



Fifth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

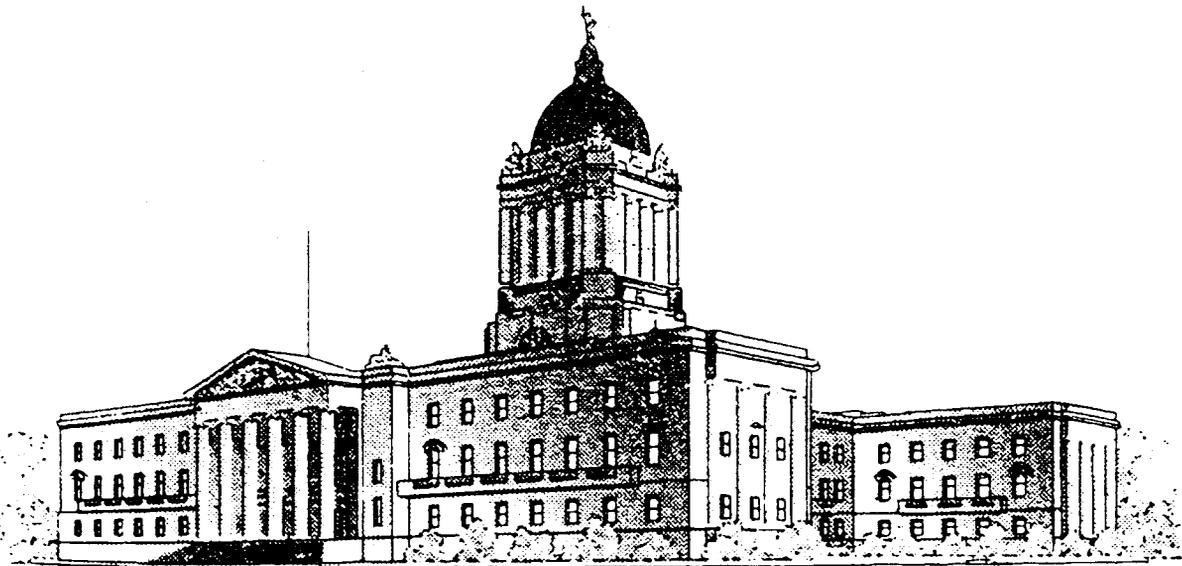
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. XLIX No. 60 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, July 14, 1999

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
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	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley, Hon.	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin, Hon.	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
<i>Vacant</i>	St. Boniface	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, July 14, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

Public Insurance for the three months ended May 31, 1999. Thank you.

PRAYERS

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Virology Lab Wastewater

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has been considering a motion regarding concurrence in Supply, directs me to report progress, and asks leave to sit again. I move, seconded by the honourable member for LaVerendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my left where we have with us this afternoon Dr. Gulzar Cheema, the former member for The Maples.

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

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I wonder if I could have permission to revert momentarily to reports.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Environment have leave to revert to Tabling of Reports? [agreed]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the quarterly financial report for the Manitoba

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the 2,000 litres of discharge into the river system from the federal lab with the other public issues of the Ebola virus and the hantavirus and other issues that are of concern to the public, there is obviously a lot of public concern about the revelation yesterday that this amount of litres went into our water supply on June 23.

I would like to ask the Premier what action did his minister take on June 24. Did we write the federal Minister of Health, Mr. Rock, on our concerns, and could the minister table that in the House today?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for the question, and I am presuming he did receive material on the licensing that I forwarded to his office earlier today as requested yesterday. I should indicate to the Leader of the Opposition that on the 24th of June the department itself was just being notified. The member may recall that both the deputy and I were at the international environmental conference with the federal minister on another issue at that time. The department, though, when they did receive the notification on the 24th, immediately contacted the provincial health authorities and the city health authorities. The city had been alerted the day before. The health authorities then made the determination as to whether or not there was a safety hazard and made a determination as to there being no health hazard, and what kind of notification needed to be made was, of course, in their purview.

For our part, Madam Speaker, the department then began to immediately look at the envi-

ronmental aspects of the incident which, of course, is their mandate, and subsequently when the deputy and I returned, I was notified. By then, of course, corrective action had been put in place by senior department officials, as they are mandated to do.

Communication has taken place with senior federal officials, in answer to the member's question on that.

* (1335)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, it is in the public now that they have been notified, but the considerable concern and the danger that people feel about these 2,000 litres that were discharged into the river system, why did the minister not write the federal minister upon immediately knowing of this? Why did we not take our concerns directly to the top? Surely the public urgency of this matter and the public considerations and ramifications indicate that we should be communicating at the highest level. Why has the minister not and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) not done that with the federal government?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member should know, I believe I did indicate, that communication began immediately the province was notified between the province and the federal government and between the city and the federal government. There has been a tremendous amount of work going on between and amongst the engineers at the city and provincial levels in terms of examining processes. Indeed, senior officials have been taking a look at processes, and no work will be proceeding in the higher level lab until those procedures are verified as being pure.

Madam Speaker, I would expect that at the meeting that is scheduled to take place next week between the city, the province and the federal government, which was established some time ago, a meeting to come together to take a look at all of the ramifications of that incident to ensure that there can be no repeat, I think is quite in keeping with the rules and processes laid down, given that in this incident there was no health hazard.

We are also taking a look, as well, at perhaps having quarterly reports or something

like that issued by the lab just to keep people up to date as to the types of things that are happening there for interim information in the absence of hazard but just for information.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, it seems to me that the 2,000 litres of material released to the river would have indicated the intervention with the federal government at the highest level, minister to minister, on June 24, not when it becomes a public issue that we make public statements. I am disappointed that the minister has not taken more urgent action with the people who opened this lab and gave us guarantees at the time that we would be safe and that this facility was absolutely safe of human error, was failproof.

Madam Speaker, a further question to the minister. When I read Sections 19 and 20 of the licence, it does provide, in my view, a permissive authority, the licence issued by the province, to discharge materials to the river system subject to the monitoring of the facility itself and the treatment by the facility itself.

So is the minister not in agreement that the statement made by the former minister that these materials would be contained—the licence is permissive and the authority to do so is with the lab itself.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member asked a question like this yesterday. It was worded a little differently, but it had some of the same content that I took as notice. So I will maybe answer both with my response now.

In terms of discharges from the lab, as the member knows or as citizens do know, there are three kinds of water. There is sterile water that is absolutely sterilized; there is normal water that would have things in it but not of a health hazard; and then there is contaminated water which will have a variety of contaminants from mild to serious. Any wastewater coming out of the lab is to be in the sterile category. It has to be disinfected; it has to go through a series of steps; it has to be sterilized. What happened in this instance is that ordinary water came out instead of sterilized water. That water, even though it was just water from washing, et cetera, has to be sterilized, and that is the point of concern here. It is a concern, I believe, that is

well aware of at the senior levels in the federal government, certainly is at the senior levels in the federal laboratory. I see my time is up, and I will continue on with the next question.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, it is this government—

Madam Speaker: Order, please, with a new question.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: New question, yes. This government and this minister or the previous minister issued the licence, and the licence says: the licensee, i.e., the lab, under Section 20, shall ensure that the waste management systems are fully commissioned prior to the operation of Level 3 and Level 4 of the laboratory which is the Ebola virus and other very serious viruses. This is a self-monitoring licence.

I would like to ask the minister if she is satisfied, given the human error already, that a self-monitoring licence that has been given by this government to the lab is sufficient for the public safety in Manitoba.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I think perhaps the member is misinterpreting which director is being referred to in the No. 20 that he is reading. If he is looking, he will see that this particular licence is in fact signed by a director of environment not of the lab.

But, at any rate, what I indicate to the member is that the lab itself cannot discharge contaminated water as a condition of its licence out of the contained lab. That is the bottom line; that is the heart of the matter. It is something that the province, the federal government and the City of Winnipeg will not see happen. I think that he is misreading that particular section.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, given the fact that this lab is error free, and that was stated when the federal and provincial representatives attended a press conference to cut the ribbon, and given the language of permissiveness in this licence, is the minister saying then that their director did approve the discharge of these 2,000 litres into the river system?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, no, nobody approved the discharge of nonsterilized water into the water system. That is the point that our environmental officials are making now. The environmental officials are currently enforcing the act now as we speak and as of last week and the week before. When the member says that the licence is permissive, then it begs the question, if the licence is permissive, why are the environmental officials enforcing a breach of the licence? The reality of what is happening proves the inaccuracy of his premise.

But the water coming out of the lab, and I will say it again because this is the point that needs to be recognized, is to be sterilized. In this instance it was not, and so they are going to have to change their procedures before they can repeat that process and before higher level lab work contaminants enter there.

Mr. Doer: On the one hand you say it is not self-monitoring, on the other hand you say the director did not approve the discharge. Given the fact that the discharge could deal with human error with items such as the Ebola virus, Madam Speaker, surely to goodness the minister: (a) would be concerned about her own system of licensing; (b) she would want to halt the issuance of this licence immediately and ensure that there is some other inspection measure in between the licensee and the river system and the people of Manitoba. Why can we not have that change in the licence?

Mrs. McIntosh: I indicate—[interjection] The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), from his seat, has said that I should not have been in committee yesterday. I should have been here rather than in committee. Madam Speaker, I indicate to the member for Thompson that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Environment has been recognized to respond to the question.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I guess the member is again asking a question when reality has already answered it. The department officials, the Department of Environment, the City of Winnipeg, the public

health officers, both provincial and city levels, the city engineers, the provincial engineers, and the people from the federal government have been working together on this very issue to see that the very things that he asks happen, happen.

So, Madam Speaker, the member is either saying that he does not have confidence in the scientists who work for the department to know their work or he is saying that the processes that we are going through right now are not happening. They are indeed happening.

* (1345)

Virology Lab

Clean Environment Commission Hearings

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, my questions are to the Minister of Environment.

Under The Environment Act, the minister has the right to call Clean Environment Commission hearings on any proposed development in this province. In fact, the government held hearings on the licensing of the BFI waste disposal site. Presumably this project is just as serious and requires vigorous investigation.

My question to the minister: why did this minister not call Clean Environment Commission hearings when the federal government applied to operate this laboratory?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I will indicate, of course, that I could not have called anything; I was not minister at the time, but that is beside the point.

Madam Speaker, the fact is there was a very strenuous licensing process. A Lab 4 licence goes through a very vigorous and rigorous assessment. There are standards that are national and international in scope for a facility of this type. It is much, much more than merely a provincial undertaking. It is a standard it has to meet. There are only a handful of labs of this stature in the world that have criteria that they must meet.

I would remind the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) that he was the Leader who pressed

for a faster and earlier delivery of this lab at the time, when he would rise in the House and say: build it faster, build it sooner. Hurry. In fact, I will quote, if the member opposite is saying that this process was too speedy, that we have the Leader of the Opposition saying: why are we having to wait so long? When will we see the subject of this environment licence? When will we see the approval of the capital projects this year for the federal government? Let us have the shovels in the ground right now rather than have this disease lab delayed and delayed and delayed, et cetera.

That is what the Leader of the Opposition was saying, putting on the pressure to speed through the licensing process, which we did not do. We did not do that as a government. We took the time to do it properly, despite his pleas to do otherwise. It shows the wisdom of our department that we did it that way.

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question is to the minister.

Does the minister think that this issue is not important enough, not serious enough to have been reviewed by the Clean Environment Commission?

Mrs. McIntosh: I am being given a lot of advice, and I appreciate it. I guess I say to the member that the process gone through for this particular enterprise was rigorous, was vigorous, was held to international standards, was beyond the standards of other simple labs like hospital labs, for example, hospital labs and even high school chemistry labs that every day put contaminated water into the sewer system. We have a much higher standard for this type of lab.

There was a lot of public information available at the time, a lot of debate at the time, a lot of public input at the time, and I have confidence that the process gone through at that time was a process that will put in place safety and security for the people of Manitoba.

The fact that we are pausing now, Madam Speaker, to look at a breach of the protocols is, I think, a very significant indication of our concern as to the importance of this issue, that we have said everything has to stop while this is

investigated indicates that we are taking it very seriously indeed. This is not a light or a laughing matter, nor is it one that should be played politics with. It is far too serious for that.

Public Consultations

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, asking questions here about public involvement, how was the public involved? How was the public consulted in the licensing of this project?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I will obtain for the member a detailed outlining of the input that was provided by the public. I will provide that to him. I am surprised that they would not know, given that it was the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) who felt this was a very good enhancement to his neighbourhood and said so on the record in Hansard, that it was much better than the asphalt plant. Given the intense lobbying by the opposition at the time to press ahead with the project and take shortcuts to get it up and running quickly, I am surprised he does not know that we annoyed them by taking too long to allow the information to come through for proper assessment of this project.

I think it is a passing-strange commentary they are making now after the fact, but I will get that information for him so he can be reminded of who it was that tried to hold this project up by doing a proper assessment. Who was it that tried to ram it through in order to get the political points that they tried to claim credit for, by the way? They tried to say it was their project.

* (1350)

Virology Lab Environmental Licence Suspension

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): My questions are to the honourable Minister of Environment. As the facts are known as of this time, there are at least two breaches, two violations of the licence, the fact that notification was not presented within the 12-hour period, and the second violation is that the liquid effluent and the waste were not sterilized in a separate

heating facility separate from that of the city's waste disposal unit. These are the two violations and breaches of the licence.

Why did the honourable minister not temporarily suspend or revoke the licence because of these breaches?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, with apologies, I heard the second question but not the first. I tried very hard to hear the first question, but there was quite a bit of noise in here. I wonder if the member could repeat the first question, and I will answer both of them. If everybody could be quiet so I could hear it, I would appreciate that, too.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Broadway, to quickly repeat the question.

Mr. Santos: Madam Speaker, I can only ask one question at a time.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Broadway, to clarify the question asked.

Mr. Santos: I am obedient, Madam Speaker, so I will pose the question again.

Despite the two violations of the conditions of the licence, namely the lack of instant notification within a 12-hour period and the lack of separate sterilized treatment facilities of the waste separate from the heating treatment of the city, why did the minister not temporarily suspend the licence of the licensee?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I would think the fact that no work can proceed until the situation is rectified is an indication that we do not want to see any work proceeding until the situation is rectified in that particular area. We are doing what the member has asked. It is a virtual suspension, as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) says, because they cannot do the work. [interjection] It is true. I thank the Premier for the use of the right words there because they can continue with the lower level work. But any higher level work has to wait now, and that is the same as a suspension. They cannot proceed until the city and the province are satisfied that it is safe to proceed.

So, Madam Speaker, he is asking me to do what I have already done, and I presume he is asking because he is concerned about the people of Winnipeg, which is why we have done what we have done, because we are also concerned about the people of this province.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I have not yet recognized the honourable member for Broadway.

Emergency Response Plan

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, according to the conditions of the licence, again, there is supposed to be an emergency response plan in place in case of accidents of leakage like this one. If there is such a plan, can the minister table it for the benefit of this House?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I do think this is a very serious topic. I know we have heckling that goes back and forth on subjects of lesser importance sometimes, but I think on this topic it belittles the issue itself to have the opposition doing what they are doing while the serious topic like this is being discussed. This is not something to play politics with. It is a serious—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1355)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, this minister is doing it again. Her comments might have perhaps been appropriate on a point of order. She was not recognized on a point of order. She was supposed to be answering a question, and, incidentally, all we were doing from our seats was asking the minister to give a real answer to a very serious issue.

So I would like to ask you to have this minister called to order, and under Beauchesne Citation 417, answer the very serious question

asked by the member for Broadway about the evacuation plan, not the rambling nonsense that we just heard from this minister.

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

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I hardly think asking that this matter be treated seriously to be considered rambling—whatever he called it.

An Honourable Member: Rambling nonsense.

Mrs. McIntosh: "Rambling nonsense" is what he said. Madam Speaker, I think asking that a matter like this be taken seriously is not rambling nonsense.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I would be pleased to go straight to my answer, if he is concerned that I am drawing observations to the attention of the public he does not want the public to know about.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I would remind the honourable Minister of Environment to respond to the question asked.

* * *

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. There are emergency procedures in place obviously. With a lab of this sophistication, they are very precise, and they apparently all went into action immediately, so the reports tell me. I was not there, but the reports have indicated that when the tap was accidentally turned on, before the sterilization process was complete, all of the alarm systems and everything else that is in place there immediately signified that to the people working in the facility.

As well, the only area in terms of communication that was breached was that—and it is a serious one and we are taking it seriously; we are consulting with legal counsel to see if in fact it should be pursued through the courts in terms of an infraction in enforcement—they are then to notify immediately the city and

provincial authorities with a maximum time limit of 12 hours. They did not notify the province till the next day, and that is a breach of the protocol that should not have occurred. Having said that, though, once the notification to the province did take place, the health authorities were immediately contacted, et cetera, and all of the emergency processes kicked into place. The flaw here was that there was not immediate notification, and that we are working upon.

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

Public Meeting Request

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, given that all governments are stewards of the people, particularly the residents surrounding the area of the microbiology laboratory, that kind of responsibility calls for reporting to the residents themselves as to the state or nature of the condition. Would the honourable minister be willing to call a public meeting and pacify the anxiety and fear of all the residents in the area?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question because I quite understand what he is saying about people and their feelings on this issue. We are having a meeting next week, and one of the subjects I have asked my officials to discuss at some length with the people from other jurisdictions is the whole process of communication. As you know, the Department of Environment is concerned with the environmental aspects to ensure that safety is there, that there are no health hazards. That is why we said no work to continue until this is corrected, et cetera.

The health authorities, in this instance, were the ones to decide whether or not a public communication was required, not that it was secret, but they decided they did not need to make a public announcement because there was no health hazard. However, we are having public discussions about it now, and I think that there might be some merit in having some form of standard communication available, whereby reports on a regular basis go out to the public indicating what is happening in the lab, that this

type of thing could be covered by, et cetera. What form that process could take to be really effective I am not certain, but I think it is something that we should talk about because part of having confidence is to have knowledge. I think the member has made a good point there that part of the confidence is knowledge, and we will look at that seriously.

* (1400)

Folklorama Financial Assistance

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Premier (Mr. Filmon). Every year for two weeks of the summer Manitobans are provided the opportunity to tour the world through our world-renowned Folklorama, which has been hugely successful over the years. Due to the Pan Am Games, it is no longer two weeks, it is eight days, which has resulted in a number of the pavilions looking at losing, from what I understand, money. In the past the government has assisted pavilions.

My question to the Premier is: is the Premier prepared to look at giving financial assistance to our pavilions to ensure, because of the shortening of the two-week period, that there be some form of compensation?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, my department does work very closely with the organizers of Folklorama. It is a little bit too early to determine whether or not there will be any losses or any concerns in that area, so I would think that we should, in fact, let Folklorama, which is very successful—I participated last evening as did many others. Let us see how, in fact, things go. To my knowledge, of the festivals that have been organized to accommodate the Pan Am Games, the two which are complete have been highly successful. We have every reason to believe that Folklorama will be very successful, as it always has been.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I look to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship—and I must say I agree, it will be successful because of the volunteers—to have the minister acknowledge the fact that in the past the

government has assisted Folklorama, that in fact the numbers are considerably down, as high as up to, as I have been told from some, 30 percent. Would the minister not acknowledge that, yes, there could be a need then to assist our pavilions to ensure the long-term viability through some form of assistance, just for this year?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, the member's question is purely hypothetical. We are barely halfway through Folklorama now, and for my part I would like to continue to have confidence in its ongoing success. We will look at the very end to see if, in fact, there is any need required.

Education System Standards Testing Breach Investigation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, on a new issue to the Minister of Education. It has been leaked that the Department of Education will, in fact, be conducting an independent investigation. My question for the Minister of Education: will he now formally make it public that there will, indeed, be an independent investigation, and does the minister know who is going to be heading that independent investigation?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, as I have told the honourable member, I was very, very carefully considering the steps that should be taken in light of the matters that have been made known. I believe that it is important that there be public confidence in a system of standards and standards examinations in our province-wide system. I believe that damage has been done to that public confidence.

I believe that an independent review is needed in this matter, and I am making that known today. But I am also saying to the honourable member that details about the mandate of the review and the person selected for that review will be made known in the very near future.

Mining Industry Abandoned Mine Sites

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, during Estimates last month I asked the

Minister of Mines to provide a precise location of abandoned mine sites in Manitoba, sites which are potentially hazardous to our environment. Today I received a letter from the minister, and unfortunately, precise locations of old abandoned mine sites were not indicated.

Will the minister admit that his government does not know where the exact location of these old mine sites are, where companies drilled, blasted and extracted metals and ores, where those wastes remain, that this minister does not know where there are or what the potential environmental risk of metal leachates, which include copper, lead or arsenic, where those leachates are or what their potential environmental hazard is? Will this minister admit that he does not know where those sites are?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I will not so acknowledge.

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

An Honourable Member: MaryAnn, you were the inspector; you know where they are.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Mihychuk: The Minister of Mines should know where they are.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate. The honourable member was recognized for a supplementary question.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, can the minister explain why he has not taken a serious review of where these old abandoned mines are located and ensure that the environmental condition of these abandoned mines is safe? Is he willing to assure Manitobans that those sites are environmentally safe or not?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, the Department of Environment has the responsibility to deal with the environmental inspections and the consequences relating to the Department of Mines, and operating mines in the past. We, of course, have just during the past few months approved and put into place environmental

rehabilitation regulations which are second to none, approved of by the industry, and ensure that there is a proactive way, including an up-front deposit or security, to ensure that mining rehabilitation is done appropriately.

Over a long history of previous governments, there have been situations which were not subjected to the kind of scrutiny or the kinds of proactive approaches by the regulatory schemes we have. We have mounted a process to deal with orphan mine sites which are identified as being problematical, and a multidepartmental strategy, a process for addressing that is under-way as we speak.

Health Care System Summer Closures

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Health. Today we set a new standard for announcements by the minister when the minister announced a floor plan for a centre that is going to open up a year from now.

I would like to ask the minister, since he is trying to garner publicity: will the minister now give us a precise list of all of the summer closures, including the psychiatric summer closures, the summer closures for drug treatment so Manitobans can know where the government is shutting down facilities, since the minister has time to announce a floor plan, as he did today, for a facility that is going to open up a year from now?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): Well, Madam Speaker, I am extremely surprised at the member for Kildonan mocking an announcement today that is very important for the Health Sciences Centre here in Manitoba, very important for cardiac surgery, for cardiac patients, an issue that I have addressed on many occasions right here in this House.

I had the opportunity to be there with doctors, with nurses and so on at the facility. Today's announcement of a state-of-the-art step-down unit for cardiac surgery to the Health Sciences Centre, with eight beds being identified for that procedure, was very well received, and is something that is extremely important to that

facility, to those doctors, to those nurses and to the cardiac patients.

I am really surprised and disappointed with the member coming here and mocking that kind of an issue that is that important for cardiac surgery, where today we are doing about 1,100 cardiac surgeries. You go back several years and we were in the few hundreds. That is all part and parcel, because of the significant commitment of additional resources that we have made in this budget that he stood up and voted for, I am sure in large part because we have \$194 million more in funding for health care to address a number of very important issues to our government and to Manitobans.

* (1410)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I am asking the minister to explain why the minister, who had the time to announce the floor plan today of a facility that is not opening up for a year, cannot tell us what contingency plan is in place for the closure of Sara Riel for two weeks, cannot tell us what is going to be done with the closure of the chemical treatment unit at the Health Sciences Centre, cannot tell us what is being done with the closure to rheumatology and all the summer closures that are taking place because of this government's poor handling of health care in the province of Manitoba. Yet he has time to do an announcement about a floor plan for beds that are opening up in a year.

Mr. Stefanson: Again, Madam Speaker, I continue to be amazed by the approach the member is taking on this very important issue. I can only believe that he has not talked to the doctors in the cardiac surgery ward of the Health Sciences Centre. He has not talked to the nurses. He has not talked to any of the patients.

This is a state-of-the-art facility. We in Manitoba were amongst the pioneers in North America in terms of the establishment of the step-down unit at the Health Sciences Centre in terms of the quality of patient care that unit provides and also freeing up additional intensive care unit beds. So it is a very important initiative for that facility and for cardiac patients in the province of Manitoba.

Again, on the issue of summer schedules, the member knows full well summer schedules have been in place in Manitoba for many, many years under our government and previous governments. It is nothing new in the province of Manitoba, and the WHA and the other regional authorities work with all of the facilities in terms of their summer schedules and ensuring that the services are still there to meet the needs of Manitobans in our hospitals and other facilities.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, the minister was there and heard the vice-president say that the pace of the building of this unit went in glacial proportions; that is what the vice-president said. It took that long to build this facility.

Will the minister outline for us today what contingencies are being put in place for the closure of the Sara Riel centre for two weeks this year, when we know that community mental health and psychiatric services are in short supply in this province, have been ever since the government closed a number of facilities and did not put in place adequate or properly funded community-based services?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, if the member wants to look at capital projects, he can look at facilities like St. Boniface and the record pace that was set in terms of the emergency room redevelopment, which, again, is something that is very important to that facility, to Manitobans, and I assume members across the way support.

In terms of Sara Riel, because of staffing issues, that facility did shut down their crisis stabilization for two weeks. It opens up again on Monday, but throughout that period services continue to be available through the Salvation Army and other facilities.

But, again, I continue to be amazed at the member's cavalier attitude toward a very important initiative at Health Sciences Centre that was well received by the doctors, by the heads of cardiac surgery, by the nurses, by everybody with that project, and how delighted everybody was to see this announcement today and this project moving forward with a state-of-the-art facility in an area of Manitoba which is

not only a Canadian leader but one of the world leaders.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Legislative Interns

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, on behalf of all honourable members, I would like to take this opportunity today to give a very warm and heartfelt thank you to our legislative interns who have worked very hard for all of us during the course of the last year.

Mel Mallet, better known in my office as the Hammer, Melanie Vanstone, Shelly Wiseman, Rory Henry, David Markham and Renata Neufeld have been invaluable components to the successful management of our caucuses from their very first day on the job. The quality of their work and their dedicated work ethic speaks for itself, and their professionalism has been exemplary. They have been excellent examples of the success of the program, and I wish them the best of luck in their future endeavours, though I dare say that they will hardly need it.

Renata, David, Rory, Mel, Mel and Shell, you will be sorely missed, and I hope you come by to visit on a regular basis.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Economic Growth

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, what has the economy under Conservative governments given us? Governments have told us that economic growth is good for everyone, making everyone better off, but it is becoming evident that inequality is growing despite economic growth.

First, the rich are richer. In 1973, the richest 10 percent of families with children under 18 made 21 times more than the poorest 10 percent of Canadian families. In 1996, the richest 10 percent of families made 314 times more than the poorest 10 percent of Canadian families.

Second, the middle class is shrinking. In 1973, 60 percent of families with children under 18 earned between \$24,500 and \$65,000 in 1996 dollars. By 1996, the middle class shrunk. Only 44 percent of families with dependent children made between \$24,500 and \$65,000. Most of that change happened in the very middle. Those earning the equivalent of between \$37,600 and \$56,000 in 1973 accounted for 40 percent of the population. A generation later, only 27 percent of the population found themselves in the middle.

Families increasingly have to rely on more than one income to get by. Increasingly, even a second income is not enough. Real average family market incomes are lower today than they were in 1981; 60 percent of families with children were earning less than in 1981.

Governments clearly have a role to play in society, both by setting the rules by which the markets play and by mediating the fallout from the market. Unregulated markets do not do a good job of distributing, for example, health care, education, public safety, public recreation and infrastructure. These are the very things that this government, this provincial government, and the federal government are cutting back. We need to change the government and elect a government in Manitoba that is committed to justice, equity, fairness and economic opportunity for everyone. Thank you.

Pan Am Games

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and offer my best wishes to the many athletes, organizers and volunteers involved in the 1999 Pan Am Games here in Winnipeg.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The 13th Pan Am Games will be the third-largest multisport event ever held in North America. Five thousand athletes from 42 western hemisphere countries will be competing at these games which are being supported by the efforts of over 17,000 volunteers. The excitement surrounding the Pan Am Games is being felt and shared by communities—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. I am having trouble hearing the honour-

able member for Gimli. Could those who are carrying on conversations please do so in the loge or out in the hall.

Mr. Helwer: The excitement surrounding the Pan Am Games is being felt and shared by communities around Manitoba.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Today the Pan Am flame will cross the border into our province at the town of Emerson, and from there it will visit 20 Manitoba communities, travelling as far north as Churchill, before arriving back in Winnipeg to officially open the games.

* (1420)

Many communities will also play host to Pan Am events, including Stonewall and Gimli in my constituency, which will host baseball and sailing respectively.

The games offer a wonderful opportunity to showcase our beautiful communities and province to people from around the world. There is no doubt that these games will open doors to new cultural and economic partnerships between Manitoba and our southern neighbours.

So I would like to ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming the Pan Am athletes and offering our congratulations to all of those involved for what is sure to be the most successful Pan Am Games ever. Thank you.

Bill 47

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, in the last two days I have had discussions with people from Grand Rapids and Lac du Bonnet who are very disappointed in the actions this government has taken by passing Bill 47 which will exempt Manitoba Telecom Services from paying taxes. Grand Rapids and Lac du Bonnet passed by-laws in their communities to have personal properties assessed on Manitoba Hydro in their communities.

The province was to assess these properties, but over the last couple of years the assessor has refused to do that work. As a result, the two

communities had to go to the Court of Queen's Bench to get the assessor to do his job. The province tried to talk both these communities into dropping their case, but they refused. However, the case was to be held in June and was extended into September. When it was extended, they were given the assurances to have the same conditions in place at the time that the case would be heard. However, this government has brought forward legislation which changes those conditions. They made a commitment to the communities that the retroactive clause in the bill would be removed, and it has not been removed.

It seems very strange that this government did not recognize the problems they were creating when they privatized Manitoba Telephone System, that it was a private corporation and should be paying taxes. Now they have brought in an exemption for Manitoba Telecom Services and Manitoba Hydro, and it is hypocritical to try to think that you can treat a private corporation like MTS and Manitoba Hydro the same. This legislation that the government has brought forward will cause concerns for many municipalities, that they will not be able to collect taxes on other private corporations. It is unfortunate that the government did not do more consultation before they brought this bill forward, rather than saying that they are going to do the consultation after the bill is passed.

MTS Labour Dispute

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, the countdown for the Pan Am Games is indeed on. There is only nine days to go. The torch is in Manitoba. The sprinklers are going full time to try and get the new sod to grow. They are madly trying to finish the Norwood Bridge and other infrastructure. The teams are being announced, and what do we have? We have MTS, the first corporate sponsor, has its employees locked out, with no consideration about the games. Before the games, MTS was the first corporate sponsor, but that was before privatization. That was when MTS was a Crown corporation and a Manitoba company. Now that MTS is 80 percent owned by people who are not Manitoban, they do not care about their employees and they do not seem to care about what happens in Manitoba.

The employees, of course, are concerned about their jobs, and MTS also is not concerned about jobs and keeping jobs in Manitoba. There are 1,100 jobs that have been lost since they privatized MTS and hundreds of employees that are now locked out are concerned that their jobs are next in line, that they are going to be contracted out and will lose more jobs to the United States. The operating jobs could go to Phoenix, Arizona.

The employees are walking the pavement in front of the MTS buildings now, and those hundreds of people are slated—a number of them—to be volunteers at the Pan Am Games. But they are at risk of having to forfeit that opportunity in order to try and get the company back to the bargaining table. We know that the government currently has four board members who are still part of the board, and we want the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to pick up the phone and not jeopardize the MTS sponsorship of the games, to have MTS get back to the bargaining table so that these employees can have a decent summer like the rest of us.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I wonder if we might seek leave to return to Presenting Reports by Standing Committees and then seek leave for me to report from my standing committee.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Norbert have leave to revert to Routine Proceedings, Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees? [agreed]

Does the honourable member for St. Norbert have leave to present the standing committee report? [agreed]

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Law Amendments Fifth Report

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of the Committee on Law Amendments): Madam Speaker, by leave, I beg to present the Fifth Report of the Committee on Law Amendments.

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its Fifth Report.

Your committee met on Wednesday, July 7, 1999, at 7 p.m., Thursday, July 8, 1999, at 10 a.m., Monday, July 12, 1999, at 2:30 p.m., Monday, July 12, 1999, at 7 p.m., Tuesday, July 13, 1999, at 10 a.m. and Tuesday, July 13, 1999, at 2:45 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

At the July 7, 1999, meeting, your committee elected Mrs. Driedger as Chairperson and Mr. Faurshou as Vice-Chairperson. At the July 12, 1999, 7 p.m. meeting, your committee elected Mr. Laurendeau as Chairperson.

Your committee heard representations on bills as follows:

Bill 40—The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'emploi et au revenu

Von Haywood - Canadian Association of Non-Employed

Michelle Forrest - Private Citizen

Theresa Anne Swedick - Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf Inc.

Rick Juba - Juba Neighborhood Resource Drop in Centre

Deborah Graham - Private Citizen

Susan Bruce - National Anti-Poverty Organization

Joseph Stephenson - Youth Against Poverty

Eric Encontre - Private Citizen

Natalie Encontre - Private Citizen

Tim Jackson - People Empowering Themselves Against the System

Rick Pettigrew - Private Citizen

Shauna MacKinnon - CHOICES: A Coalition for Social Justice

Randy Kotyk - People Empowering Themselves Against the System

Sid Frankel - Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

David Martin - Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

Graham Starmer - Manitoba Chamber of Commerce

Pauline Riley - Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women

Blair Hamilton - Canadian Union of Public Employees, Manitoba

Rhonda McCorrison - Private Citizen

Alan Maki - Private Citizen

Neil Cohen - The Community Unemployed Help Centre

John Doyle - Manitoba Federation of Labour

Peter Kaufmann - Private Citizen

Valerie Price - Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties

Thomas Novak - OBLATE Justice and Peace Committee

Catherine Stearns and Glen Michalchuk - Workers Organizing Resource Centre

Darrall Rankin - Communist Party of Canada, Manitoba

Rev. Harry Lehotsky - New Life Ministries

George Harris - AIDS Shelter Coalition

David Henry - Private Citizen

Written submissions:

Bev Le Blanc - Private Citizen

Your committee has considered:

Bill 40—The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'emploi et au revenu

and has agreed to report the same, on division, with the following amendment:

MOTION:

THAT the preamble of the Bill be amended by adding the following after the second paragraph:

AND WHEREAS it is a related goal of welfare-to-work initiatives to improve the economic circumstances of Manitoba families;

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Speaker, by leave, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would ask if you could call, with leave of the House, report stage on Bill 40.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to call report stage on Bill 40? [agreed]

REPORT STAGE

Bill 40—The Employment And Income Assistance Amendment Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Bill 40, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'emploi et au revenu, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to advise the House, in discussions with House leaders and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that I am not asking for leave at this time, but I would advise that it is very likely that at six o'clock we will seek unanimous consent of the House to sit beyond the hour of six o'clock tonight. So I am just advising members, as they plan their schedule today, that that is a very likely possibility that we will be sitting beyond six o'clock.

Secondly, I believe, if Madam Speaker canvasses the House, she will see that there is a willingness to waive private members' hour.

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to waive private members' hour? [agreed]

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I would ask if we could proceed to the concurrence process at this particular time. I understand that the correct motion to be moved is I would move, seconded

by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

* (1430)

The Acting Speaker, Ben Sveinson, in the Chair.

