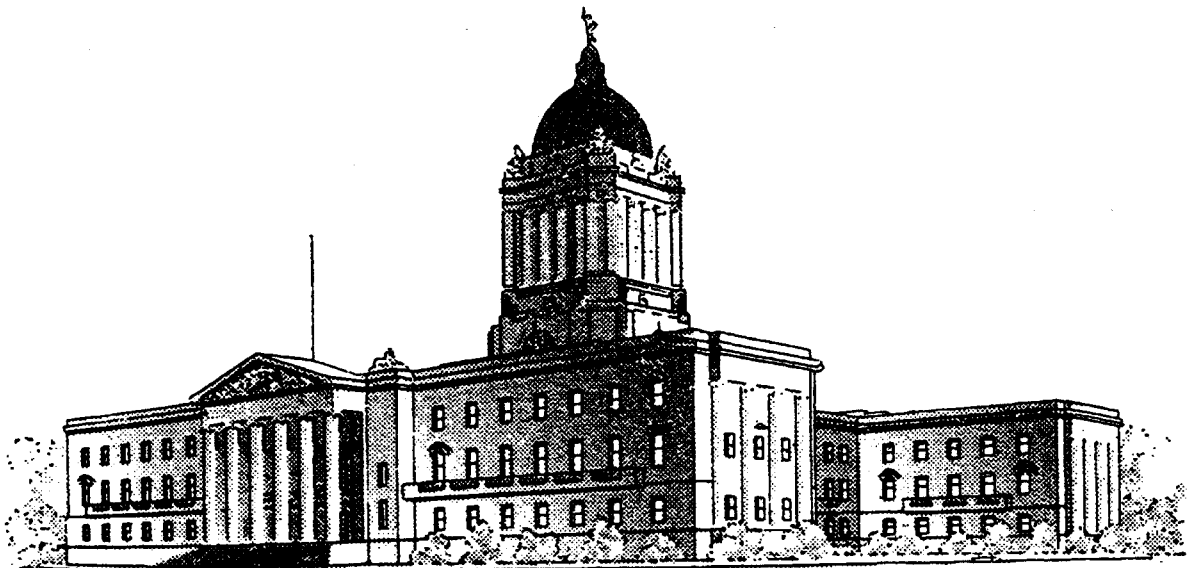




First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
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LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 21, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Marivic Cabalu, Cesar Villamor and Rey Cabalu Jr. requesting the Government of Canada cancel fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of A. Rosales, M. Rosales, C. Rosales and others requesting the Government of Canada cancel fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: The Clerk will read.

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

WHEREAS Manitoba has been immeasurably enriched socially, economically and culturally by immigrants and their families, and;

WHEREAS it was for this reason that successive provincial and federal governments have encouraged immigration to Manitoba, and;

WHEREAS since 1993, the current federal Liberal government has reversed these policies by instituting a series of changes making immigration more difficult; and

WHEREAS the 1994 changes in quotas for family reunification class of immigrants were unfair and punitive; and

WHEREAS the fee increases for immigrants instituted in the 1995 federal Liberal budget are neither fair nor justifiable and border on racism, and;

WHEREAS the new \$975 fee being imposed on adult immigrants is more than many immigrants make in their home country in an entire year, and will make it even more difficult for people from these countries to immigrate to Canada.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request that the Government of Canada cancel these fee increases and instead institute policies that will encourage immigration to Manitoba.

* (1335)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the report on the Economic Innovation and Technology Council for 1994-95.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of The Public Trustee, 1993-94.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Emergency Physicians' Strike Government Action

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

On Monday, we asked the government to use as much of their authority and leadership to resolve the dispute and withdrawal of services by emergency doctors in our community hospitals and pathologists at Winnipeg hospitals.

Madam Speaker, we are pleased that the parties, insofar as the MHO and the doctors, are at the table today with a mediator named by the government, Mr. Chapman.

I would like to ask the Premier in light of their responses on Monday toward resolving this dispute, does the government have a direct representative at the table who has the authority to achieve a settlement and end this withdrawal of services, so that Manitobans and people relying on emergency services and pathology services will have those services returned?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the dispute is between the Manitoba Medical Association and Manitoba Health Organizations.

They have their direct negotiators at the table, and we have people available as resources to the process, as well as obviously to the MHO, and that is as the negotiations in the past have taken place when the members opposite were in government, and it is the case today.

Mr. Doer: I would like to ask the Premier, has the government provided the long-term flexibility and authority to resolve this dispute and keep emergency doctors working in our community in the longer haul, retain them in our community hospitals, retain pathologists in our health care system?

Does it have the kind of political will behind this set of negotiations that we saw, for example, dealing with the potential strike of casino workers in the gambling sector of the province, Madam Speaker?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, we have a very strong desire to ensure that emergency services are available to Manitobans when they are needed. We regret very much that the physicians are not at work. It was not our wish that that happen in the first place.

The action taken by them, however, made it incumbent on us to ensure we had in place a plan that would ensure the basic safety of our system. We obviously regret any inconvenience that this causes, but we would prefer that the dispute was resolved quickly.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, on Monday when I asked the government some similar questions, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) indicated that his government had a willingness and a desire to ensure that they do everything possible, everything reasonable to try to bring an end to this dispute.

We are approaching our third weekend in this withdrawal of services, Madam Speaker. I mentioned on Monday, in a previous potential dispute and a lockout situation, the Minister of Labour met with both the employees and the employer, dealing with the sugar beets situation.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health and the Premier whether they will get ministerial involvement, ministerial leadership, to get these services back in place in our community hospitals. Will they take a leadership position as they have done in previous disputes which we applauded the government for doing, or are they going to sit back and leave this with an agency removed from the government?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, during the process of this dispute, I have met personally with representatives of the Manitoba Medical Association and expressed the wish that matters be resolved through the efforts of a mediator, and, indeed, honourable members opposite were asking for a mediator long after one had been appointed and put to work. The mediator had already completed part of the work when members opposite were asking for one. We already had that, so we wondered what interest honourable members opposite were really taking in this issue.

Earlier this week, I asked again that the services of the mediator be resorted to. I asked that both parties take part in that process. I am pleased to learn today that the Manitoba Medical Association is also pleased with the appointment of the mediator, Mr. Jack

Chapman. I think honourable members opposite, if they were in my shoes, would probably want, as I do, to have the mediator do the work and get the job done, so we can get this matter resolved.

Crime Prevention Council Status Report

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): My question is for the Minister of Justice.

During the Conservative election campaign which was co-chaired by the minister, the Justice part of the Conservative platform document responded to our notorious crime rate by promising, and I quote: The provincial Crime Prevention Council will continue to seek the advice of experts on the development of community crime prevention initiatives.

My question to the minister is, would the minister explain how a council that has never existed can continue to do anything?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I am very pleased to speak about an initiative which this government was very happy to talk about. The council will be a council of experts who will be available to assist—[interjection] just listen—but, Madam Speaker, they also will be available to offer advice to the youth justice committees.

One of the issues that was raised to us was that we wanted to know exactly what kind of assistance youth justice committees needed, and so we did spend time making sure that we had the person who will chair that group visit youth justice committees around this province. The person did so with the support of our Community Corrections, and names have now been forwarded to us, not only from that consultation but from other interested Manitobans, and I expect to make an announcement on that very shortly.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, if the minister now wants us to believe that the Crime Prevention Council is her advisory council on youth crime, which was announced a year and a half ago, would she confirm that when she promised this so-called committee of experts, Manitobans would never have

envisioned a single, volunteer, part-time person with no mandate, no budget, no counsellors, no crime prevention?

It is a phantom council. It is Casper's council, Madam Speaker.

* (1345)

Mrs. Vodrey: This government has led the way actually across this country, and members opposite who have never offered a solution, who have never supported any one of the solutions which the people of Manitoba very clearly spoke about their support for, they have never supported any of those solutions.

Madam Speaker, this government has a very strong record of movement in the area of youth crime and violence, in the area of public safety, and the Provincial Council on Crime will, in fact, be named very shortly. However, we did take the time to make sure that there was a consultation process, so that the individuals named to that council would, in fact, be able to meet the needs, and when I make the announcement of the individuals, I will also make very clear the announcement of the mandate, as well, at that time.

Madam Speaker, the federal Liberal government also announced an intention in this area, and we wanted to make absolutely sure, and I made representation to the federal minister, that there would not be any crossover of that council into the jurisdiction operating in Manitoba.

Youth Advisory Council Status Report

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, would the minister also explain to Manitobans why another one of her little Casper's councils, the youth advisory council on youth crime, promised by her over a year and a half ago in a nine-point plan because she said she took very seriously the input of young people, does not exist?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, this is the member's difficulty with all of the accomplishments in

the nine-point plan, the accomplishments of boot camp and rigorous confinement in this province, the accomplishments of training of individuals in the school area, the development of the surveillance team, the issue of putting 40 more police officers on the street. He has always had a great deal of trouble with all of the initiatives.

The youth council will be named following the initiative which the other side has claimed was of no benefit, and that is the No Need to Argue program. We looked for youth leaders across this province who are willing to spend the time with their communities and to work with other young people to develop programs. From our No Need to Argue program which has been operating and from which I expect to be able to announce a number of the very important programs that have been developed from No Need to Argue, we have been able to find leadership among the youth.

Madam Speaker, it is this government's view that young people themselves have to be involved in the solution. The other side has only been critical, has never been part of the solution.

Independent Schools Funding Formula

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

Manitobans have been shocked and angered by the government's recent increase in funding for private schools at a time when public schools have been forced to cut, to spend their savings and have been prevented from raising revenue. In a recent interview on CJOB, I am concerned that the minister may have left the impression that this private school increase was due solely to a court-ordered settlement.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister to take this opportunity now to explain to the House that her policy of funding private schools at 80 percent is the result of a Conservative-initiated legal agreement, part of a bidding war in the 1988 and 1990 election between the former member for River Heights and the present member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon).

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member is an historian and I think perhaps might be interested in exploring the history of this whole situation of independent funding for private schools or independent schools in Manitoba. I think perhaps she may have read something about it, if she presses her memory, may be able to recall some of the facts surrounding this. That is, of course, that even her previous leader—when Mr. Pawley was in office, Mr. Penner indicated that he felt that there should be some sort of formula to address, and that is what we are doing, independent funding for independent schools.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that a 100 percent funding settlement ordered by the courts would have cost the taxpayers of Manitoba far much more money than the very pragmatic out-of-court settlement that was reached by this government and the independent schools in 1990, which will see us moving this year to 68 percent of the operating costs of public schools, not the capital costs.