Mr. Praznik: I understand the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman) has been requested and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson). They are on their way now. Before we do that, I would ask if you could recognize the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou). There was a statement that he wanted to make. There was not time available in allotments for Members' Statements, but we had had some discussion with the opposition House leader, and if he could be recognized, it involves a member of this Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Is there a willingness in the House to allow the honourable member for Portage to make a statement? [agreed]

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Outstanding Young Farmer Award Dan and Anita Penner

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): May I first say my appreciation to all members of the House at this time for allowing me to rise here this afternoon. I rise today to offer congratulations to Dan and Anita Penner of Halbstadt, Manitoba, who were this year's winners of Manitoba's Outstanding Young Farmers Award. Dan and Anita were recognized this past weekend at the annual event during Saturday night's official opening of the Portage Ex. The Outstanding Young Farmer Award is a project sponsored by Canada's Jaycees and the alumni which honours young farmers for their achievements in agriculture. Candidates must be between the ages of 18 and 39 and receive two-thirds of their income through farming.

It goes without saying that the Penners are no strangers to farming. Dan has been farming for over 14 years and currently Anita, Dan, and Dan's brothers grow grain, special crops, beans, oilseeds, and corn on their 3,300-acre farm at Halbstadt. In addition to farming, the Penners are valued volunteers in their community. They are active leaders in the 4-H club, in church activities, and co-ordinate local junior curling. They also are involved in the Rhineland Ag Society, Farm Women's Committee, Manitoba Sugar Beet Producers' Association, which has since been not as active, however, at its time, they were most active, and the Manitoba Pulse Growers' Association.

The Penners are not only outstanding farmers, they are outstanding community people. Mr. Chair, I might like to add that they have been mentored by a member of this House, the Honourable Jack Penner, who is the member for Emerson. Dan is Jack Penner's son. Jack has shown leadership in the ag community all throughout his life. I am certain that Dan and Anita have benefited from that leadership.

I would like also to recognize the other honourees in the competition. They were: Darryl and Tara Albrecht of Boissevain; Kevin and Bev Coughbrough of Portage la Prairie; and Robert and Leifa Misko from Roblin. Each family has demonstrated excellence in farming, and I congratulate them all as being the finalists in this competition.

Mr. Chair, I ask all honourable members to join me in congratulating Dan and Anita on winning Manitoba's Outstanding Young Farmer Award and wishing them all the very best in the national competition this fall in Regina competing against the seven other regions nationally. Congratulations and good luck.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Consideration of Concurrence Motion

The Acting Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. The Committee of Supply has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I would like to ask a series of questions to the Minister of Energy and Mines. I would like to begin with obtaining some more information as to the recent document that I received pertaining to the locations of mine sites in Manitoba. The letter is dated July 12. First of all, I would like to ask the minister if he believes this is a comprehensive list of all mine sites in Manitoba?

Hon. David Newman (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Chair, the list and the map provided by the department was in response to questions asked during Estimates. If the honourable member for St. James is asking that I review it and double check with the department as to how comprehensive it is, I can only undertake to do so. They attempted, I would hope, using their sincere best efforts, to respond to the question that was posed during Estimates that they could not answer at that time, and if there are some specific questions that the honourable member for St. James has that she wants me to take back to validate, I would have no hesitation undertaking to do that.

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you. One of the specific mines, for example, is Herb Lake, unless that mine had a different name that I am not aware of specifically, I do not see on the list, for example, and that is one that the minister knows that we talked about in Estimates and one that is actually being considered as a designated historic site.

So, in addition to Herb Lake, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) has indicated that he is also aware of numerous old mine sites, perhaps not huge in the scale of today's mining operations, but they were mine sites that are also not on the list, so I would ask the minister that perhaps more detail could be provided. The location of the mines is very, very vague. If you look at Chisel Lake, it says: in the Snow Lake area. Elora [phonetic] is at Rice Lake. Where precisely are those mine sites because, without that information, it would be very difficult to identify where those sites were, to ensure that they indeed were in an environmentally or a safety-issue condition for the public good, and so I would appreciate more detail and ensuring that that is a comprehensive list.

I would ask the minister if he has had an opportunity to look at the map that he provided

me and would just like to comment that at this scale, it would seem to me to be fairly unreasonable to attempt to locate these old mines back from the thirties at a scale of one to a million, I believe this is, which was a whole provincial map and the dot is much bigger than a whole region when it comes to locating the mine, so it is not a very practical map.

* (1440)

It does show trends, and it shows the active mines clearly because they are also easier to spot, but, for instance, a very specific question, and I am sure that there is a logical reason, the nonoperational mines are in a gold colour and there is another category called nonoperational fenced. My eyesight as well as my hearing is not as good as it used to be, but this map I cannot differentiate between the two types of mines, which apparently is significant enough to have two categories. So this map is of little use. If we could have some greater detail and locations, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, I have no difficulty co-operating in an effort to satisfy her desire for more preciseness. Dealing with the first point, I think there is another name for the Herb Lake mine, but we will get that for you as well.

The issue about the size of the map, wanting it on a smaller scale map, I am sure that could be accommodated. It was probably done in anticipation that this is the kind of document you wanted for ready referral. But to the extent you want more precise locations and you want a more complete depiction of the history of mine sites, I will seek the co-operation of my department in doing that. I think it would be a useful document for a variety of different purposes, so I think it is a worthwhile use of departmental staff.

Ms. Mihychuk: I want to thank the minister for his co-operation.

I have one additional set of questions to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro who is the Minister of Energy and Mines. My question to the minister: is he aware that an individual known as Cubby Barrett has received three-phase service to his pig barn facility at Fisher Branch at no charge?

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, I some time ago received information which was designed to respond to that rumour, and my recollection is that there was a corporation, no personal ownership by anyone, but there was a corporation involved in exercising its rights, like all Manitobans, in relation to the application of a policy of Manitoba Hydro.

I examined the report from Manitoba Hydro about that and was satisfied that what was done was entirely in accordance with a normal situation, a normal application of the policy in relation to a commercial enterprise by a corporation in the province.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister clarify, is it not the case that Manitoba Hydro will provide the service at no charge for facilities that are within two miles from the power source and, in fact, that this location exceeded five miles? Is that correct?

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, I do not have the detail on this, so I am not able to respond to that very specific question. I can undertake to provide that information and, in fact, provide the briefing note that I received from Hydro to the member.

Ms. Mihychuk: Would the minister review the situation, and if, in fact, the information that an individual, Cubby Barrett, who is involved in a corporation that is involved with a piggery in Fisher Branch, received three-phase service which can be fairly expensive service, if this corporation received this type of service and if it exceeds two miles and if, in fact, it was five miles away from the power source, will the minister conduct an investigation as to whether policy and protocol were followed or was there a breach?

Mr. Newman: In response to the rumour, I undertook that inquiry and received a briefing note response which confirmed the dealings with this particular corporation was in accordance with policy. As I have said, I will share that briefing note with the honourable member.

If the honourable member has questions arising out of that, that she wants to have third-party validation of, then that can be done, but let

her satisfy herself in that way. Then I will co-operate in ensuring that the integrity of the application policy was followed by Hydro, as it must be. If it is not, the board of directors is accountable for that, and if the board of directors does not do something appropriate about it, then it is up to me to do something about it.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister indicate whether it would be considered normal to over-estimate the distance by approximately three miles?

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, I will get the briefing note and the details to the honourable member for St. James. Then the supplementary kinds of questions that are now being asked, which I am incapable of answering, I could be properly informed about and we could be dealing with facts not speculation.

Ms. Mihychuk: Would the Minister responsible for Hydro indicate how much this type of service would cost to cover a customer if they were to cover the expenses of obtaining three-phase service? I understand that indeed in some circumstances where those facilities are under two miles and where they see the customer as being a heavy user, and most three-phase service customers are, that sometimes the charges are waived.

It is also my understanding that this facility was well beyond the two miles, in fact, was over five miles. It is very difficult to understand how that type of error could be made. Indeed, that is a lot of poles or line to run. I would ask the minister to investigate how such a mistake could have been made, or if, in fact, there have been any other applicants that have indeed received three-phase service that exceeded the four- or five-mile distance from the power source. I am not aware of that situation. It seems highly unusual that this individual who is involved with this corporation seems to have ties with the government and the government's party.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

It does lead to the question, and I think the onus is on behalf of the minister, which he is assuring us to have the facts come out clearly because the integrity of the minister and

Manitoba Hydro are somewhat in question when you look at what apparently has happened in this case in the Fisher Branch area. So my question is: will the minister provide this information, review whether this was an unusual circumstance? Were there other situations that received three-phase service at no charge at five miles? What would be the value of this type of service transaction?

Mr. Newman: Mr. Chair, I am actually very pleased that the honourable member for St. James has brought a matter of rumour into this House so that her anxiety about whether there has been an impropriety or not can be dealt with. The approach that I will take is to very promptly share that information with the honourable member and invite her, if she has further questions or concerns to seek further additional information, we will co-operate fully in ensuring that the integrity of the policy process of Manitoba Hydro has been respected by Manitoba Hydro employees.

I thank the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) for bringing it into this forum, rather than contributing to rumours which caused some concern amongst the people who felt that they were being accused of an impropriety and wanted me to be in a position to deal with these malicious rumours in an appropriate, responsible way should the occasion arise.

So I am very pleased to co-operate in that way.

Mr. Chairperson: I am not sure if the member wants to be recognized or if she just wants to carry on a conversation. The honourable member for St. James, so we can have these words for the record.

* (1450)

Ms. Mihychuk: One final question, and this one I wanted to ask in my series of questions in the House today, but there were other individuals in our caucus so anxious to ask questions that I felt that I could present this to the minister at this time.

Can the minister update us as to what plans the government has to deal with the issue at

Sherridon and the mine tailings which are leaching into the water system at Sherridon?

Mr. Newman: The up-to-date position on that, Mr. Chair, is, I said just stay tuned to the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) on this particular issue, because I know he did a personal visit up there, and that is in his constituency. He and the Mines critic, of course, are concerned to get some information before any election taking place. I am equally anxious to make sure that something is done about a situation that might have some potential environmental consequences and certainly economic consequences to tourism in the area, so I will give you the up-to-date report which is fairly fresh.

My department intends to seek approval for funding out of the Mining Reserve to advance with the necessary funding to prevent the kinds of risks which are the subject matter of the anxiety. We are dealing with this in an expeditious manner and seeking the views of the community itself as to whether or not they feel that would be an appropriate use of the Mining Reserve.

Since it has been done in the past and that has been the funding source in the past, we do not anticipate that being a difficulty. I would appreciate this being expedited by the honourable member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), endorsing that as a source of funding. If she does not, then it becomes a more problematical kind of issue. It would also be helpful if the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), through the honourable member for St. James, indicated his position on that particular matter, because if that is the position of the New Democratic Party through those representatives, I am sure that will make it easier to get the kind of timely support that is necessary for it. [interjection]

Mr. Chairperson: Let me know when we get this out of our system and we will carry on.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Chairperson, I have just a couple of brief—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Could I ask honourable members to keep it down. There are some members who cannot hear quite clearly what is going on when there are different noises going on.

Mr. Sale: I just have a couple of questions for the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism in regard to questions that I have asked in Estimates and in the House on the Manitoba Capital Fund.

Would he simply confirm the existence of the agreement that the Province of Manitoba would underwrite the first \$5 million of losses in the Manitoba Capital Fund, which was, I understand, part of the set-up agreement of Manitoba Capital Fund? At least, according to the Workers Compensation Board it was.

Hon. Mervin Tweed (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Chairman, I would refer the honourable member to the news release dated May 14, 1996, in which part of the release stated that, as an incentive to attract other capital, government funds will act as a loan loss reserve to help reduce the risk of other investors. It was announced that day, and certainly, as the opposite member implied yesterday, it was no secret that it was being done.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I have seen that. There was no statement in that press release, I believe, of the amount of the loan loss being \$5 million. If the minister is confirming that it is up to \$5 million or perhaps he would like to tell us if it is higher than that. Could he tell us what the loan loss ceiling was in the agreement?

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, as the member knows, the risk pool capital was a \$25-million fund in which the government entered into the agreement with a \$5-million contribution. Again, I would suggest that is clear enough as far as what the statement says, that our investment would act as a loan loss reserve.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I understand the minister has confirmed that the loan loss provision was for the entire \$5 million, about, as a presumable maximum.

Could the minister then tell us, tell the committee whether the province is entitled to

recover that loan loss before the other partners are paid profits, or are the losses absolute and not recoverable by the province out of other profits, if there are any?

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, as all capital risk funds, there are good investments and perhaps not-so-good investments, and at the end of the day, when the fund has run its course, the expectation is that the province will receive its full investment.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I do not believe the minister answered my question. I do not want to get into a debate with him. I am really seeking information at this point.

Is the province entitled to recover the losses that it suffered in Shamray and Rescom to the amount of \$4.5 million out of the first gains to the fund, or are the profits distributed, the gains distributed according to a different formula in which all partners receive pro rata the gains but only one partner absorbs the first \$5 million of losses. Could he simply clarify that?

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, again, I would refer the honourable member to the news release quoted earlier, May 14, 1996. The third page states that the province expects to recover its initial investment at the end of the seven-year term through quarterly returns and a repayment formula at maturity.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I was unable to hear the last sentence the minister spoke. I just did not hear him. If he could repeat it, I would appreciate it.

Mr. Tweed: The announcement stated that the province expects to recover its initial investment at the end of the seven-year term through quarterly returns and a repayment formula at maturity.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I believe the minister has said then that the province is not entitled to recover losses up to \$5 million but will share only in its pro rata share of any gains in the fund that take place. So the \$5 million is an absolute loss. Would he confirm that?

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, I will not confirm that. What I will confirm is at the end of the investment period, the seven-year period that the funding that is available at that time is scheduled to be repaid back to the province. It is set up on a formula of quarterly returns and a formula at maturity, and as I mentioned earlier yesterday, risk capital has the ability for tremendous growth and tremendous return, and when you look at a pool of money that is being used and being invested to entrepreneurs, the ability to overcome a loss in one area is made up in other investments in the fund. At the end of the fund we fully expect to be repaid.

* (1500)

Mr. Sale: The minister has the memo from the Workers Compensation Board. Are the percentages quoted in the Compensation Board's memo 6.6 percent to date and nine point something at maturity? Are these the figures that he is suggesting would be the formula that would result in a payout to the participants in the fund?

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, although I do not have the exact details of what our return and what our payout is, he is correct in stating that the WCB has received a cash return at 6.29 on the investment, and all funds forecasted anticipate that the partners will receive a 9.67 target return on maturity date in 2003.

Mr. Sale: So, just then to conclude, Mr. Chairperson, I believe what the minister said is the following: that the province is liable for the first \$5 million in losses and that these losses are not recoverable in any direct way before the gains of the fund are paid out pro rata to all of the partners; that, secondly, groups like the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce have been paid a 6.2 or thereabouts rate of return on their investment to date and expect to get a further return at the end of the day but have suffered no losses as a result of their participating in this Venture Capital Fund. I believe that is the essence of what he said.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, that is not exactly what I said. What I said was, when we entered into the risk capital fund the province's share of \$5 million was to be set up so that it would be—and I will get the term right, the government

funds will act as a loan loss reserve to help reduce the risk to other investors. What in general happens is that the other funds that have been invested in and the other businesses that have been invested in are showing a rate of return of which I expect the province to share in the annual rates of return on those investments and then receive its full return on its investment in the year 2003.

Mr. Sale: One question. Would the minister tell the House what the fair market value of Manitoba Capital Fund's investment portfolio was at the last audit or annual meeting date, the total portfolio invested to date? Could he give us that figure?

Mr. Tweed: I regret that I do not have that in front of me at this point in time, but I can tell you that capital funds vary basically from one day to the next as far as the value of the shares of the companies that it has invested in. It was recently told to me that as recently as about six weeks ago, the stocks in Bill Gates's company went from \$30 million to \$66 million in one day.

Mr. Sale: I am simply concluding again that the minister does not want to tell Manitobans what the fair value of the total investment in Manitoba Capital Fund is at the present time. I am not asking him to suggest that it does not change from day to day. I expect it would. I asked him for the fund value at the last audited statement, and he is refusing to give that information. One could only speculate that that might be because the information would be embarrassing in terms of the scale of the losses that the fund has sustained.

So I regret that lack of transparency, but I thank the minister for confirming that Manitobans lost \$5 million as a result of the way in which this fund was set up.

Mr. Tweed: Disagreeing I guess with the comments of the member opposite, what I am hearing from Manitobans is that they are pleased that the province took the lead, went out and created the risk capital to enhance business opportunities and new business chances for our young people, jobs to keep people in Manitoba, to keep our families working at home.

I think if you go out and talk to any Manitoban, they would certainly agree that the province is doing very well economically and look forward to this government leading them into the future and the prosperity that goes with it. Thank you.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask a few questions of the Minister of Agriculture if I could.

One of the issues that I want to raise is the support that is being offered to farmers for unseeded acreage. I want to ask the minister whether there are any supports being offered to producers who have crop insurance, who seeded their crop because they were able to take part in the early seeding and then lost their crop because of rain. Are they entitled to any of that additional coverage that this government announced for unseeded acreage, or do they only get the coverage that was offered under the crop insurance that they purchased?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): In response to the honourable member for Swan River, I would have to indicate that those who did get their crops seeded are, of course, more fortunate than those who did not get their crops seeded, and they would be subject to only those benefits available to them from crop insurance. If the situation is where a farmer has unseeded acreage, those are the ones who are being contemplated for some special and specific support.

Ms. Wowchuk: I guess, Mr. Chairman, I would like the minister to recognize that there is a group of farmers there who were able to seed, but because the weather changed to the extent that it did, their crops drowned out. So they will qualify for the crop insurance that they had, but they still have the same problems that the other farmers are having as far as cleaning up their land. So the other farmers are going to be able to get \$50 an acre for crop that they did not seed, and it is much needed. I agree it is much needed, but there is a group of farmers who are caught in the middle. Because of their management plan, they took out crop insurance. Their crop drowned out, and they have not been able to seed again, but they are not going to be able to take advantage of the other programs.

I am wondering whether the minister recognizes this as a problem and whether Crop Insurance is looking at a way to deal with this in order to bring some fairness and equity to those people who are all suffering the same because of the heavy rainfall, but some took crop insurance and managed to seed but lost their crop anyway, and then I guess whether the same thing would apply to those who did not have crop insurance but seeded and lost their crop.

So they all still have the same problem of having to clean up those fields. Whether they seeded or they did not, if the crop got drowned out, they are basically in the same spot as those who did not seed, but they just happened to get some work done before the rain started but are now all caught in the same situation.

*(1510)

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think the response to the honourable member has to be that we have a particular problem that involves, the exact number I do not know, but it could be as high as a million, a million-plus acres of unseeded land. On a lot of this land, those farmers have, I am told in 25-30 percent of the cases applied, maybe \$15, \$20, \$30 worth of fertilizer on these same acres of land who now have no possibility, zero possibility, of getting any return. That is being recognized certainly by this government, by this minister, and to some extent by the federal government, although not to the full extent that I would appreciate. We are still working on that situation that needs to be addressed, the unseeded acres.

To the farmers who were able to seed within the seeding deadline date, and after all that is why we put in a special program to help that along with the \$10 an acre custom seeding incentive, if you like, they then are eligible for crop insurance coverage. Depending on their coverage that they have selected, 60, 70, 80 percent will bring them up. I cannot be specific in a general cause, because each farmer has his own records but would bring them up into the area of anywhere from \$120 to \$160 an acre payout. Now that is still considerably different and better than the \$50 that is being promised to those farmers who have unseeded acreage and cannot expect any returns. The short answer is I

am aware that this year, because of the volatile weather situation she describes, it exists, but it is not being contemplated by myself or crop insurance to provide any special provision other than those who specifically will be eligible because of their unseeded acreage.

Ms. Wowchuk: I recognize what the minister is saying. I am just wanting the minister to be aware that there are a group of farmers in the southwest part of the province, some of whom were able to get some of their seeding done prior to the rain starting and now they are caught in the same situation and feel that there is a bit of unfairness. It will be something that will have to be addressed.

I guess, I would ask the minister whether there will be any long-term implications on the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation as a result of the programs that have been put in place for the unseeded acreage. Will there be any financial impact or will any of this money come from the Manitoba Crop Insurance or from the agriculture budgets? Are the funds that have been announced for unseeded acreage going to come from a different part of Treasury Board? Can the minister indicate where those funds are coming from?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I think the honourable member will concur, chosen the vehicle of the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation as being the appropriate agency that is best situated both in knowing the land that we are talking about, having over 12,000 clients, 85 percent of the land that we are talking about are clients of Manitoba Crop Insurance. So I am using Manitoba Crop Insurance as a vehicle to do the administration of any monies that were being paid out.

The seeded acreage reports are now in, which every farmer who has to file with Manitoba Crop Insurance. I expect very shortly, maybe, certainly by the middle of next week, to be able to for the first time put definitive numbers as to exactly how many unseeded acres there are. A farmer will fill out his report. If he normally farms 1,200 acres or 3,000 acres, and he will say: 500 I got seeded and 600 I did not get seeded. So we will get accurate data.

It is not contemplated to be using Manitoba Crop Insurance monies for these payouts. They will be the agency that will be handling it. The first \$25 of the \$50 that my government has committed to support, I am hoping, and that is still a little murky, to come out of the AIDA program, again, and without penalty to those who may or may not qualify for a payout under AIDA. If I may, just as an example, if a farmer has 600 acres that he could not seed, at \$25 an acre would be a \$15,000 payout. Let us assume, for a moment, that under the AIDA program, he would qualify for a \$22,000 level of support. Well, he would get the \$15,000 acreage payment, and then in the final configuration of his AIDA program application, he would get an additional \$7,000 to bring him up to it. Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I have permission to introduce a private member's bill. I just read one that was attempted in Georgia.

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Mr. Enns: Pardon?

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Mr. Enns: See, I am being—

Mr. Chairperson: Go ahead, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Enns: Do I?

Mr. Chairperson: You might have to run it by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), though.

Mr. Enns: So the \$25 will come through the AIDA program, and the other \$25 is the one that I am in serious negotiations. We are hoping we can get it under the disaster national assistance act where we could get considerable federal sharing.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Mr. Chair, in just trying to manage critics' and ministerial responsibilities for this afternoon, because of a meeting that I know the Minister of Agriculture has, it is very important, in which I am also involved, and that the Attorney General has, I have spoken with critics, what we will do now with the kind permission of

the committee is allow the Justice minister and the critic to have some time until 4 p.m., and the Minister of Agriculture will then return with the critic at 4 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, does that sound right? Did the minister want to conclude his answer?

An Honourable Member: He did.

Mr. Chairperson: The minister concluded his answer. Were you done, Harry?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Chairperson: I did not think so, see you at four o'clock. You can move your motion later.

An Honourable Member: I do have this little bill that I would like to introduce.

Mr. Chairperson: We will introduce that at four o'clock, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I have a series of questions for the minister in the area of Corrections. As the minister is aware, the previous minister had promised the immediate construction of an added building for inmates at Headingley in which the Honourable Ted Hughes emphasized should be opened at the earliest possible date and should get underway immediately. That promise was made almost three years ago, and with construction which I understand is just beginning now as an election is coming, can the minister explain the impact of this inexcusable delay on the record overcrowding that is now being experienced in Manitoba jails?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I think that is probably something better put to the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura). The Minister of Government Services is responsible for the construction. I do have some very general information relating to a facility that is being built and the target date being open for the middle of July. So it should be any time now that a specific wing is being opened. But in respect of the larger increase in the beds, I understand that it is on schedule.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is not on schedule. It was promised for immediate construction in September three years ago, and then it was repromised in the subsequent budget. I asked the minister not about the delay per se, but rather what has been the impact of this delay on the overcrowding that is now being experienced in the jails?

Mr. Toews: I am not sure I heard the question. I think he indicated what has been the impact of the construction?

* (1520)

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for St. Johns, to clarify the question.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I asked what the impact of the delay in construction has had on this record overcrowding.

Mr. Toews: I guess there is a fundamental difference between the New Democrats, who want to see open-door prisons. The member for St. Johns has indicated to me a number of times he wants to see the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry implemented, which call for open-door jails in this province. I disagree with that. We have taken a very different approach to the whole area of corrections. Not only did we ensure that there are appropriate facilities being built but that there are medium-security facilities and high-security facilities being built in Headingley jail.

I know that, again, the member and his party oppose some of our policies in respect of bail. In respect of a particular incident, I know I read in the newspaper about one of his colleagues advocating for early parole for a convicted drug dealer and gang leader. I was very concerned that our Crown attorneys would spend time to convict an individual, to have the judge convict the individual, by working very rigorously, and members for his party advocating that these individuals should be released on early parole. So there is a fundamental difference between his party and our party in respect of issues of crime.

Now, we do understand that because of our policies in opposition to bail, that has, in fact, led to adjustments that have had to have been

made in the facilities, including the construction of a facility that was targeted to be open at the middle of this month, on or about the middle of this month. I understand if it is not open yet, the opening is imminent. So we are working very diligently in order to ensure that we are meeting the needs that our policy, in fact, has dictated.

Mr. Mackintosh: Yes, if anyone should know about open-door policies at prisons, it has to be this government. As I recall, I think they waved goodbye to Robert Guiboche as he left the Remand Centre by mistake. As I recall, the findings of an independent party were that this government was responsible in no small way for the riot at Headingley. We all know about that.

Of course, recommendations made by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in respect of facilities were made before this government allowed the rise of criminal street gangs in this province. Some of those recommendations are that, I think the one that the minister is trying to be cute about would of course no longer be applicable due to this government's negligence.

Now, of course, we also know about bail under this government. We know how this government has been so lax and dangerous in its bail policies, but what is happening at the Remand Centre attests to not how tough this government is on crime but how soft it is. The overcrowding attests to the fact that this government has been an absolute failure when it comes to dealing with gangs in particular and crime as it has worsened over the last number of years in this province.

My question is: can the minister, in any way, give any assurance, particularly to staff in Corrections, when there are reports that the Remand Centre, for example, we understand from reports, was holding as much as 348 or 349 inmates on Monday, which would be about 60 inmates too many, and considering such overcrowding that does not even count what I understand are about 100 inmates, and that was from a report back in February, that have been sentenced and are held at Stony Mountain, so what assurances can he give that this overcrowding is not going to endanger staff currently? Whether a new unit opens or not, my understanding is that unit is only designed to

take 45 inmates, remand inmates, if there were 60 too many on Monday will not even be accommodated with the new facility.

Mr. Toews: I thank the member for the question. I note his concern. I want to assure him and the people of Manitoba that I am similarly concerned, first of all, that the safety of the public is assured. Again, as I indicate, there is a fundamental difference between our government and the opposition who want to see an open-door policy. The member has consistently asked me to implement those recommendations of the AJI and has consistently asked when those recommendations of the AJI will be implemented. I have indicated to him the open-door policy that he endorses and has endorsed in the past will not be implemented by this government.

We think that our bail policy is working. Now that the member sees that it is working, he says now we have too many people in our facilities. While I acknowledge that there are some additional concerns raised by the success of our policy in that respect, I know that the assistant deputy minister and his staff have been working very closely with staff and with the union to ensure that there are adequate levels of staffing and that our policy continues to be implemented. We certainly do not agree with the policy of the party opposite which would support the early release of convicted drug dealers and gang leaders to the extent that they would go to parole board hearings to support those kinds of things.

So, again, I note the concern raised. I share the concern in that we will work very diligently to ensure that the people of Manitoba are secure, and we will continue to oppose policies like the members opposite who think that people should get out on early parole, even though they are known drug dealers and indeed convicted drug dealers and gang leaders.

Mr. Mackintosh: The minister's pathetic response, of course, is nothing but a figment of his imagination.

I think we have enough problems and concerns about public safety in this province without the minister being unable to not only

come back with explanations but then to fabricate and make something up about a position of ours on open-door prisons, which is absolute nonsense of course and which he knows about.

I asked the minister what assurances can he give. What precautions are now in place to deal with the overcrowding, and how can the corrections system accommodate, for example, if there were any more sweeps in the next while or any large busts? The police have to continue to do their job. What precautions can he say he has put in place?

Mr. Toews: I will take that question as notice so that I can bring the relevant information to the House.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, you see, here is the minister going on with some political drivel, and then, when the question is posed, he cannot answer it. Surely he can tell Manitobans what precautions are now in place to ensure the safety, particularly of staff, given the current populations in our correctional facilities.

Mr. Toews: This is a member who basically slept through the Estimates and allowed the Liberals to ask all the questions when my staff was present beside me. When the assistant deputy minister was present beside me, he was asleep at the switch, and then was embarrassed because he wanted to bring a motion against my salary, and he missed it.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, the minister has been caught with misleading statements in this House, and I think he should apologize for what he has just said. He knows that I think there were upwards of, what, 15-16 hours in Estimates, day after day, answers that he would not give, but he filibustered through the whole entire Estimates, making a mockery of that parliamentary institution and the value of it to Manitoba citizens.

I ask him to correct the record and not mislead the committee and Manitobans once again.

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

* * *

An Honourable Member: On the same point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: No, the point of order has been dealt with, Mr. Minister. The honourable member, with his question. The member for St. Johns, you had a question?

Mr. Mackintosh: I asked the minister what precautions are now in place.

*(1530)

Mr. Chairperson: You were dealing with the point of order at the time. I said you did not have a point of order; it was a dispute over the facts. If you have a question for the minister, now would be the time to pose it.

Mr. Mackintosh: I said: what precautions are now in place to guard against threats to the safety, particularly of staff, given the current populations? It is a simple question. I think Manitobans, particularly staff, deserve an answer.

Mr. Toews: Well, the member knows that I do not have the information in front of me. He specifically waits until concurrence to ask very detailed, specific questions about an issue. He did not ask that question during the Estimates, when my assistant deputy minister for Corrections was beside me and could, in fact, have provided him with those answers.

But that is typical of his style of asking questions. He wants to only ask questions when he knows that the answers need to be taken as notice. So, therefore, Mr. Chair, I will take the question as notice, and I will respond to that in due course.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, since the minister confirmed he does not know the answer or cannot give any assurances, I will ask him a question that he did take as notice and, in fact, that was raised during Estimates and that he did

not answer with all the staff sitting there. Would he tell the committee and Manitobans what is the amount of unpaid traffic fines in Manitoba?

Mr. Toews: I took that question as notice, and I have not had a response on that question. As soon as I have the exact information in front of me, I will provide it to the member.

Mr. Mackintosh: It is interesting to see the passage time since that question was asked. I think I last asked it actually when he had staff around him when he was introducing legislation to deal with unpaid fines. So there goes the minister's excuse about he needs staff around him to answer questions.

Is the minister aware of any concerns from staff in the correctional facilities about the lack of a career path, if you will, that is being assured for staff because of an increasing reliance on part-time correctional officers now?

Mr. Toews: I understand that, of course, we have hired many additional staff in order to ensure public safety, because I believe that if we have appropriate levels of staffing in our correctional institutions, not only is that better for the staff, but, indeed, it is better for public safety generally.

I know that from time to time there are always issues concerning advancement in the department, advancement in the career, and if there is any specific issue, rather than the general comment, perhaps I could address that.

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, I asked if the minister was aware of staff concerns about the proportion of part-time officers to full time. I also ask whether he has been briefed or is he aware of concerns from staff about any growing level or proportion of officers who are relatively new or relatively inexperienced, particularly at Headingley?

Mr. Toews: I know that my Assistant Deputy Minister Mr. Graceffo is a very hands-on assistant deputy minister. He deals with concerns as they arise from day to day. I know that he has raised a number of concerns with me that staff have expressed. After discussions or after being briefed on those matters, I am generally satisfied

with the direction that the department is going in.

But if there are specific concerns where the member feels that we could do better, I would certainly be interested in listening to his suggestions in terms of ensuring that we have appropriate staff on duty at all times, that our staff are appropriately trained. I know, for example, the emergency response team is a matter that we have had some discussions on in terms of providing that specific training. [interjection] Well, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says he does not think that is the question.

The question, as I understood it, is: have there been any concerns in respect of training of staff and the experience of staff? I thought that by indicating that the training of the emergency response unit was something that I felt was important and is an issue that needs to be addressed, and so if the member for Burrows saw something different in the question than I answered, maybe he could elaborate on what he thinks the member for St. Johns meant.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister answer this question then: has he been made aware, or is he aware, as to whether or not there has been an increase in incidents or assaults against staff, particularly at Headingley, in the last year?

Mr. Toews: Again, the member will have to give me specific details. I know that from time to time assaults do occur in Headingley jail as well as in our other correctional institutions, and my concern always is that the staff take appropriate precautions, that it be properly trained, and that it respond in an appropriate fashion. I know that the various policies of our government, in respect of the management of the correctional institution, go a long way to address some of those specific concerns.

I would look at things not as directly as staffing for the moment, but let us look at the whole issue of the gang containment policies, the no contact visits that we maintain in Headingley Correctional Institution, where the presumption is that there is no contact rather than there being a presumed contact visit. The impact of something like that has, in fact, reduced, I would

submit, the opportunities for drugs to come into the facility. As, I think, is well known, the presence of drugs and other intoxicating substances creates a situation that could lead to destabilization, so those types of general policies pass by regulation or simply under the direction of the superintendent. I think, go to ensuring that untoward incidents are minimized and that our staff are protected, and that they are clearly aware of what standards need to be met in order to ensure that the facility runs appropriately.

I know that for a number of years the Scurfield committee met. The Scurfield committee, as the member knows, is a direct result of the recommendations of the former Justice Hughes, who conducted the inquiry into the Headingley situation in 1996, I believe the year was. In that respect, both the union and management worked very closely together on a number of issues. This related not only to health and safety issues, which were appropriately identified, but also related to issues of the construction of the new facility.

The member indicated that there was somehow an inappropriate delay in the construction of the facilities at Headingley. What I do know and what I think is very important is that not only was management consulted on an ongoing basis with the development of that particular facility, but that the union was made aware and, I believe, received or provided substantive input into the development of that scheme for developing the new facility.

* (1540)

I know that when I became minister there was still a plan on the drawing boards to have a minimum security portion of the facility at Headingley, and that was changed to a medium and a maximum. So we had the original proposal for a maximum and the minimum, and that was changed to a medium and to a maximum. Well, all of those decisions take time in order to ensure that we are in fact meeting the needs of the population of Manitoba generally but also the very legitimate concerns of our guards, our correctional officers, in our facility. Those consultations, yes, they do add some time to the development of the plans, but I think if we are going to build a system that is going to meet the

needs of the people of Manitoba on an ongoing basis, those are very necessary consultations.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

So I am aware that the union and individual union members and guards have in fact raised issues from time to time. As far as I am aware, that is handled at the operational level. I do not have expertise in the area of how to run a correctional facility on a day-to-day basis, but I am very confident that my staff is very aware of some of the issues involved. As the member knows, Mr. Graceffo, who is the assistant deputy minister, has not only a broad range of experience in our facility here but indeed in the federal correctional system. I think some of that experience he has brought to bear here and I think implemented in a very practical and beneficial way.

Mr. Mackintosh: Can the minister tell the committee whether gang leaders who are sentenced under the Young Offenders Act are segregated from the general populations at either the youth centre or Agassiz, and I would include in that hard core members.