The member also should be conscious of the economics of the situation, that if those students were all to return to the public school system tomorrow, an extra \$8 million would be needed to be raised by the people of Manitoba. So I think it is a very pragmatic out-of-court settlement.

* (1350)

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, I would like to challenge the minister to table that court order.

Will she tell us the date of the court order which ordered the government to pay 80 percent? This is a Conservative election promise. This is an initiation of an agreement by the Conservative government. It is not a court order. Would the minister again clarify that for the House?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I would encourage the member to think clearly about the implications of what she has just said.

Madam Speaker, if we had a court order ordering us to fund it 100 percent, which was the case proceeding

to the court, we would have been paying a lot more than we did with the agreement that we arrived at out of court, and I have specifically said out-of-court settlement in my first answer, repeated it again in my second answer.

Out-of-court settlements, Madam Speaker, are put in place to avoid costly solutions. They are usually pragmatic, common-sense solutions to avoid an ultimate higher cost. That is what we have done. That is what I have said.

I encourage the member to think clearly about what a definition of out of court means as opposed to a court order. To me, the meaning is clear.

Ms. Friesen: Will the minister tell us, as the minister responsible for public education, whether it is her intention over the term of this government to continue to deliberately undermine public education, as she is doing, by systematically taking from the public school funds and applying them to the support of private selective schools?

Mrs. McIntosh: May I remind the member opposite, Madam Speaker, that I am the Minister of Education in Manitoba, not just one branch of education but all education in Manitoba, all education including funded, nonfunded, public schools, universities, colleges, home schoolers, education in Manitoba. May I also remind the member, let there be no doubt ever in anybody's mind of my commitment to the public school system. My record on that is much more clear than hers.

I reject, as well, the concept that the member has tried to raise in the House, the implication she has tried to leave as if it were a fact when it is not a fact, that money going to independent schools robs the private system, because, Madam Speaker, if all of those private students enrolled tomorrow in the public school system, the taxpayers of Manitoba would have to cough up another \$8 million to fund the system, and that is money that she thinks we do not have any obligation to be concerned about.

I am saying we have a pragmatic, common-sense, out-of-court settlement that is fair to the public system, fair to the taxpayer and fair to the independent schools

which pay a user fee and make a choice to have other things in their system, as well.

Highway Maintenance/Upgrading Wabowden

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My question is for the Minister responsible for MPIC.

Will the minister assure northerners that none of the more than \$250,000 in costs so far from the failed Wabowden paving project, which affected over 250 vehicles, will result in higher premiums next year for the vehicle owners?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, the claims records are used in the determination of rates, but they are not that specific in that a situation of this nature would have a direct regional impact, and certainly I think the minister yesterday confirmed that we were looking into this situation.

* (1355)

Mr. Jennissen: My supplementary question is to the Minister of Highways.

Will the Minister of Highways assure northern Manitobans that the extra costs incurred at Wabowden will not be deducted from committed highway capital expenditures for northern Manitoba which are already pitifully low, in fact less than 6 percent of the total Highways budget due to continual cutbacks?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I think the member needs to understand what happened up there. The sealcoating crew was putting a seal on the road, which they do all over the province, which they have done for 30 years, and for reasons as yet completely undefined, it failed and it stuck to the tires and it caused MPIC claims.

Staff have done this across the province for some 30 years. It is the first failure of this nature. One happened also in Saskatchewan last year which cost

them in the vicinity of \$2 million in claims. It is serious. My department has accepted the deductible liability on behalf of MPIC for the individuals involved.

As the member already knows, we are in the process of determining where the fault is, whether it is with the emulsion, whether it is with the weather. It did rain after it was put on, but that happens in other locations in the province. Something unique happened here.

When the actual truth is found or the process of fact-finding is completed, we will let the member know, and then certainly the liability will be sorted out. At this stage, it is not definitely in any one location.

Vehicle Safety Inspection Program Garage Suspensions

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My final supplementary is to the Minister of Highways.

Given the admission by the minister that there are several cases of wildly different charges for repairs of the same car under the private vehicle safety program, what changes will the minister make so that people know what garages have been suspended and the public is thus protected from gouging?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, some 800 garages have been certified across the province. It creates jobs in all kinds of local communities to do the inspections. Under the old MPIC random program, about 25,000 cars were inspected per year. Under this program, about 150,000 to 200,000 cars or about a third of all the cars and light trucks on the road will go through inspection every year. It improves safety on the road, no question.

We are in a learning curve to be sure that everything is done precisely, according to the handbook. On behalf of the mechanics, I would say it is difficult to get exactly everything right in a handbook that is this thick. Our department is working with the various garages. They respond to customer complaints where people feel that there is something out of the ordinary as we work our way through, but I can guarantee to the

member safer vehicles are on the road, and many vehicles that people knew would not pass the inspection are no longer on the road because they could not get a registration.

So we are taking unsafe vehicles off the road and improving the safety of those on the road. I hope the member would support that.

Emergency Physicians' Strike Government Action

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

For hours and hours we have debated through the Health Estimates what is first and foremost in this Minister of Health's mind whenever he talks about health care reform, and that is what is in the best interest of the patient. This minister is taking great pride in saying that he is going to take what action he believes is in the patient's best interest.

Madam Speaker, I believe very firmly that what is in the best interest of the patient today is to end the strike for emergency services. I would appeal to the Minister of Health. Does he not concur that it is indeed in the best interest of the patient today if we end the strike of emergency services?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Yes, I do agree that would be a good thing to do, Madam Speaker. I think if I can look ahead to the honourable member's next question, I would probably disagree with what he is going to suggest, certainly at this time.

Madam Speaker, in my previous responses to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), I stated that I regret that this strike is taking place. I do not think it should be. It is, and we are trying to get it resolved through the use of mediation services.

* (1400)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask the minister, is he prepared to live up to what he has said in the past and put the patient first and bring in legislation that would legislate them back to work?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, we have at every step put the patient first, and as I said, for those who require services that are neither emergent or urgent, those people are finding a great deal of inconvenience.

I understand that, and I regret that, too, but I say, Madam Speaker, I would invite the honourable member, if he is truly concerned, as his demeanour today would tend to indicate, truly concerned about patients and about the health system, I would suggest that he join me in calling upon his counterpart in Ottawa, the Honourable Diane Marleau, Minister of Health and Welfare for Canada, to take a different sort of approach in her dealings with provincial Ministers of Health whose job it is to be the front line in the delivery of health care services in our country.

If the honourable member really wants to help, he might be sending some questions along to his colleagues in Ottawa.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am not too sure if the federal government can actually legislate them back to work.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster, for a final supplementary question.

Mr. Lamoureux: My question to the minister is, at what point is he prepared to look at the possibility of legislating emergency services workers back to work, or is he quite content to allow this strike to go on indefinitely and at what cost to the people in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I said I did not think there should be a strike on in the first place. It would be my preference that emergency physicians and pathologists who deliver very, very important services to Winnipeggers and Manitobans would be on the job and not on strike. I think that is an inappropriate way to deal with this, but that having been said, I have been overruled on that point by the physicians themselves. They have taken this approach which I am trying to bring to an end.

The honourable member suggests that perhaps something more heavy-handed is in order. Well,

Madam Speaker, we have put into place a contingency plan to deal with this. Today's report, for example, is that all the hospitals are managing well. Now that, under all of the circumstances, is acceptable to me. My preference would be that the doctors go back to work.

Public Health Inspections Information Release

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): A recent story on television indicated that as regards public health inspections, the inspections undertaken by the city appear to be at a higher standard, but more importantly, provide more public information regarding health inspections than do inspections by the province.

Can the minister today confirm that he will instruct provincial health officials to make public information regarding public health inspections by the province in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I appreciate the honourable member's suggestion, Madam Speaker. Public health inspections and certain other services delivered by the province and the city were the subject of recent discussions between myself and Councillor O'Shaughnessy in looking at the whole system in the city of Winnipeg.

I will certainly take the main part of the honourable member's question and look into that and get back to him about that.

Jurisdiction

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, can the minister confirm—and he has indicated in his response to my first question—that, in fact, the City of Winnipeg and the province are presently negotiating to have the City of Winnipeg take over public health activities within the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I do not know if the honourable member has it just the way I put it. Madam Speaker, we discussed this and other matters, and to get perhaps a better rationalized system of health services working in the city of Winnipeg, we are looking at the possibilities.

What those possibilities might be today, I am not able to say until I hear further as to what officials have learned through their investigations.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I will table a copy of a letter from Councillor O'Shaughnessy to the residents in Kildonan and Garden City areas indicating, and I quote: "we are currently negotiating to have the jurisdiction of the Health Department expanded to cover the entire city. This would mean our public health nurses and health inspectors would come under control of the city for the first time."

Can the minister indicate whether or not that is, in fact, a representation of his negotiations with the city and with Councillor O'Shaughnessy?

Mr. McCrae: I have not seen the letter the honourable member is tabling yet, but the discussions that Councillor O'Shaughnessy and I had had to do with a more efficient way of dealing with the various health services provided by the two levels of government.

We both see an opportunity perhaps to find some administrative efficiencies which would either make more money available for the direct service delivery or somehow improve service delivery to the people of Winnipeg.

CN Rail Layoffs—Transcona Shops

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, yesterday CN announced the layoff of another 266 employees at its Transcona Shops operation. This brings to a total of 625 the number of jobs lost at the Transcona Shops operation to this point in 1995. At the end of this year, the employment will stand at some 760 jobs, down from 2,500 when this government came to office.

I want to ask this government, Madam Speaker, will the government confirm that there may be another 100 jobs lost before the end of this year at the Transcona Shops operation, in addition to the jobs that have just been announced yesterday and that there may be a three-month shutdown of this shop operation? When will this government stand up and speak up for the rail

jobs in this province since they gave away millions of dollars in fuel tax revenue to the railways?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, although we are certainly disappointed that this would happen to these people, I think the member misrepresented the circumstances. The jobs are not lost. These are just layoffs related to—CN is a federal Crown corporation, but these are jobs related to a decline in grain traffic which the member, I am sure, is aware of. There has been a significant decline. When there is less product to haul, naturally there are fewer people needed.