Mr. Toews: I know that there are certain policies with respect to the identification of gang members and gang leaders, and as a consequence of that identification including risk identification, certain institutional decisions are made regarding the handling of those individuals. Beyond that, I would prefer to obtain further information from my staff and take the rest of the question as notice.

Mr. Mackintosh: Earlier in the session, I asked the minister to confirm that monies were mistakenly paid out to certain plaintiffs, I believe, in an action following on the conduct of the Immigrant Investor Fund, and he had confirmed that either in the House or through the media. I am wondering now if the minister can tell the committee if any of those monies and what amount has been collected.

Mr. Toews: I do not have that information with me. It is a fairly technical issue. I know that the last time I had occasion to receive some information in that respect there were issues of

whether or not there would be lawsuits flowing out of that. I do not know what the status today is in respect of decisions regarding lawsuits, and, if so, the status of those lawsuits.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I have some questions for the Minister of Family Services. I want to ask questions about some of the programs that are being set up. I know we have looked at some of these in the past in quite a bit of detail, so basically some of these questions will be sort of repeats from previous years but just sort of trying to get an update.

I know, for example, with the BabyFirst Program that last year there was a budget to spend \$1,600,000. I just want to find out what the budget is for this year. Originally, there was a couple of sites that were targeted, too, I believe. So just to get some more information about the increase in the number of sites this year.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Chairperson, it may take me a little while. I do not have staff here, but the increase for BabyFirst this year was about \$1.662 million last year, and the increase is \$1.098 million this year. My honourable friend has asked me for a list of the sites, and I can certainly get that listing provided for her.

Ms. Cerilli: Are there more than the two sites that were sort of the pilot or test sites?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Chairperson, there certainly are, and I know that there are sites right throughout the province. The regional health authorities through the public health nurses, each regional health authority has hired additional public health nurses. I do not have the numbers in front of me, but we funded them specifically for public health nurses that would be the coordinators of the program in all of the regions, so there are sites right throughout the province.

Ms. Cerilli: I am just going back to the financing of this program. The material that the minister gave me from last year says that the budget for BabyFirst was \$1,600,000, and this year she says it is \$1.098 million.

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, Mr. Chairperson. The increase was \$1.098 million for a total of \$2.76 million.

Ms. Cerilli: Okay, just to clarify then the staffing. Originally, there was a plan to have 10 nurses and 30 home visitors in place for that program. With the increase in the budget, is that now the number of staff that are working in the program, and can the minister tell us if those people are new staff that are doing other duties as well? That staff that have additional duties for BabyFirst added to their workload, how does it work in terms of staffing for the BabyFirst Program? We have done some phone calling on this and been told that the program is in concept positive, but what is actually happening on the ground is that staff do not have the time to devote that they require to the program, to the kind of assessment that the program requires, the follow-up.

* (1550)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not have the detail in front of me, and I am not sure where to find it in the book I have in front of me. If I had staff here, I would be able to have that kind of information at my fingertips and provide it to my honourable friend. It is my understanding that the RHAs throughout the province are at different degrees of readiness in the full implementation of the program.

Some information that I can find is that with the additional funding there will be 17 more public health nurses employed throughout the province and 45 home visitors hired, and that is in addition to what—and I am not sure whether we had an opportunity to discuss that and discuss these numbers last year. I do not have last year's numbers in front of me. I have numbers that will indicate how many additional staff resources will be hired as a result of the increase in funding.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, can the minister tell us when the home visits started under that program under the first sites that were announced? The first two sites were in the city of Winnipeg, I believe, at the North End Community Ministry and Heritage Park.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The two research sites are the North End Community Ministry and Heritage Park which have been operating since April of 1998, employing two home visitors. That is the

last information I have in this book. I am sure staff would have more if they were here to bring me up to speed.

As of January 18, 1999, 11 families out of an approved 30 families were receiving home visiting services. I do not have any more information than that. That is what is in my notes, and if staff were here who are involved with the program, I am sure they could give me more information.

Ms. Cerilli: So the program for BabyFirst was announced as part of the original ChildrenFirst strategy. It was announced in March of 1997. But the home visits for the program did not start until January 18 of 1999, if that is what the minister is confirming.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I will read again into the record. The sites have been operating since April of 1998, and as of January 18, 1999, to date 11 families were receiving home visiting services. It looks to me from this that another 19 families had been approved for service. So that was as of January, and I do not have any more detail or information.

Certainly, if my honourable friend would like, we could sit down with some staff from the Child and Youth Secretariat, and the details to her questions could be answered.

Ms. Cerilli: The question I am asking is a fairly straightforward one. The minister has stated that the program which was announced in 1997 began operating in April of 1998 but that the home visits did not start until January of 1999. So there was some operation between 1998 and January 1999. When we have talked to some people in the field, they have expressed concern and said that the home visits got started in January of this year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not want my honourable friend to put words in my mouth. Twice now I have given an answer, and twice now she has interpreted it differently. I have a note, an update, dated January 18, 1999, that is telling me what has happened until that date. It says in that note that the sites have been operating since April 1998, employing two home visitors. To date, not starting today, but from April 1998

until January 1999, 11 families were receiving home visiting services. So somewhere between April 1998 and January 18, 1999, those support services and home visits started. They did not start in January 1999. That is my note that is dated 1999, and it is saying what has taken place up to today.

Ms. Cerilli: But my question was when the home visitors started. I guess the minister is saying they started somewhere between April of 1998 and January of 1999. I am letting her know that, when we have talked to people in the community, they have told us the visits started in 1999, and that is the reason that I am asking the question. So the minister is, in some ways, confirming, by the information that she has, that there were 11 families on January 18, 1999, that were receiving home visitors. The reason that I am asking this is because I want to ask the minister: at what time did her government start collecting the funding from the National Child Benefit? At what time did her government start collecting the monies from the increase in the benefits that would have gone to families receiving social allowance under the National Child Benefit that are funding these programs? At what date?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, again, Mr. Chairperson, these are very detailed questions that my honourable friend should have taken the time through the Estimates process to ask when staff was available, so I could answer in detail these questions. [interjection] Oh, you know, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says bring your briefing book next time. For someone that, again, appears to be a Minister of Family Services-in-waiting, he seems to have no understanding or no sense or any idea of the kind of activity that is involved and expects that every minister should have every detailed number and date and figure at their finger tips. He is so out to lunch, Mr. Chairperson, that I am not sure there would ever be any confidence in his ability to provide the kind of leadership that might be needed in the Department of Family Services.

But, anyway, Mr. Chairperson, again, I believe the funding kicked in in June. It was halfway through the year, and so it would have possibly been June. I do not know whether it was—these are details—I believe it was June of

1998 that the money kicked in, and we had something like \$10 million, if my figures are correct, I am not sure, in the first year. We did not have full-year funding the first year that the National Child Benefit kicked in.

* (1600)

So we calculated how much money we would have from the National Child Benefit, and we allocated X number of dollars to different programs. I cannot remember, off the top of my head, what the allocation was for each of the programs. My sense would be that it would have been the first number that I quoted to my honourable friend for last year's funding that would have been part-year funding to fund the research sites and to fund the RHAs to start the process of hiring people to deliver the BabyFirst program.

Now each RHA, because they have the authority for hiring the nurses and hiring the home visitors, would be at different stages. Some would not be as developed as others. But I want to indicate that the money that we allocated would have been spent in last year's budget. It did not lapse, it was spent on the BabyFirst program. So, you know, without having, again, staff here and detailed information, I cannot give actual dates or times, but I do know that the money that was allocated for BabyFirst and EarlyStart and all of our other programs was spent on those programs through the Children and Youth Secretariat.

Ms. Cerilli: I guess one of the things we would ask for is to maybe see a budget for that program. You know, I am interested in finding out how the money flowed. The \$2.76 million this year for that program should be accounted for in a specific budget for that program. Does the minister have that in the Children and Youth Secretariat to show how much money is going to pay, for example, the salaries of the nurses and the home visitors, and how much money is going to the other aspects of the program?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Again, that is an Estimates question, and I will seek to get that information from staff of the Children and Youth Secretariat and provide it for my honourable friend.

Ms. Cerilli: Are you waiting for me to do a handspring or what? Yes, Mr. Chairperson. Hello-o!

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): The honourable member for Radisson, I believe, wishes to be recognized. I would remind all honourable members that there is a degree of respect that is owed to the Chair, and I would ask that that be provided, and ask the honourable member to pose her question now.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, with all due respect, I will let you know when I am going to wrap up or nearing the end, otherwise we can just sort of keep going back and forth with asking questions.

I am interested in knowing sort of the regional implementation of the program as well. I think the minister had said there were actually 17 nurses. Originally there was a target of 10 nurses. There are 17 nurses. Did she say that out of 17 nurses that have been hired or will be hired, because she said that there are different levels of readiness among the regional health authorities, so how many nurses are currently operating under the program?

I do not know if she addressed the issue I raised earlier in terms of the workload and the requirements on those nurses. Are they being hired by the regional health authorities just as regular nurses, and they are doing all sorts of other duties besides what is required of them under this program?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We gave money to the regional health authorities to hire nurses specifically for the BabyFirst program. So that is their job. It is additional resources. It is not taking resources away from other activities of public health nurses through the regional health authorities.

But as to how many nurses are hired through each regional health authority and how many home visitors are hired through each, and where each regional health authority is at, I do not have that information here today, but I will get the answer and provide it.

Ms. Cerilli: I am wanting to ask specifically about the availability of programs like the

BabyFirst program and the EarlyStart program, and some of the specific communities. We have expressed the concern that, while all Manitoba families on social allowance are losing the money from the National Child Benefit, that not all families are going to have access in their community to the kind of programs that are very much home-based related. They are not the kind of programs where you can sort of fly off and participate and then go home. They are programs that are designed to be sort of community based. I think the minister would agree. So I am wanting to see if there are programs in communities like Brochet, Sherridon, or South Indian Lake, for example, and where those families have to go if they are not in that community to get access to some of those programs?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I want to make it clear on the record that no family, as a result of the National Child Benefit, is worse off. That was one of the principles. [interjection] No, that was one of the principles.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. McAlpine): Order, please. I have recognized the honourable Minister of Family Services to respond to a question. If there are other members that wish to ask a question, I would appreciate it if they would get the attention of the Chair, and I will respond accordingly. The honourable minister, to complete your response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much. The two goals of the National Child Benefit were to reduce the depth of child poverty and to try to ensure that people were better off working than on welfare. So the focus of the National Child Benefit—and my honourable friend from Radisson sort of makes faces and noises. These were principles that were endorsed by all ministers of social services across the country including the New Democrats in British Columbia and the New Democrats in Saskatchewan. So this is not something that Manitoba dreamed up or goals or a vision or objectives that were set out by Manitoba. They were principles or goals that were set out by all provinces and territories and endorsed by the federal government.

So, you know, it is fine to be in opposition and to think that you would do things differently,

but it is a different reality being in government and understanding what the issues are and regardless of political stripe having to come to some sense of what objectives should be nationally for some sort of national program. So I will go back to saying that British Columbia and Saskatchewan endorsed the goals and the principles, and one of the underlying statements was that no family would be worse off as a result.

The objective was not to increase welfare rates because welfare will always be a low income, last resort option, and that is reality because I know for a fact that in British Columbia they provide less per child through their welfare system than Manitoba does. Now you tell me whether a child in Vancouver living in a welfare family gets \$103 per child is better off than a family on welfare living in Winnipeg where we provide minimum of \$116 per child, and as children get older in Manitoba they get more money. British Columbia, Vancouver does not make any exception for older children. Every child gets \$103.

So, I mean, when we talk about issues and we talk about a New Democratic philosophy versus a Conservative philosophy, we see that the New Democrats in British Columbia are more punitive than the Conservative government in Manitoba when it comes to providing support, through welfare, for children. So I think that needs to be on the record because I think my honourable friend needs to think twice before she makes faces and moans and groans when we talk about the principle of the National Child Benefit being that no family would be worse off, and welfare families are not worse off under the National Child Benefit, but they are not better off either.

*(1610)

That was one of the principles, and that is exactly the same in New Democratic British Columbia, and it is exactly the same in New Democratic Saskatchewan. So those were the principles that would underline the National Child Benefit that were endorsed right across the country, accepted by the federal government, and we have moved on to seeing lower income working families have more money in their

pockets as a result of the National Child Benefit. That then is I think what most of us would have agreed at the time when we talked about and implemented the program, was to try to encourage families to think better than welfare as a career option or the only opportunity or the only hope.

We have put in place programs in Manitoba to work with single parents, to move them out of the cycle of poverty, off of welfare and into the workforce. As they move into the workforce, we want to ensure that if they are making a low income, they have additional support through the National Child Benefit for their children.

The federal government committed I think it was \$850 million in the first year, and I think they have committed another \$850 million in the next two years. The ultimate goal would be that there would be no child that would be supported through the welfare system because all children would be supported through a federal payment, the National Child Benefit. So the ultimate goal would be the federal government providing enough money so provinces would not have to support children on welfare. That payment would be coming directly from the federal government.

So dollar for dollar, as the federal government increased support to welfare families through the National Child Benefit, those dollars were reinvested into programs that would support families at risk, through programs like BabyFirst, EarlyStart, Stop FAS, the Women and Infant Nutrition Program, all of those programs that have been put in place and developed based on the research and the public consultation that the Children and Youth Secretariat had done over several years.

I know my honourable friend has been critical in the past of the Children and Youth Secretariat and how they seem to consult and consult and not do anything. Well, I think we have seen the results of the consultation and the research that the secretariat did in order for us to develop programs that national institutions like the C.D. Howe Institute are saying other provinces should follow our lead in the development of early intervention programs like we have developed, like putting the extra money

into child daycare that we have put in so that the child care services and supports are there, the services are there for mentorship and support for families on welfare and ultimately, hopefully less need for services from our health care system, our Child and Family Services system, special needs in the education system or ultimately additional supports from the justice system.

So I think that we have moved in the right direction, and there is a lot more to do. We want to ensure that as more resources become available and as we have the opportunity to reinvest more, we will continue to build upon the programs that we have put in place to date, recognizing and realizing again that we have to evaluate them all and ensure that they are having the desired effect.

Now my honourable friend is saying that she has heard some comments in the community that they are not having the desired effect. I would certainly be interested in hearing some specifics around that because ultimately I do not want to be endorsing or supporting or using taxpayers' dollars to support programs that are not working. So if there is some information that she might have that might lead me to believe that they are not the right programs, we are not moving in the right direction, that there are some problems with them, I think that would be a good discussion for us to have because it then would allow me to follow up and see whether in fact the programs are moving in the right direction. If not, then I guess we have to reassess them, but my understanding right now is that we are getting the programs up and running, that public health nurses are being trained, home visitors are being trained in the BabyFirst program, and we are expanding and adding more public health nurses and more home visitors with the additional money that has been provided this year.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Chairperson, that was a very long answer, but the minister did not address my question. The whole basis also behind the way they have approached the national child tax benefit was the families that are on social

allowance that would not be receiving those benefits would have access to programs, so our question and our concern is there are regions of the province and communities in the province where there are not programs. My question specifically was to her: are there programs in communities like Brochet, Sherridon, South Indian Lake, Granville Lake, Gods Lake Narrows, Red Sucker Lake, Princess Harbour, Pine Dock, Matheson Island, Manigotagan, Little Grand Rapids, Island Lake, Berens River?

Some of these communities, granted, are quite small, but they all have children. They all have children who are living in poverty. They all have children that need to benefit from any advantage that they can. We are concerned that the strategy the government is employing is not going to reach those families, and that they are—I think the minister used the words—not going to be any worse off, but they are not any better off. Unfortunately, they also do not have access to the kinds of programs that are being created to benefit families and children across the province, so it is a straightforward question.

If the minister has some explanation of how those communities are going to be accessing services that have been created through the funding through the national child tax benefit, that is what I am looking for in terms of an answer. If the regional health authorities have a strategy for how to reach those communities with services through outreach with their home visitors, through other ways that the public health nurses can be involved, through other ways—I understand there are 15 sites with the EarlyStart program. So there are other programs that perhaps are going to be put in place because there are regional considerations or geographical considerations for those communities. There are all sorts of other communities that I have not listed that are spread out across the province that have children that are in need of support and are in need of services.

In terms of the other question that the minister raised in response to my question, the information I have is that the programs that the government has announced are not as extensive in the community as the minister and the government have led us to believe, and now she has announced that there are going to be

additional staff resources. There is additional funding in this budget. I would have to look at the date for when we contacted some of these organizations. When we were talking to people in the community, that was the information, that the announcements for the programs were not being met in reality, that the home visitors were not as far along in undertaking the kind of home visits that were hoped for in the community, the kind of public health nurse services were not forthcoming.

Perhaps what the minister is saying is that the program was a little slower in getting off the ground than they had hoped. If that is what she wants to provide as an answer, or if what she has tried to explain, that is, I guess, what has happened with the program. That is why I was raising the question, because the way the minister and the government had announced the program and led us to believe was going to be the extent to the program, that that was not actually what was happening in the community, that the home visitors seem to have been a little slower in getting going and slower in getting hired, that there were not the numbers.

The real point that I wanted to make and the question I wanted to ask is for the minister to provide some explanation of what those communities that I put on the record, those kinds of communities, aboriginal communities, for the most part, are going to receive in terms of services that are going to be funded by the national child tax benefit, that are part of the ChildrenFirst strategy that is being put forward by this government, that is going to be incorporated into the regional health authorities in a number of ways, perhaps Family Services involved and other programs, Education and other programs, but our concern is that there are families that are not benefiting from the national child tax benefit and are also not receiving any program access because of the jurisdiction in which they live.

* (1620)

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will have to take note, as I read Hansard, of all the communities that she has asked about, determine which regional health authorities they are in, and get some answers back on what the strategy might be for each regional health authority. I would indicate again

that my staff may have that information in the Child and Youth Secretariat. If it is there and available, it will be shortly forthcoming; otherwise, we will get that information from the regional health authorities.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I just have a few questions for the Minister of Family Services. In the Estimates process, we got into a bit of an argument about something, and the minister did not really get a chance to clarify herself. So I would like to give her another chance either now or take it as notice, and that has to do with the clawback of the National Child Benefit. I was suggesting to the minister in Estimates that even families who are working or have a member working and are getting partial assistance from Employment and Income Assistance are having the National Child Benefit money clawed back.

The minister at that time indicated that was not accurate, and so I would like to have a clarification of that because some individuals that we had talked to, including one individual who has been working full time as a teaching assistant at a school and who has three or four children, said that the money was clawed back. So I am wondering if the minister could clarify that for me or take it as notice.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will take that as notice and get back. There is a whole issue around it. I know and I am thinking back to now when the National Child Benefit was implemented. The federal government indicated they were going to pay, but they had forgotten about those that were working part time. There is a working income supplement that I think the federal government paid. I just do not have the detail at the tip of my fingers, but, anyway, there were a significant number of people that were going to be losers as a result. One of the principles was that no one would lose anything; no one would be worse off. So we had to go back as provinces and negotiate with the federal government a sum which probably did not cover all of what it should have from the federal government, but provinces made up the difference through reinvestment in the National Child Benefit to ensure that families were not penalized in any way. That may be part of the answer for my honourable friend, but I will try to get more detail.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister a couple of questions about Taking Charge! Some time ago I had asked for a copy of the evaluation, and I believe I may have talked to the assistant deputy minister for Employment and Income Assistance. I also asked questions about this in Estimates, and I am just going from memory here. I think what I was originally told was that the evaluation had to go to the board first, which is entirely reasonable, but my recollection is that I may have inquired either months ago or possibly even up to a year ago about the evaluation, and I know that I asked again about it in Estimates this year.

I am wondering if the minister can tell me what the holdup is for passing on that evaluation and when I can expect to get it.

Mrs. Mitchelson: It is my understanding that there is a project review committee, because it was a federal-provincial initiative. It was a project review committee that does include Taking Charge! and both levels of government. That report has to go to the project review committee, and they have to accept it. At that point in time, once that has been signed off by the project review committee, it will be available for public release.

My understanding is that the federal-provincial joint management committee has not yet seen the report and met to endorse it or whatever, and they would have been the committee that commissioned the review. My sense is that that should be happening anytime in the very near future. I mean, I do not know whether it is this week or next week or two weeks from now. I could try and get that date for my honourable friend, but once they have reviewed and signed off on the report, it will be available. I will ensure that my honourable friend gets one as soon as it can be made public.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for that answer. Switching now to the topic of not-for-profit adoption agencies, I believe I asked the minister questions in the past about Adoption Options, and it would be my understanding of the way the new legislation works that not-for-profit adoption agencies can charge fees on a basis that really has to do with cost recovery, that there is a fee for home visits, and that covers

the cost of the home visits, home assessments, that sort of thing.

As we know, the fees are quite substantial for individuals who are going through this private, non-profit agency and other agencies. I am wondering if the minister can tell me if there are any grants going to Adoption Options, especially in light of the fact that, you know, the rules have changed since Bill 48, The Adoption Act.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I am not aware of any money that has gone to Adoption Options. I do know that we did indicate we would work with them, and if in fact there was a family in circumstances where they could not pay—I mean I think there was a sliding scale. I do not want to put anything on the record that I am not absolutely certain of, but we are not giving them grants as such, grants to an external agency to deliver a service.

My sense was that we would work with them if in fact there were some financial difficulties surrounding any specific individual adoption case and see whether, in fact, we could help support that family through that process. But I would rather check on that before that is used. It seems to me those kinds of discussions were held. But as far as giving them a grant, an outright grant or an annual grant, no.

Mr. Martindale: Can the minister also find out for me if there is any taxpayers' money going to Adoption Options and get back to me?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Sure.

Mr. Martindale: Switching to a different topic, and if this is more appropriate for the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. McCrae), I am sure the Minister of Family Services will tell me. There used to be a phone number that people could call who were looking for jobs, and it was some sort of a, what shall we say, electronic voice mail, and you pressed different numbers and you got different categories. It had listings of available jobs and how to follow up.

My understanding is that currently this phone service no longer exists. Now people can go to employment centres and there are kiosks in malls and libraries, but I am wondering why this

phone number and this phone service was discontinued.

Mrs. Mitchelson: There used to be employment or training programming as part of the Department of Family Services. That was moved over to Education and Training when it became training, and all of the training functions moved over to the Department of Education.

* (1630)

So I would not be aware of us, in the Department of Family Services, having a phone line that would provide lists of jobs. I would presume that if it were a provincial government line, it would be with the training part of Education and Training. So I will undertake to ask my colleague the Minister of Education (Mr. McCrae) for some information on that.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for that answer.

I would like to ask the minister again if she has any information about when the baby Schmidt inquest report might be out.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, no, I do not. Due to judicial independence, we just have to await the finalization of that report by Judge Conner.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, going on to another question regarding Child and Family Services, I have the minister's news release of June 25 about new board appointments to Winnipeg Child and Family Services. I am wondering if the new board will be undergoing some sort of orientation, and if the minister can tell me what sort of expectations she has or the agency has about any changes in direction or the philosophy behind these appointments, which I think we are very interested in. I put a suggestion on the record in Estimates that this is the kind of thing the government should be doing or should consider doing, and a day or two later the news release came out. I am sure it was in the works for a long time before I suggested it. I am wondering if there is an expectation that the direction of the agency may change or the mandate may change or the philosophy may

change. I would be interested in hearing the minister's thoughts on that.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I think we look very seriously at the composition and the board makeup and the composition and the makeup of the children who are involved with the Winnipeg agency. The statistics that come forward from the agency tell us that 70 percent of the children are aboriginal in origin. We had one aboriginal representative on the board and several recommendations that we should change the mix of representation on the board to reflect more the nature of the families that Winnipeg Child and Family deals with.

That recommendation came forward from a committee that was pulled together of status treaty Indians through our mandated native child welfare agencies. We certainly had urban aboriginal representation—the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Winnipeg agency, and of course my department involved. A report came forward, and there was a little bit of turf protection from time to time. The native agencies sometimes think that they should have sole jurisdiction or responsibility for every status child whether they live in Winnipeg or out of Winnipeg. You know, the Metis community would like to have their own child and family services agency.

There have been reports that have recommended a native agency in the city of Winnipeg. I guess for me it is not an us-and-them issue. I think that we all need to be around the table and we all need to put the child first in any decisions that are made around the best interests of that child. So we should not be fighting with each other, because sometimes our fights with each other get in the way of providing the best service for the child. I try to say that in every meeting that I have. I do not think it matters who owns the agency. I think it matters how we deal and how we support children and families who need our support.

So I think we have tried to bring together at the board level people who seem to have that belief and want to work together. So you will see reflected in there those who are status, those who are Metis, urban, mostly urban, but someone with a connection to the reserve, Sydney Garrioch, who I think would have a lot

of respect from members on all sides, all three parties in this House. I think he does really care and wants to get beyond the politics of the issues. He has had a good track record of dealing in a very, I think, sensitive and positive way with families that he has been involved with.

So I am hopeful that we will be able to get a better sense of how we deal—I have often said that you cannot deal with aboriginal families and children without having aboriginal people involved in the decisions, and I am hopeful that the new board will be able to look at what is happening today. I mean, I have heard some concerns raised in the past by Ma Mawi, for instance, that have said, you know, we have gone out and we have recruited families in our community to be foster parents and take children in, but the agency does not necessarily place children in those foster homes when we recruit them and we train them. So I am hoping that some of those issues will get addressed as a result of the new board taking a serious look at what is happening today and how we can better try to serve children.

I know very often that when you move a child into a suburb who may have grown up or have been located and going to school in the core area, and you remove them from their community, from their family, from their school, that sometimes we are not serving them any better even in a caring foster home in another community. So, you know, these are all things that I am hopeful that the new board—yes, they are going to do an orientation and have an orientation and a bit of board development, get to know each other, and then try to determine how they can best serve the needs of children through the agency. So I am pretty hopeful. I am very impressed with the people who have made the commitment to want to be there and be part of the team.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of questions for the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Chairman, we know that we faced real challenges in the farming community this spring, particularly in the southwest part of the province, but the heavy rainfall only added to the many other problems that farmers have been

facing, with low commodity prices, high input costs, high transportation costs.

The minister attended the ministers' conference just a couple of weeks ago in Prince Albert, and I wonder whether the minister and the ministers from other provinces had any discussion as to how we can address the whole issue of getting the farm community back on its feet and addressing the low commodity prices and high input. Are there any suggestions as to how we are going to help the farm community?

I guess it also involves international subsidies that other countries are prepared to provide for their farming community, but here in Canada our federal government has very much pulled away from agriculture, and although we are focusing this year on the issue of the people of the southwest part of the province with serious flooding problems, it is an ongoing challenge that we have of low commodity prices.

I would ask the minister whether there was any discussion on that and any proposals as to how we can have a long-term solution for this whole situation that is facing the farming community.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I do thank the honourable member for that question. That is a very important question, and she is absolutely right, that while the focus has tended to be on the immediate urgency of those flood-stricken farmers, the bigger question that she raises is there. Commodity prices are not improving. In fact, a crop that was helpful to many farmers in staying on the black side of the ledger, our big canola crop, this year is going nowhere. So that has caused a lot of us great concern.

I am not going to give an overlengthy argument, but simply to indicate that there was a lot of discussion about how we can fashion a better support safety system for our farmers across Canada. We have, Mr. Chairman, as you know, three major programs that have come into being over the last 30-40 years beginning with our Crop Insurance Program that was introduced in the early '60s. Then my colleague introduced the NISA program in the early '90s, an income stabilization program. The present minister and

Minister Lyle Vanclief and provincial ministers introduced the AIDA program.

We have three major programs, and part of the difficulty is they are kind of rubbing shoulders on occasion, overlapping on occasion. There is some concern about, you know, if we are pursuing the AIDA-type course, strictly a farm receipt course, is that impinging on crop insurance and taking away from the value of crop insurance. Now on top of that, these programs all have their own administration costs, and they are substantial. The crop insurance administration costs are in the 70 millions of dollars. That, quite frankly, is not acceptable to me. More of that money should be going into enhancing the program.

We also have the NISA administration which is now about eight years old, I would say, '91. That is another administration, and we are in the process of developing an AIDA administration. I have made the suggestion to my colleagues and to the federal minister, let us challenge all of us, our national safety net people, advisers from the different farm sectors. Is it not possible to put all those programs into a box and fashion out a program that carries the best features of all three and some income support, because I see that looming as particularly important as these commodity prices stay where they are at.

* (1640)

The basic Crop Insurance Program insures against yield, particularly important to the Prairies here where we can have, through drought or flood or other things, very basic deficiencies on yield, and a combination of NISA and AIDA as an income support-based program. That would depend on the will of the governments, both provincial and federal, to what extent we put money into that program.

I know deep down in my heart that I think to begin with we could probably save a hundred million dollars in administration costs if we put them all into one administration. It would make it much less frustrating for the farmer who currently complains about filling out his NISA form, filling out his AIDA form, filling out his crop insurance form. It is an awful lot of

paperwork that is involved here, and it is keeping a lot of bureaucrats busy, both provincially and federally.

So to answer the honourable member's question, I really think we ought to be challenged, and I invite her to keep challenging me in that respect, that we use this whole discussion, this whole focus on safety nets not just to tinker with the individual programs but maybe actually to come up with an innovative solution that would bring efficiencies to the program and provide the maximum benefits under these programs to our farmers who regrettably, I have to acknowledge—as I hear reports from different parts of the world and certainly here in North America, it looks like a substantial crop is coming off both in the United States and in Canada, despite our troubled areas, these other areas in Alberta, the western part of Saskatchewan and our own Manitoba, as the member knows. There are some very excellent cross-crop prospects right now. All of that does not auger well for any future serious improvement in these commodity prices.

I toyed with it at the time we exited GRIP, for instance, which was a very successful income support program. Many of the farmers are now reminding me of that fact as I know they were then. I challenged the crop insurance board of directors in the organization to see whether we could not build an element of GRIP into our Crop Insurance Program, maybe not quite as rich as the GRIP program was but at least build into, on top of the yield insurance that we provide in crop insurance, build some measure.

That could change, as I say, with the will of governments. If we have a responsive federal government that would put some of the money back that they took away from western agriculture, \$750 million in the Crow, before the Paul Martin budget that did that, the safety net envelope, all the years that my colleague was administering, was running at about \$860 million, the federal share that was arbitrarily capped at \$600 million. I am not saying maybe claw it all back, but if we move that up to, say, \$700 million, look for \$50 million, \$60 million, \$70 million in efficiencies in the administration of these programs, we might be able to put

together a package that could respond to what I believe to be a very legitimate and a very serious issue that farmers are facing not just in Manitoba but throughout Canada.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, one of the issues that the minister did not address that has become a real burden for farmers is the increased transportation costs. Recently, we saw a study that indicated that railways are not passing on their savings. There were supposed to be substantial savings with rail line abandonment, and those were supposed to be passed on to producers. It had been raised before, but a recent study by the Wheat Board indicates that in fact somewhere in the range of \$224 million annually is going to the railways in excess profits that should be shared with the producers, but it is not being shared. That is a lot of money that could come back into the farming community.

We are now in the process where we have had the Estey report tabled and we have Mr. Kruger, who is working to implement the Estey report. If we are going to have that report, we have to ensure that the savings are passed onto the producers. There is some way that those savings have to be passed on to the producers and that the railways are co-operative with short lines to ensure that we do have joint running rights, revenue sharing, so short lines can operate and somehow, again, offer the producers a better service.

I would like to ask the minister then if he has had any discussion with his colleague the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Praznik) and had input into how we can ensure that the savings that are supposed to be realized from rationalization of the railways will be passed on to producers. Can he indicate if his government is prepared to pull away from the table on these negotiations, if the railways are not prepared to share their revenues and offer joint running rights for those? We cannot have the producers sacrifice their freight rate caps and all of the other things that are detrimental to the producers if the railways on the other hand are not going to share some of the benefits that they have and continue to provide service. We know that the excess profits now are somewhere over \$200 million. If more lines are abandoned, there is

going to be more savings to them. What is this government prepared to do to ensure that our farmers are not cheated again and have to pay additional costs, which they really cannot afford in this time of low-commodity prices?

Mr. Enns: Well, Mr. Chairman, our province was a full participant in the extensive review that was done on this whole question of transportation by former Justice Estey. I am satisfied that the mechanics of an implementation process of some of the recommendations is now in place. My response to the member would be simply that we would have to allow that process to demonstrate what many in the industry believe can achieve the kind of efficiencies, the kind of fundamental changes, and bring into transportation what has been so sadly lacking, an element of competition that will discipline the kind of changes that need to be taken into consideration.

What I do know with certainty, Mr. Chairman, is that additional regulation in an already overregulated transportation system will not work. That is what we have today. For me to for one moment take seriously her suggestion, will we pull away from the table, no, because that implies that we are satisfied with what we have today. We are not satisfied with what we have today. We are not satisfied at all with what we have today. So I believe that Mr. Kruger and the players involved know that if grain is to be moved in today's new freight regime without the benefit of the Crow that those efficiencies have to be found.

Now, there are of course other things that will be taking place in the meantime. In many respects, the drive for greater livestock, greater utilization of feed within the province, particularly a province like Manitoba, will continue to take place. There has been a slight hiccup in that process with respect to hogs because of the, you know, pricing problems.

* (1650)

I am concerned, I might just throw in right now, I am deeply concerned about the American action with respect to beef cattle. Just as we were beginning in a very positive way to encourage more feeding of our own livestock,

our feeder animals, feeder calves instead of shipping them to Alberta or south or elsewhere, and we see nice developments as we saw in the Hamiota area with a major feedlot, our other feedlots are filling up and encouraging, this is going to work directly against that process. In fact, the animals that should be consuming the grain here in Manitoba and thus avoiding those freight costs and those shipping charges are now going to be shipped elsewhere so that the Americans can feed their surplus grain to those cattle. That is the kind of a double whammy that we are facing.

So there are very serious policy issues on this front that will keep me busy this summer. I might indicate to the honourable members and to the House that I am leaving at 5:30 in the morning for Salt Lake City in Utah. I want to assure all members that when this little Mennonite goes there I will not be returning as a Mormon, but nonetheless I will be discussing agricultural policies there with American secretaries of Agriculture and Mexican secretaries of Agriculture in what has become, this is about the fifth annual meeting of this group that works toward trying to resolve some of the agricultural trade problems and issues between our three countries.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): During the course of the Estimates debate, the minister took under notice a number of questions and information that he would provide to me. I wonder if the minister has any timetable as to when we would be receiving that detailed information.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Health): I do not have anything here this afternoon. I know I do have some of the information compiled. I expect I can get it to the member very shortly. It is partly driven by a staff issue. The assistant deputy minister of the financial administration side, Susan Murphy has actually been on holidays. It is really her area that compiles the majority of the information that the member was asking for. As I did undertake to him, I am not going to wait until I have all the information and send him one batch, at whatever point in time that would be. I think I do have a reasonable amount of it that I can get to him certainly within the next very short period of time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: What I intend to do during the course of the discussion, we have concurrence, is just touch back on a few issues for follow-up related to the minister.

Just with relation to the question that I raised in the House on several occasions with respect to the Pan American Games, the minister I thought gave the impression certainly that there was no effect, if I understand the minister correctly, he can correct me if I am wrong, from the Pan Am Games on the acute care sector, on the health care system. I do not think that is in fact true.