I fully expect, as the harvest is coming off, grain is in the system, we know the supply line is very, very empty around the world, a high demand that the jobs will be called back very, very soon. There is every indication the grain volume will come up. It was certainly a surprise to the railroads on how it fell in the last two months.

Madam Speaker, I also understand that across the western Canada network there are some other 500 layoffs within CN because of the same problem. There is less product in the system to haul at this specific time, but it should pick up very, very soon.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, considering this spring's shortage of grain hopper cars affecting farmers and export customers alike, has the Minister of Highways and Transportation pressed CN to explain why these 266 laid-off employees are not working on the long line of hopper cars currently awaiting repairs at the Transcona Shops, or are we going to await another car shortage before this government takes some action?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, with regard to rail transportation, CN and CP at the management level and mid-management level have some very difficult decisions to make in the course of what is going on right now.

There is no question that the person who is paying the freight bill for hauling that grain has been severely impacted by the elimination of the Western Grain Transportation Act. Some \$650 million over the last few years has disappeared out of the transportation

economy of western Canada, and when they have to pay higher costs, like, for instance, Manitoba shippers have gone from \$10 a tonne in some cases to \$20 a tonne and in some cases to over \$30 a tonne and even for feed barley to \$40 a tonne, a fourfold increase, they cannot just absorb it.

So, Madam Speaker, I can assure you there is a lot of stimulus out there for hauling more specifically to dedicated markets, to value-adding that through livestock as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) has talked about. Those are the adjustments that are going on.

No question that the railroads will haul something in the future, maybe not as much bulk grain but certainly more value-added processed commodities, maybe to different markets than in the past. So everybody is going through a very difficult adjustment as to how to read the future at this point in time.

* (1410)

Mr. Reid: That answer is not going to help the farmers of this province, that is for sure.

Has the Minister of Highways and Transportation asked CN to explain the 266 job losses that were announced yesterday which CN blames on the downturn in grain traffic, when CP Rail which also moves grain has not experienced a similar circumstance? Why is that the case, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, one would assume that CP would encounter the same problem, but they both do their books maybe in a little different fashion. They haul from different regions of the Prairies. They haul different commodities. I mean, no question CN has indicated that they have had a significant decrease in the amount of grain to haul, therefore it has affected their bottom line in a very significant way, and CN is very definitely wanting to show a positive bottom line. I would commend any company that wants to show a positive bottom line today.

Madam Speaker, I hope the member would reflect on what I said earlier. Difficult adjustments are occurring throughout the grain industry, and nobody will be

unaffected by it. It was all stimulated and triggered by a federal government which took away a Crow subsidy which they never talked about taking away during the federal election campaign.

Water Resources Bacteria Monitoring

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): My questions are for the Minister of Environment.

Madam Speaker, the answers that the Minister of Environment has provided to this House regarding his government's concern for the high level of fecal coliform count in bacteria in Manitoba waterways are less than reassuring. This was demonstrated this past summer when the levels of bacteria found at a number of the provincial beaches here in the province reached levels 10 times the department's own acceptable level.

My question for the minister: Will the minister confirm that his department does not monitor the bacteria level on a daily basis, and therefore the public has no way of knowing whether the water is safe to swim in?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, he is correct that on an ongoing daily basis that function is not performed, but wherever there is an indication that surveillance and testing should be increased, we respond.

That is based upon the information that we gather to make sure that we are not responding in a way that would (a) jeopardize any public health or (b) create undue alarm.

Mr. Dewar: Will the minister then tell the House what levels of bacteria his department was detecting this past summer?

Mr. Cummings: Well, I am afraid my memory is not that good, Madam Speaker, that I could respond precisely.

I think that the member should be clear on the fact, though, that a number of the accusations that were made about levels that were unacceptable at beaches

were not necessarily substantiated by further testing or by factual information that was gathered in following up on some of the questions that were raised.

One should never disregard the importance of this information and should always err on the side of caution, but I do not think that the member should unnecessarily raise the issue as one that is not being carefully watched.

Mr. Dewar: Madam Speaker, when it comes to protecting Manitoba's interests in terms of the environment, this government is far too cautious.

My final question is, why has this minister not acted upon the recommendations of the Clean Environment Commission and developed a more aggressive communication program which included a high bacteria public warning system so that the health of Manitobans is not compromised?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, that, in fact, is being done.

I think the member is probably referring to the recommendations within the city of Winnipeg. He might well be interested in sharing some of the concerns that were raised with me when areas were, in fact, signed and flagged. It certainly requires diligence, but it certainly does not require that alarmist attitudes be put in place.

Winnipeg Jets/Arena Government Briefings

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, yesterday, the Premier indicated to the media that Mr. Jules Benson, the secretary of Treasury Board and the former treasurer of the Progressive Conservative Party, was present at MEC meetings throughout the period from January until the provincial election on April 25. Further, the Premier indicated that Mr. Benson, while present, did not commit the province to spending more than \$10 million before the election but that he was present throughout this period.

Will the Premier tell the House how many meetings Mr. Benson attended during this period of time, and

how many times he met with the Premier during that period of time, January to April 25?

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, for a very short response.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, my memory is not that good.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Crescentwood, for one very quick question.

Mr. Sale: Can the Premier then tell the House how he knew, as he stated on CJOB on April 18, that MEC had raised over \$100 million in investment and loan capital? If he had not had any briefings, how did he know that?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I do not know how he segues into saying that I did not have any briefings. All I have said consistently over and over and over again is that our only commitment that was made was \$10 million.

He has heard it from Mr. Cam Osler. He has heard it from John Loewen, the president. He has heard it from Charlie Spiring. He has heard it from the lawyers on behalf of MEC. He has heard it from everybody there who has any credibility who was involved, and he insists on trying to spin a falsehood, Madam Speaker. It is absolute nonsense, and he has no credibility.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has indeed expired.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) once again used a term which is unparliamentary. "Falsehood" is very clearly identified in Beauchesne's Citation 489. So I would, once again, ask that either the First Minister withdraw or that you ask him to withdraw that comment unequivocally.

Madam Speaker: Indeed, the honourable member for Thompson does have a point of order. The word "falsehood" has been ruled unparliamentary.

I would ask the honourable First Minister to withdraw unequivocally the word "falsehood."

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, there is no question in my mind that the information provided by the member is absolutely, totally false. I withdraw, however, the comment about falsehood.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister.

Speaker's Ruling

Madam Speaker: I have a ruling for the House.

On June 29, I also took under advisement a point of order raised by the honourable government House leader respecting words contained in a question asked by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

I have perused Hansard and find that the question contained the following words, "I would like to ask the Deputy Premier whether on Monday evening of this week past they received a briefing with some substantive detail from the Dominion-Hunt Spirit consortium in cabinet, which were left with members of cabinet."

Beauchesne Citation 411(2) provides that questions may not seek information about proceedings in cabinet. Speaker Phillips in 1986 applied this citation in ruling a similar question out of order.

I am ruling that question did contravene Beauchesne Citation 411(2) and is therefore out of order.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

December 6 Women's Memorial Committee Women's Memorial Garden Opening

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I request leave to make a nonpolitical announcement.

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

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, on Sunday, December 24 at 2 p.m., the December 6 Women's Memorial Committee plans the opening and dedication of the December 6 women's memorial garden. The site is in the northeast section of the Legislative grounds, just to the right of the parking circle if you are facing Broadway.

Shortly after the murder of the 14 young women in Montreal's École polytechnique on December 6, 1989, a group of Winnipeg women gathered and determined to take action against violence and misogyny. In the face of the Montreal murders, they decided to honour and celebrate the lives and rights of Manitoba women by creating a living memorial, or as they term it, quote, a living commitment to the lives of Manitoba women.

The program on Sunday will include a dedication, music, open mike, acknowledgements and commemorative T-shirts for sale.

The December 6 Women's Memorial Committee welcomes your support and participation. I know all members of the Assembly will join with me in acknowledging the vision, hard work and commitment of these women. Thank you.

* (1420)

Legion Week

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

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

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, since this is Legion Week, I would like to commend and congratulate the Ukrainian Canadian veterans, Branch 141 of the Royal Canadian Legion. I would like to commend them for all their service to veterans, for visiting veterans at Veterans Manor and Deer Lodge, for their hospital

visiting and for providing honour guards for funerals. I would like to commend them for their service to the community, which is considerable. They sponsor four baseball teams. They have a seniors club. They have a Ukrainian dance group and air cadets.

There are many other activities for which they should also be commended, including donations to numerous charities in the north end and Winnipeg. I would also like to congratulate them since this is the 50th anniversary of this branch. It is also the largest Ukrainian Canadian veterans branch in Canada with over 1,200 members. I look forward to celebrating with them on October 29 at their banquet to commemorate their 50th anniversary. Thank you.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, might I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

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

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, I would also like to join in congratulating Legion 141 for all of its efforts. I would also today like to congratulate the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch No. 30, West Kildonan Royal Canadian Legion where I had the pleasure of attending last night their Legion Week veterans dinner, a dinner where we had an opportunity to honour all veterans of all conflicts in which Canada was involved. I found the evening, as I normally do at legion events, very inspirational and very hopeful.

I would like to commemorate the organizers of this particular event and congratulate all members of the Royal Canadian Legion West Kildonan Branch and, in particular, Les Weber and his committee for organizing such an outstanding event and doing their part to remember the sacrifice and the efforts of all those Canadians who have sacrificed themselves in many ways to preserve our freedom. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you call Bills 15, 5, 6 and then

the balance of the bills as listed on the Order Paper. Thank you.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 15—The Agricultural Producers' Organization Funding Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), Bill 15, The Agricultural Producers' Organization Funding Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement d'organismes de producteurs agricoles), standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to put some comments on the record with respect to Bill 15 which this government talked about for some time and was introduced in the spring of this session. This bill is the amendments to Bill 28 which this government brought in I believe in 1988 and a bill which caused some concern for people in rural Manitoba and members of our caucus.