Now, the minister might have meant something else, but there is no doubt that people in the system, many, many people in the system, have communicated to me special arrangements, special changes and special provisions that are being made for the purposes of the Pan American Games. So I wonder if the minister might comment on—[interjection] Did you want to ask a question now? [interjection] Our leader just wanted to ask another quick question. Perhaps we will come back to my question.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I thank the member for Kildonan. I just have one question. An individual, Menard Canada, is a person who has come to me and apparently has been in touch with the Department of Health over a long period of time about a concern he had that the Health Sciences Centre dental clinic had people that both worked for the public sector and were having a private practice. Now, I do not know whether this issue is—apparently it has been asked before in the Estimates. I promised the individual I would raise it with you. Apparently the Department of Health has investigated it or it has come to their attention, and I would like to know whether the minister has the results of this investigation. Was this against policy? Is it against policy? What follow-up has happened with the individual who made the complaint, and what is the status of the situation with a citizen who feels—the individual feels it is an abuse of a public asset by a private person.

Mr. Stefanson: The Leader of the Opposition is right that this issue did come up in Estimates. I believe it was the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) who raised it. He did not indicate

what his source of it was or the individual. He did not name an individual or provide any source of it, but he did raise the same issue. I had the department check into it, and I am going now from memory, but basically the result of it was that there was no substantiation to it. There were no problems. I am certainly prepared to get a more full briefing, again, from the department and provide that to the Leader of the Opposition.

As I would have put on the record at that time, the checking done by the department into the issue could not substantiate any problems in this area, recognizing, again, as I am repeating myself, that was on the basis of not being provided with any source, nobody to turn to to say: what is your source of this? What can you point to that shows there is some problem here? Now the Leader of the Opposition, I believe, did name an individual, and I am more than prepared to have the department look into this issue again, contact that individual, follow up with that individual on this issue and get back to the member.

Mr. Doer: There may be a file, then, on this individual or a member of his family that would be knowledgeable of this issue, and it does look like it goes back to the early '90s. He is not that easy to contact because he does not have a phone. I guess what he wants to know is whether the Department of Health has ever investigated. Do dentists have the right or have they had the right to use the dental clinic at the Health Sciences Centre and also have a practice of private patients that they bill out of a public facility? That is the question, the specific question, as I recall it, and I would look forward to a response from the minister on it. Any information he can give me, I will pass on to the individual when he drops into our offices as he is wont to do. Thank you.

Mr. Chomiak: Concluding my question, Mr. Chairperson, certainly the information provided to me is that there are contingencies being made, and there clearly has to be a plan because there are going to be 5,000-plus athletes and numerous thousands of visitors here. It is quite clear that contingencies are being made. I wonder if the minister can enlighten me as to what the plan is or who is providing the plan, and I will contact the individual or individuals just to acquaint myself with what the circumstances are.

Mr. Stefanson: I will certainly provide the member with more detailed information and potentially a contact person either within the department or within one of the organizations like the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. But certainly the information that I have been provided consistently is that the Pan Am Games are not in any way taking away services from Manitobans, that the issue of some beds in some of our hospital facilities is being dealt with on beds that were impacted by the summer closure anyway, that would have been impacted by the summer closure, irrespective of whether the Pan Am Games were here or not. If there is a need for additional beds as a result of the Pan Am Games, the option is, then, there to go after the summer-scheduled beds. That really is the contingency plan that is in place to deal with the Pan Am Games. So the information I have consistently received is that there are no beds being taken out of circulation specifically to address the Pan Am Games, and therefore these Pan Am Games are not in any way removing some services available to Manitobans. So the opportunity is there to provide beds based on the summer schedule of beds, and that would be addressed if something happened that beds were required. But I can certainly provide a more detailed summary to the member, and I am sure I could probably put him in contact with somebody who could provide a further explanation of the entire issue, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, we have also discussed in Question Period the issue of the summer closures, and we have also discussed on previous occasions the minister indicating that the minister is contemplating, as part of the new policy of providing information to Manitobans, to provide some form of regular reporting. We know the minister receives weekly stats on beds in the system or certainly the system has a means of accounting for weekly bed status.

Can the minister provide us with that information? Will he table the information with respect to the bed counts and the status of that on a weekly basis that is occurring?

* (1700)

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, well, the member is right that we did discuss the benefits

of doing something like a quarterly report on health, not unlike we see in the Department of Finance. It does a quarterly report on the finances. That still is an initiative that I am currently working on with the department to do just that, to put out a quarterly report on a number of indicators, a number of statistics on the current status of health care issues in the province of Manitoba. The member is also right that I do receive regular briefings on issues like bed status, bed utilizations.

So again, I would expect that some of that information would form the basis of a quarterly report in terms of issues like our bed status and so on. We are still pursuing that issue. It is something that I intend to implement, that I support. Obviously, our first quarter of this fiscal year ended at the end of June, so we are currently working on that entire issue of potentially doing a quarterly report for the first quarter of 1999-2000.

So there will be an opportunity to provide some of the information the member is referring to at that time, and I will take the rest of his question as notice and certainly provide him what information I can on beds. I know one of the issues I think that is still outstanding, and I expect that we can respond to, as part of the information I said that we should have available shortly I think, is the whole issue of the bed listing that the member gets every year.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, also in Question Period I raised the issue of Sara Riel closure. In conjunction with that the minister, like most MLAs, has met with an organization of mental health advocates—I guess would be the best way to term it—who are, frankly—and I encourage it—meeting with all MLAs to acquaint them with the issues concerning the mental health community, largely on the basis that most individuals do not know enough, even elected officials, about what is happening in the mental health field and the pain and suffering that people go through and that frankly this, without doubt, has been basically a nonpartisan issue in this Chamber. The mental health issue has been nonpartisan in this Chamber certainly as long as I have been here.

On that basis, I wonder if the minister can outline what his commitment was or what his

commitment is for putting in place adequate community-based resources, keeping in mind that the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority has made some requests from the provincial government with respect to funding requirements and needs.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, well, the member is right. I did meet with the community mental health group which I believe were meeting with some MLAs, and I know they met with the member for Kildonan. They left me a presentation. We obviously went through that presentation. I would describe our meeting as a very good meeting in terms of an opportunity for them to bring these issues certainly to my attention. On the one hand, they were very complimentary of what could be described as the first phase of mental health reform back in the early 90s, the shift to community-based mental health reform. But they did express some concern about the further implementation of what we described as phase two, and that is some of the additional service adjustments in the community in terms of counselling, in terms of preventative measures and so on, in terms of monitoring and those kinds of issues which were raised both in their submission and in the discussion I had with them.

I undertook to obviously review all of the issues that they raised with me, including the issue of funding and to report back after I have had an opportunity to review all of the issues, with a view as to which ones we are able to implement and over what kind of a time frame. So, I obviously take the information they provided to me very seriously and will be responding to all of those issues in the very near future.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, with the issue of Sara Riel's temporary closing and with the discussion about psychiatric beds, what is the status of the issue of additional facilities to be provided in a short term?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, as the member for Kildonan knows, the Sara Riel temporarily closed their crisis stabilization unit and that will reopen on Monday, July 19. During that period of time, services have continued to be available at and with facilities

and organizations like Salvation Army, Seneca House and others. I have continued to ask the department whether or not there have been any problems, any issues during this period of time, these two weeks, and none of them have been brought to my attention. But, again, in terms of many of the other issues facing mental health, it is a matter of striking the right balance between beds and bed requirements in our health care facilities and the supports out there in the community. That was certainly a major part of the discussion I had with the Community Mental Health group and will form part of our review of the recommendations that they left with me.

Mr. Chomiak: I think we can probably generally conclude that the community supports are not sufficiently in place, and, consequently, the closure of the community-based facility like Sara Riel must, by logical extension, have an impact on community resources. The minister has indicated that he is going to be reviewing the proposals, and I accept that. I think that we can all agree that without placing blame, there has to be a major initiative and a major step with respect to community-based services. We accepted that when we dealt with the amendments to The Mental Health Act last year. The question is: what is the time frame that we are looking at? The minister has indicated he is looking at those proposals. Frankly, I would change some of the structure of the Department of Health as it affects mental health in order to affect the changes, but that is an administrative decision the minister is going to have to make. I do not think you can make the changes without a change in some of that administrative emphasis.

But having said that and given that gratuitous advice, did the minister put a time line in terms of when he is going to reach a decision or when he is going to get back to this group? I think we can all agree that generally, without going into political rhetoric, the services require additional supports.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I certainly would want to reaffirm our commitment regarding the mental health services. As I said, the group was very complimentary of the first phase of changes to community mental health services back in the early '90s. They have raised several issues, of which funding certainly was

one of them, and from the organizations that met with me and on behalf of the various groups, it is certainly an important issue. As the member knows, the WCA has also been working on this issue.

So I am looking at all of the issues they raised with a view to, again, I guess I am being repetitive, but to which ones we can implement and over what time frame, recognizing that the groups would like to hear back from me and from government fairly shortly. I am sensitive to that, so it is certainly my objective and our objective to attempt to respond to these issues raised in the very near future. Obviously, when one of the issues has a financial impact, it is a matter of looking at the year we are currently in as well as looking forward to the next budget cycle. That is part of the review I am undertaking.

* (1710)

Mr. Chomiak: With respect to META [phonetic], the minister has acknowledged that Phase 2, as it has been suggested, has not gone well. There really does need to be a new orientation and a new initiative and a new drive, similar to what was undertaken in Phase 1 to implement the changes required for Phase 2. Does the minister agree with that?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, I am not sure that I would describe it that way. Again, the group that I met with representing many of the mental health groups really raised some specific issues that can be dealt with within our existing structure, I believe. But, as I have indicated, I am reviewing all of them, and if some structural changes are required to better provide the services in this area, I am not rigid on that at all. Our objective throughout this review will be to provide the community services that are needed in the most efficient and effective fashion. So structure was not raised necessarily as one of the more important issues. I am going in part by recollection, and I do have some of the information here with me now.

Again, I am certainly prepared to look at structure, and if structure is an impediment to providing the services required, I am more than prepared to look at structure. If the member has

any specific suggestions or recommendations in that area. I am certainly prepared to look at them.

Mr. Chomiak: I do have specific recommendations, but what I will probably do is reduce them to writing and forward them to the minister. The fact is that if there was not an impediment, those changes would have been made, because there are needs and requirements in the community that have not been met, admittedly by all. I am saying this without political slant, because quite publicly I say generally I admit that the Phase 1 went very well, and in fact Phase 2 is now stalled, and it has been sort of a mantra that has been repeated by all, those within and without the system. I am talking about discussions I have had with people who are presently in the system. But I will reduce that to writing and provide some comments from the minister, with respect.

What I meant by structural is not just structural in form, but there has to be a reorientation toward a commitment to the community-based mental health system. I think a mindset has to be moved along and pushed along in order for those changes to take place.

I am going to go on to a new question, unless the minister has a comment.

Mr. Stefanson: I appreciate that clarification. I think in part what has happened in Manitoba and right across Canada over the last few years is that there has been an awful lot of focus and attention on our acute care services in our health care system, on some of our other community support areas like personal care homes and home care, and so on. So, if the member is saying that there is a need for some additional focus brought to the importance of this service and the whole issue of the levels of service and so on, I would not disagree with that, Mr. Chairman. Certainly that has been part of what has happened from my meeting, his meeting, and I am sure others that the group is meeting with. That is exactly why we are going to be reviewing these recommendations in detail, and I expect to be able to respond to some, if not all, of them, fairly shortly.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister will know that, from the numerous letters he receives from my

and our offices, generally, with specific individual claims, those go directly to the minister for dealing with with the department. We generally do not bring individual matters to the Chamber. I have brought a couple of matters to the Chamber under exceptional circumstances, and I want to raise one today because I want to get a perspective because this individual is literally sitting on tenterhooks. The minister will recall I raised this situation of a woman named Bonnie Ferguson. She has been diagnosed with breast cancer; she requires heart surgery; she is diabetic. She is one of, she has been told, 60 people on a waiting list for heart surgery. Since the matter was raised here, on two occasions she has had to call an ambulance in order to deal with her severe angina. The minister's office has contacted her twice, and one occasion she was not that pleased with the contact and the other occasion she was very pleased with the contact. The point is that she is still sitting at home suffering from severe angina; she contacted the hospital today; and we are told that, unless she is in the hospital, she is not going to get her surgery moved up despite her physical condition.

Now, speaking frankly, we all know what doctors and what patients do when they have severe problems and need surgery, they go into the hospital in order to be bumped up, which, for better or for worse, has been the procedure and the practice. But the point is: what direction can I give to this individual in order to deal—and the minister has indicated that numerous cardiac surgeries are done—but what does an individual, without trying to leapfrog in the system, which is the only recourse open to her—she is sitting at home alone suffering daily with angina, has twice been taken in by an ambulance, has been told she may as well stay in hospital because if she stays in hospital she will get her heart surgery but is unwilling to jump the queue. What advice does the minister have in this particular instance? I just spoke with her several hours ago.

Mr. Stefanson: The member is right, when he or anybody else in this Chamber or any individual situation is brought to our attention, we do attempt to follow up on it immediately. In fact, I was a little disturbed when I had a chance to follow up on an issue that his Leader raised

about one individual that he claimed had phoned my office three times and had not been responded to. We went back into our files, and we had responded to that individual the same day in all three cases. It just happened that the individual did not have an answering machine and was not available themselves. So we do take that very seriously either when it is brought to our attention or when somebody phones because when that does happen, obviously the people themselves are concerned and certainly deserve to be responded to on a very timely basis.

Again, I am more than prepared to have our department and my officials look into this individual's situation, but the best thing that they can normally do—and I am sure this individual is doing that, based on what the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has just outlined—is to deal with their own doctor, their own surgeon in this case and/or with the family doctor as well, because they are the ones that certainly have the expertise, the knowledge of whether or not a situation is emergent or urgent or what is called elective. Again, I know the member for Kildonan is well aware that emergency cases are dealt with in very short order and urgent cases are dealt with in very short order. When it comes to our waiting lists for the elective processes, we compare quite well right across Canada. In this area we compare quite well. As the member himself indicated, we are now doing approximately 1,100 cardiac surgeries a year. That is up significantly from what we were doing just a few years ago.

So my advice for this individual would be to be following up with his or her surgeon and doctors, but I am also more than prepared to have my staff follow up and determine what the status of this person is and what can be done to deal with their situation.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, this is going so well, I almost hesitate to proceed down this next path, but given the general enthusiasm here in the House, I do want to comment. We had an interesting discussion in Question Period today. It was very interesting. I have to admit in my years as critic, this was the first time I have gone to an announcement where, I mean, I went to the Health Sciences Centre fully expecting a model

or an actual program announcement, and there I was, subjected to the unveiling of a floor plan, quite literally of a floor plan.

* (1720)

Now, one does not criticize the fact that finally the glacial movement of the step-down unit has achieved fruition or, to use a better metaphor, there has been a meltdown, and the minister made comments to the effect that, well, you know, it was an announcement of the approval of the program. I have had my share of announcements and reannouncements under the government. I mean, I have gone to the Cancer Treatment Foundation announcements, have been to at least four announcements of the same project, from approval to the Premier providing—[interjection] Pardon me?

An Honourable Member: I did not see you there today.

Mr. Chomiak: I was there today at the back of the room when the minister unveiled the floor plan. I guess the point is, I mean, we are at the point where we are making announcements of approval of programs.

Now, there is no criticism certainly of the step-down unit. Good heavens, particularly with the ICU beds being cut down this year, there is a need for the step-down unit, as there was the need for a step-down unit at Children's that we advocated for some time.

I know that we are in different political circumstances, given that events I think are fast approaching where there is going to be some accountability required, but this was the first time I have actually seen an announcement—well, there have been announcements of approval. I was surprised by the minister, but the reality was you were announcing the approval of a program that is not going to be ready for a year. It just seemed to me that today's announcement looked to me like, you know, we are moving more towards that big event that we have been anticipating in this province since about April 25.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, in keeping with the spirit, I do not want the member to read

too much into today's announcement relative to other events. But as I was saying to him during Question Period, the key issue here for Health Sciences Centre and for this very important unit is the commitment of the government, and that is what took place today, is that the Health Sciences Centre has a commitment for this step-down unit.

It is going to cost \$1.4 million, and it is not uncommon, particularly when it comes to capital improvements, that announcements are made at the time of commitment, because that is at the stage when the facility—and in this particular case, this particular area of services can go into the detailed design and start to order whatever equipment and work towards the redevelopment that has to take place. If the member was there, I did not see him, otherwise I would have acknowledged that he was there, as I usually do. But if he was there, then he would have heard the comments, not necessarily from me, although I know he usually believes what I say. I think he usually applauds when I am through, but, more importantly, he would have heard from people like Dr. Bill Lindsay, the head of the cardiac sciences program. He would have heard from Carol Ringer, the vice-president of Health Sciences Centre. [interjection]

Well, the member chooses to zero in on one comment out of about 20 minutes of comments that were basically nothing but compliments and accolades and excitement amongst all of the people involved with this project. I had a chance which he also—[interjection] That is a reference, my Icelandic heritage. I had a chance also to go and look at the existing unit and developed an even greater appreciation for the value and the need for this particular unit. So we have been working with the Health Sciences Centre. I have met with some of the people in this area, some of the surgeons and people involved in providing the service. They have been very anxious to get the commitment, to get the announcement so that they know with absolute certainty that this is moving forward. It can have further input from the doctors, the nurses and so on.

So everybody was extremely excited today, very pleased with this announcement. I am assuming that the member himself was pleased, and, as he has done on other occasions, if he has

a criticism, his only criticism is, well, maybe we should have done it a little bit earlier. The reality is we are doing it. It is well supported and it is going to be state of the art. It is an area that Manitoba really has been a leader in terms of the whole utilization of the step-down unit, where after about six hours in post-operative recovery, individuals go into a step-down unit. They then do not utilize an intensive care bed, and it ends up being better for the patient, better for the entire system and so on.

So I am pleased that the member was there to participate in this very important announcement for Health Sciences Centre and for the patients of Manitoba, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: Also following up on a matter that was raised this week, I had occasion to pursue further the issue of the possible transport of patients out of province as a result of shortages for radiology and radiology-related services. In terms of the course of my discussion, I was advised that, yes, it is one of the options being considered in a plan. Prior to that occurring, two other options are going to be undertaken, one of them being additional hours of operation and longer working overtimes, et cetera. That raises a very fundamental question. I am wondering if the minister can undertake to provide us with information with respect to the amount of hours worked overtime and related hours of individuals, certainly in Winnipeg, or some kind of appreciation as to how much expenditure of provincial revenue has gone towards additional overtime hours in related matters. I am sure the minister has those figures. Can he undertake to table them in the Chamber?

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Mr. Chairman, I am aware the member has been contacting individuals, I gather, with the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation. I think he was mostly correct with what he put on the record. It is not in any way inconsistent with what I have said that the immediate focus of that organization is to take all of the steps that they possibly can to improve the services in Manitoba. They are looking at a number of initiatives that will free up additional time in terms of some improved efficiencies having to do with accessing some of the staff hours and so on. They are also looking at the issue of

additional treatment slots that can be achieved through overtime.

So those are the steps that they are currently following. As well, they are aggressively pursuing attempting to attract more radiation therapists. The member is right that as an option on a go-forward basis, depending on how successful all of this is, one option that was just put forward was to consider having some patients go outside of Manitoba to the United States, primarily in the area of prostate cancer. I believe that is currently happening, if I am correct, in the provinces of Ontario and Quebec, I believe. But at this particular point in time, it is merely that. It is merely one of many options that were put forward as a way of addressing patient services and waiting times. It is not an option that has in any way been accepted. What has been accepted are the options that we have discussed in terms of improving efficiencies, creating more services here in the province of Manitoba.

I will certainly undertake to pursue providing information on levels of overtime and so on in the whole area of radiation therapy, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chomiak: The minister publicly stated that in fact the government was going to expand the number of medical students graduating and enrolled at the University of Manitoba. I have written to the minister on this, and I wonder if the minister can outline for me whether or not the class enrolling this year will be expanded.

Mr. Stefanson: Again, the member is right. He has written me, and we discussed this somewhat during the Estimates process. Right now, the Deputy Minister of Health is in the midst of discussions with the Faculty of Medicine and with the university about that issue in terms of the timing of expansion of enrollment in the Faculty of Medicine.

Again, as I said to the member during Estimates, our view is no later than the next academic year, in the year 2000, but we also believe there may well be an opportunity to enhance enrollment in the upcoming academic year starting this September. So that is still the direction that the Deputy Minister of Health is

working on, and I will be more than pleased to report back to the member as we make progress on that issue.

Mr. Chomiak: Have the funds been approved for a class in this particular year?

Mr. Stefanson: We have a little bit of flexibility if there is an opportunity to expand enrollment in the upcoming year. That is obviously one issue. Within a budget of \$2.1 billion, we do have some flexibility if there is an opportunity in the upcoming academic year to increase the enrollment. So that is certainly one of the issues that has to be addressed, but, Mr. Chairman, there are other issues that have to be addressed in terms of the logistics, the ability to do all of this and so on.

So if all of the other parts can be put together to expand enrollment in the upcoming academic year, 1999, I do not see the financial resources necessarily being an impediment to that.

* (1730)

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the minister a couple of questions with regard to services that people from my part of the province get from out of the province, out-of-province services.

Many people from Swan River are transferred, go to Hudson Bay or the majority of times to Yorkton for services. For people that are seriously ill, they end up being medivacked to Regina or Saskatoon, using Saskatchewan medical services, air ambulances, and they are then required to pay.

So I would like to ask the minister if he could get this information and get it back to me in writing, because I know we are a bit short of time here, but whether there are reciprocal agreements between Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where those people who have to be transferred from one Saskatchewan hospital to another by medivac, by air ambulance, whether their costs are covered as they are in Manitoba.

The second question that I would like to ask the minister, if he could provide me in writing, is

whether there have been any reductions in services or changes in agreements that we have with other provinces. We all know that there are waiting lists in our hospitals for hip replacements and many types of surgeries. So Swan River people are sent to Saskatchewan, but we find that there is a reduction, that they are being held very long on waiting lists in Saskatchewan—whether there are any changes in the agreement that Manitoba has with Saskatchewan in providing services to people who live in border communities.

I realize the minister may not have that, but if he could provide that in writing for me, that would be very helpful.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Chairman, I will undertake to do that, to respond to both of those issues in writing, and I do not see that taking a long time to do that.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Sveinson): Shall the motion pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Sveinson): The motion is accordingly passed.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Madam Speaker: First of all, let me establish, is there unanimous consent of the House for the Speaker not to see the clock at 6 p.m.? [agreed]

Committee Report

Mr. Ben Sveinson (Acting Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a motion regarding concurrence in Supply, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurschou), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that this House concur in the report of the Committee of Supply respecting concurrence and all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of Ways and Means for raising of the Supply to be granted to Her Most Gracious Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

* (1740)

COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS

Capital Supply

The Acting Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): Order, please. The Committee of Ways and Means will come to order. We have before us for consideration the resolution respecting Capital Supply. The resolution for Capital Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that towards making good certain sums of money for Capital purposes, the sum of \$1,106,900,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): The resolution is accordingly passed.

Main Supply

The Acting Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): We also have before us for our consideration the resolutions respecting the Main Supply bill. The first resolution for the Main Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that towards making good certain sums of money granted to Her Majesty for the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2000, the sum of \$5,550,138,900 as set forth in Schedule A be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): The resolution is accordingly passed.

The second resolution for Main Supply reads as follows:

RESOLVED that towards making good certain sums of money granted to Her Majesty for the public service of the province for the fiscal year ending 31st day of March, 2000, the sum of \$113,256,800 as set out in Schedule B (Capital Investments) be granted out of the Consolidated Fund.

Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

The Acting Chairperson (Ben Sveinson): The resolution is accordingly passed.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Ben Sveinson (Acting Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means has adopted a resolution regarding Capital Supply and two resolutions regarding Main Supply, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 46—The Appropriation Act, 1999

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 46, The Appropriation Act, 1999 (Loi de 1999 portant affectation de crédits), and that the same be now received, read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 46—The Appropriation Act, 1999

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 46, The Appropriation Act, 1999 (Loi de 1999 portant affectation de crédits), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 45—The Loan Act, 1999

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999 (Loi d'emprunt de 1999), and that the same be now received, read a first time and be ordered for second reading immediately.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 45—The Loan Act, 1999

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): By leave, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999 (Loi d'emprunt de 1999), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into the Committee of the Whole to consider and report of Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999; Loi d'emprunt de 1999, and Bill 46, The Appropriation Act, 1999; Loi de 1999 portant affectation de crédits, for third reading.

Motion agreed to.

* (1750)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): The Committee of the Whole will come to order to consider Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999; and Bill 46, The Appropriation Act, 1999.

Bill 45—The Loan Act, 1999

Mr. Chairperson: We shall proceed to consider Bill 45 clause by clause. Is it the wish of the committee that I proceed in blocks of clauses? [agreed]

Clause 1—pass; Clause 2—pass; Clauses 3(1) through 4(3) inclusive—pass; Clauses 5(1) through Clause 8—pass; Schedule A—pass; Schedule B—pass; preamble—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Bill 46—The Appropriation Act, 1999

Mr. Chairperson: We shall now proceed to consider Bill 46 clause by clause. Shall we do it in blocks? [agreed]

Clause 1—pass; Clauses 2 through 7—pass. Shall Schedule A be passed?

An Honourable Member: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All those in favour of Schedule A, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

An Honourable Member: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: In my opinion, the yeas really have it. The clause is accordingly passed.

Schedule B—pass; preamble—pass; title—pass. Bill be reported.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Committee Report

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999, and The Appropriation Act, 1999, and has directed me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the report of the Committee of the Whole be received.

Motion agreed to.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 45—The Loan Act, 1999

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, by leave, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999 (Loi d'emprunt de 1999), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded again by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999; Loi d'emprunt de 1999, reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 46—The Appropriation Act, 1999

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, by leave, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 46, The Appropriation Act, 1999 (Loi de 1999 portant affectation de crédits), reported from the Committee of the Whole, be concurred in.

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

Motion agreed to.

THIRD READINGS**Bill 46—The Appropriation Act, 1999**

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, with leave, I would move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Bill 46, The Appropriation Act 1999; Loi de 1999 portant affectation de crédits, be now read a third time and passed.

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

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, upon sitting down I understand that in fact we will be going or putting forward the question on its passage. My intention is to actually call for a recorded vote just so that you are aware of it. Suffice to say, we in the Liberal Party do believe that there is an alternative budget that should—the government does not have the confidence that the official opposition has given it in its budget presentation, and we suggest that it is not good enough for Manitobans. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. No one is infallible, and I hope all members will understand. I would like to revert back. I have been informed by the table officers that the appropriate motion for third reading of Bill 45 was not put to the House nor voted on. So I would ask the honourable government House leader to re-move third reading of Bill 45.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I believe I was in the process of moving that motion when the table officers advised that I needed to be moving 46. So I do regret that, and I was in the process of moving that.

Madam Speaker: Okay, just for clarification, I believe the honourable government House leader was directed to be asking for leave before moving the motion.

Bill 45—The Loan Act, 1999

Mr. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, to do what I started to do, with leave. I would move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Bill 45, The Loan Act, 1999; Loi d'emprunt de 1999, be now read a third time and passed.

* (1800)

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill 46—The Appropriation Act, 1999

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading. Bill 46. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

An Honourable Member: No.

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

An Honourable Member: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Madam Speaker, I believe if you canvass the House that there is support for a recorded vote.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Inkster have support to request a recorded vote?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, in the interests of supporting the member having a recorded vote, this side of the House will lend support to his call.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster indeed has support. A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* (1810)

Order, please. The question before the House is third reading Bill 46, The Appropriation Act, 1999.

Division

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

Yeas

Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Cummings, Derkach, Dewar, Doer, Downey, Driedger (Charleswood), Driedger (Steinbach), Evans (Interlake), Enns, Faurschou, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Hickes, Jennissen, Laurendeau, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McAlpine, McCrae, McGifford, McIntosh, Mihychuk, Mitchelson, Newman, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Stefanson, Struthers, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey, Wowchuk.

Nays

Lamoureux.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 47; Nays 1.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I believe there is only one bill remaining for business to be completed, that being Bill 40, and I would ask if you could please call that bill for third reading.

Bill 40—The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 40, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'emploi et au revenu, be now read a third time and passed.

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

Motion presented.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity to put a few comments on the record. I know that many of my colleagues, indeed members of the opposition, want to put a few comments on the record.

I had the opportunity to participate in the debate in committee, and it was interesting to see the various positions come out or indeed not come out from the members of the opposition. Indeed, they are quite reluctant to say anything about where they stand on this bill, especially in view of the fact that in the past they have taken very definite and hard stands against workfare.

What I thought I would do, Madam Speaker, is just briefly talk to the preambles in the bill. The preamble as amended in committee has a number of goals that are important, I think, to Manitobans, and they are values that Manitobans can share. The first paragraph of the preamble speaks of a balance; it speaks of a balance between obtaining assistance for those who are in need and yet at the same time promoting personal responsibility.

The second preamble indicates that we need to encourage people to become self-sufficient wherever possible. While social assistance is a necessary, an important social good in our community, we must not put forward a program that discourages people from becoming self-sufficient, because we know that no matter how

good a program of social assistance it is, it will never do for people what they can do for themselves if they have the capacity to do so. So I think it is very important that that principle be set out in the preamble.

The other preamble that was included by amendment, Madam Speaker, speaks about the improvement of the economic circumstances of Manitoba families. While social assistance provides families with the basic necessities, again, as I have indicated, that is very important, what this act seeks to do, seeks to implement in law, the policy that welfare to work improve the economic circumstances of Manitoba families, that Manitobans be encouraged to work in order to improve their economic circumstances.

The last preamble, Madam Speaker, or the last paragraph of the preamble speaks about community commitment, the fact that all of us are a part of a larger community. We all contribute to the community, and just because you are poor does not mean you do not have a meaningful contribution to make. There are many ways that wealthy people can contribute to our communities, and there are many ways that those who are economically disadvantaged can contribute to our communities. This bill seeks then to ensure that those who are less fortunate economically be given an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the community, whether it is through a job, a nine-to-five job, paid job or through community programming where they assist their fellow citizens in the greater good in building that community.

* (1820)

I want to stress as well, Madam Speaker, that this bill is not to include the disabled. This bill deals with able-bodied people who are on social assistance, and I think it is very important to see in that context. I know that many of my colleagues will be speaking about the many economic opportunities that we have in Manitoba today as a result of the very concerted efforts of this government to bring in progressive economic policies, not simply to rely on tax dollars to create opportunities, but indeed, create a new economy that brings growth out of that new economy, not the artificial growth that we have seen past NDP governments try to

stimulate by an artificial infusion of taxpayers' money which create jobs for short periods of time, indeed, only as long as that taxpayer money keeps on going.

So, Madam Speaker, those are principles I think every Manitoban supports. I want to stress then the distinction between the bill brought forward by this government and the position of the NDP. Now we do not know whether it is the new NDP, the old NDP or tomorrow's NDP. What we do know is that they have been consistent in their policy in that respect. So I think it is very important to just refresh members' memory, and I refer to the private member's resolution that was brought forward by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). It was on the Order Paper, and I am referring to that Order Paper of March 5, 1997. I do not intend to deal with the entire resolution, but what the member for Burrows made very clear is his party's utter disdain for the concept of work, that they simply do not see a benefit to work in and of itself. Let me support my statement by reading directly from the resolution, and I quote, it states: WHEREAS workfare is a coercive and oppressive system which robs social assistance recipients of their dignity.

So that is their position of workfare, or should I say, at least the member for Burrows.

An Honourable Member: He took it as the caucus position to their annual meeting.

Mr. Toews: I know one of my colleagues has indicated that it is a caucus position. There is a caucus position on that, and I will get to that as well. This is the private member's resolution. Well, I am assuming that his caucus did support him on this, but I do not have that from the face of the record. What we know at this point, Madam Speaker, is that the member for Burrows in fact does view workfare in that capacity.

What he then asked this Legislature to do, what he asked them to do is that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, and I am quoting: urge the provincial government to consider refusing to implement or participate in any employment programs which force social assistance recipients to accept employment which they have not freely chosen or which force social

assistance recipients to involuntarily participate in work programs as a condition of eligibility for their welfare allowances.

So clearly, their position, or should I say the member for Burrows made it very clear on the record that no one under any circumstances should not be compelled to perform work. Indeed, the only work that a person should have to do is the work that they want to do; otherwise, he says: the state owes that person a living.

Madam Speaker, I disagree with that position. I do not think that is a responsible position, and I certainly do not think that is an appropriate view of the nature of work and the benefit of work for individuals.

Now, members in the House might suggest that the resolution was simply the work of one rogue member of that caucus. Well, the same sentiments are reflected in a caucus report to the 34th constitutional convention of the Manitoba New Democratic Party, and that was in November of 1997. This was brought forward by the same member, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), but this time on behalf of the caucus. What the resolution, or the report to the constitutional convention of the New Democratic Party, states is that the resolution encourage the provincial government to introduce legislation guaranteeing the rights of social assistance recipients, including the right to a level of assistance adequate to meet one's needs, the right to appeal decisions which limit or deny assistance and the right not to have to participate in work or training programs, and in order that there was no confusion about what was meant, following the phrase "training programs," it goes on, i.e., that is, workfare, in order to receive assistance, a clear denunciation of the concept of work, that people have the right to refuse work whatever the work is, and then that the state has a responsibility to pay a living allowance to those who choose not to work.

Clearly this does not deal with disabled people, because I think all of us agree that certain people in our society may not be able to work, and the Minister for Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) has indicated that will be the discussion of a separate program.

So I find it somewhat confusing that in committee yesterday the same member, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), brings forward a number of amendments, and I think my colleague from La Verendrye expressed it best in suggesting that these were simply legal techniques trying to provide every opportunity for people to avoid working and yet receive social assistance. The attempt of those amendments was to create a legal smoke screen in order to destroy the integrity of the bill. And what then do we make of the amendment that he moved in respect of the preamble, and he suggested the preamble include the following paragraph, and I quote: and WHEREAS it is an underlying principle of welfare-to-work initiatives that it is a social obligation of all employable persons to work.

Now, what could that possibly mean, given what the same member has said on two separate formal occasions, No. 1, that workfare is coercive and oppressive, that no one should be forced to work in order to receive social assistance benefits, and then in the report that he brought forward on behalf of the entire caucus, saying that everyone has the right not to have to participate in work or training programs or workfare.

* (1830)

So then the question that comes to mind is, how can there be coming out of the mouth of the same member the concept somehow that work is a social obligation of all employable persons. What is he saying?

Again, I can only go back to what the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) has said. This is some kind of legal smoke screen that he is developing or, indeed, a political smoke screen to disguise the true beliefs of what that party stands for. They have said it over and over again. Suddenly, a few months before an election, they come out with a statement stating that somehow, yes, now it is a social obligation. Even assuming there is a measure of bona fides in that resolution or that proposed amendment, what I think is clear, the member again is trying to destroy, in one way or another, the principles behind the act, the principles that have been summarized in the preamble, trying to destroy

the balance between receiving social assistance where it is needed and personal responsibility, destroying the principle that we should strive, wherever possible, to be self-sufficient, because it is through self-sufficiency in an economic sense that economic wealth comes from. Wealth is not created by governments. Wealth is created by individuals either working by themselves or with others in order to stimulate activity.