Madam Speaker, the agriculture industry in Manitoba and in Canada is facing dramatic changes and there is need for farmers to become organized and have a strong voice because they certainly, particularly here in Manitoba, have not had a strong voice on their behalf. We have not had a government that has been speaking out for farmers. We have had a tremendous loss of services for farmers by the federal government to cut back in services and cut back in transportation support, cut back in research, and we have not had a strong voice from this government to defend it.

So there is need. There is need for a farm organization, but if we are to have a farm organization, farmers should have say in what their organization is

and there has to be recognition, Madam Speaker, that all farmers do not share the same views they do. The organization that farmers have representing them has to be chosen by farmers. It cannot be dictated to them.

This legislation that is being brought forward, Madam Speaker, is amendments to a bill, but this is not democratic legislation. In fact, very few farmers are even aware that this legislation is being brought forward. The legislation was introduced this spring, and I might say that the government during their election campaign did not talk about amending the check-off legislation.

I think it was discussed once on an open-line show in Brandon, but it was not part of a platform. So this legislation was introduced in the spring when farmers were very busy putting their crops in. Now we have the legislation which will go to committee and again will come at a time when farmers are very busy taking off their crops. I do not think that the government was very conscientious of the farming community when they introduced this legislation as far as timing goes or when they are going to take it to committee.

There has to be some sensitivity to when the farming community has time. I know there are many members across the way who are involved in the farming community, and they should realize that this month and next month are very busy months for farmers. It will be very difficult for them to participate in the hearings.

I said that we have concerns with this legislation, and, in particular, we have concerns because the previous legislation, the legislation that is being amended allowed the farmers to opt out of the checkoff if they were not interested. It has proven there are very few farmers, approximately 20,000 farmers in Manitoba, under 4,000 farmers are members of the organization right now. That is an indication that there are problems, and it is a problem that has to be addressed.

* (1430)

For some reason farmers are not choosing to become part of the recognized organization right now, which is KAP. For some reason they are all opting out. There

are not even a quarter of the members of the farmers participating in this organization. The government has decided to force farmers to become part of this organization. They are introducing a negative option checkoff. The farmers have to pay their money in and then apply to get it back. Now there is nothing wrong with a farm organization being established, providing the membership has been canvassed. At no time have the farmers been asked whether or not they want to have a membership.

I have talked to the Keystone Agricultural Producers about this. I said, if this is the kind of legislation that you want, canvass the members, let them have a vote. If 60 percent of the members want to be members of this organization or 50 percent, 51 percent, let the legislation pass. Then we will have a farm organization, but farmers have not had a say. What the farmers have said through their opting out is an indication that they are not happy. So somebody has to do some work and find out what it is farmers want.

Certainly farmers need an organization, but perhaps, Madam Speaker, what this government should be looking at when they are doing this legislation is giving farmers some options. I believe in the Ontario legislation there are two organizations. The farmers have a choice of the organization that they want their funds to go to. Perhaps if the government would look at that kind of legislation where farmers would at least have some choice, then they might have more people participating, but to force people to say you have to send your money in and then apply for it back is a negative option that we do not support.

You know, you could carry this a little bit farther, and maybe this government is going to introduce legislation that says, all people have to belong to a political party and the party that is in government and then you have to apply for your money back from it, which is what is happening here because, whatever you say, the farm organization is a political lobby group. It is an organization that lobbies on behalf of farmers. There is political clout to that organization.

So, Madam Speaker, I think that this is not a good move, and I would suggest that the government reconsider this and look at the possibility of putting in

a clause that would allow for farmers to have a petition signed with the majority of farmers signing the petition whether they would look at a vote for farmers. I am sure we can organize votes on a referendum right across Canada. Surely the people in Manitoba can organize to allow farmers to have a vote. It should not be so difficult, and I would make that suggestion to the minister that let us look at this. Give farmers a say and if this is what they want, fine. If they vote for it, give them the organization.

I heard someone across the way mention unions. Well, in a union you have a vote, and if the majority of the people want the representation, that is what they have. If we are going to have farm organizations, and which I believe we do need, let the farmers have some say in it. They are not having a say under this legislation. This legislation is not allowing for that.

One of the areas that causes concern which is not part of the legislation is on who decides which organization should represent farmers. The body that is now in place to decide is not farmers. It is outside people and I think that it should be farmers who make the decision on who their organization should be. I think that would be very, very important.

Certainly, Madam Speaker, we need a strong voice for farmers in this country, as I said earlier. Farmers are facing some very dramatic changes in this country and I do not believe that this government has done a good job in taking information to the farmers. In particular, when we had the changes to the Crow we heard some words from this government but not a strong voice from them. I guess, in retrospect, I do not really expect much more because the changes to the Crow began under the Conservative government under Brian Mulroney. They were the ones who started to cut back on that Crow benefit and certainly we had hoped that this government would speak up stronger for farmers and defend or put a fight up with Ottawa to see some of the farm services and supports kept in place. In particular, I believe that this government should have put a much stronger fight to cutbacks that we saw, as I said, to transportation but also to research.

Although the government made some statements, they certainly never went out to visit with farmers or

hold meetings with farmers in rural Manitoba to tell them the consequences of these changes and there are going to be dramatic changes in agriculture. [interjection] Yes, and the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) just indicated that he could meet with the Minister of Agriculture any time and talk about the issues. Unfortunately, the rest of the people in rural Manitoba do not have that option. It should be the role of this government to go out and take out information to the farmers on what is happening with changes like this, but it has not happened.

We certainly have not had a strong voice with respect to the Port of Churchill, which is a very important issue for farmers in this province. When you consider the changes in cost that farmers in this part of the country are going to face and the alternatives that they have for transportation, one of the main alternatives they have is the Port of Churchill which is a possibility of a cheaper route to ship our grain out, but we have not heard. We have heard platitudes from this government, but we have not heard very much lobbying going on. Basically, we have heard lip service from this government, but we do not see them lobbying to get the freight shipped through the Port of Churchill as we did when we had an NDP government. If you look at the record, Madam Speaker, you will see that when the NDP was in power, much more grain went through the Port of Churchill than we have right now. So we are not having a strong voice.

With respect to this legislation, I believe that there does have to be representation, but when we do have representation, we do have farm groups, those farm groups have to speak up for farmers. I do not believe that the farm groups that we have right now are speaking up strongly. That is why we have the dropoff in membership that we do have. When we see, as I said, under 4,000 members within the farm organization right now, when we see the number of farmers participating in farm organizations, you have to question why farmers are not participating, and it is wrong for the government to try to legislate that farmers have to participate in an organization. We have to look at giving farmers the option.

The other part of the legislation, Madam Speaker, deals with the commodity group checkoff, and I believe

that the same thing applies here. Commodity groups should have the right to raise money for research, and the reason they have to raise more money for research is again they have been let down by the federal government and the provincial government. Governments have a role to play in doing research for crops and other research, but we have seen a great decrease in that under this government. Of course, commodity groups should have the ability to collect a fee, but before they can collect that fee, they should canvass their membership as well.

* (1440)

The group that is looking for the checkoff right now is the canola growers. Madam Speaker, it is approximately 12,000 canola growers in Manitoba, and of those there are only between 300 and 500 who are members. That is a very small percentage that are members right now. I have talked to the Canola Growers Association about this. I feel that there should be a vote, there should be a petition, go out and get the canola growers to sign a petition and if over half of them say they want this, then let them have their checkoff. But, again, this has not happened. There has been no canvassing of the growers saying that they want it. So why should we impose something on them? If producers want it, they should be canvassed. They should be given the opportunity to vote on it. If they decide that is what they want, more power to them, and then we would have a commodity group that was funded, but at the present time that has not happened, and they are being forced to do something without even being given very much information about it.

The government has indicated that the reason they are bringing the legislation in is because the elevator agents, the grain companies want this. Well, I have talked to many elevator agents, and they have said they are not interested in this checkoff legislation— [interjection] Yes, maybe higher up, maybe the elevator companies, but certainly the agents have not been talked to about this, and this is not their request. This is just a request to make things easier for one organization to have a membership, and it is the elevator agents who are going to be doing the work for the organization. A good organization, if it is doing its job, will have no problem getting membership and

getting funds sent in. It should not be legislated as this member has.

Now the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) keeps chirping from his seat about the Farmers' Union, and I know the Farmers' Union has always been a thorn in his side, but as much as I respect the Keystone Agricultural Producers and the issues that they address, I wish the member would respect the views of the Farmers' Union, because not everybody thinks alike. A healthy society is based on different views, but of course this government does not like to hear that there are different views. If the member for Arthur, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism will look back at the record, the Farmers' Union did some very good work in their day in representing farmers. They did many things.

Members of government are very sensitive, and they want to have control of everything. It is well known that the Keystone Agricultural Producers, in fact the Past President of the Keystone Agricultural Producers has run; he is a member of this House on the Conservative side of the House here, so we know that the agenda and the philosophies of the Keystone Agricultural Producers is more right wing, and there is nothing wrong with that. If that is the direction that that group of people wants to lean, that is fine, but farmers have a broad base of views. They should not be forced into that one organization as this government is trying to do, and that, Madam Speaker, is what we have objection to. We have objection to the fact that farmers are being forced into an organization without having say into it.

The other part of the legislation deals, as I said, with commodity groups. I have met with the Canola Growers and they have raised their—they very much want this legislation to pass so that they can have funding for research. We have told the Canola Growers when we met with them that there has to be a better way of canvassing the members, and if this legislation passes without having the—I would like to see an amendment where there would have to be a petition, where farmers would have to be canvassed, but I would also like to see an amendment for the organization, commodity groups, that if farmers opt out, if they decide not to be part of, if a certain

percentage of them drop out, they are not interested, then it has to be reviewed, that once they have the commodity check-off, if it is not working, that it be reviewed and looked at more carefully than it has and give the farmers an opportunity to have the legislation reviewed or have a referendum on the legislation.

Madam Speaker, I indicated in my opening comments that I have concern that this legislation is being brought in at a time when it is very busy and farmers have not had the time to review the legislation. This is legislation that affects rural people, and I would ask the government to consider the possibility of taking the hearings on this bill out to rural Manitoba. Take it out to several communities and give the opportunity for farmers and rural people to have input into this legislation.