It destroys, Madam Speaker, the preamble that we should seek to improve the economic circumstances of Manitoba families, because what social assistance does, and what a reliance on social assistance, and a right, an absolute right to social assistance does is, of course, that it destroys economic independence, economic strength, and the betterment of Manitoba families.

Of course, what does this amendment seek to do? It seeks to destroy the community that needs the individual efforts in order to succeed. A community's strength is dependent on the efforts and the strengths of the individuals who are in it. In no way does this amendment brought forward by the member in fact recognize those very important principles, but, in a sly way, attempts to destroy those principles, attempts to set up a legal smoke screen and, indeed, attempts to create a political smoke screen which is not acceptable.

So, Madam Speaker, those are the thoughts that crossed my mind while I was sitting in committee. The apparent and, indeed, obvious contradiction between what the New Democrats say in certain situations and in situations when they perceive that there might be a political advantage to doing so.

I know, in my constituency, back in 1995, the New Democrat who ran against me opposed balanced budgets. He told the constituents of Rossmere that balanced budgets were not a good thing, that they would not work, that it was destructive of the economy. The same individual told members of my constituency that the trade policies, which were bringing thousands of jobs to my constituency, and indeed have brought thousands of jobs to my constituency, everywhere you look, new jobs, and this member, as he was then, criticized the trade policies,

criticized the economic policies, criticized the budgetary policies, and, now, four years later, his masters who sent him out into the streets to say all these things are changing the rules. They have new rules. Now, all of a sudden, they believe in balanced budgets; now they believe in freer trade; now they profess to believe in economic responsibility, and, indeed, Madam Speaker, now they even profess to believe that workfare is indeed what they term a social obligation.

Well, Madam Speaker, we know what they have said on other occasions in direct contradiction to what they are saying today. This is a party, and I am speaking of the NDP, who change their principles for political expediency. I can look at the principles and the preamble of this act and say it is consistent with the party that I ran for in 1995. It is consistent with the party that I run for in the next election. It is consistent with what the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba has stood for over the last 20 or 25 or 30 years. My political memory does not go much beyond that, but I dare say those principles will find themselves reflected in many of the speeches and many of the concepts of John Diefenbaker, and Duff Roblin I know would have believed in these principles. I assume he still does. This is a party that has been absolutely consistent in its principles.

Madam Speaker, I know that from time to time mistakes are made along the way. That is the wonderful thing about the democratic process. The voter is always there to check governments and parties and individuals who make mistakes, but I know that if I proceed in the future on the basis of principles like these, I know I can do my work in the best interests of the people of Manitoba. What can the NDP say? There are no principles; there are no standards. They cannot point back to a history of longer than less than two years—less than two years. Where are their principles? Where is their integrity? I think the people of Manitoba will look very harshly at what they are attempting to do by their sly legal and political maneuvering.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to support this bill, and I know members on this side of the House are as well, and I commend this bill to the House.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, this bill was cobbled together in one day in the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) office with no consultation, at least not any public consultation. You know, frequently when the government wants to bring in legislation, they have a task force or they have a review committee or they have public hearings or they have travelling hearings, and then they draft legislation based on what they have heard. Then they introduce a bill; they send it to committee where the public gets to comment a second time, and then they draft regulations.

But this bill is different because this bill probably resulted out of a focus group, a focus group which reinforced the Angus Reid poll which said that moving people from welfare to work was a critical weakness of this government, a poll that came out in January 1999. After the focus group then there were TV ads, and then they hastily got some people together in the Premier's office to do the first draft of this bill. Then it was sent off to the Department of Family Services, and then Bill 40 was introduced about six weeks from the time of a provincial election call at the end of the session, at the end of 11 years of a tired old government who has run out of steam, run out of ideas, and are desperate to get re-elected even it is on the backs of the poor.

* (1840)

Now we see in the contents of the bill that this Conservative government wants people to trust them with the details in the regulation. Well, why should we trust this government? This is the government that is part of a political party that would do anything to get elected. We saw that in the vote-splitting scandal in 1995. We saw it with the promise to keep the Jets in Winnipeg, which now some people are regretting they supported according to a column in the Free Press today.

In 1995, this Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) said that welfare rates for food allowances for children will drop when the province takes over the city's welfare rolls, which they did. This was following a conference of ministers of Family Services where this

minister spent over \$5,000, I think it was \$5,400, to treat civil servants and elected people at Le Beaujolais Restaurant. We remember that well.

This is a government where under whose watch and under this minister's watch where there are 12,000 more people on welfare in 1998 than there were in 1988 when this government took office. As I said before, getting people off of welfare was identified as a critical weakness for the Tories in a recent Angus Reid poll. The public wants assurances that any new measures will not be costly failures like in New Brunswick where workfare cost \$177 million, got few people off of welfare and had to be abandoned. Given that the Making Welfare Work budget has been cut in half, including Taking Charge!, it is clear this government has no plan. There is no new money in this budget to implement this. The government does not really want to come clean on Taking Charge!. I still do not have the report of the evaluation of Taking Charge!, and I requested it a long time ago.

We believe that all employable citizens have a social obligation to work, but the Tories voted down our amendment on this principle. We believe in welfare to work programs that truly work. Our amendments called for accessible community-based resources to ensure that welfare recipients can move from welfare to long-term employment. The Tories voted down these amendments.

Bill 40 has come in at the end of an 11-year electoral term and after a series of election ads, voting down our amendments that would actually make the bill work, made it obvious the Tories are only interested in pre-election posturing. They are willing to sacrifice vulnerable people in a desperate attempt to move up in the polls. Although the deaf community is considered employable, the minister has said that she will not even consult with them until the fall. Without community-based resources to move people into training, treatment and parenting programs, the deaf community would not be able to fulfill the obligations in this bill. It is another example that the bill is only an election ploy.

Now we have just heard the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) trying to do some damage control on this issue. The Minister of Justice

said that deaf people are categorized as disabled. Well, the truth is that many, many deaf people are on social assistance, and we are told from people who work in the minister's department that the majority of them are deemed employable. In fact, their caseload is carried at the Rorie Street office and the Main Street office, depending on whether they are employable or going to be subject to the kinds of encouragement that people who are considered employable get from this department or people who are deemed employable but have barriers to employment, which is I believe the caseload at the Main Street office.

This minister said she is going to consult with them. In fact, I was just reading today, the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities update newsletter of Summer '99 and it says: "Consultations to be held with disabled community to improve income assistance program"—Mitchelson. And there is a quote here. "To determine which route is best, our government will first consult with all segments of the disabled community and their families about the merits and possible design features of any new initiatives."

So we know that the government has this vague kind of plan about what they are going to do with the disabled category, but they did not consult the disabled category about this bill and whether or not this bill would apply to them or not. So we heard in committee from many disabled people, people with various kinds of disabilities, all of them said that they want to work and all of them opposed to this bill said: in order to get into the paid workforce, we need some help and supports from this government.

An Honourable Member: We need some interpreters.

Mr. Martindale: Interpreters would be one of those. I know that the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) is going to talk about that in more detail. In her presentation, Theresa Swedick stated: "Are you aware that the Prov. Welfare doesn't consider deaf as disabled? So where does this system fit the Deaf community? We want jobs not workfare. We didn't ask to be born or to become deaf for you to force us to become slaves."

Point of Order

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, the honourable member for Burrows is quite familiar with the bill, and he makes reference to the disabled people of this community. It is a real shame that he is using the disabled community to benefit his own arguments as far as not supporting this bill. That is very unfair, and I would ask you to call him to order and to address the two facts of the bill.

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

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Had the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) been listening to me, he would have heard me say that I was quoting from the presentation of Theresa Swedick in the committee, which is a matter of record. It is in Hansard; we have a copy of her brief; this is what she was telling people in a very public forum, a committee stage of this bill.

In the presentation from the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities Inc., David Martin, their executive director, stated: "Since the government has decided to move in this direction, . . . our members have questions about its implementation as it affects people with disabilities. We fear that some people with disabilities may be affected by the measures forcing people to work, to attend addiction programs, or to participate in educational classes because there is no clear definition of disability." Mr. Martin also stated: "Threatening people with a life on a street and starvation seems untenable in a society like Canada."

If the Tories were serious about moving people into long-term employment, they would have consulted with the deaf and disabled communities first. The Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities presented a paper called Employment Solutions calling for accessible resources such as transportation. If the government were serious, they would have built community resources into the bills recom-

mended by Theresa Swedick and the league for disabilities.

Many of these suggestions were incorporated in our amendments. I would like to read into the record our amendments beginning with the preamble, where I moved: "AND WHEREAS Manitoba has one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada, it is a related goal of welfare-to-work initiatives to reduce the rate of child poverty in Manitoba."

What did the Tory government do? They voted against it. Another AND WHEREAS continues to say that it is a related goal of welfare-to-work initiatives, "that it is a social obligation of all employable persons to work."

That wording was taken from a presentation by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. What did the Tories do? They defeated that amendment.

Then we moved an amendment saying: "The Workplace Safety and Health Act applies in relation to an applicant, recipient or dependent who is required to undertake a community service activity under the regulations as provided for in clause (1)(b)."

The minister said they are already covered. We moved this amendment; they voted against it. Even though she said it applies, they still voted against it.

Then we moved an amendment saying that people who are required "to undertake a community service activity if, in doing so, he or she would replace or displace a paid worker," that this would be prohibited.

Does this government want to lay off people who are working and paid and replace them with volunteers? Then the paid people would be on the welfare and the people on welfare would be in work. I do not really understand the logic of that, but we suggested that did not make sense. How did the government vote on this amendment? The government defeated it; they voted no.

Then we moved an amendment saying that people with an addiction problem, as determined

by a recognized agency—I think our amendment actually said the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba or another recognized agency, because we thought it was only fair that if people have an addiction problem, it should be assessed by a professional person rather than by somebody who works for the welfare bureaucracy. How did the government vote on this? They defeated the amendment.

* (1850)

You know, one of the more interesting things that the government probably will not say in their speeches is that we supported the obligation sections of the bill. What we were trying to do is improve the bill with our amendments, and they voted down all our amendments. We also moved an amendment, I think three different times. We used identical language. We said that people should have community-based access without cost to him or her. We did some research on this, because if people are going to have to get treatment or a parenting program or whatever it is, it should be community-based and it should be accessible. Well, is a program accessible if it has a 15-month waiting list or a two-year waiting list? No, it is not. For example, the Laurel Centre has a 15-month waiting list. Did the government support this amendment? No.

We also moved an amendment saying that the government should provide for a student social assistance program and cover their expenses in relation to education or training. Well, why did we introduce this amendment? We introduced this amendment because a number of years ago, the government eliminated the student social assistance program. In fact, I wish I had it with me, but there was a Free Press editorial. I think it had a picture of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) in it, and it called their bill the kicking-students-out-of-school bill. I think that was one of the last bills that we debated in that session of the Legislature on the last night. What did they do? They kicked students out of school and put them on welfare. Now that they are on welfare, they want to force them to go to school. Well, how are they going to do that if they cannot afford—[interjection] Yes, I think that is a flip-flop. I agree with the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid). So we suggested that

students be allowed to go to school, and the government voted against our amendment.

We said that there should be available education or training, convenient or community-based access to education and training without cost. Did the government support this? No, they voted against it. This is the government that when it came to the Access program, they cut it from a peak of \$12 million in 1989-90, the first year of the Tory government, to just \$6.4 million this year. What about the BUNTEP program? Brandon University Northern Teacher Education Program and the Northern Bachelor of Nursing Program have also been cut. I am quoting here from Frances Russell, July 7, 1999, but these examples we have put on the record many, many times over the last 10 or 11 years. New Careers, the most successful training program in the country, with a 93 percent job success rate, terminated by this government.

In 1993, the Conservatives ended annual funding of Manitoba's 11 Indian and Metis friendship centres. In June 1994, payments for foster parents who care for relatives were halved from \$20 to \$10 per day. This reduction has impacted most severely aboriginal families and northerners, since 80 percent of aboriginal foster care placements occur within extended families. In 1993, the province cut funding for the Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance. In 1991, the Keewatin Community College, which primarily services the North, saw its funding reduced by \$11 million—\$11 million. We believe in welfare to work that works. They believe in cutting funding to education which is an investment in people, which helps them get off welfare and into work. In 1996, the Tories cut welfare rates by 21 percent for single adults. For the last nine years, highway spending in the North has averaged only 4 to 6 percent of total budget, compared to between 13 and 22 percent in the 1980s. As Frances Russell said, these decisions are not a hand-up, they are a kick-down. In fact, Theresa Swedick had a version of this. She said this is not a hand-up. This is a kick in the teeth, I believe, she said. I think she got it right. So here we had amendments. The government did not support any of them, voted them all down, and then expect us to support the bill.

I am going to be rather brief because I want a number of my colleagues to speak, and I know a number of government members want to speak.

In summary, Madam Speaker, we know that this was a politically motivated bill, that this bill arises out of the sheer desperation of this government to get re-elected. We know that they have cut programs that help people to get off welfare and into work, but if you look at the number of their welfare-to-work programs currently, they have the numbers in their Estimates book, 887 positions, 17,300 employable people on their welfare rolls, welfare rolls that have increased by 12,000 people between 1988 and 1999.

So, Madam Speaker, I am going to wrap up because I want as many of my colleagues to speak as time permits, and we are looking forward to this debate and watching this government do damage control and put their spin on this legislation which we know that they will be doing through TV ads, because they want to fight an election on the backs of the poor, which is something that we on this side refuse to do.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate the opportunity to put comments on the record regarding this bill. I would invite all those who may be reading the Hansard from this debate to, before they read any further, immediately obtain a Hansard for Tuesday, July 13, and read the committee minutes on the Law Amendments committee on Bill 40, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act, to find out why the lengthy list of amendments that the member just quoted was defeated.

I do not want to rehash the committee meeting here, as the member before me just did, because I do not think that is what we are here to do, Madam Speaker. I think we are here to debate a very important bill, and it is disappointing to think that the lead critic for the opposition would spend his entire time rehashing the amendments that they put forward in

committee yesterday without indicating why they were turned down.

Just for one quick example and into the meat of my speech because I intend to speak to the substance of the bill, as I wish that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) had done as well, one of those amendments to have the Workplace Safety and Health apply to this bill was defeated because it was redundant because it already does apply to this type of activity.

So I encourage people, please, if you are reading this Hansard, go get the Hansard for Tuesday, July 13, and read the committee minutes to find out the real story behind the amendments the member has just put on the record as if there was some other reason for them being turned down than the real one.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I also want to indicate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am puzzled by two things, puzzled by the fact that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), during the Minister of Justice's (Mr. Toews) speech, said four times this is a wedge issue. I do not understand why the opposition are so obsessed with saying that. I believe it is a wedge issue, as a matter of fact, but they seem to be obsessed with it and terrified by a wedge issue.

A wedge issue simply identifies a difference between one side and the other, and in a democracy that is fair game. Always, always, we have had differences in philosophies, differences in ideology, differences in approach to life between one side of the House and the other, between the government and the official opposition. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that with this particular issue, that the opposition has constantly referred to it as a wedge issue with some trepidation and fear in their voice. This I do not understand. What is wrong with having an honest difference of opinion, an honestly differently held belief in the way the world should be ordered?

I am also intrigued by the fact that this particular bill is referred to often by the opposition as a bill that was—I forget how the

member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) phrased it—cobbled, he says, cobbled together. That, to me, negates the work that has gone on for the last three years in terms of moving people from welfare to meaningful work to full-time employment. As well, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) and one of the other members, I am not sure which one from the other side, were also shouting out: this is just a vote-getting bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have never said it is a vote-getting bill. The ones who are afraid it is going to get us votes are the members of the opposition, and I do not understand why they would be preoccupied with whether a bill is going to get votes or lose votes. It seems to me they should be preoccupied with whether or not the bill is a good bill.

* (1900)

We have noticed and we still are unsure as to how the vote is going to go on this. We have noticed that the New Democrats who traditionally oppose anything to do with having people work for their—[interjection] I am trying not to listen to the heckling, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is very difficult. If you had earplugs, I could maybe carry on, but they are very, very rude and they are very, very noisy and they are very threatened by everything I am about to say here. I suspect that is why they are trying to shout down the speaker; they are trying to shout down the person speaking because they do not want the words to be heard. They hope they can throw the speaker off track in order to avoid this issue being talked about.

I do not know why they would be afraid to hold true to their principles. Yesterday some of the members of the New Democrats were freely admitting that for public perception they would vote for this bill. I see in the paper today their Leader says they will not vote for this bill. The member for Burrows has twice said that workfare is akin to evil, but I will be interested to see if he holds for it or not. I was disappointed that I did not hear anything about the substance of the bill from the member for Burrows. All I heard was dancing around the topic and talking about the amendments. I would like to now talk about the bill, and I hope other members of the

opposition, should they rise to speak, would also address the bill and not dance around the topic. I would also hope that they would have the courtesy to stop being so blessed rude as they are, especially the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who is incredibly rude right now. I am sure you can hear his screaming. He is actually screaming, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He is actually screaming and that is so appalling. It is so appalling. They are asking me to go back and—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask honourable members to wait until such time as they are recognized to put their voices and their notes on the record. I am a very patient type of guy. The honourable minister is attempting to put forth her views on the bill. All honourable members will have their opportunity when they are recognized by the Speaker. At this time the honourable minister has the floor.

The honourable minister, to continue.

Mrs. McIntosh: The basic difference between the government and the opposition on this issue, no matter how they vote, in terms of what they believe and how we act out our mandates, is that we do not believe you can create and build independence by fostering dependence. We believe that people given the opportunity to work will find great dignity and satisfaction in that. We believe that people will find greater satisfaction being self-sufficient and independent than being dependent and having to rely upon somebody else. I have talked to a lot of people, and in one sense I do agree with something that was said by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), and that is that most people do wish to work. Sometimes they are held back from working by fear. A lot of times they are held back from working by fear. They are afraid, they are nervous, they are afraid to face that first job, they are afraid of the interviews, they are afraid of being rejected. They need assistance in terms of incentive. They need a reason to take that first brave step into the job market.

All of us, I think, can remember times when we were nervous or apprehensive about having to take on a task and, if we could have, would have gone away from facing the time of trial in order to avoid the nervous feeling in the

stomach, and yet when forced to face it have found the strength to overcome and then the joy in knowing that the achievement has taken place.

I have two friends who have sons, and they are only a year apart in age. My one friend had the great sorrow of having her beautiful boy become diagnosed as schizophrenic some years ago. One of her biggest and most sorrowful realizations as he became hospitalized and very ill was she was afraid that never would he be able to have the ability to be self-sufficient and independent, that never would he be able, like the other children in her family, to get a job and be able to live without assistance from the state or from the family, from friends; a terrible sorrow for that family.

My other girlfriend's son, who is a year older than this boy that I just referenced, was born with a birth defect and was not able to learn as other children do. It is commonly referred to as mentally retarded. But he had a work expectation, and I am very proud of this boy because although he is retarded, he is employed. It is not a government-created job, it is what he calls a real job. Guess what, Auntie Linda, I have a real job, a real job. I got it by myself. It is not a big job. It is not a fancy job. It is a low-wage job. It is repetitive and, for most people, probably would be boring, but he takes pride in his work. He does a good job, and his employer thinks the world of him. He is now living independently, apart from his parents. He has two roommates. He takes the bus by himself to work every day, and the pride that that young man has and the rising of his self-esteem has been a wonderful thing to watch.

These two boys are disadvantaged people. One may always require assistance from the government, one may always need our help, and that is what we are here for. That is what the social assistance program is there for. The one boy who may not be able to sustain himself will be given assistance support from not only the family but from government. The other boy who may someday again require assistance, as he did in his early twenties, can for the moment relish his pride in being independent.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Madam Speaker, I do not want ever to be part of a government that encourages people into a life of welfare that is a cycle, that does go down through generations. I do not want ever to be part of a government that says: you cannot make it on your own, and I am not going to do anything to give you any incentive to make it on your own.

I do not want ever to be fostering dependence. We know that for those who are able bodied and able to work that in many cases all that is needed is the incentive to go out and do that. To date, governments have not necessarily done a very good job of that. When we hear people being told, as some have been told, that their first opportunity is to go on welfare and stay on welfare, I shudder.

* (1910)

So, Madam Speaker, I support this bill. There has been much said about it. I encourage people to read the committee hearings of Tuesday, July 13. Again, I repeat, the Hansard, Bill 40, July 13, 1999. I encourage people reading this, which is a short summation, to get that Hansard and read the longer debate, listen to the rationale of people on all sides and understand.

Again, my basic premise is that you do not create independence by fostering dependence and that you do a greater disservice to people ultimately by encouraging them to rely on others than you do to encourage them to be self-sustaining and independent. I believe that deeply. I guess it is a wedge issue. We believe that on this side. I know that is not what they believe on the other side, and I do not mind it being a wedge issue. I do not know why they are upset that it is. I do not know if it is a vote-getting issue or not. I do not really care if it is or is not. I think this is the right way to go.

They believe it is a vote-getting issue, and I find that very interesting. That is why I think they have come this close to supporting it because of their ulterior motives. I would be interested to see how the vote goes. Yesterday they were going to support it; today I think they may not. I will say this, Madam Speaker, that if they vote for it, then I will know they see it as a

vote-getting issue. If they vote against it, I may not agree with them, but at least I will respect them for not having prostituted their ideals.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 40 this evening, and like my colleague the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) and like the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh), I will be brief. I know we discussed this bill in great detail yesterday in the committee, and I know that many members want to speak to it.

Basically, Madam Speaker, I am going to confine the remarks I make tonight to the deaf community and to the presentations made by the deaf community. As I think members know, the Winnipeg Community Centre for the Deaf is in my community, and I feel very close to these people and am very honoured to be their MLA.

As well, my colleague from Burrows did go through the amendments that we proposed yesterday, all of which were defeated, and so I do not want to reiterate what he said, but I can hardly—in fact, I cannot refrain myself from mentioning one of them. I quote from the amendment: "AND WHEREAS Manitoba has one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada, it is a related goal of welfare-to-work initiatives to reduce the rate of child poverty in Manitoba." They voted against this, Madam Speaker. I do not know whether they support child poverty or whether they did not want to have it publicly stated that they had one of the highest rates of child poverty in Canada. I know for many, many years, it was the highest; I think we might not at this point be the child poverty capital of Canada. I think we might be second to Newfoundland or New Brunswick, I am not sure.

One of the interesting things was that the Minister of Family Services rejected this amendment by saying that she did not trust the stats on child poverty because they were 1997 information, which I found kind of interesting because I know members opposite—I think of the Minister of Health (Mr. Stefanson) who bats statistics around with great aplomb as though he were a juggler. I think of the Minister of Health who constantly uses statistics, leading me to believe that statistics are good when they are

using them but not when we are. Anyway, the child poverty, the refusal of this particular amendment, I found extremely disappointing.

Now, the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) has already pointed out that Bill 40 was gathered together very quickly one day in the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) office. He pointed out that the members opposite, the Progressive Conservatives, if that is what they are calling themselves in this incarnation. I do not know whether they are the Filmon Conservatives, the progressives or just the plain old Conservatives. I do not know what they are, but anyway so I will say members opposite. Maybe they are the Reform Conservatives now. I do not know.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, what I wanted to say was that the members opposite have asked us to trust the details of this bill to the regulations, but, of course, people do not trust this government. They do not trust members opposite, nor do they trust a minister known throughout the province as Bonnie Beaujolais, and I am going to tell you why she is called Bonnie Beaujolais. I want to quote from a news release where I read—

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Norbert, I believe, is up on a point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, clearly, the honourable member knows, if she is quoting something, that is fine; but she should not be referring to any member in this House other than as an honourable member, not the way she has been doing it. She knows that.

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

Ms. McGifford: I used the expression "Bonnie Beaujolais." If it fits someone in the House, well, then it does, but I did not name anyone in this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. In the interest of maintaining decorum in the Chamber, I would suggest that all members pick and choose their words carefully. However, if indeed the member stated the words initially in the same context she spoke to the point of order, the honourable member for St. Norbert did not have a point of order.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: I thank you, Madam Speaker, for a wise decision. Well, I do not really have to press this point. We do know that several years ago the Minister for Family Services gained herself notoriety and a certain title by spending somewhere in the region of \$5,000 on wine and a dinner party at restaurant in Winnipeg. Maybe she did, pardon me, I am sorry, maybe she did not have any wine. It was a piano? Five thousand dollars anyway was spent at a restaurant called Beaujolais by a Minister of Family Services for this and earned herself a certain title.

An Honourable Member: To talk about welfare.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, this was, ironically, a meeting of ministers of Family Services.

But, Madam Speaker, we digress and I did promise to be brief. So if I might—

An Honourable Member: That is how they understand welfare, their own welfare.

Ms. McGifford: Well, Madam Speaker, you are being very indulgent, and thank you very much.

I did want to address the issues of the deaf community in my con-stituency, but I also want to congratulate members from the deaf community for their presentation. I noted at the committee that I have not seen a deaf person ever make a presentation to a committee. The member for Burrows who has been here since 1990 said he has never seen a deaf person make a presentation at a committee. So I felt very proud of my constituents for coming out here, for showing some leadership,

and I think we all congratulate them. I know that members of the committee did.

Also, I thank you, Madam Speaker, for the role you played in obtaining interpreters, along with the Clerk. So I thank you on the record.

A contentious problem at the core of this bill for the deaf community is the question of whether deaf people qualify for social assistance because they are deemed disabled. That is to say, does a deaf person qualify because a deaf person may be deemed disabled, or is a deaf person not disabled? Several independent inquiries to the office of the Minister for Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) said that no, a deaf person does not qualify for social assistance because a deaf person is not disabled. A deaf person can work.

* (1920)

The deaf community believe that they do not qualify for social assistance because they are not disabled. Now, the minister in the hall today to the press said, and I think I am paraphrasing her very correctly, anyone who is currently deemed disabled will be considered disabled under the new legislation. Apparently, Madam Speaker, I take that to mean that deaf people will not be included unless they have been deemed disabled by a medical panel, and I want to return to this issue later.

An Honourable Member: That is right.

Ms. McGifford: I am glad to see that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) is agreeing with me because I felt that the minister's remarks in the hallway today were calculated to be a little misleading, or at least an effort to shroud the issue in mystery, to obfuscate. I do not think that she helped to clarify the issue because, of course, she would like it to be believed that the deaf community do qualify. But of course they do not, unless they are deemed disabled.

Interestingly, the woman who reported to the committee and made a presentation to the committee is judged to be disabled, but not because she cannot hear, not because she is deaf, because of other physical issues.

Madam Speaker, at the presentation in committee, Ms. Theresa Swedick from the WCCD talked about how frequently the deaf community is left out of participating or consulting in any government decision. So she was very pleased to be given the opportunity to speak on behalf of her community.

I am going to paraphrase some of the things she said. She addressed the issue of addiction and, of course, forced treatment for addiction is part and parcel of this bill. She pointed out that deaf persons can hardly receive addiction treatments when there are no support services by way of interpretation. She pointed to a specific example. A deaf person of her acquaintance who apparently was suicidal was put into a treatment program, but there was not an interpreter. Now, what kind of situation is that? How could that help this individual come to terms with his or her addiction? We do not know whether this is a male or a female and indeed it does not matter.

Now, there are interpreters at AFM. I understand they are few and far between, but there is the possibility of getting some interpretative services. The problem is that people who attend courses at AFM are then frequently asked to attend Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and once they attend those meetings, once again they are at a disadvantage because there are not interpretative services usually.

So I think that what Theresa Swedick was saying is that the bill is unworkable because it demands something. It demands certain obligations on the part of citizens, but no obligations to allow citizens to fulfill their duties. There are no resources for deaf people or, to be perfectly correct, I should say there are not enough resources to make addiction programs possible.

I think that the point was also made that the waiting list is long, long, long, way too long, and I know that the minister today and indeed in the committee talked about putting \$500,000 more into treating addiction services, but she did not address the issue of interpretative services. When this woman spoke at the committee, she did not address the issue of interpretative services.

The same kind of issues that exist for addiction programs also exist for parenting programs. If deaf people are to take parenting programs, then indeed, they need parenting programs where interpreters are present at all times. If deaf people are to attend education and training programs, then they need to have interpreters. It is not possible to be educated when you are deaf if you do not have interpretation.

One of the very sad things we heard at the committee was Ms. Swedick talking about her struggle for employment, how she had taken course after course after course. She is clearly a very well-educated, talented woman, and yet she is having great difficulty finding a position. Employers, unfortunately, do not want to hire people who are hearing impaired or deaf, and I think there is some responsibility on the part of government to educate employers in this area, and certainly, I think there is an obligation on government to lead the way in hiring deaf people and, of course, other people with other disabilities.

I am merely talking about this one, because it is the one that I dealt with most recently. Well, Madam Speaker, speaking of the question of employment, I did want to put on the record that we were told by Theresa Swedick that 83 percent of her community is unemployed; 83 percent, that is a staggering figure. I did promise to be brief. I had many other things that I wanted to say, but I think that I would like to close by saying that the deaf community, like other communities who made presentation to the committee, said over and over again in a variety of ways that what they want most are jobs. They want the dignity of respectful work. They want to take a paycheque home. They want to make this kind of contribution to their community, but this government is not providing the services that make that possible.

I recently did a survey in my community and asked constituents to identify their No. 1 issue, and I can assure you, I can assure all members of this House, that the material that came from the Winnipeg Community Centre of the Deaf listed jobs, jobs, jobs as their primary issue. These people want to work. Unfortunately, this bill puts these people in a very awkward position,

because it does not allow them to be declared disabled, at the same time the government is not providing them with work, so where are these people caught and what will this bill do to them? Does it mean all of them will have to seek 35 hours of volunteer labour a week? Again, of course, that would be an impossibility because just as there are not employers, there are not agencies in the community that are equipped to accept volunteers because of the lack, once again, of interpretation.

So I think in closing tonight, I want to say that I am extremely disappointed in this government for refusing all of our amendments. I want to vote against this bill, because it unfairly penalizes the deaf community, and, of course, my first loyalty is to my constituents.

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Speaker, this is my first opportunity I have had to speak to Bill 40, either here in the House or in committee. Let me tell you, to start off, I am proud to be a member of a government that believes in giving families in need a hand up and not a handout. For all too long, governments of the past believed in just bringing them into the trough, feeding them and then attempting to set them free. It does not work with wild animals, and it does not work with people either. If you have somebody at the trough, they are there for life unless you train them to get off of the trough.

The importance about workfare is exactly that. The example that we must look at is what experience does one receive when they take a job either volunteering or in an area somewhere within the community. Each job has its own impact upon that person. Within my business career when I had a couple of small businesses, I used to bring in some people through a system that I had developed, and it was a mentor system.

* (1930)

We took people who did not have jobs, Madam Speaker, who did not have the ability to get jobs because nobody taught them how to get a job, No. 1, or what a job even meant. It was not always easy. Sometimes we could only have them for two and three days, and they were gone. It took us awhile to get them back, but we

had great success when we created in them not an incentive, but a want to succeed, and there was a willingness to want to succeed. What gave them that willingness was the ability to say I enjoy what I am doing, and I do not enjoy receiving something for nothing.

My mother was a great one for welfare. My mother used to feed the people who came through the community of St. Norbert in the past, but they never got something for nothing. If they came in, yes, there was a meal for them, but for that meal, there was a garden outside that needed weeds picked. There could have been a fence that might have had to have six boards painted, but those six boards would be painted. Why? Because you would receive your sustenance if you gave something in return. That is what it was all about. There was not something for nothing. It was something for something. Madam Speaker, they felt satisfied that they were not receiving something for nothing, yet they had the sustenance for the day. There were some hard times back then, but people made it through. They made it through without these types of programs that we have today.

Today we are taking and improving these programs. This government in its tenure has improved its addiction programs. It has improved its child daycare programs. It has improved on its education programs. Because of the steps that this government has taken dramatically on the economic side, we are more able to work now today on the social deficit left to us by that government before us.

It was not only deficits and deficit funding that ran with that government, it was social deficits, Madam Speaker, that today we are having to correct. Will it happen overnight? No, but we, over a decade, have been working at it one step at a time. We have put forward ChildrenFirst policies because that is who is important. Because in some cases that is who we must have succeed in the future to save. If we as a government do not succeed, welfare will be there into the future, but if we can succeed in giving jobs in this province, we have done it.

We have the lowest unemployment rate in all of Canada. We have reduced the welfare

rolls in this province since 1996. The only province in Canada to have done so. Madam Speaker, go to Saskatchewan or go to British Columbia where they have NDP governments, the new NDP governments, what do they have? Increased rolls. So do not tell me about the new NDP.

Now, the members have all spoken about bringing forward 12 amendments to this legislation. I find it very interesting that they say they brought forward and we voted against 12 of their amendments. Well, three of their amendments were ruled out of order. I could give the reasons, but I do not think that will be necessary.

Let us look at the other amendments that they brought forward. Right off the bat, they had one in the WHEREAS in the preamble. Well, let us not get into the detail of it because right then we would be promoting what the NDP promote day in and day out in this House, and that is negativism.

Madam Speaker, I am tired of that, because we have to start speaking positively about this province and the positive initiatives in this province and stop speaking about the negative impacts that the NDP left us after their tenure. So their first one was not worth supporting and we did not support it, and I am proud of it.

Let us look at a couple of the other amendments that the members brought forth. I can basically put a couple of them together, I think: student social assistance program, availability of education or training, availability of addiction treatment program, availability of parenting support programs. Madam Speaker, they must be in our policy book, because this is our policy. We are doing it today. We will do it tomorrow. We will have it in the future. We do not need it in this legislation. We already have it as we do with the Workplace Safety and Health and the workmen's compensation, each and every one of these amendments the minister had an answer for. Did they listen? No, they did not.

Each and every one of these amendments was not worth the paper they were written on. They were written to give them the availability and the ability to say: we will vote against this

legislation because they did not support us in our amendments. Trash. That is what it is. As they go through the doors, will they say they support workfare? No. The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) does not support workfare. He believes in government supporting people from cradle to grave. That is what the member believes in. The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), what does she believe in? Cradle to grave. This government does not believe in it. This government believes in a job, a job for all Manitobans, and a job is what we will give them. I am proud of this government, and I will continue to fight for the people of Manitoba. I will see that they have a just and fair government, and that is what this minister and this Premier (Mr. Filmon) will give all Manitobans in the future and into the next millennium. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I just wish that I had a chance to attend that presentation at the Fringe last week. It was one of the better Fringe performances of comedy, I guess. I missed it, though, but I am glad I could catch the reprise tonight in the House.

This is a very interesting bill, Madam Speaker. It is the first time that I know of where a government ran a focused group, got an issue, crafted an ad, ran it on television, and then said: my goodness, we better get a bill. So they had a group get together in the Premier's office over one afternoon, and they put together this little piece of legislation looking for an election that they were too afraid to call on May 18 or May whenever. It is a new way of making public policy. Have a focus group, run an ad and then put together the legislation on public policy.

The next step that they are going to take reveals where this minister actually is in her thinking. Now that the bill is going to be forced through the House by this government, they are going to consult with the community that they are going to affect, so we really have an interesting order. Focus group, television ad, cobble the bill together, and then consult the

community. It is a very interesting process of public policy formation.

I want to focus for a moment just on the "consult" piece, because I think the minister genuinely does not understand the degree to which she has deeply, profoundly alienated those who have disabling conditions in the way she has treated them in this bill. I have worked with those in the disability community since before 1976, when I became director of the Social Planning Council. In fact, I used to meet every month with the directors of the major agencies: CNIB; what was then SCC and A, and now it is the Society for Manitobans with Disabilities; Canadian Paraplegic Association, under the able leadership of John Lane; Canadian Mental Health Association.