I know people sometimes get Perimeter vision and think everything should revolve in this building here, but I am sure that members across the way will support me. I am sure the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) would be happy to have hearings on this bill held in rural Manitoba so that people that are affected by the bill can have a chance to have input. [interjection] Again the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) is chirping away and having some comments, but I would ask Madam Speaker if you would ask him to refrain himself and perhaps—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Swan River is debating this bill in this remaining 40 minutes, 19 minutes remaining, and I would request the co-operation of all members to be attentive. You will all have your turn.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I was indicating, the member for Arthur-Virden keeps chirping from his seat, but, you know, I look forward to the time when he debates this bill. He can tell us his views on it and why he feels that it is so important that we legislate which organization farmers should belong to. I just cannot believe that a minister would support legislation that is so undemocratic in taking the rights away from farmers to make a choice.

I cannot imagine that if somebody tried to pass legislation saying that everybody that worked in stores

had to pay fees to a union, I can imagine what the people from the other side would say. They would say, oh, you guys, you are just trying to create unions; you are undemocratic. But when they are bringing in legislation like this, it seems like it is quite okay. By their philosophy, it is quite okay.

An Honourable Member: Well, there is a difference, all right.

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, there is a difference, Madam Speaker.

We have a very diverse agriculture community. We have people in rural Manitoba who have different views, just as people in urban Manitoba and northern Manitoba have different views. It is wrong to think that they can be all represented, that all producers can be represented by one unified voice. It is wrong to think that. There has to be the opportunity for farmers to have different views, and they cannot be forced by legislation to believe that they will be represented by one voice.

* (1450)

There has been no opportunity for farmers to become involved in this legislation. There has been very little publicity about it. As I say, we just had an election. We did not hear the government members campaigning saying that they were going to bring in legislation like this. There must be the opportunity for farmers to participate. I would ask very much that the government would—[interjection] I beg your pardon? I am sorry, Madam Speaker, I missed a comment from the member.

An Honourable Member: I said it was pretty strange.

Ms. Wowchuk: So I would very much urge the government to look at the possibility of getting this information out to farmers but in particular holding hearings in rural Manitoba so that the government will have the opportunity to hear the views of farmers.

I heard the minister across the way saying that he agrees with that statement. I look forward to him putting that on the record.

The farmers are in a very difficult time right now. We have gone through the change to the Crow. When that was happening we expected that farmers would be very angry, but they have accepted this change. They are feeling very downtrodden that they have no supports from government, and that is very disappointing. There has to be information, and I think that the government should take this opportunity to go out to rural Manitoba and listen to the farmers. As well as having hearings, it would be an opportunity for them to listen to the views of farmers.

Now there are a few members here who said they have listened, but this is something that has to be addressed. I would hope that the minister would take that into consideration and hold those hearings. Again, Madam Speaker, I would hope that the minister would take into consideration the concerns that have been raised with respect to the bill, that this is undemocratic. Farmers have not had a voice in the drafting of this legislation. Clearly farmers have not said that they want a compulsory checkoff. [interjection]

The member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) says that they said so in an election. That is not true. The government did not run on this legislation; they did not put it in their election pamphlets. I have talked to many, many farmers over the last couple of months who are not aware that the government is proposing to bring in this legislation to force them to be part of an organization that they have chosen not to. The negative option checkoff is not a good piece of legislation. I am disappointed in it that the government is taking that step, and I hope that the government will look at the suggestions we have made.

We have a few amendments that we will be bringing in when we get to committee, when we have those amendments drafted, in particular for farmers to have a better say. We will be sharing those with the minister and hope that he will take them into consideration.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, as I had said earlier, there were real changes going on in agriculture, and we have to have better information provided to farmers. But above all we have to look that what we are doing in agriculture, what we are doing in any economic growth in this province, is sustainable, in the future

when the next generation of farmers comes along, that there is land, that there is water and that those people who choose to live in rural Manitoba have the ability to do so.

We have to have a government that is prepared to work with the farmers and provide them with the opportunities to grow and adapt to the changes that are coming about in this province, changes that are coming as a result of the dramatic changes we will have because of change to transportation in particular which will affect Manitoba.

So I hope that the government in their wisdom—in their wisdom, as my colleague indicates, in their short wisdom—will remember that as we have the changes in rural Manitoba they must be sustainable, and we must treat all producers fairly.

There are farmers in many, many parts of the province. We cannot only think about farmers in one part of the province. We cannot sacrifice one group of farmers for another. We need to have a government that will speak up for them. Farmers need to have the ability to organize themselves as they choose. Farmers should not be restricted that they should have only one organization that represents them.

According to this legislation, they are being restricted in how they organize them. Other people will say they are not being restricted, but certainly with this checkoff that is being in place right now for one organization without the opportunity for other organizations, farmers having the opportunity to contribute to whichever organization they want, they are being restricted.

Now the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) again says that the farmers voted on April 5. Well, I will tell you, Madam Speaker, in Swan River farmers did vote in April, and they said that they wanted an NDP representative. They wanted a representative who would speak up for them, and that is what I am doing. I am telling this government that the farmers in my part of the province do not agree with this legislation. They do not want to be forced to be a part of one organization; they want the options. This government has to look at giving farmers—if they are going to bring in legislation then give the farmers a choice that they

can send their money to whichever organization they want to represent them, and the government is not doing that with this. This is undemocratic. They are dictating which organization farmers have to be part of, and it is wrong.

As I said, Madam Speaker, I have other colleagues who want to comment on this legislation. We will be bringing in amendments, but I sincerely encourage the government to take our suggestion and take the hearings to rural Manitoba and listen to farmers, because the government will be surprised, shocked and surprised, to learn that this is not what farmers want, and they want a choice. I urge the government to give farmers that choice. Thank you.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House and speak, take a few minutes to address the issues under Bill 15, The Agricultural Producers' Organization Funding Amendment Act.

The reason I choose to make a few comments is because of what has been said on the opposition side about the bill and what has been said about the reaction of the farm community in regard to this bill and what the needs are in the agricultural community in their dealings with governments, agencies and proper representation on agricultural matters. We need only look around during the last 10 or 20 years to realize the huge and dramatic changes that have come about in agriculture. We need only look to the past hundred years or so and realize the very, very dramatic decreases in the farm population in all of rural Canada. It would be to me, if I was living in an urban area and in a very populated country, it would be very scary to me to realize that we had now put the production of food into the hands of less than 2 percent of the people in this country.

* (1500)

It is really scary when you sit out in the countryside and look around you and realize the tremendous power that agriculture has in the world today. Yet, when you surmise the net result of what has happened over the last two or three decades, we realize that that powerful group of a very small group of people in the world has

been held at ransom and has been held at bay by the forces that utilize the resources that they produce, mainly the consumer.

The political forces, whether it be in Manitoba, whether it be in Canada, the U.S. or the European nations and/or other countries in the world, had decided in the past that in order to keep a flow of affordable products to the consumer and ensure that the world would in fact be fed, something very dramatic had to be done. Europe, having come out of the First and Second World Wars and the huge famines that they experienced during that time, made a promise to its people: never again would they run hungry; never again would they go hungry. Other nations in the world did exactly the same thing. What it led to is what is now known as the green revolution.

Remember, members in this House, that it is not very many years ago that there was a prediction that by the early '80s we would face huge, huge famines in this world, that this world would run out of food. Those predictions were made in the early-late '50s. Actions were taken by nations to put policies in place that would encourage the production of food, the production of food at very, very affordable costs.

Now what happened? The governments of the day decided that they would put in place subsidies and tariffs to ensure that the food that the consumer bought across the counter was in fact affordable, not only affordable but very cheap. They then in turn made a political decision that they would pay farmers out of taxpayers' funds to ensure that farmers had an income that would encourage that production.

That led to the green revolution. We produced in Europe far more food than the population in Europe could consume which created huge, huge surpluses. We did the same thing in the United States and we did the same thing in Canada.

We need only to look back to the late '60s and early '70s to realize the kind of chaos that those surpluses led to on the farm and in rural communities, which in my view was the determining factor in the decisions by many, many rural people to move off the farms and into the cities. It caused a huge depopulation of rural

Manitoba, rural Canada, the rural United States and many of the other rural parts of other nations.

Madam Speaker, if the farm populations in those countries, in our country and in our province would have been adequately represented by members of their own industry, I believe that we would have had entirely different policy, but farmers in general, right across the world, were unorganized. They did not have spokespeople that were adequately knowledgeable to convince politicians to not make the kinds of changes and make the kinds of political decisions and put the kinds of policies in place that led to the huge surplus situation that we were in. We in Manitoba are no different.

Throughout this nation's history, farming has been and will remain cyclical. There will be times when the farm community will need support in order to meet the economic requirements to keep them on the farm, and there will be times when we have very good times, when the farm community will be in relatively good shape.

We are probably entering the upside of a cycle that agriculture—and it is almost predictable. Yes, that is exactly what happens; it goes in huge waves. So I think we are on the upside of the price swing currently that will lead us into an era where the farm community might say, well, it is really not necessary that we have that kind of representation, and it is really not necessary to be that organized.

Well, let us just look back about eight, 10 years ago when these surpluses were causing a huge hardship on the farm community, and farmers started organizing in a very meaningful way in Manitoba. They formed an organization, and they did so not just out of thin air like this; they held huge numbers of meetings across this province. They debated and decided to put in place an organization that would truly represent the views of all parts of the sectors of the agricultural society.

So they formed an organization which really has 64 elements to it. It involved all the commodity groups, and it involved all the areas of the agriculture-producing part of Manitoba. It even allowed for the representation within that organization of industries in

supply management. There was a tremendous effort put to make sure that there would be an organization that could truly speak for the farm community.

Back in the '80s when prices of grain were less than a dollar for wheat, that organization went to Ottawa and spoke on behalf of Manitoba farmers. That organization went to Saskatchewan, Alberta, B.C., Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes and solicited the support to put forward a case to Ottawa that there needed to be some special help. Out of that effort was born the Special Grains Program. The Special Grains Program which was initiated under the Mulroney administration under the guidance of Charlie Mayer, the then Minister of Agriculture, paid better than \$3 billion, almost \$4 billion to maintain a farm community, ladies and gentlemen, in this province and in other parts of Canada.

Why am I citing all this? Because there is a tremendous amount of history that has led us to where we are today. Today we are faced with a situation where commodity prices are rising and the need for an organized farm community is lessening, so we need to recognize that this cycle will again come into a downswing. The farm community wants a vehicle that will speak for them, but that vehicle also then needs leadership. It needs good spokespeople. It needs people who have the time or will give of themselves and put in place the time and put out the effort that is needed to make the case for the farm community.

In order to be able to do that properly, that organization needs funding, and it needs funding on an ongoing basis, not on a cyclical basis. It needs a regular flow of cash to be able to put in place an organizational structure that will in fact serve the farm community. Whether it is the canola growers or whether it is the hog producers or the cattle producers or the broiler producers or the grain producers or any of the other specialty crops producers, they need to work together to be able to fend for themselves and protect their interest to ensure the continuation of agriculture, because if we do not do that, Madam Speaker, then you and I might one day walk to our grocery shelves and find them empty.

* (1510)

I say to you, Madam Speaker, that I believe that we are that close to coming to the predictions that were put forward in 1950. I believe we are probably 10 years behind what they were predicting at the time, saying the 1980s could be famine years, because farmers will not put into their crop production exercises more than they think that they can get out of. So they need to convince politicians like myself and yourselves in this House and others, whether they be in Ottawa, in Washington, in The Hague or wherever, they need to convince politicians to allow them a level playing field in this world market that we are into. To do that, we need strong organization.

The second reason we need to put some proper ongoing funding into agriculture organization is to ensure that there be proper research, that there be proper research done to ensure that ongoing varietal development within the system is maintained and enhanced whether it is in the field of canola production—and I say to you that Manitoba was not too long ago considered the leader in canola research. It is no longer the leader in canola research. Other provinces have put in place a funding mechanism that will ensure that proper funding and research facilities are maintained and, in fact, provided for by the farm community.

We in Manitoba are lagging, and I, quite frankly, take some responsibility for that because we have not had the political will in this House to put forward this kind of legislation that will allow for the establishment of a proper research fund, that will allow for proper research to be funded in this province. So we need new varietal development. We need new crop development.

I say to you that we have some tremendous opportunity if we allow ourselves to provide funding of that kind of research. We have seen a tremendous expansion of three crops in this province over the last decade, one of them being the potato industry, the other being the bean industry, and the third one is the corn industry.

In order to further that you need the kind of research and development and to provide the funding that has gone into the canola industry. The research that has gone into canola and the canola industry has been

largely done by the farm community. Had it not been for that, canola would today not be king in western Canada.

The value of canola production over this last couple of years has probably exceeded the value of wheat production. So I think there is a demonstration there of what can be done if the farm community and the industries put their minds together and put that kind of effort into breeding varieties that are acceptable for growing in Manitoba and western Canada.

I think there are some tremendous opportunities, but beyond that, we need spokespeople, we need leaders and we need to recognize that the farm community needs to pull together and provide proper funding to those leaders and spokespeople that can in fact make the case for them on an ongoing basis, and that is the reason we need organizations.

I am somewhat amazed, quite frankly, colleagues in this House, that the opposition members will question the need for this kind of legislation for the farm community when the NDP party has gone headlong in support of the Rand Formula for the labour people in this province. Are they now saying that they are willing to back off on providing that kind of support to the labour community in this province? Is that what they are saying by the speech that was just made from the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk)? I mean, I would suggest to you what is good for the farmer is good for the labourer or what is good for the goose is good for the gander.

So I would think that the opposition members might want to rethink their position on this piece of legislation. There is a tremendous battle that is emanating or is going to come forward in this province and in the rest of Canada fairly soon, and that will include the supply-manage system.

It is not the Americans in my view that in the final analysis are going to decide whether we should have supply management or not in this country. I believe it is western Canadian farmers that are going to question very, very sincerely whether we should maintain supply management or not. When we in fact in Manitoba can produce livestock, whether it be hogs or

beef, poultry, whether it be turkey, chickens, geese, ducks or emus, or any one of those kinds of products, that we can produce them cheaper than anywhere else in this country or maybe in North America, why should we then not be able to produce as much of it as we possibly can?

So those questions are going to come, and it is going to take a strong farm voice to be able to put the position and make the case for the farm community, and that is why they will need proper funding, adequately to be able to afford the kind of people that they are going to require to be able to speak for them.

So whether you are dealing with freight rates in the future—and I guarantee you we will be dealing now on an ongoing basis annually, and we will be negotiating as a farm community with the railways and other transportation firms to either increase or reduce freight rates. We will negotiate with the elevator companies on an annual basis to set handling costs within elevation, to set cleaning charges and all those kinds of things. You need a strong farm organization to represent us.

When I talk about we—the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) asked who is "we." We are the farm community, and I believe that that is the group of people that will need the kind of spokespeople and strong voice to be able to negotiate with, whether it be the transportation company, the grain handling companies or any of the other producers and processors, because that is where it is going to be at.

So I say to you when we look at Churchill, for instance, and we make the strong case to transport more grain out of Churchill, who is going to speak for the Port of Churchill? Is it going to be labour that is going to say, well, yeah, we should put many more jobs in Churchill. Is it going to be the labour unions? I doubt that. Is it going to be the transportation companies, the CN, the CP? I doubt that. Is it going to be the grain companies? I doubt that. Is it going to be the Canadian Wheat Board or the Canadian Grain Commission? I do not think so. It is going to be the farm community that will decide where they can in fact transport grain out of Manitoba in the cheapest manner. If there is a case to be made, if we can prove, or if the farm community can

prove that you can haul grain out of Churchill or export grain out of Churchill cheaper than you can out of Thunder Bay or Vancouver, then that farm organization will make that case.

So they need proper funding. They need a funding formula to be able to put all that together. We need to recognize the fact that farmers will become involved in their own destinies to a much greater degree than they have in the past because all these programs, whether it be GRIP, whether it be special grains programs or whether it be the Crow, are gone, so they are on their own. If they are on their own, they are going to have to speak for themselves.

I suggest to the members sitting on the opposite side of this House that, yes, there will be some farmers who oppose this kind of legislation because as the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) has said, some people will see this as compulsory funding legislation, which it is not. This is legislation that will truly allow farmers to designate a checkoff, and it will indicate to whether it be an elevator company, whether it is a processing firm or any other firm that they have to make the checkoff, which our previous legislation did not do. At the end of the day, if and when they decide that whoa, this organization is not moving in the manner that we think it should be moving, they can, in fact, ask for their funding to be halted and rebated.

* (1520)

So this is not compulsory, mandatory type of legislation. This is voluntary contribution legislation, absolutely, and this should not be understood and I believe that this will strengthen the farm community's voice. It will strengthen the economic position of rural Manitoba, and it can be the foundation of a much, much stronger agricultural community in Manitoba.

I ask the honourable members in this House to give full and unequivocal support to this kind of legislation. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to speak on Bill 15 and wish to put on record our party position and my own

personal opinion as hopefully one day being able to haul in my crop to the elevator. When I get there it would be a shame if I had no choice because of this government deciding to shove down an automatic checkoff. It is really a form of taxation.

As I speak to it, I speak not only as a potential farmer, and hopefully in two or three years I will be harvesting, and not only that, but as a citizen of Manitoba, all of us have reason to object to this bill. Why? We had a recent example of a negative checkoff. All Canadians were put in a position where we all went through this. Recently, there was the expansion of the cable system, and if the other side will remember, there was a great deal of opposition about the automatic billing for your cable channels.

Thousands of Manitobans, hundreds of thousands, millions of people across Canada objected. Why? Because we did not have the choice in terms of getting our cable channels. It was a form of taxation. It was put right on our bill. It is true you could go down and remove or opt out, but the problem is that it is not a choice when you go to the elevator. It is not a choice in the beginning. The only thing it is is a negative option. After the fact you apply for the rebate.

This, when you look at the farming community, is particularly distressing. Not only have we seen extremely unstable markets, our prices for commodities have been particularly low, we have seen bankruptcies, we have seen our neighbours leave. It has been tragic. It has been very tragic for farm communities.

Closure of schools, our small communities are closing down, and in addition to that we have seen unstable grain prices. We have seen huge debts incurred. We have seen the necessity of large investments as we look to try and increase our production. Now we see the Crow rate subsidy cut. We are getting it both from the Liberals and now from the Conservatives, unfortunately, but our opportunity is here to make a change. This will be an additional tax to farmers at a time when they cannot afford it.

I would say, let us give farmers a choice. Do not make them automatically pay when you get to the elevator. This is a fundamental philosophy,

Conservative philosophy. Choice—what happened to free choice? You allow people to choose what organization they wish to represent them. You do not make it mandatory like this legislation is doing, and just like any other organization, call for a vote. If the majority of people choose that, then you are in.

I think that if we look at the negative option, one government in particular took leadership, and I think that this government could learn from them. In that case, we saw from cablevision that it was the NDP government in B.C. that took the lead. You have the opportunity as government to change this legislation, make it democratic, make it an option and make it reasonable for farmers in Manitoba. That is why the negative option is not only of concern to the farmers, and in my case the potential farmer, but to every citizen in Manitoba that as we looked at the cable situation we said no to that. If we had had a stronger voice, we probably would have had another option for cablevision as well, but now that we have learned from that I do not think it would be wise, not prudent, to continue in this manner.

Give farmers a chance. Give farmers a chance to pick which union, which organization they wish to go with. You mail in later on, it is unfair; it is undemocratic and it is a bad idea.

This mandatory tax that the Conservatives are imposing with this proposed bill is very unreasonable at a time when there are rising transportation costs and very unstable conditions in the farm community.

The act actually has organizations applying to a certification agency which does not comprise of farmers alone. In fact, it is comprised of the University of Manitoba, the Manitoba Institute of Agrolologists and the Union of Manitoba Municipalities.

I would question why they would choose to have this form of organization rather than looking at farmers having the ability to choose when they would go to the elevator or choose at any time to participate. My concern here is an organization has lobbied the government and the government is giving in. Why are they lobbying? If you look at what I understand, the Canola Producers have a membership of 400 members

presently at \$100 per member. They are looking at an annual budget of \$40,000 for the organization. What will it be in the future? You are looking at 12,000 members, \$100 each time. You are looking at over a million dollars for the organization. Obviously they are going to be appealing to the government to bring in legislation like this. It is basically a cash cow for them, but it is an unfair legislation.