In fact it was during that time that we welcomed Bill Martin as an executive director. Without any exceptions those who had physical or mental challenges, whether they were in the form of a person like Euclid Herie, a great Canadian and a great president of the Canadian National Institute of the Blind, or whether it was Archie Carmichael, then the director of SCC and A, and not a person with a disability.

* (1940)

To a person, they wanted to be expected to work. They wanted to work. They wanted training to work. They wanted devices to help them to work. They wanted interpreters to help them to work. They wanted work, and now this minister says at the end of the day, after we passed the legislation: we are going to talk to the disabled. She has no idea how angry David Martin is. No clue how angry those people like Ms. Swedick are when they are seen by the government as not entitled to work, because they are disabled. I do not think she has any idea how offensive that is. It is deeply and profoundly offensive to that community.

I sat through most of the presentations, though I missed a few. I was impressed with the civility and the patience and the depth of feeling that was expressed by people who said over and over and over again, a paraphrase of what Churchill said in World War II: give us the tools, and we will do the job. Give us the tools,

and we will do the job. We want to do the job. We want access to education. We want access to the bridges of opportunity. We want employers to see us as abled, not disabled. We want to work; to a person, they said that. They said: give us the child care. Give us the supports. Give us the access to real work, and we will beat down your doors.

We looked at this bill, and I feel badly. I feel actually quite badly for the members who sat opposite and puzzled over our amendments, trying hard to see what devious scheme did we have in mind in moving these amendments.

The scheme that we had in mind, Madam Speaker, was a transparent attempt to hold the government accountable for what it says its policy is. Over and over again, in response to reasoned and thoughtful amendments, the minister said that is our policy. We already do that. So we said: well, then, fine, put it in the legislation, so those who are affected by your legislation will know that that is your policy, and, more importantly, that you will be accountable for what you say. She even at one point, I believe, said trust us. Trust us.

Well, "trust us" is not something that somebody who is vulnerable wants to hear when they are facing, as Susan Bruce is facing, loss of support when she is caring for disabled children, because she happens to be articulate and assertive and obviously capable of work and would like in fact to work except for the fact that she has a seriously disabled daughter who needs her very badly to be present as a parent.

Every reasoned amendment we put forward—make sure the training courses are available, make sure the addiction programs are available—every time the minister said that is our policy, but, of course, she could not vote for the amendment.

Now, that is a curious position to take because our statutes, Madam Speaker, are full of redundancies for very good reason, because you often want to know that notwithstanding what you may think, this law, in fact, does apply in the case under question. So there is nothing wrong with saying Workplace Safety and Health applies to all those who would be affected by

this legislation, and there is certainly nothing wrong with saying that before someone should have their benefits reduced for an addiction, they should have, first of all, the privilege of a diagnosis by an agency that is competent, and, secondly, they should have access to programs that might help them deal with their addiction.

But, no, we could not do either of those things, because the minister said we already do that. Now, what kind of perverted logic says we cannot accept an amendment because it is our policy? Perverse logic.

But, Madam Speaker, the most astounding thing of all is to hear members—and I am disappointed in the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau)—say that an amendment calling on this bill to have as one of its purposes the reduction of child poverty was a negative thing, that it revealed negative thinking. Those were the words he used just a few minutes ago in this House. We asked the minister to accept that a goal of her system was the amelioration of child poverty, and she said no. She said, no, it is not. It is not a goal of our system to reduce child poverty.

You know, in an unconscious way I guess she was reflecting the fact that it was her government that cut \$20 a month off babies' food allowance. It was her government that presided over a growth in the social welfare rolls of this province by 12,000 people. It was her government that has made the lot of low income people worse, has seen us as the child poverty capital of Canada for all but the last six months or a year, for years and years and years.

So, apparently, the amelioration of poverty is not a goal of the social welfare system. What an appalling position to take in order to get cheap votes, in order not to have any sense that the NDP might be concerned about something legitimately in this bill. You could not even accept an amendment about child poverty.

Then the capper on the cake. The NDP has always believed in full employment, and as a matter of fact, it is one of our founding principles, has always believed that people should contribute to the maximum extent of their capacity. It has always believed that. So when

we put forward an amendment that said that it is the job of all those who are employable, it is a social obligation to seek employment, a social obligation, they went through what the Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) talked about as pretzelization. I watched the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) make a mockery of the English language trying to figure out how he could get the idea of socialist out of social obligation. It was quite an amazing performance for someone who is supposed to be a wordsmith of the English language, to be able to turn the idea that an individual has an obligation to society into some notion that I guess conforms to his idea of strange people under the bed, that this was a socialist view, that an individual person with skills and abilities has a social obligation to society.

In summary, Madam Speaker, what this side of the House believes is that a civil society is made up of obligations, responsibilities, rights and privileges, and where there is an obligation, there must also be the ability to fulfill that obligation. Where there is a responsibility, there is also a right, and every one of our amendments was to put forward a balanced view, that if we are to hold people accountable for being citizens in a civil society, we as a government must be accountable to them in terms of opportunity.

We believe in bridges of opportunity, bridges of hope. We believe in the means to find employment. We believe Ms. Swedick has the right to find her way into the workforce. If that means confronting prejudice, if that means providing an interpreter, if that means skills training, she, as a citizen, has the right to get that so she can offer her skills to our society, her very obvious and considerable skills.

* (1950)

Every one of our amendments was put forward to balance the equation of civil society, of citizens committed to meeting the needs of each other and of their society and equipped to do so and supported to do so. And if they see some devious pattern behind amendments like that, it is a true reflection, I suppose, of the depths to which they are prepared to sink to try to find what the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) had at least the honesty to

acknowledge was a wedge issue in which she could pit some Manitobans against others and divide rather than unite, and that is apparently the only objective of this bill, hatched in a focus group, put together through an ad and finally drafted through this hasty legislation, Madam Speaker. I am sorry that the government has sunk to such a level.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I am pleased to rise in the House today to support Bill 40. This is an important piece of legislation which will allow us to help all Manitobans reach their full potential and become active participants in the Manitoba labour force.

I would like to note from the outset, Madam Speaker, that the amendments we are proposing in Bill 40 would not affect Manitobans with disabilities. In fact, we have maintained or increased the benefits which are made available to this group. In the future, though, we will examine the system to make sure that it meets the needs of this group as effectively as possible. Furthermore, benefits to recipients with children will not be affected in a way to compromise a child's well-being.

This has been clearly stated from the outset, Madam Speaker. However, the NDP have been manipulating this information, thereby attempting to create fear amongst the public. This has been shameful. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Charleswood.

Mrs. Driedger: We currently have more jobs in this province than we have people to fill them. Why then, Madam Speaker, should we sit idly by and do nothing when there are jobs to be had and people eke out meagre existences on social assistance? This would be irresponsible governance. In its capacity as a leader, the Manitoba government has an obligation to its citizens to lead them to healthy and productive lives. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Could I please ask all members for a little common courtesy and to carry on any exchanges outside the Chamber. The honourable member for

Charleswood has been recognized three times now to put her comments on the record.

Mrs. Driedger: This government is committed to improving the social potential of this province, and allowing significant numbers of Manitobans to be stuck on social assistance is not acceptable as far as we are concerned. Now is the time to reform our social assistance system and to help people to make the transition from welfare to work at a time when there is much work to be had. Social assistance was never intended as a permanent income replacement program for able-bodied individuals. It is intended as a temporary arrangement for people who are faced with exceptional circumstances and require assistance to get them through.

The way my government wishes to address this issue is to equip people with the skills they need to enter the workforce, so they can become fully productive and self-sufficient. Providing a higher income for themselves and their families gives them greater resources but also greater pride and self-reliance.

In one of the presentations, Madam Speaker, we heard the story of a young boy who was 18 at the time he applied for a job. Michael came into a grocery store and wanted a job. He had taken the trouble to get himself all dressed up in a suit. When he came in, he told the grocer that he had schizophrenia, that he would only be able to work as he was able to and that he had to go to the hospital every second Thursday for a needle. Michael wanted a job very, very badly. In all these years, he has maintained that job and he has made \$200 a month that helps him with his rent, and this young man is totally self-sufficient and very proud of his work and being able to contribute. He will tell you that his work matters to him a lot. He values the job and the dignity that work has provided for him. Everyone needs to have that opportunity.

Madam Speaker, we want to help people help themselves, and helping to move them in the right direction will give them the tools they need to become self-sufficient. Allowing people to spend their whole lives on welfare is unfair, unkind and disrespectful. We would far rather prepare people to enter the workforce than give them social assistance cheques on an ongoing

basis. There is an expression, and I have used it before and I think it is valid again: if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime. I really have to wonder which philosophy the NDP adhere to.

Our proposed amendments will help people make the transition into the workforce and give them their independence and pride. It will help us break the intergenerational dependence on welfare that we see far too often. Parents often tell their children that they want them to have more than they did growing up. Intergenerational welfare dependency makes it very hard for parents to make this possible for their children.

A link in the chain needs to be severed. People need to be given education and to be encouraged into the workforce. Only then will they improve their chances and those of their families. In speaking to a teacher recently in my area, she was telling me a story of an eight-year-old boy whom she was reprimanding in school and telling him that it was really important to learn as much as he could so that when he grew up he could get a good job, and the little boy, eight years old, said to the teacher, well, why should I have to? My dad's on welfare; he does not have to work and I could do the same thing. So an eight-year-old boy had already learned something at his very young age.

Madam Speaker, since my government embarked on welfare reform, we have seen substantial numbers of Manitobans make the transition from welfare to work. More and more Manitobans are freeing themselves from the chains of welfare dependency. We are proud of our welfare reform initiatives which, since being introduced in 1996, have helped us remove more than 18,000 people off social assistance. Manitoba's welfare rate is now the second lowest in Canada and this is something to be very proud of.

Madam Speaker, in a seven-year period in the 1980s, the municipal welfare caseload grew by over 170 percent and the provincial caseload by 22 percent. No measures were put in place to stop the momentum of the system, and the entire

social assistance program certainly, surely, would have collapsed under its weight.

It is interesting, Madam Speaker, the NDP have been so good at criticizing, but when they had a chance in the '80s to make a difference, what did they do? The NDP wants so badly to be seen as today's NDP, the new NDP. This bill, however, has really forced them to look at their true identity, and they have struggled with it. At times, in committee, they have huffed and they have puffed with such indignation during some of the presentations, and at other times they have sat there quietly and said nothing.

* (2000)

They tried to bring in amendments to make it more palatable for them, and then when the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh) was asking them about the amendment, the substantiality of the amendments and wondering why the NDP were putting forth these amendments, a comment I believe I heard, from the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), said "public perception." I really have to wonder what he meant.

An Honourable Member: I think you should get your hearing checked by the way.

Mrs. Driedger: I heard very well. The minister was talking about the amendment. The comments that were being made from the member for Thompson was "public perception," which really questions the creditability of the amendments, the motivation of the amendments, the sincerity of the amendments, and the respect of people on welfare.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Driedger: Bill 40 represents the opposite of what the NDP stand for. Their values and philosophy absolutely oppose what we are trying to do with this bill. So how could they possibly support a bill so strongly opposed by the people they invited to make presentations? [interjection] It actually is in the Hansard.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Driedger: It would be awfully hard for them, Madam Speaker, to accept a bill which was so strongly opposed by the Manitoba Federation of Labour and CUPE. The NDP are on record, in March of '97, on a private member's resolution, saying that people should not have to participate in work or training programs in order to receive assistance. How can their NDP now turn their backs on people who have believed them for years? They would be seen to be the ultimate hypocrites. They would lose all creditability among their supporters. So what will the party of contradictions stand for? How will the public know what they stand for anymore?

Madam Speaker, the NDP were so anxious to have the House recalled so people could see them in action, yet they have shown no vision, no cohesion, no energy, no leadership and no consistency. All we have heard from them is their usual shuck and jive. So, what will we see? The new NDP or the old NDP? A flip or a flop?

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I was very interested in some of the comments that the member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) put on the record, and I will paraphrase them because I wrote them down. I am not sure that I will get every word right and will not until I see Hansard. I, unlike the member for Charleswood, do not assume that what I thought I heard was accurate without getting it on the record first.

Madam Speaker, the member for Charleswood said that Bill 40 would equip people with the skills they need to enter the workforce and would help people to help themselves. Now, the problem with Bill 40 specifically is that it does not do that. The minister has even admitted that there are no services in place. She has not done the consultation with various groups to find out. She had not consulted with the community groups that she is counting on to provide workplace and volunteer locations. She has said that she has not yet done that. So how she can say, how the government can say, this is a good

piece of legislation, when it was ill conceived? As the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) said, the timing was very interesting.

I think that the reason Bill 40 was conceived and delivered in the haste and in the dead of night in the Premier's office is because the Premier (Mr. Filmon) did not have the courage to call the election on May 18, when everyone in this House and virtually everybody in the province of Manitoba thought there was going to be an election. All of a sudden, they have television ads ready. They have their platform all going for something they are going to do, and then all of a sudden they are not into the election campaign. Oh, oh, Madam Speaker, they are going to have to produce something, so they are producing Bill 40. The lack of appropriate gestation is shown in Bill 40.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

The member for Charleswood says that we put forward the amendments we did in committee to make the debate more palatable for us. I would like to say that we put forward the amendments we did on Bill 40 specifically, because we recognized that Bill 40 in its ill-conceived and hastily thought-out production did not do and will not do and cannot do what the member for Charleswood said was the objective of the bill, which was to equip people to enter the workforce.

Our amendments will or would have, had the government had the courage to accept even one of them, done that or gone a long way towards making that actually happen. Our amendments would have ensured that workers in paid jobs would not be replaced by workers in any workfare program. The goal is to keep Manitobans working and to have more Manitobans working. It is not to replace current workers with people who might come in without even any salary at all.

Our amendments would have ensured that recipients actually have reasonable access to drug treatment, parenting support, education and training programs. I want to speak just briefly about that situation, in particular, the whole issue of access to drug and other addiction treatment

programs. I have worked prior to my becoming a member of the Legislature. I did work for the Women's Post Treatment Centre, which is now the Laurel Centre. I know the people who started that program in 1984. Muriel Smith and the former government did put in place the Women's Post Treatment Program. What this program has done with a great deal of success over the past 15 years is it recognizes that women, No. 1, have special needs and requirements and treatment modes that are different in many cases from those that men have. It also recognizes that many women have chemical addictions or drug addictions or other addictions as a result of childhood sexual abuse. Those two things put together are uniquely in the province of Manitoba and almost uniquely in the country dealt with by the Laurel Centre.

* (2010)

Now, the Laurel Centre has a waiting list of 15 months for any new client to come into that program. I do not know of any other treatment program for addictions that deals specifically with women's addictions and understands the unique characteristic of many of the problems that face women with addictions, not another program in the province—15-month waiting list. What we are saying in our amendment is if you want to have on the one hand people take responsibility for their lives and say I have a problem and I want to work on it, that is fine, but to do that, to force a person or to say to a person you must take responsibility and then not on the other hand provide the balance, provide the service so that they can actually do that, what have you done? What classic hypocrisy that is. You demand something on the one hand and you do not give it on the other.

This government has spent a lot of time reducing supports for people on social assistance. Many of my caucus colleagues have spoken out on that over the years. Again, many, if not the majority of people on social assistance are women, and many of them women with small children.

One area that we did not actually talk about, I do not think, much in the committee but is very important in this whole area is the fact of maintenance enforcement. I would like to speak

just briefly about maintenance enforcement. I am wondering if the government members know that right now or as of May 25, 1999, the latest information we have received from the director of the Maintenance Enforcement Program, the arrears owed to families, read children, in the province of Manitoba now totals \$42.26 million. That is money that is legally, legitimately and morally owed to the parents and children in the province of Manitoba. What has this government done about it? They have talked about maintenance enforcement. They have talked about it for a decade. They still do not have even the basics of allowing for enough front-line staff to answer the telephones, for Pete's sake.

You cannot get through to the maintenance enforcement number. The maintenance enforcement officers have caseloads that are, I think, over 300 cases. The active number of accounts, for accounts, which is kind of a business person's accountant situation, the active number of families that we are talking about here that are owed \$42.26 million is 14,009. Mr. Acting Speaker, 14,009 families in the province of Manitoba, mostly women, the vast majority if not virtually all headed by women and their children, are owed \$42.26 million. What has this government done? It has continued to provide no support at all for the maintenance enforcement people.

Those maintenance enforcement officers do incredible work with no resources. Try to imagine that you have a parent on the phone, when you finally get in touch with them, who has not had a maintenance payment for months and months and months. She is going to go on social assistance. A very large percentage of those families are on social assistance because this government refuses to do anything about maintenance enforcement. Then they have the gall, unmitigated, I might add, to stand in this House and talk about their principles about getting people off welfare. Well, if it were not such a joke, such a dreadful joke, it would be laughable.

It is not laughable because these are real human people that we are talking about here that this government, through Bill 40, is saying, on the one hand, you better go get in addiction training because you have got an addiction,

because your worker or your director says that you have an addiction, and you say, fine, I will do that, tell me where to go. What is the waiting list for the St. Norbert Foundation? The St. Norbert Foundation is not the appropriate treatment locale for many people in this province who have addictions. I am not going to go into all of that. You need a range of treatment programs. We do not have anywhere near a range.

There is not one appropriate treatment program for everyone. The St. Norbert Foundation, my understanding is that it treats families and individuals, but a lot of it is families. What I said earlier about the Laurel Centre is that women often need addictions treatment that works only with women, that does not include men involved. You talk to any women's organization, the member for St. Norbert, and you will find that is the situation. I am not denigrating the St. Norbert Foundation. I am saying there is a range of treatment programs that need to be put in place. We do not have a range of treatment programs.

This piece of legislation is not worth the paper it is written on. It is a disgrace to the government. The people of Manitoba will know exactly what it is. Thank you.

Mr. Ben Sveinson (La Verendrye): I rise tonight to speak a little bit more on Bill 40. I have had the opportunity to speak a number of times in committee on this particular bill or pieces of it, but I have to say a few more words to make things quite clear. I have to start off with a little bit of fun, and maybe a little bit of it is at my own expense.

I said yesterday in committee, and I just want to touch a little bit here, read out the centre part of it. I know people in the general public will say that the NDP have clearly prostrated themselves by voting for this legislation. However, I will give it this much, that I might have said "prostrated." I might have. That is not the joke. The joke is this, that the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), and the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), all had a jolly laugh, figuring it was at my expense, and that is all

right. I can take that. But there was something behind all this.

You see the member for Osborne then said: It is not prostrated—ridiculing me—it is not prostrated, it is prostituted. That is exactly what she said. That is exactly what she said, exactly. The joke was this. The joke was—

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):

On a point of order. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) talks about they are not going to seize my car because of this. You know, I find it amazing that members of this House would be using terms, and by the way, for the member opposite, the only person in that committee that was using the term "prostitute" was the Minister of Environment (Mrs. McIntosh), a phrase that I find absolutely objectionable. No member of this House, in any context on or off the record, should be in a position of having that term used. It is not only unparliamentary; it is absolutely about the lowest form you could ever get to in terms of debate.

I point in Beuchesne to similar language on 492, Mr. Acting Speaker, not being included, and I find it regrettable this member in trying to correct his misspeaking himself, put that on the record. Most definitely, the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) was not using that term. The member who was using it was the Minister of Environment yesterday from her seat. I thought it was so inappropriate that I did not even deal with that in committee yesterday.

Mr. Acting Speaker, on a bill as serious as this, we do not need terms like that used, and I would like you to call that member to order and have him withdraw those comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): The honourable member for Osborne, on the same point of order.

Ms. McGifford: On the same point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker, the only exchange I had with the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) was when he said do you not feel silly, and I said I could not begin to compete

with you in that arena. He seemed to be very wounded. I did also, when he used the word "prostrated," say that is a gland. Those were the only exchanges I had with this member. I do not use the word that he accused me of using because I find it extremely offensive to women. I assure you, he either misheard or dreamed it up because it is not a word that I use, and I am extremely angry with this member.

* (2020)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Acting Speaker, I believe that members opposite are using the term in a very narrow sense. I think the sense that the member for La Verendrye used the word in is, in a sense, of being mercenary. These opposition members have demonstrated that they are nothing but mercenaries. They change their policies whenever it suits them. In that sense, the word that was used, the word to prostitute, does not necessarily have a sexual connotation. Indeed, it does not have a sexual connotation in that sense. They are mercenaries. That is what I think the context of the conversation was, and that is not unparliamentary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): Thank you. Order, please. I think the honourable members who wish to carry on a conversation, I would ask you to come to order, please. Order.

I would remind honourable members that when they are called to order they would consider the proper decorum that they are familiar with in the Chamber. When a member is speaking, when the member is acknowledged, that they would allow the member to speak and treat them like all honourable members.

I was attempting to deal with a point of order that was brought to the attention by the honourable member for Thompson. The honourable member for Thompson did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, is that appropriate for a member to use the term "prostitution" in this House, not a reference to anything else other than members of this House? Is that appropriate? I would like to know if that

is your ruling, because if that is the case we will be challenging the ruling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): In response to the honourable member for Thompson, with regard to the point of order that was raised, the honourable member for Thompson was referencing the parliamentary reference made to prostitution by the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinsson). The honourable member, and I was listening very carefully to the honourable member for La Verendrye, was not referring to any honourable member in reference to prostitution. He was referencing a collective reference to all members. So, to the honourable member, on the basis of that, it is not unparliamentary, and the honourable member does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: I challenge your ruling.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): All those in favour of upholding the ruling of the Chair, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): All those against.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): On division.

Mr. Sveinsson: If the members had waited for me to stand, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would have removed the word "prostituted," not that in fact it had not been said in that committee, but just because it riled somebody. I would have removed it. That is still not the point that I

wanted to make. The point that I wanted to make before I was so rudely interrupted was, and I point out, that the members across the way knew exactly what they were doing with these amendments. They used the word that explained it very, very well. So the word that they used and that they do not want to say that they used, they know exactly what it was and they know exactly how they used it, and it explains it perfectly.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I do not want to go on too long here, but I just want to say, just to touch on a few of the things, be it motherhood and apple pie, that they applied to a number of these amendments, and then they threw in the words: no applicant, recipient or dependant is required to comply, no assistance shall be denied and so on, along with the motherhood and apple pie. And then they said: we cannot understand, we just do not understand why you do not go along with it.

There are so many things that I want to get into here, but I do not know if I will have the time. I just want to say this: the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) sat across the way and he mentioned a number of things like saying: we believe in workfare, we believe in workfare. It seems to me that I heard him say something like: we believe in balanced budgets. That does not go back too far, does it?

What do the people across the way have there? Commitment. Integrity. Understanding. Do they stand up for what they believe? Well, I am not too sure about that. I am really not too sure.

Let us take a look back. We heard it just used here a little while back that this particular piece of legislation was an election gimmick. Let me see if I can find anything to do with the balanced budget legislation. It was an election gimmick too, remember? Yes, Sir, it was an election gimmick, and here it is. Mr. Hickes said it. An election gimmick, yes, it is in Hansard.

* (2030)

Mr. Doer said: it is a cynical pre-election ploy. And Mr. Sale said: balancing a budget

every year cannot be defended on any economic ground. Just imagine that. Mr. Ashton said: this bill will not work. Barrett said, or Ms. Barrett said: this legislation does not correspond with any economic theory known to personkind, either historical theory or current economic theory.

Mr. Jennissen said: it was created for election purposes. Does it not have that ring to it? Ms. Wowchuk said: no government needs balanced budget legislation. It was not too long ago that this particular group across the way said that they believed in balanced budgets. They did not add those extra words, though, balanced budgets and balanced budget legislation, because the first chance they ever got they will rip it out and chuck it. That is what they believe in.

No government needs balanced budget legislation. Ms. Friesen said: it is one of those more unthinking pieces of legislation.

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: With the greatest respect, Mr. Acting Speaker, the bill under debate is Bill 40. It has nothing to do with balanced or unbalanced budgets. It has to do with social assistance. I wonder if you could ask the member who is speaking to speak to the bill under question and not to speak to irrelevant matters so that we can conclude this debate in an orderly fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McAlpine): The member for Crescentwood, I believe, does have a point of order. I would remind all honourable members, when they are speaking to this bill, Bill 40, that they direct their comments and remarks to the bill. I would ask the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) to continue.

* * *

Mr. Sveinson: I have to point to just a couple of things said by a few of the people across the way. It has been pointed out earlier, for example, Mr. Martindale has said: whereas workfare is a coercive and oppressive system—the honourable member for Burrows, I am very sorry—whereas workfare is coercive and an oppressive system which robs social assistance recipients of their

dignity, therefore be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider refusing to implement or participate in any employment program which forces social assistance recipients to accept employment which they have not freely chosen or which forces social assistance recipients to involuntarily participate in work programs as a condition of eligibility for their welfare allowances.

How many of the people across the way stood up and said: we believe in people having to work. What do these words say?

I truly believe that the people of Manitoba in this next election will really judge things well, and they will be lucky to have one seat left in this House. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Acting Speaker, I have been listening carefully for a number of weeks to debate on this bill both in the House and at the committee, and I want to start off by saying that I think we would agree that welfare is not the solution to unemployment. We know that welfare is well under the poverty line—we could call it institutionalized poverty—and we know that there is a complex need for programming and services in this area to provide the transition from welfare to work in a successful fashion. To make that transition permanent, to make that transition actually elevate people out of poverty is a complex problem. Unfortunately, this government is not so complex.

We, on the other hand, recognizing that welfare is not the solution have a history of programs that work. The NDP has demonstrated a creation of a number of programs. It was interesting at the presentations on the bill, Mr. Acting Speaker, that one of the speakers who talked about being a former welfare mother, when asked how she did it, how she went from welfare to work to be there before us, she referenced the Access program, one of the successful programs that the NDP put in place that this government has reduced and has stood by and watched the reduction.

We want to help people move from social allowance to employment, but we recognize that this requires support. That is why we have put

forward amendments. We put forward amendments, Mr. Acting Speaker, that this government voted against. We put amendments forward that would require some of the programs that they have reduced, for example, in education, to be replaced. We know that this government has the worst record in the country now on having people go to community college and graduate from community college, the lowest rates in the country of having high school graduates enter community colleges. We want to see that problem solved, and that would be one of the solutions in helping put those kinds of supports in place. We know that we have some of the longest waiting lists for entry into community colleges.

So we requested that they would look to have some obligation as well, that as they are requiring people to have an obligation to look for work and to work, that they have an obligation to put in place the kinds of programs that people need, the kind of literacy programs, the kind of education programs, the kinds of programs that are going to have them see a job at the end of the process. So what did they do? They voted down those programs and that amendment. This government has, as I said, reduced the Access program, and now what they do is they try and stretch the funding. They are creaming the people who enter that program, the people who do not have as great needs. They do not provide as much support so that they can try and keep their statistics up.

But we also know that they cut the New Careers program. That training program had a 93 percent job success rate. It was the envy of the country, and that was ended by this government. They have reduced the payments for foster parents, and particularly punitive was the care for families who are taking into foster care a relative, and that has greatly affected aboriginal communities and northern residents. We know that in '96 when they first began their welfare workfare program that they reduced the social assistance benefits by 21 percent.

We know that one of the reasons that they have gone to these measures is, as the minister for social allowance has said a number of times, that a life on welfare is a life in poverty. But they also have created a situation in Manitoba by

their low-wage economic strategy, where a life on minimum wage for a number of families is also going to be a life on poverty. So to deal with this, they have brought in workfare. They have had to bring it in and then start reducing the welfare payments. They cut the Student Social Allowances Program, and now they are requiring people to work without ensuring that those programs are in place.

It is interesting to note that the initiative which was announced before the bill was targetting 16- and 17-year-old welfare recipients. In 1994, the Tories changed the policy for noncompliant 16- and 17-year-old wards of Child and Family Services to simply put them on welfare with no supports. The number of Child and Family Services wards on welfare falls at about 130. In '95, the Children's Advocate called for a full review of services for 16- and 17-year-olds and repeated the call with the last report. This is a highly cynical move on their part, given that the same number of 16- and 17-year-olds are the ones that they are now requiring to go back and take those programs that they eliminated.

* (2040)

We also put in proposals to deal with the problem on addictions. There are waiting lists of 15 months at the Laurel Centre. There is a waiting list for 200 at the St. Norbert centre, but they voted down that amendment as well. They voted down our amendment. I want to reference that even Reverend Lehotsky said, referring to addictions treatment, there is concern expressed about that. Is it just the discretion of a worker who is grumpy on that day? We need a solid mechanism for determining who is really putting themselves and the community at risk. Even their own candidate has expressed concern about the bill under the area of addictions, the discretion that they are going to have.

We put forward a similar amendment requiring supports and child care, recognizing that they have increased the subsidy cost per child care, and the fact that there is a sore lacking of before- and after-school child care in our province. The reason I mention all of these is because of the way that the government dealt with all of these amendments, would have at

least given the chance that this program in this legislation would work, and that is because they called these trivial. They called these technicalities. The member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) called these community supports that are needed by these recipients so they can be successful in the workforce. They called them redundant. Those are the words they used to describe the community supports that are essential for people to successfully move from welfare to work.

We know that there are 12,000 more people collecting social allowance under the watch of this government than when they first took office. We know that there is \$42 million or more owing to children in this province under the maintenance program. The Maintenance Enforcement Program only has a success rate of just over 51 percent. We know that they are serious about addressing the increase in social allowance reliance by a lot of those families. If that is what they were to do, address those abysmal statistics.

Mr. Acting Speaker, under the area of listening to the public, I would suggest that the government was not paying attention at the community hearings. I know that a number of the presenters said that they felt like they were not consulted. They were using people like Theresa Swedick. She said: we are disappointed with the speed in making and preparing this bill. Certainly it is not going to help the disabled community. She said: workfare will be damaging to us because we have to have interpreters.

We need to have other services provided. Are they going to provide interpreter services? Probably not. Individuals who have an addictions problem need interpreters if they are deaf. Are they going to provide those services? Probably not.

This is part of the consultative advice that we would be giving to the Conservatives if they had consulted people with disabilities prior to cobbling together this bill, but, no, they chose not to do that. They chose not to listen to the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities who said that people with disabilities do not necessarily want to be categorized as a separate

category. They want the programs that they need, as well, to work, to move into the workforce. They do not want to be labelled unemployed. A number of them have a lot of skills. They need support so that they can get into the workforce.

The bill, then, also has been criticized for having no clear definition of how they are going to determine who has a disability and the fact that many people with serious disabilities have invisible disabilities, and, unfortunately, many people who are very capable of working and could go out and do a job exceptionally well have very visible disabilities, and those are the ones who could very easily be defined as disabled by this government. It seems they have no interest, though, in providing the kind of supports necessary for people with disabilities to ensure that they can be successful in moving from welfare to work. Their consultations are afterthought, second thought, and we can see very well that in cobbling together this pre-election bill that they really did not give very serious consideration to the damage that they are doing to the lives of people who are vulnerable, who are disabled, who need different support so that they can be successful in getting into the workforce.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we want to see a welfare-to-work program that is going to work. We want to ensure, as did our amendments put forward that they also defeated, that this program is not going to displace people who are already working for wages that are above the minimum wage, perhaps that are higher than the minimum wage. This government sees nothing wrong with having people working 35 hours a week for wages that are less than the minimum wage.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the legislation is vague. It gives a lot of permissibility to staff in the minister's department, and we can tell that this bill is basically them searching to try and find a pre-election issue. I am pleased that the public, as we have seen through the presentations, and we are not in support of the bill.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Acting Speaker, when I was first elected to this House in 1986, I came

here with a vision and a mission, if you like, to do everything I could to work with my colleagues, all my colleagues in this House, to help prepare for a better Manitoba for future generations.

I came here not to support dependence in our society but self-reliance. I came here not to support despondency but to support confidence. I came here not to promote sadness in our society but to bring about well-being in our population, happiness in our population. I did not come here to promote and support envy. I came here, Mr. Acting Speaker, to help promote self-worth in our population. I did not come here to help bring about a sense of hopelessness in Manitobans but to promote hope, to support and stand up for freedom and to work toward a sense of joyous anticipation for the children of this province and for the people of this province.

There is a very wise person in Manitoba who once said our social safety net is a net, not a hammock, and there are people in this Chamber who want to continue to promote that dependency amongst the population in this country and in this province. Everybody knows what this bill says; everybody knows what it does not say. What we have been hearing is a lot of rhetoric, certainly from one side of this House, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I think that honourable members on this side of the House who support this bill and who support what it stands for will prevail in this debate. The people who promote hopelessness and dependency in our population, I hope, will fail, and I hope they will ultimately see the error of their ways and join with the rest of Manitobans who are looking for a bright future and not for one which is one of spawned dependency. I say "spawned" because I have a sense that there are some politicians in this province who have a philosophy that, if you create dependence in the people and you get certain politicians elected, then as long as those politicians find a few crumbs to throw to the masses you can somehow make them grateful for those crumbs.

* (2050)

Mr. Acting Speaker, crumbs are not good enough for me. Crumbs are not good enough for my children. Crumbs are not good enough for

the people of Brandon West, and they do not expect me to support this kind of thinking. Indeed, I have before me a resolution which I understand was debated and carried at a New Democratic Party convention. I am sorry to say it was sponsored by the constituency of Brandon East, but I assume the NDP part of that particular constituency, and it calls for various things we have been hearing about tonight from honourable members opposite, all of which point to hopelessness, despondency, dependency, envy and all of those things that I have spoken of a moment ago. One of the things that is contained in that resolution is the following: the right, and I apologize for the split infinitive but it is not mine, the right to not have to participate in work or training programs, i.e., workfare, in order to receive social assistance. Then it says, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that when the Manitoba NDP forms the next provincial government of Manitoba, legislation enshrining the aforementioned standards for social programs be introduced.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think we know what we can expect from honourable members in terms of their position as they put it before the people in the next election in Manitoba. We have also heard plenty of evidence of it here in this House. I know also that, when I sought the nomination for my party in 1985, I remember speaking about competency, about caring and businesslike approaches being taken to the running of government in our province. Notice in this sense the emphasis on caring. People, those who are able, ought to be able to look out for themselves and government ought to get out of their way and make life bearable for people. But governments tend to make life very unbearable for people and very overburdening, because when you adopt the philosophy, the crumbs philosophy I mentioned a few minutes ago, you create that envy in people, you foster that dependence in people, and you make them less people than they really ought to be.

The Creator has expected people to thrive, people to make something of their lives. Those who are able to should work. Those who are not able to have every right to look to their friends and neighbours and society to look out for them. That is our duty as caring individuals and a caring society. But to stand up and to make a

case that you ought not to have to work for welfare if you are able bodied, the people of this province simply do not agree with that, and anybody who thinks otherwise is living on some other planet and certainly not in the province of Manitoba.

So, on behalf of my constituents, who feel strongly about working against cradle to grave dependence and despondency and envy and all of those baser instincts that we have unfortunately in humankind, the people of Brandon West expect me to stand on my feet to support Bill 40 and to support self-reliance, confidence and a well-being and a sense of self-worth in the people of this province. After all, much of the groundwork has been laid for people to take up the opportunities that have been made available, not only with the help of the Creator but also with the help of the wealth generators, the job creators in this province as well as this particular government that has been in office here. But I am sorry to say there are some politicians in this province who see it in quite another way, and I am sure that the people of Manitoba—I know they will—will have the wisdom to know the difference and to know what is good for the future generations of Manitobans.

I urge all honourable members to vote for Bill 40. Those who are intent on doing so, congratulations. Those who have other thoughts in mind, I ask them to think about it long and hard before they continue along the path of creating a society of dependency. I simply will not support that.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to speak on this bill today. I had the opportunity to sit in most of the committee hearings, and I will say that I was very moved by many of the presenters who showed a lot of courage to come before this Legislature and committee and present in the face of a hostile government in its dying days, a government desperate for a political issue, a government after 11 years that has put in this legislation, legislation that I believe not only is not good legislation but legislation that shows some of the big differences between members opposite and members on this side when it comes to understanding the reality of what drives our society in Manitoba.

I think it is appropriate as we stand here today, as we enter the new millennium, to reflect that it is only in a very short number of generations that we have fundamentally changed Manitoba's society. You know, a hundred years ago members of this Legislature in the previous Legislative Building looked at a very different society. In those days people would work for 70 hours a week. People lived in terrible conditions. There was no public education for many people. In fact, 30 percent of children under the age of 15 did not attend school. We call that child labour today. In those days there was no medicare. In fact in those days, in fact as late as the Second World War, 30 percent of people who applied to fight in the war were rejected for medical grounds.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

In terms of democracy, in those days, in 1899 there was not a single member of the Legislature that had the kind of vision that this party has, although I might add that the first labour representative was elected the following year. But you know, it is not surprising, given the fact in the city of Winnipeg with 100,000 people, only 7,300 people were eligible to vote. Women were not eligible to vote. Aboriginal people were not eligible to vote. What dramatic change we have seen, and it comes from a vision of a social society.

I find it amazing that members opposite, you know, as soon as they heard the word "social" the only thing they could do was attach the term "socialist." But whether people were socialists or social democrats or had a vision of social economic justice at the beginning of this century, it has been a remarkable century because, by and large, we have achieved it in this province. We now in this province, despite all our shortcomings in this great country of Canada, because of those who had that vision, now have according to the United Nations the best quality of life, and a lot of it, I might add, is because of our commitment to health and education, the social aspects.

Fundamentally the vision that we put forward for a society was the fact that we are far stronger as a society as a whole when we support each other than as individual components. One

of the things that has dramatically changed in this century is the way in which we deal with those who are poor and those who are disadvantaged. One hundred years ago, to quote a political philosopher that probably sums up the political philosophy across the way, life was nasty, brutish and short for many poor people without health care, without education. In terms of working conditions, the people in this Chamber may not realize but on a one-mile stretch of the Hudson Bay rail line there are 50 unmarked graves. That is what the working conditions were like in those days.

But you know throughout this century we have built on that. We have established many social safety nets in this province, and we have also understood if you work with the poor, you work with the disadvantaged, that you can have a much better society in terms of employment.

I say to members opposite what they are doing now on this legislation for their own political purposes threatens that very society. We may take credit on this side, but until recently there was I believe a broad consensus on many of those issues in the province of Manitoba. I say to members opposite by picking on the poor, as they are doing in this case, what they are doing is they are going back to a time gone by, a time gone by in which the deaf and the disabled and others suffered immensely in this province, were never given opportunities.

I want to say to members opposite, despite our philosophical differences, of all of the legislation I have seen from this government in these 11 years, this is about the lowest. This is the lowest that I have seen this government stoop for political purposes.

An Honourable Member: You mean lower than MTS?

Mr. Ashton: Even lower than MTS, because in MTS they may not have told the truth, Madam Speaker, but you know they are setting up a situation where in this election they are going to try and run against the victims. They are going to try and victimize the victims in this province.

Let us get it straight right now in this 1999. After 11 years of Tory government, what has

their vision accomplished? There are 12,000 more people on welfare than in 1988. There is only one welfare party in this Legislature. It is the Conservative Party that has cut every imaginable education and training program and assistance program to get people from welfare to work. Let us not kid anybody in this Legislature. They cut Access; they cut New Careers; they have cut apprenticeship programs; they have cut the Student Social Allowances Program. I have seen people in my own constituency. You know what they did? They went from school to welfare under this government because they cut the Student Social Allowances Program.

* (2100)

I want to say, Madam Speaker, I have seen them twist and turn on this issue in terms of their characterization of us. I was kind of glad in a way that members opposite, if we did not vote against this bill, we were betraying our principles. Well, what do they expect after they rejected every last one of our 12 amendments, when they have a bill that is a one-way street, a bill that says to somebody such as the people in my constituency who are unemployed?

I will give the example of Thicket Portage, or Pikwitonei in the committee. I invite members to visit that community. A generation ago everybody was employed. I tell you the grandparents worked 35 years in CN; the parents were laid off after 15 years; and the kids and young adults today have no job opportunities, no education opportunities because of the neglect of this government. They did not choose what has happened to the trapping industry with the antifur lobby in Europe. They did not choose what has happened in terms of fishing and declining prices, which has not been made any better by this government with the freight assistance. If they are unemployed today, and many are seasonably employed, and they have to deal now with the cuts from the Liberal government federally in terms of unemployment insurance, it is not by choice. It is by circumstance. I tell you they want to work. They want to work in the same way the presenters before the committee want to work, the courageous deaf community, 83 percent unemployment.

I say to members opposite, when there are 17,300 people who are considered employable

on the list, this legislation just shows how out of touch the government is. The reason there are more people today on welfare than 11 years ago is because this government has forgotten what used to be a consensus but is still the principle espoused by this government. It is a view of society as being a social organism; it is a view of society that views social and economic justice coming from the recognition of two things: that we need to give people opportunities, but that we also need to work with them to make sure they can maximize those opportunities. I say to members opposite who seem to take some glee in us opposing this bill—I am sure they have their campaign ads lined up. It is actually Mike-Harris-like here. I want to say this is Manitoba. We have a proud tradition in this province of a hundred years of building a better province with that social vision. I want to say to members opposite: Mike Harris politics is not going to work in Manitoba because the people of Manitoba know better.

Our position as a party is clear. Unlike the Conservative Party, we will not fight an election on the backs of the poor, the deaf and the disadvantaged in society. We will speak for what needs to be spoken for: in this case, work, not this trumped-together workfare, but work and opportunities. This government with 12,000 more people on welfare has been an abject failure. It is time for a party that will put people to work, the New Democratic Party that will provide the supports and the real opportunities for the unemployed and the disadvantaged in our society just in keeping with our vision.

I say to members opposite: our vision is intact, and our vision is the vision we are going to be taking to the people of Manitoba. I have every confidence that they will elect a New Democratic government and throw out this government after 11 years of failure.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I am certainly pleased to see the fire back in the belly of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). I thought that they had almost died and gone to heaven, or I am not sure to heaven, over the last few weeks because I think they have been in quite a dilemma. They are in quite a dilemma because we have seen the new image, the new Tory-blue

image, of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) in his ad campaigns and in his new dress and his new manner, the pin-striped suits and the new image of the new NDP or today's NDP. I was becoming quite hopeful that the "me too" attitude of the New Democrats might continue and they might agree to support legislation which, I think, just follows along with the legislative changes that we made back in 1996 where we brought in welfare reform and enabled us to take over the City of Winnipeg's welfare caseload and amalgamate that to a one-tier system.

I know the members of the opposition, when that bill was presented, certainly voted against it, spoke against it, and I think probably put a lot of the same comments on the record, the fear-mongering on the record back in 1996 that they put on the record again during the debate on this piece of legislation, although they have only just now begun to debate it, because they were not quite sure what they would do when the legislation was introduced. I think it has become very clear over the last 24 hours maybe, must have been decided in the deep, dark halls of the New Democratic caucus last night.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, I do want to go back and put on the record a bit of history of why we are here today debating this bill tonight. I became the Minister of Family Services back some, I think it is over six years now.

An Honourable Member: Six short years.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Six short years. Sometimes it seems very short when I look back. It has been a long time. In the history of our province, I am not sure there has been a Minister of Family Services in place for six years; nonetheless, Madam Speaker, the reason we brought welfare reform and changes to legislation back in 1996 was because I had the opportunity to speak to many Manitobans who were on social assistance, on welfare, and the policy at that time, a policy that was in place under the New Democratic government and continued for a few years under our government, was a policy that said to single parents: we consider you, we label you unemployable, and you can stay on welfare until your youngest

child turns 18, and then we expect you to go out and get a job.

Madam Speaker, there were many, many older women whose children were 18 who had no self-esteem, no skills, no ability to enter the workforce, and they were expected to go out and get a job. That is extremely unfair to the women in our province and our communities who have been committed to a life of poverty on welfare and cannot or would not have the ability to move forward to move into the workforce. I felt at that point in time that I wanted to see more for the women of Manitoba than a life of poverty on welfare. So we started to look at our welfare system and started to look at what kinds of changes needed to be made in order to ensure that people had an opportunity to move forward, to move out of a life of dependency. So at that point in time, back in 1996, we brought in legislation that changed that. We brought in legislation that said: once your child turns six or is in school full time, you are expected to find employment. So women, when they have a family and become single parents, should start to think about how they are going to move forward into a life of independence, not a life of dependence.

We looked at amalgamating the City of Winnipeg's caseload to reduce the overlap and the duplication and to try to ensure that we had programs that were consistent, that people did not have to move, enter the welfare on a city caseload, become disabled, and then have to move over to the provincial caseload. If their disability was only temporary and they had the ability then to go back to work, we would move them back to the City of Winnipeg's caseload. I mean, it did not seem to make sense to individuals to have to go through that kind of activity. We wanted a streamlined program that would, in fact, ensure that we were not wasting time administratively and not serving the clients.

* (2110)

I know the opposition did not support that first phase of welfare reform, and I would imagine tonight they are not going to support the second phase. I think from their comments that they have made over the last few days in both committee and tonight that they have made up

their minds that they do not believe in the kinds of principles that we have put in this second piece of legislation, which follows up from 1996. I have heard the opposition comment about the timing of this legislation. Well, I want to say that our first welfare reform bill was brought in back in 1996 after a provincial election. So it was not just before. It was not just to gain support from the electorate, but it was the right thing to do for the right reason. And the reason we are making changes again today is because we now have the ability with the one-tier system in the City of Winnipeg that was just implemented this year to move forward and ensure and focus.

What the opposition have neglected to talk about in their comments—they have talked all around the issues, but they have not talked about the main focus of this legislation, and that main focus is on those 500 single, able-bodied people per month that walk into our welfare offices and say: give me welfare. We have a government that has put in place economic policies and balanced our budget and had the private sector come to Manitoba and create jobs, and there is no reason for 500 single, able-bodied individuals every month to walk into a welfare office and say: give me something. It is time that we said to them: there are jobs out there begging for people to come to work. Every main thoroughfare that you drive down today has job opportunities, help wanted signs. There is no reason those able-bodied, single individuals should not be out looking for jobs. The only reason they might think that they should be able to choose welfare over a job is because of the policies that the NDP has articulated over the years.

We see policies and resolutions that the New Democratic Party has brought forward that does not provide any incentive for those single, able-bodied people to go out and get jobs, to take some personal responsibility for their own lives, and to remove the burden from the taxpayers of Manitoba of some of those that believe that they deserve to get welfare, that they do not have to work because the New Democratic Party says that they have a right to welfare, and they have a right to choose what they want to do. Even if there is a job there that they are qualified for, if they decide they do not want to work, they do

not have to. That is the difference between them and us. We believe in personal responsibility. We believe that people have an obligation to themselves and to their community to contribute something back, that something that seems to be missing in the New Democratic Party.

We know it is missing, and we know that all of their comments have focused on the disabled people in our community who are not impacted by this legislation. Madam Speaker, I have heard many comments about the deaf community and disability. I want my honourable friends across the way to remember that the policies that are in place for disabled welfare recipients are the same policies that were in place when the New Democratic Party was in government. They have not changed. They are the same policies for identification of disabled individuals under our welfare system as were in place when they were government. So let them not lead Manitobans to believe that we have done anything different policy-wise than what they did.

The only difference is that when the NDP were in government there was no special rate for the disabled. They treated disabled people like employable people. We were the government that brought in an income supplement for the disabled category on welfare. Before we came to power, Madam Speaker, there was nothing there for the disabled. They gave them nothing. They talk a good line, but, in fact, they do nothing when they are in government. It is fine to be able to talk in opposition about what they would do, but history tells us what they did do when they were there. They talk now about being a soft and sensitive and caring government when they come in, and they will give everyone everything that they ask for and people do not have to give anything back in exchange. I find it absolutely despicable.

When I look at some of the comments that were made—I mean, I listened to the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) saying in committee, and I just have to find my quote because I could not believe my ears. She said how much money is in your budget for job creation? I have to say back to her that there is no money for job creation because the private sector creates the jobs under a Conservative government. It is not

government's job, it is not our job, to create jobs for individuals. We create the economic climate, Madam Speaker, and the private sector creates the jobs. That is why we have jobs wanting for individuals today, and the New Democrats would rather say keep people on welfare; give them the right to stay on welfare; they do not have to work. That is the difference between them and us.

Madam Speaker, they talk about a piece of legislation that was cobbled together. Well, I have to say that we have been working on welfare reform since 1996. We brought in legislation which the New Democratic Party did not support at the time, and, again, we see today that they are the same old New Democratic Party with a new face and a Tory-blue Leader that talks about different times and different ways today. But most Manitobans will understand and will know that there is a difference. There is a difference between a New Democratic Party, whether it be today's, tomorrow's or yesterday's, that brings resolutions to this Legislature, passes resolutions at their annual meetings that talk about welfare being a right and no one should have to work or contribute to the community in order to receive welfare assistance.

I think it says it all when we look at a resolution from Brandon East, from members of the New Democratic Party, that says many WHEREASES, and one of the rights that individuals should have is the right not to have to participate in work or training programs, i.e., workfare, in order to receive social assistance; and BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that when the Manitoba NDP forms the next provincial government of Manitoba, legislation enshrining the aforementioned standards for social programs be introduced. That is the old New Democratic Party. That is the new New Democratic Party. That is yesterday's New Democratic Party, and that is today's New Democratic Party.

Madam Speaker, I think that we as a Conservative government have more hope for Manitobans. We know that the kinds of programs and the kinds of obligations that will be placed on individuals who are able bodied that should be contributing to our community will happen under this government and under this legislation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I, too, would like to, on behalf of the Liberal Party, put a number of words on the record. If I can in essence quote the Leader of our party: It is time to change our welfare system, but it is difficult to support Bill 40 which brings in workfare without a more comprehensive review of the whole welfare system.

Madam Speaker, I believe Liberals, in fact the majority of my constituents, support welfare reform, and workfare is a part of that reform process, but when I vote for legislation I need to have the confidence that changes needed will in fact be made. I have little confidence that this in fact would happen. Again, in quoting my Leader: Bill 40 is a simplistic shotgun approach to welfare reform. The Conservative government had 11 years to bring a bill like this forward. They waited until the eve of an election and then tabled a poorly designed bill. The concept of workfare—

* (2120)

Point of Order

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): I believe Beauchesne allows members to use notes to deliver a speech, but I just wonder if the member qualifies using notes for his speech.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I sat and I listened to a number of speeches, and I can assure you that members on both sides of this House actually took the liberty to specifically quote other aspects. That is all I was doing is making some very specific quotes. I would ask that the government House leader respect that.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I thank the honourable government House leader. He has withdrawn his point of order.

* * *

Mr. Lamoureux: In terms of the concept in which we do support the concerns in regard to

replacement or displacement of individuals that are currently receiving money in some form is a valid concern which this bill neglects. Availability of treatment programs is again a valid concern that has been expressed. The question in terms of appeal mechanisms again raises serious doubts in regard to the viability of this particular bill. The ability to allow for individuals to do job searching questions the validity of this particular bill. Putting at concept the risk of workfare is the way in which we see this government approaching this very important issue in which we all recognize is necessary. We do distinguish ourselves with respect to the New Democrats who do not believe in the concept.

With those few words, I will indicate that we will in fact be voting against Bill 40.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I want to make a few comments about Bill 40. The member for Inkster has just stated that their party understands, as we do, that this last-minute, cynical, pre-election bill is not, regrettably, worthy of support. We knew, when we read the bill two weeks ago now that this bill provides all the authorities to deal with so-called workfare to the cabinet of the day. In fact, if this was another bill dealing with another matter where everything is subject to regulation, everything that is dealing with the matter of welfare and social assistance is subject to cabinet agreement, why would we even need to bring a bill into this Legislature? To take away this legislative authority and responsibility and delegate it to people in cabinet, I think, is a huge abdication of our legislative responsibility.

When members opposite say, oh, you know, you did not know which way you were going to go, we knew 10 days ago that this bill needed radical amendments because there had not been any real work except, the government by regulation may do this, the government by regulation may do that, the government by regulation may do something else. I mean, this is the government-by-regulation bill. Maybe we need truthfare, not workfare in terms of legislative changes around here, Madam Speaker.

They think it is a political tactic. They have got their Republican consultants and they have

watched what Mike Harris did and after they did not have the courage to call the election. They then had to refigure and reposition themselves, and so they looked at the polls that the taxpayers had paid for that said they were weak on the number of civil servants and they were weak on the number of people on social assistance. So they had to reposition themselves, but instead of going out and consulting the people that are most directly affected, people that are deaf, people that are disabled, people that are most vulnerable, as any government with any conscience left would do—and this government is heartless, with no conscience, there is no question about that, it is a heartless Premier and a heartless government that only cares about the workfare for its own members, not the workfare for Manitoba citizens that are more vulnerable—they would have consulted the people most directly.

Now, Judge Monnin said on page 16: I have never encountered more liars in all my experience on the bench. Yesterday I heard the Premier, driving from one meeting to another, in answer to a question: well, did you consult with these people before you brought in this bill? Oh, yes, we consulted with these people before we brought in the bill. Pinocchio Premier says it again. It was almost two years to the day of the Atlanta Olympics when he said, oh, the Pan Am Games is paying for my hotel room, and we found out later from Frank McKenna that it was IBM. Well, we have the transcript. I heard you yesterday.

Now, what did the Minister of Family Services say a week ago directly to a person who was deaf at the committee dealing with consultation? Well, we did not have time to consult with you now. We will consult with you in the fall. Well, why is the bill not coming in in the fall? If the government wants to bring in a bill in the fall after they consult with people and then the people who are most directly affected and most vulnerable have dealt with it, so be it.

Madam Speaker, that is where again the government clips and cuts and Order-in-Council; clip and cut and Order-in-Council. This is not a bill that provides the resources to get people off of welfare. This is not a bill that provides the resources for people to get addiction counselling.

This is not a bill that provides people that are expert in addiction counselling at the Alcohol Foundation the ability to deal with when a person needs intervention, when that intervention should have consequences to it, conceivably consequences that have a stick to it that would potentially push somebody into that intervention to get the kind of treatment they need so they could get off social assistance. This is not a bill that provides any resources at all for parents and parenting programs.

Look at the literacy programs they have cut. This is not a bill at all that provides for learnfare. I mean, how can people opposite keep a straight face after they cut student social allowance to put 1,200 people on welfare? You know, 1,200 people go on welfare in 1993-94, and they now come back with learnfare. Well, we need truthfare, Madam Speaker, because they should never, never have cut students social allowance here in Manitoba.

* (2130)

Now, we represent a lot of working people in a lot of ridings. Yes, there is no question at all that people in communities that are working hard, putting in an honest day's work, trying to raise their families, under lots of pressure, do not want anybody in their community that is able bodied and able to work not to work. I have no difficulty saying that I have run life skills programs before as a volunteer 20 years ago where a carrot, the life skills program, and a stick, the consequences of not taking jobs that are available, are utilized as part of a way to get people off of welfare and into work. I have no difficulty with that concept. Members on this side have no difficulty with it because we were the first ones in Canada that took money from the social assistance budget and put it into the Dutch Elm Disease Control Program and got people off welfare, and many of them are still working today. They are still working today. I have run into many of those people who said: I worked in the municipal programs on Dutch elm.

So why not take this challenge on? Now, the member opposite said, well, there is no money in the budget for job creation, because we believe in the private sector. What did the

Canadian Federation of Independent Business say? You got \$45 million in corporate welfare grants in there, did they not say that? They got Shamray that lost \$4.5 million in there. The members opposite gave \$60 million to the Jets, but Barry Shenkarow was not on welfare, I guess. They paid for Keith Tkachuk's salary of \$7 million, but they want to cut somebody off that is deaf. That is the hypocrisy of members opposite. Cut the deaf people off and give Keith Tkachuk \$7 million. That is the privileged Tory administration.

Madam Speaker, we moved a number of amendments at second reading. You know, the member talks about the disabled community. This is the Premier that had to fight the disabled community in the snow and in the communities when he tried to privatize and Americanize home care, when he tried to privatize and Americanize home care. He had the disabled community united against his government. So why now should the disabled community give him an axe to cut them off, along with his Minister of Family Services? Why should he give him the axe? I would not give that Premier the axe under Order-in-Council to cut off the disabled ever, and that is why this legislation should be defeated.

When we had an opportunity to listen to Angela, who is a deaf person who raised these issues with the minister last week, when we have to listen to people in the deaf community, we have heard from people in our own department that Angela's interpretation of who is covered under the disabled and who is not is correct. The deaf people are not covered. We will listen to Angela over Gary and Bonnie any day of the week. There is no question in our minds who to listen to.

Now, the Tories have been saying, oh, we are going to have a tough time on this bill. All of us should have a tough time on this bill, because these are real people. I know we are going to fight an election campaign. I know you want to have a few political clubs to deal with, and that is fine, and we can fight that campaign, but there are real people that you are affecting here. There is more than just the simple, little Republican wedge issues beyond this legislation. We tried then to work in a fairly co-operative

way by drafting a number of amendments. We even shared those amendments, many of those amendments, with the government a day ahead of time. We shared them with the government ahead of time because we thought they had merit. Rather than giving cabinet the unilateral authority, we moved an amendment to provide for addiction services. We moved an amendment to provide for community services. We dealt with The Workplace Safety and Health Act for people.

You know, the members opposite say, well, you do not need that amendment. What about those three people on workfare training programs? They are not covered under Workers Compensation now. Are they covered? Shall we have another case like that? Is that what you want? You want all kinds of people hurt under a community services program without any Workplace Safety and Health? Do we want to have inspection and investigation after investigation? Let us put the amendment in the act now. Why not put it in now? But, of course, the members opposite say no.

Madam Speaker, there is a real skill and expertise involved in alcoholism and dependency. I have done life skills programs before as a volunteer a long time ago to try to train people to get up in the morning to go to work. I have a little bit of that experience. I have no experience in dealing in any capacity as a volunteer on alcoholism, but I have talked to some people since this bill was drafted. The people that I have talked to who are professionals, who work for us, tell us it is a really fine line between when an intervention can be effective and includes an intervention with consequences, both family consequences and work consequences and welfare consequences, versus when those interventions cannot be effective. They say to me that if you do not have the expertise to make those decisions at the right time, you can drive somebody right over the edge at the wrong time, and all you are going to do is increase family breakdown and increase the homelessness in this province if you do not use the proper people.

Why not support the Addictions Foundation? Why not have more people in community agencies, in Pritchard House and other

agencies involved in providing the hand up? It is not just members of this cabinet who will allegedly provide a hand up, those who some people have argued have been the ones who have kicked people in the teeth. Why not let the Alcohol Foundation be involved in giving people a hand up, who are involved in alcohol programs, Madam Speaker, again, a positive amendment.

Madam Speaker, we believe that our amendments would deal with the issue of workfare that cuts off everybody, including people who are disabled, people who are deaf, people who are single parents and others—some programs of workfare cut off almost everybody—versus the issue that we all agree on, people who are employable should work. People who are on social assistance who are employable should work.

We have no difficulty in saying in our amendment that work is a social responsibility, Madam Speaker, but we are not going to vote for a bill that cuts off the deaf. We mentioned Theresa, and I have a brief from one David Martin representing the Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities. This is a person who was just told the day that the bill was going to be presented that they would be consulted long after the bill was passed, and he said: "Threatening people with a life on the street and starvation seems untenable in a society like Canada."

Madam Speaker, we fear that some people with disabilities may be affected by the measures forcing people to work and to attend these programs. Why did the government not stop, look and listen to people with disabilities? Why is it repeating the same mistakes as it did with the privatization of home care? Why is the political timetable of this government more important than the hopes and dreams of people who want to get off of social assistance?

So there are 12,000 more people on welfare today than there were when the government was elected. Having said that, there were more people at the end of '88 than there were in '81, and the welfare rates went up in the '80s and it went down in the latter part of the '80s. The welfare went way up in the early '90s, and it has come down in the last three or four years in this

government. The economy is [interjection] See, that is the problem. You have lost it. You cannot be objective anymore. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) cannot be objective anymore. The numbers are there. Just read the annual reports.

* (2140)

We believe that our amendments would have improved this bill. We believe that working people want their neighbours who are on social assistance that are able bodied and can work to have work opportunities. We are going to continue to move amendments that give people opportunities. The only people who have more power and more opportunities under this bill is the Filmon cabinet, by regulation, by regulation. We are going to enforce the maintenance provisions of government, so some of the people who are denied proper maintenance payments can get off social assistance. We are going to get decent child care, as recommended by the Chamber of Commerce, so people can get off social assistance.

We are going to reinstate students social allowance and the 1,200 people that this Premier put on welfare, get them off welfare with decent education and training programs. We are going to have addictions programs that have the professionals in the Alcohol Foundation helping us give people a hand up, not this kind of cabinet fiat that we see from members opposite, and we are going to make sure the disabled community has hope and opportunity, not a kick in the teeth. That is why we are voting against this bill. Thank you very much.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to add some comments on Bill 40, and I will attempt to be brief. I certainly do not think that I can match the bombast of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). We can always tell when he is feeling harassed and under great stress because he raises the level of his rhetoric louder and louder and louder to the point that he attempts to drown out any possibility of anybody thinking.

The member opposite talked about truthfare, and I suspect that if such a policy were in place there would not be too many members opposite sitting in the House. He comes forward with the

proposition, for instance, that the numbers of caseloads on welfare dropped in the late '80s, presumably under the wonderful policies of his administration. His administration, of course, was that of the Pawley-Doer government that tripled the net debt of our province in just six and a half years and that spent over \$200 million attempting to stimulate the economy with the short-term, make-work Jobs Fund of which not one job exists today here in our province from that effort, and then out of desperation built the Limestone Generating Station two years ahead of when we had a contract to sell the electricity, Madam Speaker, for the sole purpose of trying to create employment desperately to get them elected again in 1986.

But, despite all of that, the welfare rolls continued to go up and up and up, year after year after year. As a matter of fact, beginning with one of the very first moves of the Pawley government, welfare went on a constant rise that went throughout the '80s and well into the '90s until we brought in welfare reform in the mid-'90s.

I will begin that saga with the news release that was issued by the Honourable Len Evans, at that time Minister of Community Services and Corrections, on December 17, 1981. Now the significance of that is 17 days after the taking of office of the Pawley administration, their first major move was a 16.5 percent increase in welfare rates in the province. Well, that was their way of demonstrating that if anybody ever doubted that they believed in and were totally committed to welfare as a way of life in this province, they were going to show unequivocally to the province and its people that if you want welfare, if you want dependency, we are the best people to deliver. That is the New Democratic position, always has been and always will be that dependency is their fundamental building block.

When they talk about fighting an election on the backs of the poor, that is precisely the position that they take. They go to the doors of the poorest people, the most disadvantaged people in this province, and they say: you can count on us to give you more, as long as you stay on the public trough, than you will ever get from any other party running for office. That is

the real position of the New Democratic Party. That is fighting your election on the backs of the poor, I tell you, ladies and gentlemen. That is precisely the position that the New Democrats have lived in this Legislature as long as they have been campaigning in this province.

So, with that initial move which moved us up to the higher echelon of welfare payments in the country, we became the magnet in this province for people who wanted to live on welfare. They could come here and be better off on welfare than they could anywhere else in western Canada. They came. They came from Ontario, and they came from all over the West. That is the reason why the welfare rates continued to grow throughout the NDP period of time. Their culture of dependency, their commitment to keeping people dependent, because they knew that as long as they kept more people dependent on government that they could go forth and, 10 times out of 10, they could win the vote by saying: we will always give you more; we will always give you more.

That is precisely what has happened in this province, until our government had the courage to examine the policies on welfare and to create incentives for people to break the cycle of dependency, to break that continuous cycle of dependency that resulted in through good times and bad times, through strong economy, weak economy, through recession, through expansion, increases in the numbers of people on welfare in this province. I have the facts and the figures here for the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), not the dreams and the nightmares that he tries to portray about what happened under his government.

Under his government, beginning with 22,805 people on welfare in 1980-81, it went up by 1987-88 to 33,359, and it continued to go up and up and up and up. Only in 1995 did it begin to come down because of the welfare reforms which we initiated. It has come down; 18,000 people have been taken off welfare and into jobs since we began the welfare reform.

His caucus continues to believe that people have the right, the unfettered right, to collect welfare. That is the difference between his party and our party, Madam Speaker.

Here we have a cutout of the newspaper, this one happens to be January 21, 1998, but it ran throughout the course of last year in community newspapers and in the Winnipeg Free Press, a big block ad by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen): welfare rights meeting. Come to the multipurpose room upstairs at Magnus Eliason recreation centre on Langside Street. And who is going to be there but the member for Wolseley and Mel Holley of the family law centre to do what, to give people information on how they can better exercise their rights to welfare in this province? That is the culture that they want to perpetrate; that is the culture that they stand for.

* (2150)

I have to tell you that the one thing that I am quite confident about, having gone throughout the province and listened to many people, I am telling you that I am not just listening to people in my area of the province, I am listening to people everywhere. What do I hear from them? I hear from people who are struggling to make a living, who are the working poor. They say: do you know what the NDP want to do? They want to take my hard-earned tax dollars that I struggle and sweat away for, and they want to give it to people who do not want to work, who are able bodied, capable of working and do not want to work, and they want to take my money and give it to them. That is what they say.

I hear the blue collar people whom the member suggests that he represents, the union members, and they come to me and they say: you are right on. There are people who are on welfare who are able bodied and should be working and refuse to work. Why are they able to do that? Why? Because members opposite tell them that. They hold seminars to tell them they do not have to work and to explain their rights to them. And it is not their party; in this case, they cannot dodge the bullet because this was the 1997 annual general meeting, and the resolution was presented on behalf of the caucus by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). He says this is what they are passing: the right to a level of assistance adequate to meet one's needs; the right to appeal decisions which limit or deny assistance; and the right not to have to participate in work or training programs, i.e., workfare, in order to receive assistance. That is

what they believe in. That is what they stand for, a culture of dependency.

I want to tell you that most Manitobans, including many who go through difficult times and have to for a period of time be on social allowances, do not believe in that. They believe that they want to go to work. They believe in self-reliance. They believe in personal responsibility. They believe that they can contribute to the economy and that they want to, not by staying on welfare. What do the New Democrats say? They say: you can stay on welfare and nobody can stop you. We are going to protect that right, and it does not matter whether you are able bodied; it does not matter whether you are capable of working.

Look around. I have had so many people in the course of the last six months say they have never seen so much construction and development activity in this city, in this province, never in the history of the province. They look and they say on every major thoroughfare in this city, you go down Pembina Highway, you go down Henderson Highway, you go down Corydon, you go down Portage Avenue, what does it say? Now hiring, help wanted everywhere. There are jobs; there are opportunities. You read the newspapers, what does it say? There are opportunities like there have never been before in the history of this province. There are more people working here today than ever in the history of this province. They earned last year \$14 billion in wages and salaries, and yet there are thousands of jobs going begging. Yet the New Democrats say: those people who are able bodied, who are capable of taking the jobs, should not be required to take the jobs.

Madam Speaker, I do not have to make my case here in this Legislature to those people whose minds are absolutely closed. I do not have to make my case here. I will make my case to the people of this province who believe in the dignity of work. The people in this province believe in the dignity of work. They believe in self-reliance. They believe in contributing to the future growth of this province by their efforts. They do not believe, as New Democrats do, that people should be allowed not to work for welfare and should be encouraged, indeed explained to them how they can exercise their

rights and hold seminars so that they do not have to work and they may remain on welfare. Madam Speaker, that is the difference between us and the New Democrats. That is what I find is deeply and profoundly offensive, to use a term that was used by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), is that they want to go contrary to the values that have built this province strong.

The waves and waves of immigrants who came to this province, our First Nations people believed in working, believed in working and supporting their families. We were just at a reception hours ago at which there were members of our Sikh community, and a number of them came up to me and said you are right on, that is what we need, is the people who are able bodied to work, take the opportunities that are there. That is the fundamental, bedrock value of this province. It is the basis on which this province was built strong, and the New Democrats do not understand it. The New Democrats are trying to put across a phony, false vision of the future, and Manitobans will not buy it.

Madam Speaker, the members opposite have the audacity to talk about child care when we have three times as many subsidized child care spaces as they ever had when they were in government. We have thousands and thousands of more opportunities for child care. We have policies in place to support the people. Whether they are in education, whether they are taking parental training, whether they are in addictions training, we have policies in place, and we have capacity that is greater than it ever, ever was under the New Democrats. I cannot imagine how they can, with a straight face, even talk about these services when they are so superior to what they were under the Pawley government.

I can tell you when I heard the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) talking about 40 unmarked graves in a one-mile stretch on the Hudson Bay railway, his head was so far in the past talking about fighting battles. I know about those days. My father was a secretary of his local, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. He went into organized labour. He went to work for better wages and conditions at a time when there were sweatshops, when there were difficulties, when there were things to fight for. But these people are still talking about those

days, 50 years ago, 100 years ago. That is where their policies are. That is where their headspace is. That is where their principles are, is 100 years ago. They have no idea what is happening today, they are so out of touch.

What is happening today is that the people who are in those unions are saying to us those people who are able bodied should not be on welfare, and they are saying to us you are doing the right thing. Union members support this bill, because they say the policies that allow people to be on welfare are victimizing the working poor, victimizing the hardworking union people who are the workers of this province because then their taxes are taken away to pay for these people.

Madam Speaker, I tell you that the member for Thompson talked about having a proud tradition in his party. Well, I am not sure that the people of Manitoba support his proud tradition of endorsing and supporting able-bodied people refusing to work. I do not believe that that is something that is part of our bedrock value system in this province. I do not believe that is what built this province strong. So I say that the members opposite have clearly made a decision that is consistent with where they have been for decades. It is consistent with what their party has stood for, which is to develop and enhance the culture of dependency.

Madam Speaker, I reject that, and I believe that the vast majority of Manitobans reject that. The vast majority of Manitobans take pride in supporting themselves, in self-reliance, in the dignity of a job, and they want to contribute to building this province stronger in the future. That is why I will be supporting Bill 40.