I appeal to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), because I know that he is a very reasonable man who has lived on a farm, lives in a rural community. Many of his neighbours would object to this, this automatic checkoff, negative checkoff, so I am appealing to him, and in his wisdom he has seen that our suggestion—and he has agreed to it—to take out the committee hearings to rural Manitoba, that shows wisdom and consideration. What I am saying to the minister: Have a look at this program. It is really a mandatory, negative checkoff, not something we wish to impose on the farmers of Manitoba or on the citizens of Manitoba.

I appeal to the government to reconsider, and when they go out to rural Manitoba, to listen to the farmers there as they speak on behalf of farmers and communities in rural Manitoba and express their desire for free choice and the opportunity to choose which organization they belong to. Thank you.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that the debate on Bill 15 be adjourned.

Madam Speaker: No, it is standing. Leave was previously granted to allow the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Bill 5—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), who has 39 minutes remaining, and

standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River? [agreed]

* (1530)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, yesterday I did get the opportunity to put at least on the record some of the concerns that we had. I would like to be able to expand on them. In fact, this bill takes a number of the points from the blueprint or the action plan, whatever one might want to call it, from the government dealing with education.

There were really six aspects to The Action Plan as the former Minister of Education brought to this Chamber. Essential learning was the first, followed by education standards and evaluations, school effectiveness, parental and community involvement, Distance Education and Technology and teacher education.

Madam Speaker, what we have found is that this particular whole plan that the government has brought together is somewhat questionable in terms of just exactly how much listening was done. We were pleased to see in fact that over the election there were some changes that were adopted, in particular around the Parent Advisory Councils. We had always believed that the teachers did have a role to play on the advisory councils so we were quite pleased to see that particular change in heart from the government, because, in fact, the parent councils do have a very vital role to play.

In essence, one of the best ways you can improve the quality of education is by getting the parents more involved in what their children are doing in school. Anything at all that government can do to help or to assist in facilitating parents and community leaders getting involved, and teachers I should say, getting involved in a child's education, the better the quality of education that is ultimately going to be delivered.

Also, Madam Speaker, there was an issue which we had talked quite extensively about in the past and that

was the whole role, the idea of suspending students. Again, a very significant issue and an issue in which we believed that this government when it originally proposed the bill on suspensions to allow teachers to suspend there was a great deal of concern in terms of consistency, how one teacher might even from within one school suspend a student compared to yet another teacher in that very same school. Consistency is in fact very important.

Speaking on strictly suspensions, it is far too easy for governments, when we say suspensions that we should actually be talking in my opinion and the party's opinion more towards things such as in-school suspensions. Nothing frustrates me more when I hear of a student who has been suspended outside of the school and there is nothing put into place in order to ensure that that student is not just going to be having a one-week holiday roaming the streets or doing who knows what, Madam Speaker. Both society and that particular individual and most importantly that individual do not benefit by those types of suspensions.

There is in fact a greater role in terms of thinking on what we should be doing when we talk about suspensions. We have to be creative. Some school divisions have in-school suspensions and have set up specific programs to deal with suspensions. It would be nice to see more school divisions move in that same sort of direction.

I have often talked about a code of conduct or behaviour. In fact, in the most recent election the Liberal Party proposed a province-wide code of behaviour, conduct in all of our schools. I do believe that is needed, that there are some things in which, no matter which region of the province that one lives in, that we have to understand and appreciate that the fact of the matter is, there are certain aspects of behaviour that should not be tolerated whatsoever in our schools.

Madam Speaker, there has to be an element of respect for the teacher. There has to be an element of respect for the student and, in fact, all individuals who are involved in our educational facilities.

Quite often we forget that there is a lot more to the educational system than just the teacher and the

student, and you have to take into account the support staff, the parents, and as I indicated earlier, the community leaders.

I have indicated that we do believe that we do need to make our schools safer by suspending students to a place which would in fact keep the students involved in some capacity, and I want to reemphasize that point. I am actually no longer the critic for Education for our party, but it was an issue which I followed and I will continue to follow.

I know the member for the Maples (Mr. Kowalski) was wanting to speak to the bill. Whether it is going to be in second reading or in committee stage or ultimately third reading, I am sure he will be given that opportunity to be able to say a few words. I know that he is definitely looking forward to this particular bill going into committee to hear presentations because, Madam Speaker, it is important that we hear from all the different people who are out there who have a lot of knowledge about educational reform.

This is a bill that does have many positive aspects to it but there are areas in which we do have some concern, and we look forward to seeing this particular bill heading off into the committee stage. Thanks for the opportunity to say a few words.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to add my comments on Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act, that was introduced by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) prior to the summer recess.

I have had the opportunity to read through this piece of legislation and to consult with many of the principals, a good number of parents in my community and some teachers on this piece of legislation and also on Bill 6, I might add.

To be honest, I have never been a teacher in my working life and, of course, did not have a clear understanding of what it is that teachers and principals have to undertake by way of responsibilities and duties throughout the school day and throughout the school

year, so I did make an effort to communicate with those that perform those functions on a daily basis.

I found that there seems to be a consensus on certain areas of the legislation, pro or con—and I will get to those in a few moments—amongst the principals, that is, and that in some cases some of the parents' groups are somewhat unclear on what the intent of the legislation is and the meaning because there is to this point in time no guidance having been provided by the Department of Education to the parents' groups that are currently operating within the community.

One of the things that I find interesting is the fact that the minister is now appearing to indicate that some of the parent groups and the policies that the school boards have had in place for a number of years are in some ways deficient and that they do not function. That is the perception that has been left with some of the parent councils and by some of the school trustees that I have had a chance to talk to.

In fact, one of the teachers in my community even referenced the fact that when former Minister of Education Mr. Manness came forward with his discussion documents called *Renewing Education: New Directions - The Action Plan* and also other documents that he has come out with in addition to that document, it left the impression with teachers that teachers were doing a lousy job. This is a quote, Mr. Acting Speaker: that you teachers are doing a lousy job. You need a kick in the pants. That is the impression that is left in the minds of the teachers whom I spoke to in my community and they are their words, not mine.

* (1540)

They related that to me just this week in my discussions with them. I find it distressing that that would be the impression the teachers would have. The teachers, I am sure, try very hard to try and do the jobs to the best of their abilities and are making every effort to ensure that our children are nurtured, the learning environment is a nurturing environment for our children and it is done in the safest fashion possible, but to hear the teachers now saying that they sense that the former Minister of Education's policy meant that the teachers were not doing a good job leaves me with

some concern that that would be their perception and that was the message that was conveyed to the teachers.

I imagine one of the things that contributed to that opinion by the teachers may have been the fact that teachers were excluded from participating in the Parent Advisory Councils. We know that after some consultation with the parents, teachers, principals, superintendents, school boards throughout the province that the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) now relented and changed to allow for the inclusion of teachers to sit in or to be elected to Parent Advisory Councils where those teachers would have children within that school. I think that is a positive move. I think we should not in the initial discussion document have excluded teachers from being involved.

I think teachers have a positive role to play on Parent Advisory Councils. I know I have had the opportunity to sit in on Parent Advisory Councils within my own community and to listen to some of the comments. I know my own wife is involved on one of the advisory councils. I have been there and listened to the comments by other parents. They are very actively involved. There seems to be a philosophy within the parents of the community, I guess that is the phrase I want to use, that at the elementary school level the parents are very much active in the school life of their children.

They are very active in the parent advisory bodies that we have. We have had Parent Advisory Councils in the Transcona-Springfield School Division—12 since 1978, and there are policies that are in place to guide them for quite a number of years now. They have worked very effectively in advising not only the principals, teachers but also the school trustees as well because I have been at many school board meetings in my community and seen the various parent councils come before the school board meeting and make representation on a variety of topics.

I suppose one of the things that could change, and I am not exactly clear on how this functions, but it would seem to me that there needs to be a change in the communication that takes place between the Parent Advisory Councils and the elected trustees. There does not seem to be a clear method to allow that two-way

communication to take place. So if I was to look at one area where I might want to make some changes that would be it, to allow the good ideas to flow in both directions so that there is that open communication.

One of the things that I noticed, judging by the legislation that is here and in talking with the parents of my community and the trustees and those that work within the schools, there does not seem to be a clear understanding of the word "advisory." In what capacity will this take place and how will it direct the parent councils as they try to perform their duties? Does it mean that they will then have the abilities to be involved in the day-to-day activities of the school? Will they be involved in matters dealing with personnel, including the hiring and firing of teachers and principals or will they be there to advise on matters pertaining to the budget, to the discipline of students that are within the schools itself?

I mean, there are many matters that are unclear in my mind on what the intent of this legislation is. Even the parents that I have talked to are not clear on what the intent is. I know, and I will relate to it a bit later in my comments because Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 just last week at their school board meeting released the policy document for school community councils, and they have left out the word "advisory" out of the title for those councils. I will get into the discussion on the document itself and the way they have laid it out.

One of the things that in my discussions with principals on the Parent Advisory Councils, every principal I spoke to was in favour and very much appreciated the work of the Parent Advisory Councils that are currently in place and see them playing a very significant role in the daily activities of the school. Where there was some difficulty with the powers that could be assumed by a council, a Parent Advisory Council, in matters dealing with discipline—as the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) indicated a few moments ago—in dealing with hiring and firing and the personnel matters of the school, et cetera. The Parent Advisory Councils I talked to have expressed some concern about them themselves having the power to be involved to the level of hiring and firing of staff. The principals themselves are concerned that the parent

councils would assume that responsibility taking away the ability of the principals to make recommendations to the elected body of people that we have, the school trustees, who are normally making those decisions now.

One of the issues that was raised by one of the principals in my community when he referenced the possibility that if Parent Advisory Councils take on the ability to hire and fire, for example, that there may be an opportunity for a special interest group—their words—to come forward and to apply for the right to have a parent council, and that these special interest groups would then be able to implement their particular mandate, the thing that they were most interested in accomplishing, thereby potentially undermining the ability and the rights of other parents within that school division.

That was something that seemed to strike a chord amongst both principals and the Parent Advisory Councils that I currently have within the community of Transcona. It seems that the minister needs to clarify the intent of the advisory councils, and I have not seen any documentation to this point to indicate that the minister has given a clear direction or an interpretation of the word "advisory" because that seems to be the word that is used by the minister time in and time out.