* (2200)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading, Bill 40, The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Ashton: Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

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

Division

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

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger (Charleswood), Enns, Faurshou, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Nays

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

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 27, Nays 21.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage, and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey), that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until a time fixed by Madam Speaker upon the request of the government.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I, prior to adjournment, want to put a number of concerns on the record. It is 11 years later, and I think the need for change is very evident. If we take a look at the budget, and I take a great deal of pride in the fact that we had voted against this budget, one needs to look in terms of the core of the finances and the way in which the government administers its finances. The Provincial Auditor, amongst many others, has expressed a great deal of concern in the way in which this government attempts to manipulate the finances to try to make the government look better. There is no better example than the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. In fact I would suggest to you, in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, when I was first elected, the government did manage to come up with an actual surplus. As opposed to having a surplus, they borrowed \$150 million in order to create the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

At the time the New Democrats supported the government in the creation of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Then what we saw in the last budget is where the government has actually dipped into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to cover a deficit. So, in fact, Madam Speaker, what we have seen in the last budget is where the government has actually dipped into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund in order to cover a deficit. So, in fact, what we have seen is a complete full circle. Once again, we see the New Democratic Party supporting the move by this government in terms of the full circle.

Madam Speaker, that in itself gives good justification in terms of the Liberal Party's lack of confidence, and the reason why we move the motion of nonconfidence in this government and express our disappointment in terms of the lack of support in that nonconfidence motion from the official opposition.

Madam Speaker, we take a look in terms of the legislation that has been brought forward. For years and years, it has been over 11 years, we have seen a government that has not worked with the health care professionals, which we believe is absolutely critical in order to manage the change that is necessary in order to make health care reform effective and workable. Instead, what we see is a government in its dying days bringing forward legislation that of course

is going to receive all-party support from the Chamber. They will receive all-party support because it is legislation that is long overdue. I refer to issues such as the chiropractors or the physios or our registered nurses, our LPNs. The legislation is here today and received full support from the Liberal Party.

* (2210)

Madam Speaker, we take a look at the workfare bill that we just saw pass moments ago. There is no doubt that the Liberal Party disagrees with the old style that the New Democrats have to offer Manitobans. Equally we disagree with the mean-spirited, punitive actions with which the Tories are bringing in Bill 30.

Madam Speaker, what we need is a balanced approach. We believe that is absolutely essential heading into the turn of the century. We also take a look at the important issue of health care. We have recognized for a long time that this is indeed a No. 1 issue for all Manitobans. We were glad to see the government put more money in the health care budget, but we have to realize that it is more than just money. It is a question of how we administer our health care in the province of Manitoba and how the government manages that. All we need to realize is that, at one time, it was illegal for patients to sleep overnight in our hallways, and how much things have changed. There is a litany of examples that one can recite.

Madam Speaker, we take a look at education. We believe all three political parties inside this Chamber see the benefits of the standards exams in order to ensure good, quality public education, even though we question the Grade 3 level that the government is administering them at. But we are greatly disappointed in terms of this government's lack of action in protecting the integrity of those standards exams. A classic example of that is in fact the lack of direct action in calling for that independent investigation.

The question of ethics, we are quite disappointed in terms that we did not get the report prior to the rising of the session in regard to the Monnin inquiry or the vote-rigging

scandal. When we hear of ethics, it is a great deal of concern that Manitobans have on this particular issue, and we would have liked to have been able to deal with that particular report prior to this session rising.

Having said that, there are many other issues, issues facing rural Manitoba, our aboriginal people and so forth, in which we believe that we are in a better position to provide a more balanced approach, as opposed to confrontational, in dealing with those issues.

In terms of reform, we are sitting, I believe it is Day 60 in the last 380 days plus. For a long time, we have been arguing for fixed dates. We have been arguing for a commitment to spring and fall sessions, but to no avail. Eleven years later, we still do not have any sense of fixed dates, or guarantee that the MLAs of this Chamber will in fact be serving in one of the cornerstones of democracy, of our parliamentary system, by serving Manitobans through accountability through this Chamber. We are disappointed in terms of the lack of government looking at the reform in that nature.

We take a look at our committees, Madam Speaker. We were pleased that we were able to pass a motion that would in fact see changes to our Public Accounts committee. We look forward to the committee coming back or the subcommittee of that committee coming back with recommendations that will bring our Public Accounts into this century. There are other standing committees that deal with our hydro, Manitoba Hydro, that deal with Lotteries, that meet, if we are lucky, once a year. More often than not, we are talking about a year and a half, and for us that is not a way in which we hold the government accountable. We believe that standing committees and the need for reform is there. There are billions of dollars that are being spent through the years, and Manitobans are entitled to see that sort of reform take place.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, it has always been a great pleasure for me personally to be able to stand up and represent both my party and my constituents.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. James Downey (Arthur-Virden): Madam Speaker, I would just like to take two minutes to make a nonpolitical statement, my first in 22 years.

I would like to acknowledge the constituency of Arthur-Virden for their support of 22 years. I would also like to acknowledge all honourable members and their support that I have had, and even though I am a little emotional at this particular time, I may come back and so do not get feeling too sorry for me.

I do want to say that all the individuals that I have had the privilege of serving with have been extremely honourable people. I think the country has been better for their contributions. I thank the Premier (Mr. Filmon) for allowing me the opportunity to serve as Deputy Premier and in his ministry for as many years as he did, and I just wish each and every one personal health and personal prosperity.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, first of all, I would like to start out by saying that I prefer the kinder, gentler, emotional Jim Downey to the other one we have known over the last number of years, but I know that is not the way he is going to run the campaign, so I just wish him and Linda well.

I know there are other members. You never know when there is going to be another session. This is the fifth one. I thought we would be off and the election would be over by now, but we do not know whether the LG is going to have to bring in the army for you people to call an election.

But I do want to, in all seriousness, wish all the individuals well that will not be seeking election again, the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) and I know the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay) and others that may not run again. There are a few on our side still making up their mind. Of course, they never know when the session is going to be over and when the election is going to start, so we keep our powder dry on these things, but I wish them all well.

Madam Speaker, one of the great parts of our job is that we get hired and rehired and

replaced in each election campaign, and there are always elections that replace the individuals that are in this Chamber today. If there is not another sitting day, I wish all the individuals well. It is a battle in democracy of ideas, of personalities, of principles, of values, and often we do not know what is going to happen. I have seen really good people from all political parties defeated when the mood is against, the wave starts turning around the other way, and I wish all members well irrespective of our disagreement, which was manifested I think a little bit in Bill 40 just a few moments ago.

It is our job, Madam Speaker. We had lots of political speeches and lots of political questions, but it is our job ultimately to represent the people of the province in this Chamber, and I am proud of the fact that our caucus, and I believe all members, attempted to deal with the challenges of Manitoba people. We must deal with the people's priorities. This was a short session, and probably its most notable feature was a nonevent, a nonelection, but there were important issues to Manitoba people, to Manitoba families, to Manitoba communities, a few of which I would like to highlight tonight.

Obviously, the flooding in southwestern Manitoba is a huge tragedy of monumental proportions, and in the central area of Manitoba it is also, along some of the municipalities, a major concern. We have tried in this session to put partisan politics aside, to work with all members of this Chamber as team Manitoba, to work with all people on behalf of the people that are most directly impacted, and we have not thought about what is going to happen in the election campaign and who holds the seat and who could hold the seat in the future or who could hold another seat in the future. We think it was important for the people of southwest Manitoba that we on the opposition side stood with them in their time of crisis. We were proud to do that, and we will continue to do that.

* (2220)

I am pleased our national Leader had a chance to visit with some of our caucus members, and I hope that helped, calling on the Prime Minister to directly visit that area. It is an absolute, I think, scandal that the federal

government has not, through the Prime Minister, visited that region when you consider the Red River Valley had a visit in '97 and the Saguenay and the ice storms of Ontario and Quebec. We deserve equal treatment in western Canada, and we must get equal treatment for those people.

I am also proud of the fact that other people in our community that need hope and opportunity we have stood for and stood with in this session. The issue of the unemployment rate not being calculated for First Nations communities; the hope of people that want jobs. Do you remember we talked a little bit tonight about jobs and dependency and self-reliance? Well, there were a lot of people talking about jobs and hope and opportunity in this building a few months ago. We believe that all Manitobans should be considered in the unemployment rolls, and we believe that all unemployed Manitobans should share in the economic opportunity and the great opportunities of Manitoba and Canada, and we were pleased to stand with those people.

Madam Speaker, I would ask members opposite to reconsider their decision on the casino report that they have rejected. I would ask them to reconsider some of the rhetoric that has taken place. I do not want confrontation in Manitoba. I do not want Manitoba to end up like Oka. I believe that hope and opportunity and implementing the report for a limited number of casinos, which they have done in Saskatchewan, and even if it means decreasing gambling in other parts of the community so we can give First Nations people a little bit of the hope and opportunity in this area, is the Manitoba way. I would ask members opposite to reconsider that. All the politics aside, please, please, let us work together with our fellow Manitobans.

We have worked together with people on the front lines of health care, the patients in hallways, the families that are worried about surgery, families that are worried about delays in surgery, people that are worried about working in the front lines of medicine. We will continue to work on what we consider to be Manitobans' No. 1 priority. We will continue to work for a people's health care system that allows people on the front lines working in health care and people that depend on health care to develop the innovations but the predictability of health care

into the 21st Century, Madam Speaker. Manitobans do not want to see a situation where a thousand nurses are fired right after the election and 600 are rehired back just before an election. Manitobans need those nurses the month after the election campaign, and that is what we should deliver to the people of this province on their No. 1 priority.

Madam Speaker, we believe in education and training as part of an economic strategy. Yes, the unemployment rate is low and, yes, that is helpful to people in this province but, you know, we have had nine years of neglect in apprenticeship programs, community college programs, universities that are becoming less and less accessible, New Careers programs and Access programs that have been cut again for aboriginal people. The people of this province want the skilled jobs of the future. They want a high-skilled, well-trained economic strategy. We stand with the families of Manitoba that see that as our vision in a changing global economy. Let us again repledge ourselves to those issues.

In this session we have tried to vote consistent with the public interest. The government has had great joy about our budget vote. I suspect they would have even greater joy if we had voted against the budget. I do not know about that. We did produce an alternative budget last year. We produced an alternative budget that said health care should be the No. 1 priority and we should take money out of the rainy day fund now. It is unfortunate that it was 15 months later than we had suggested, but it was worthy of our consideration. We put proposals in for education, included in our alternative budget, dealing with public education, training, Access, New Careers. We said that property taxes should come down before income taxes should come down.

We also said in our alternative budget that the small-business tax should be reduced 1 percent per year, and the money should come, as the CFIB had recommended, from the corporate welfare in the budget over to all small businesses. That makes sense to us, because small businesses tell us that the government should not pick winners and losers. The tax regime for small business should be fair and

should be lowered. That was our alternative budget.

* (2230)

Now, we did not get everything in the budget that we had proposed 15 months ago in the budget that the government brought down in 1999, but a lot of what we said was there. A lot of what we would do further or reallocations we would make to make it fairer we have moved in amendments. But we felt it was important that the budget was close to what we had said a year ago. We thought that we should not then just try to find one or two reasons to vote against it. We supported it. We knew that the government had file A to criticize us, file B to criticize us, but we are accountable to the people. We are accountable to the people who elect us and we feel very secure in the decision we made and the reasons we made them.

We also feel equally secure in voting with the people we believe on Bill 40. Yes, people want to see people who are able bodied who have an opportunity to work, work. Nobody is disagreeing with that. But putting together a bill at the last minute, clip and cutting the bill, and the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has agreed with this position, that put some of the most vulnerable people at risk and give the axe to people who are in cabinet as opposed to rights and privileges and responsibilities passed in this Legislature we think is the wrong way to go.

We think it is important to consult with the people before you pass legislation. I have already said that about the people. I think most fair-minded Manitobans will want disabled and deaf people in our communities to be involved at the front end of legislation, not be involved after the legislation is passed. And that is why we are proud that we voted again, we think, with the Manitoba way as long as we can get the truth out about what is really in or not in this bill.

Madam Speaker, it is almost ironic that again one of the last issues we had to deal with in legislation was one of the major broken promises of this government. Again we voted, we believe, with the people three years ago when we voted against the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone System after the govern-

ment broke its promise in 1995. We voted against that provision. We said that the taxes would go up (1) from income tax and the CRTC has confirmed that, and (2) it would go up to deal potentially with changes in municipal taxation.

Madam Speaker, the government has come together again with string and binder twine to amend The Municipal Assessment Act to deal with the Manitoba telephone system and Manitoba Hydro. We know that Hydro can be treated in a separate way, because it is a publicly owned corporation, but the government should have known and should have been honest with the people in 1995, that they planned on selling the phone system. We should not have had to have binder twine to amend the legislation to deal with their broken promise. You should have voted with the people against the privatization of the Manitoba telephone system, and that is, again, why we are proud that we come in here representing the people of this province.

Madam Speaker, the government is out of gas. It is out of energy. It is out of enthusiasm. It is clinging to power. It is clinging to power. It did not have the courage of its own convictions to call the election—[interjection] Well, Mick Jagger is laughing, but it looked like Tiny Tim to us a few months ago when he tiptoed through the tulips, when he did not have the courage of his convictions to call the election campaign.

Madam Speaker, this government is clinging to power. I believe that Manitobans do not expect absolute perfection from their politicians. God knows, they are not going to get it from anybody. They are not going to get perfection from any political party, but they do expect democracy and the traditions of democracy to be maintained and enhanced. They do expect that people working at the most senior levels of government will tell the truth, and that is I believe going to be a very important issue.

I recall in the Nixon Watergate burglary that there was one issue and one event that was wrong, and we will find out how many criminal charges will be laid shortly. But the cover-up is something that remained in the minds of many North Americans, and we need to reinstate the

values of our democracy in this Chamber and outside of this Chamber.

The member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) mentioned fixed dates of the Legislature. I agree totally, and we commit ourselves totally to having two sessions of the Legislature, to have elected Speakers of the Legislature, to have committees of the Legislature meet more regularly, to release polls that have been paid for by the taxpayers, Madam Speaker, a number of things that would make democracy more important, but I do not want the fixed dates of the House of Commons because that brings in closure. I totally reject the proposal from the Leader of the Liberal Party to bring the Ottawa closure motions in as incumbent upon a fixed date here in Manitoba. Surely we can have sessions in the fall and we can have sessions in the spring, but we do not want a fixed ending because that, by definition, brings closure. That is the Manitoba way to improve and not Ottawa-ize this Chamber.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I did not want to go long tonight. I think that our caucus has tried to represent the interests of people at every challenge. Today we were raising the question of the virology lab and its impact. We were standing with people who are dealing with the flood crisis.

What our caucus wants for this Legislature is what we want for the province of Manitoba. We want clean air. We want clean water. We want a sustainable community to pass on to our children. We want good schools with teachers who are respected. We want curriculums that will take our kids into the 21st Century. We want an education and training strategy that will allow our children to get the skilled jobs of the future, so our children can stay in this province and raise a family in this province. We want more community clubs opened up and fewer new courtrooms built at a high cost for one child. That is the kind of community that we want.

Madam Speaker, we want a situation where average families 20 years ago felt that their kids could grow up and go to university if they did well in school and now feel, yes, they have got a job, and, yes, they are working harder than ever

before, and, yes, they are stretched further than they ever have been before. We want our kids to feel that they will be able to afford university if they do well in high school. We want average families to have that, and I am afraid that in this time of the good times for some and the tough times for many others, we are losing that dream for many of our young people. We have to reinstate and reinstill that dream for our kids.

Madam Speaker, our dream is to have safe communities—safe communities. Give kids the opportunity to be involved in productive activity. We want our kids in the school gymnasiums after 3:30, not at the 7-Elevens. We want safe communities. We want a society that says that health care must be affordable and accessible and available to all of our citizens through publicly administered health care. Enough of the rainy days in health care. Let us end the crisis in health care.

That is the kind of society that we want and I am very pleased with our caucus. I want to thank all the legislative staff, the pages, the interns, the Clerk's office and all the others who make this Legislative Chamber a success, Hansard.

Madam Speaker, I want to say to you that no matter whom we had to represent in this Chamber in this session, we always put people first, no matter what their region, no matter what their people, and we put the most vulnerable people first ahead of politics.

Thank you very, very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Filmon: I am delighted to be able to end this session by putting a few words on the record, my thoughts, my views, my concerns, my hopes for the future.

I want to begin by just saying that in this session we have had a whole variety of different issues to deal with. We have had some stormy times. We have had some interesting times. We have had some times in which I have felt a sense of co-operation and collaboration amongst members in the House, and I would like to begin by thanking many in this Legislature for their co-operation and support on a variety of fronts.

The farm crisis that faces many of our producers in southwestern and south-central Manitoba is, I think, a crisis of unheralded proportions, perhaps going back to the Dirty Thirties. The fact that we could rely on the support of members opposite throughout that period of time, I think, gave a great sense of confidence to our government to be able to work collaboratively with members opposite.

I will say that I was disappointed in the Leader of the Liberal Party and his representatives in this House for taking a position essentially of defending Ottawa, and, frankly, I have been through that. I remember in the days of Brian Mulroney, I remember something that that former Prime Minister has never forgotten, when I stood up with the members of the New Democratic Party and voted for a resolution condemning Ottawa for deindexing seniors' pensions. We had other issues that we disagreed on. We had issues with respect to language; we had issues with respect to Constitution. I always felt that the people in Ottawa were elected with a mandate to support and be concerned about the interests of people from coast to coast. My mandate was the best interests of the people of Manitoba.

I think in that respect that it is probably unfortunate that the Leader of the Liberal Party spent his first days in politics in Ottawa and has not been able to shake the sense that he has to be speaking for the government in Ottawa of the same political stripe. I hope that he learns before it is too late that we in this Legislature have a mandate to speak for the people of our province and to support the people of our province to the best possible extent that we can. That is why we are here.

I think that the effects of the farm crisis are going to be very, very far reaching for our economy, for the future particularly of people in those parts of the province that are directly affected. We are all going to have to work very, very hard to support them through this effort. I still hope that Ottawa will see fit to join with us in cost-sharing the commitment which we have made to those people to get them through. I believe that in all conscience and any sense of fairness and equity, they should be part of that resolution, part of that support network to keep

those farmers on the land so they can seed again next year. I hope that the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) will find it in his heart to join us and to convince his Leader that we have to put all pressure on Ottawa to deal equitably with Manitoba before this is resolved.

* (2240)

Madam Speaker, I never thought I would say this, but I want to thank the members opposite for their support for our budget. I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has stated publicly that he is going to keep all the good things that Filmon did, and I think that there are a growing and growing number of good things in his mind obviously. Little did he know how much more good we had to offer. I hope that he sticks around after the next election to keep supporting all the good things that we are doing. Obviously the 1999 budget had many good things, as has, I believe, every budget that we brought into this Legislature, many things that have been good for people.

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition—I should not digress, but I enjoy it more that way—the Leader of the Opposition points to areas over the years, the 11 years that we have been in office, and heaven knows we have not always done things that everybody supported. Heaven knows, we have disappointed people. Heaven knows that there have always been people that have said we want more here or you should have done more there, you could have done this differently, and so on and so forth. When you consider the literally hundreds and thousands of decisions that we make in the course of each and every year, the course of 11 years, it is not surprising that members opposite could have a litany of things that they could say were not popular or were things that they want to campaign on.

But, when I hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about these areas in which we have not spent enough over the years, and he talks about specific issues in health care or he talks about specific issues in education or he talks about the Access program or he talks about the friendship centres, and so on, you would think you were listening to Rip Van Winkle,

because the '90s have been a difficult time for every government in this country.

Firstly, in the first part of the 1990s we had the second worst recession this century in Canada. Only the Dirty Thirties were worse than that economic period of time, and, obviously, government revenues were under tremendous stress and pressure.

No sooner did we start to work our way out of it when the federal government reduced transfers over a period of four years by \$260 million a year. There has not been a more challenging or difficult time that I can look back on, and I can look back for several decades; I am getting to that stage. But there has not been a more difficult or stressful time for any government to deal with, and like Rip Van Winkle, he just says, well, they should have done more, they should have done more, they should have done more.

You can only spend what you have got, and, you know, the members opposite threw \$200 million into a jobs fund that did not create one nickel, that did not create one job that still exists today. The members opposite lost \$30 million on the sands of Saudi Arabia and MTX. The members opposite did all of these things, but they are geniuses. Today they are sitting opposite and they are geniuses in their own minds. I cannot believe it. [interjection] You will not be here to hear any more, but there will be lots coming.

Madam Speaker, in the area of taxation, for instance, this government has consistently reduced the taxes to Manitobans. Personal income taxes which were the highest in Canada when we took office are now seven points lower than they were when we took office. The income tax rates to small business are being reduced successively so that they will be amongst the lowest in Canada. We have had things like the Film and Video Production Tax Credit. I met today with a couple of producers from Disney who are here because of the fact that, well, they were going to do a cartoon on the members opposite, but they are here because this is in their judgment the best environment in Canada, and we have gone from \$1 million a year of film production when the members

opposite were in government to \$100 million of film production because of the policies of this government, and they continue with this budget.

We have established the Lower Tax Commission so that we will continue to ensure that not only will our taxes be fair but indeed they will continue to go down. We know the position of members opposite, and we talk about flip and flop. That is what we are talking about. Here we have the list of all of the tax cuts that they voted against over the years since we have been in office. They voted against tax changes, the reduction and elimination of payroll tax for many people in a budget of 1988. They voted against it. The 1990 budget, where, again, there were some payroll tax credits and payroll tax exemptions, they voted against it. The sales tax exemption for commercial aircraft, the payroll tax exemption being increased, the 10 percent manufacturing investment tax credits in 1993, voted against all of them. Aviation fuel tax reduced, they voted against. Railway diesel fuel tax reduced, they voted against, on and on and on. They voted against all these tax reductions, the '94 budget, the '95 budget, the '96 budget, the '97 budget, the '98 budget, Madam Speaker.

It is interesting, members opposite are talking about, of course, how much better they would do. We know how abysmally they did when they were in office in the 1980s in the Pawley-Doer administration. I just want to refresh their memories on this. This is a Winnipeg Sun article of March 22, 1983, and it says—[interjection] No, I was very much alive and awake then, and that is why I have all this here to remind you of. I want the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) to please pay attention to this because he may want to talk about this when he goes back home. A 60-year-old Flin Flon man, who suffered a massive heart attack, died en route to Winnipeg only hours after his hometown hospital refused to admit him to its intensive care ward. Intensive care manager Liz Henry told the media she had been unable to convince her qualified nurses to take shifts in the highly stressful unit. The unit had been closed for four days when Nystrom arrived the night of March 12.

This is one story. That is '83. Here is another one from '83: A strike by maintenance staff has

spread from the Health Sciences Centre to two more Winnipeg hospitals. The 1,100-bed HSC was forced to discharge 50 percent of its patient load. Fifty percent of its patient load was discharged when they were in office.

Here is another thing: Long waits for elective surgery were widespread and frequent during 1982. This is what the MMA executive director said, December 1982. People are waiting longer for needed surgery and some people are dying before they can have it. That is under the NDP. Four patients at the HSC died before intensive care bed space could be found for them. This was in 1983. In Brandon, a waiting list of a thousand patients for surgery. I wish the member for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) could hear my words.

* (2250)

So I want to say, Madam Speaker, that we know how bad it was while they were in office. Now, of course, we know what it is like when New Democrats are in office in British Columbia. I know it hurts for the members opposite. I know it hurts. Health line-ups push patients to private tests. This is July 20, 1998, in British Columbia.

This is British Columbia as well. This is about the critic for the environment. Clark government axes 159 environment jobs. This is December 22, '98. The Clark government reduced its funding to municipalities by 50 percent to 80 percent. This is also December of 1998, and it says: Why B.C. stands for basket case.

Now that is what New Democrats today do. That is what today's New Democrats do: destroy the economy and still have terrible health care, still have terrible child and family services. [interjection] That is right. That is what B.C. is.

Here is an interesting thing from June of this year. Toronto Globe and Mail says: B.C. blasted for cuts in support to disabled children's program. That is what the New Democrats do when they are in government, and, of course, the worst thing is, if you look at what is happening to the economies of the two provinces that have New Democratic administrations: No. 10 is

British Columbia, and No. 9 is Saskatchewan. That is where their economies are in growth, No. 10 and No. 9.

When the member opposite talks in lovely terms about they want to work with health care workers to create a better health care system, they want to work with teachers to create a better education system, they want to work with people to do better, how on earth is this going to happen with their deliberate antibusiness policies that are going to put our economy where the economies of British Columbia and Saskatchewan are, down the toilet. What they do not recognize is that you need to have a strong economy in order to do anything for people. So they can talk all they want about creating better opportunities, but right today the young people of this province know that, for instance, those who are in the Faculty of Management at the University of Manitoba, 92 percent of them got jobs in Manitoba this year. That is what the dean said in a public speech.

Those who are in our community colleges, over 90 percent get jobs in Manitoba, in our community colleges. In engineering, almost 80 percent of the graduates are getting jobs in Manitoba. When I graduated, it was 55 percent; it is almost 80 percent today. That is because of the economy. So, when the member opposite has this billboard that says, jobs for our youth, I remind him that when we took office their youth unemployment rate was 3 percent above Canada's. Today it is 5 percent below Canada's. There are more people employed than ever before in the history of this province. We have the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

Our people are earning almost \$14 billion in wages and salaries, the highest income that has ever been earned in the history of this province, and that is what people are concerned about, and that is what the future is all about. It is not about New Democrats' promises of phoney, make-work jobs. It is not about New Democrats talking, as the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) talks about the government is going to create jobs. The government does not and cannot create jobs other than by having policies that encourage people to invest, and that is why we have investment levels that are the highest in our history, employment levels that are the

highest in our history, export levels that are the highest in our history and the best growth rate in all of western Canada. That is what has happened as a result of the efforts of this government.

Madam Speaker, I guess the point that has been most amusing during the course of this session has been the attitude of members opposite. You might recall that before the House started, you had members opposite saying day after day: Call the House, get us in session, we have all these new ideas, we have all these policies that we want to introduce, call the House, we have new legislation, we have new ideas. The House came into session, in fact, they said: Let us at them, let us at them. They even called news conferences to have mock Question Periods. That is exactly what we have been having for 14 weeks is mock Question Periods, because they cannot think of anything serious to ask. No new ideas, no new policies. Come on, is that all there really is? Who is running out of gas? It is you guys. You are running out of gas.

All we have had for 14 weeks is criticism and mudslinging, and it takes more than empty slogans and eight-second clips to build a government and an economy and a future for this province.

So, Madam Speaker, the member opposite talked about co-operation and working together with people. That is precisely what this government has been doing. I only remind him that in the space of the last couple of months we have resolved problems that other provinces in Canada had difficulty with and had strikes on. Our nurses, we worked with them, we worked with them and we worked with them, and we resolved the issue with the nurses, and indeed we had a negotiated settlement with the nurses. Unlike Newfoundland, unlike Saskatchewan and unlike Quebec in which there are major disruptions, people put in jeopardy and health care in chaos, this government worked with the nurses of this province and resolved the issue through negotiation and good-faith bargaining.

This government worked to resolve the CUPE issue, thousands of health care support workers. This issue was resolved without a

strike and a work stoppage and disruption. This government worked with UFCW, and I believe that we resolved that issue. We will know very shortly at St. Boniface General Hospital. This government worked with the ambulance workers, and that was resolved because we were dedicated to good-faith bargaining and negotiations to ensure that we had that resolved.

* (2300)

Madam Speaker, this government continues to work with the doctors of our province. Section by section by section we are resolving the issues, and we are ensuring that we are not only in a position where we are competitive to retain our doctors but that in fact we will be able to recruit in the future. This government worked with the Workers Compensation Board widows. The New Democrats were not able to resolve that.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: I cannot believe the members opposite that they could possibly say that they are to be credited. They are the ones who created the problem in the first place. How do you think those widows lost their pensions? It was because of your policies, the New Democratic policies from the '70s and the '80s. Unbelievable. Unbelievable, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the members opposite are living in a dream world, a dream world in which they believe that all of the terrible things that they did in the past should either be forgotten or that in fact they were responsible for the good things that we have done and not responsible for the bad things that they have done. The public knows better; the public is not that naive. The public knows that New Democrats stand for destroying business, destroying investment, and destroying opportunity. The New Democrats stand for dependency, and we stand for self-reliance. We stand for encouragement of investment, encouragement of jobs, encouragement of opportunities and a positive attitude toward the future.

I say to you, Madam Speaker, I am glad that we have had the opportunity during this session

to know how little the New Democrats have to offer for the future. I know, when Manitobans have a chance to look at a positive vision of the future, at the continued creation of new opportunity, of jobs for our young people, of better services for our people in health care, in education and family services and all of the various departments and areas that government is responsible for, they will choose that brighter future, they will choose that optimism and they will choose the confidence because they know that there are people opposite who know nothing more than eight-second clips and empty slogans, and there are people here who have a solid track record of achievement and who have a plan to make the future even better.

Madam Speaker, that is what we stand for and that is what we offer.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is that when the House adjourns today, it shall stand adjourned until a time fixed by Madam Speaker upon the request of the government. Is it agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

* (2320)

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I would ask if the table officers could bring in His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

Madam Speaker: I have been advised that the Lieutenant Governor will be here in approximately five minutes time.

ROYAL ASSENT

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Garry Clark): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

His Honour, Peter Liba, Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba, having entered the House at 11:23 p.m., and being seated on the throne, Madam Speaker addressed His Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the following words:

Madam Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and faithful subjects, the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in session assembled, approach Your Honour with sentiments of unfeigned devotion and loyalty to Her Majesty's person and government and beg for Your Honour the acceptance of these bills:

Bill 45—The Loan Act, 1999; Loi d'emprunt de 1999.

Bill 46—The Appropriation Act, 1999; Loi de 1999 portant affectation de crédits.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth thank Her Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, accepts their benevolence and assents to these bills in Her Majesty's name.

Madam Speaker: May it please Your Honour:

The Legislative Assembly, at its present session, passed bills, which in the name of the Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent:

Bill 3—The Fatality Inquiries Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes médico-légales.

Bill 4—The Law Fees Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les frais judiciaires et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 5—The Highway Traffic Amendment, Off-Road Vehicles Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les véhicules à caractère non routier et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 6—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

Bill 7—The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques.

Bill 8—The Ozone Depleting Substances Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les substances appauvrissant la couche d'ozone.

Bill 9—The Securities Amendment and Commodity Futures and Consequential Amendments Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières et la Loi sur les contrats à terme de marchandises et apportant des modifications corrélatives.

Bill 11—The Statute Law Amendment (Nunavut) Act, 1999; Loi de 1999 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives (Nunavut).

Bill 12—The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1999; Loi de 1999 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives.

Bill 13—The University of Manitoba Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université du Manitoba.

Bill 14—The Amusements Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Loi sur les divertissements.

Bill 15—The Cemeteries Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les cimetières.

Bill 16—The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment and Parental Responsibility Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le recouvrement des petites créances à la Cour du Banc de la Reine et la Loi sur la responsabilité parentale.

Bill 18—The Correctional Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services correctionnels.

Bill 19—The Agricultural Credit Corporation Act; Loi sur la Société du crédit agricole.

Bill 20—The Chiropodists Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les chiropodistes.

Bill 21—The Ophthalmic Dispensers Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les opticiens d'ordonnance et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 23—The Order of Manitoba Act; Loi sur l'Ordre du Manitoba Act.

Bill 24—The Municipal Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités.

Bill 25—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale.

Bill 26—The Physiotherapists Act; Loi sur les physiothérapeutes.

Bill 29—The Victims' Rights Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes.

Bill 30—The Veterinary Medical Act; Loi sur la médecine vétérinaire.

Bill 31—The Association of Manitoba Municipalities Incorporation and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi constituant l'Association des municipalités du Manitoba et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 34—The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine et modifications corrélatives.

Bill 35—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant le Code de la route.

Bill 36—The Registered Nurses Act; Loi sur les infirmières.

Bill 37—The Licensed Practical Nurses Act; Loi sur les infirmières auxiliaires.

Bill 38—The Registered Psychiatric Nurses Act; Loi sur les infirmières psychiatriques.

Bill 39—The Medical Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi médicale.

Bill 40—The Employment and Income Assistance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'emploi et au revenu.

Bill 41—The Professional Corporations (Various Acts Amendment) Act, 1999; Loi de 1999 sur les corporations professionnelles (modification de diverses dispositions législatives).

Bill 42—The Community Protection and Liquor Control Amendment Act; Loi sur la

protection des collectivités et modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools.

Bill 43—The Highway Traffic Amendment and Summary Convictions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route et la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires.

Bill 44—The Gaming Control Local Option (VLT) Act; Loi sur les options locales en matière de jeu (appareils de loterie vidéo).

Bill 47—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale.

Mr. Clerk: In Her Majesty's name, his Honour the Lieutenant Governor doth assent to these bills.

His Honour was then pleased to retire.

* (2330)

God Save the Queen was sung.

O Canada! was sung.

Madam Speaker: Please be seated.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would move, and it is with great pleasure that this motion is seconded by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), that this House do now adjourn.

Madam Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable government House leader, seconded by the honourable member for Arthur-Virden, that this House do now adjourn. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

July 14, 1999

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PROCLAMATIONS

Peter M. Liba
Lieutenant Governor

CANADA
PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

ELIZABETH THE SECOND, by the grace of God of The United Kingdom, Canada and Her other Realms and Territories, QUEEN, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith.

PROCLAMATION

To our beloved and faithful the Members elected to serve in the Legislative Assembly of our Province of Manitoba, and to each and every of you - GREETING.

WHEREAS we have thought fit by and with the advice and consent of our Executive Council for Manitoba, to dissolve the present Legislative Assembly of our said Province:

NOW KNOW YE THAT we do for that end publish this, our proclamation, and do hereby dissolve the Legislative Assembly accordingly, and the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, are discharged from further meeting and attendance in connection therewith.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF We have caused these Our Letters to be made Patent, and the Great Seal of Our Province of Manitoba to be hereunto affixed;

WITNESS, His Honour Peter M. Liba, Lieutenant Governor of Our said Province of Manitoba;

AT OUR GOVERNMENT HOUSE, at Our City of Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba, this seventeenth day of August, in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine, and in the forty-eighth year of our Reign.

BY COMMAND,

V. TOEWS,
Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Peter M. Liba
Lieutenant-gouverneur

CANADA
PROVINCE DU MANITOBA

ELIZABETH II, par la grâce de Dieu, REINE du Royaume-Uni, du Canada et de ses autres royaumes et territoires, Chef du Commonwealth, Défenseur de la Foi.

PROCLAMATION

À tous les fidèles et loyaux députés élus à l'Assemblée législative de la province du Manitoba, et à tous et chacun d'entre vous, SALUT.

ATTENDU QUE nous jugeons opportun, sur l'avis et avec le consentement du Conseil exécutif, de dissoudre l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba:

SACHEZ DONC MAINTENANT QUE nous déclarons et proclamons, par les présentes, la dissolution de l'Assemblée législative du Manitoba et que, par conséquent, les députés de l'Assemblée législative sont dispensés d'assister à toute autre séance ou réunion de l'Assemblée.

EN FOI DE QUOI nous avons fait délivrer les présentes lettres patentes et à icelles fait apposer le Grand Sceau de notre province du Manitoba.

TÉMOIN: Peter M. Liba, lieutenant-gouverneur de notre province du Manitoba.

EN NOTRE PALAIS DU GOUVERNEMENT, à Winnipeg, au Manitoba, ce dix-septième jour d'août de l'an de grâce mil neuf cent quatre-vingt-dix-neuf, dans la quarante-huitième année de notre règne.

PAR ORDRE.

Le ministre de la Justice et procureur général,
V. TOEWS.