The Transcona-Springfield School Division, as I indicated on September 8, released their document; the administration council of the Transcona-Springfield School Division recommended this policy. It was discussed by the school trustees; there were several parent councils represented in attendance as there were staff working within the division as well as the people who helped pull this together. There were several people. There was a group including the school trustees. Teacher and parent representatives also sat in on the advisory body in the establishment of this school communities council, which, I point out again, left out the word "advisory" out of it because they were unclear as to the role or the meaning of the word "advisory."

Unfortunately, and I need to get some clarification on the opening statement that is made in the document here regarding the establishment of school councils, where it says that school community councils are to be

established at the local community school level, and then it says: Each school may establish a school community council.

The terms seem to be in contradiction with one another, and I anticipate I will get a clarification on that at the earliest opportunity.

It also says in the document here, and it has pulled out parts from the legislation and from the discussion documents that the Department of Education released, that a minimum of two-thirds of the school community council must be parents or legal guardians of children who are attending the school. Now we know that there has been a change now to include the teachers on those school councils as well.

One of the things in reference to the school community councils that the parents referenced and the principals referenced in my discussions with them, and I know it forms part of the discussion document, New Directions, the action plan, wherein the Parent Advisory Councils are said to play a role in the development of the school budgets.

Well, I asked that question specifically of the principals to find out what role and duties they play in the development of the budgets for their own specific schools, and what they told me was that the principals have very little in the way of discretionary spending that is given to them, discretionary spending powers, and that most of the items that are flowing from the budget that is directed by the school trustees come about as a result of the FRAME document, I believe. There is very little latitude that is given to principals outside of that. Certain monies have to flow as a result of the FRAME formula as it is referred to.

I find it, then, unusual that the minister's intent by way of Bill 5 says that parent councils now have to play a role in the development of the budget for the schools. When you compare that to the minimal role that the principals now play in the development of the budgets, how is it that we are going to transfer some of those duties or all of those duties and responsibilities to the parent councils? When it is so minuscule the amount of participation that principals play, where are we going to get that for the parent councils?

* (1550)

So unless the minister is intending that those powers will come from the school board trustees, who are duly elected, I thought, and transferred to the parent councils, which is the only way I can see that that would take place. If that is the case, the minister is then saying that we are going to water down the responsibilities of the elected school trustees and give those powers to the parent councils.

One of the other issues that is also described as the powers that are going to be given to the principals and the parent advisory councils is that dealing with the issues of student transportation, the bus transportation for the students. Well, it has been an issue that has been very much in the minds of parents within the Transcona-Springfield School Division, at least during the five or so years that I have been the MLA for Transcona. It seems that every year, in August and September, I get a multitude of calls from concerned parents who have been advised that they have lost school bus transportation.

Now, other members of the House may get similar calls from their own constituents either saying that there has been a change in policy or that there has been some change in how it is calculated on the distance. It is my understanding that the provincial formula that is in place mandates a minimum, that students living 1.6 kilometres from the school should be provided transportation. There has been a discussion amongst the school trustees in my community and the parents about how that is interpreted. Does it mean from the door of the home, the edge of the property, the edge of the school property, the door of the school? It can make a significant difference to some parents who have very young children.

We all know that there are cases where students as young as five and a half years of age can enter the school system in Grade 1 and that those students within the city of Winnipeg here, for example, that could live 1.599 kilometres from school would be ineligible to be bussed. They may have to cross several major traffic arteries within the community, and that could put at risk those very young children who have not maybe received all of the instruction that they need on how to

proceed safely to the schools. So there is quite a bit of discussion taking place within my community, and I listened to the comments of the parents who came before the Transcona-Springfield School Division board meeting last week. We had the parents reciting or saying over and over again that they were very concerned for the safety of their children, their very, very young children, as they attempt to get to the schools and then back home again.

I looked at the policy, and I have talked to officials in the Department of Education. I have talked to the parents. I have talked to the trustees to find out if there is a way that we could make improvements to allow for the safety and the ability of the students to go to and from school safely.

One recommendation I might make for the Minister of Education that would impact and, I think, instill some sense of security in the minds of the parents who are now worried is to look at the formula that is used, the 1.6 kilometre formula that is used.

Allow the formula to change in such a way that would take into account the age of the children, the distance that they have to travel and perhaps any safety hazards that may be along the way between the home and the school; in other words, dealing with traffic, the neighbourhood, the environment that the children have to walk through, and to do that in a graduated way so that perhaps children from the age of five to eight years would be eligible for school bus transportation to and from school and taking into consideration that fact that we want to look at reducing the distances for which transportation would be provided. Also, take a look at the fact that there are hazards that are in there that should be part of the criteria for the determination of whether the children are eligible or ineligible for that transportation.

Now, the same could apply for the older children, perhaps from nine to, I think it is, 12. That is the next point where the transportation cut-off point could occur in that those children may not be bussed unless there are certain hazards along the way, certain safety factors preventing them from going to and from school safely and maybe setting at that point that transportation should be provided at the 1.6 kilometre range.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

I throw those suggestions and put the suggestions out for the minister's consideration. I know I have had a chance to talk with some of the parents in my community as recently as last evening, who approached me again at a community function, that they want to see some changes in there. When I proposed those ideas, they seemed to think that it was worthy of further discussion to arrive at some means or some consensus of ensuring that the very young children, I am sure we all have a serious interest in protecting, will be able to go to and from school. So I throw that out for the minister's advice.

Bill 5 itself, The Education Administration Act, has three distinct sections, including the duties of principals, the school advisory councils and the suspension of pupils. I talked about two of the areas, the duties of principals to some degree, as much as I understand it and was explained to me by the principals and the school advisory councils.

The other area I would like to talk a bit about is the ability to suspend pupils from schools. Now, in the Transcona-Springfield School Division, we currently have policies in place that have been developed by the school trustees over the years to provide some direction for the principals within the various schools of the communities and the teachers and how they are to deal with certain matters related to behaviour that is not considered to be normal, both by the students and also dealing with any parents or any other outsiders that may come into the school property. It seems to have worked very successfully, from what I am told by the principals that I have talked to. The principals themselves are now wondering why the minister is looking at making these changes, unless there are some other school divisions in the province with which I am not familiar and the impact that it might have on those divisions if they do not have a policy, but our particular division does have a policy, and I am told that it works effectively.

The principals have told me, and I was shocked to learn, that there are cases where adults come onto the school property and create a disturbance, in some cases, under the influence of certain substances, and it can

create problems. Fortunately, we have had very good services provided in a very timely fashion by the District 4 police so that when a principal calls, it becomes a priority call and the police will respond quickly to the needs of the school.

One of the other areas that the principals described to me was that occasionally they will get parents who will come into the school, walk right past the office, go right into the classroom and want to take on the teacher, I guess, to strip off the teacher for whatever reason. That, I believe, needs to be corrected. That is an education of the parents, though. That is not a change required in the policy.

The principals and the school trustees can educate the parents of the proper protocol or the proper procedures. If a parent has a problem with some of the policies of the school or the education direction that the children are receiving, then it must be done in an orderly way to involve the principal, the school trustee, if necessary, and the teacher, at a meeting that can be arranged that is mutually convenient to everyone, not just to walk into the classroom.

So there are ways that it can be dealt with, but unfortunately not all parents are educated as to what would be the proper way to do that, and we have had circumstances within our school division where the principals have had to deal with situations such as this.

We have also had occasions where certain people have come into the school, and I know it was in the media just, I believe it was, in the last year and a half where we had what some might consider to be gang-related activity. Now, whether that is an appropriate term or not I am not sure because I do not believe—

* 1600)

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The hour being 4 p.m., as previously agreed, it is time for private members' hour.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) will have 16 minutes remaining.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 9—Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that

WHEREAS fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is a disease that affects unborn children caused by the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy; and

WHEREAS FAS is one of the leading causes of mental retardation in Canada; and

WHEREAS FAS causes neurological abnormalities and physical deformities; and

WHEREAS the number of babies born to substance-abusing mothers in Manitoba continues to rise; and

WHEREAS the likelihood of FAS increases with the amount of alcohol consumed, there is no known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy; and

WHEREAS FAS is entirely preventable; and

WHEREAS there is no known cure for FAS; and

WHEREAS the cost to the provincial government to treat one victim of FAS from birth until age 18 is estimated at \$2 million; and

WHEREAS the social costs of the lost potential of the victims of FAS is immeasurable.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Assembly recommend to the Minister of Health that he consider working with the Committee on Alcohol and Pregnancy to develop and promote programs to prevent FAS in high-risk populations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Minister of Health and Education to work co-operatively to ensure the school curriculum includes information on the link between alcohol consumption and FAS.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kowalski: I am glad to bring this resolution forward. This should not be viewed in any way as an attack or criticism of this government's handling of the issue but rather an opportunity for all members of this Assembly to come together and acknowledge the importance of this issue of fetal alcohol syndrome.

In doing the research on this resolution, and looking through a previous Hansard, I know that this issue was first brought forward in 1990 by Sharon Carstairs when she first raised the issue. In the following debates over the years, one thing I noticed is that in most cases the parties were united in their concern for this issue.

I noted in the spring's Estimates process, when the then Liberal Health critic Avis Gray and the member for Kildonan were in the Estimates process with the Minister of Health, this issue did come up. I noted that from Hansard this government is doing things in dealing with the issue.

I noted that the committee on alcohol and pregnancy is an active intersectoral committee cochaired by the Manitoba Medical Association and the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. To date their activities involve the development of an FAS and FAE resource network, raising awareness through northern consultations and working with representative parent groups.

In talking to members of that committee today, they are very happy with their work. They want to do more, and this resolution is nothing more than to encourage them and send a message that this Assembly is asking the government to continue in the vein of looking at this very important issue.

I understand that the committee has done a draft of a proposal that will be submitted to the Children and Youth Secretariat regarding improved diagnostic services and the need for a provincial co-ordinator. We look forward to that report being issued by the committee.

Just for the further information of the members, just going further into FAS, I think the resolution speaks for

itself, but FAS is caused by abuse of intoxicating substances. The syndrome is characterized by a combination of central nervous system dysfunction, growth deficiency and learning disorders.

Estimates vary in the numbers of affected children. Confirmed cases range from .3 per thousand births to one in every thousand births. The real tragedy is, all of these are preventable. There is some debate on how much alcohol consumption is acceptable during a pregnancy, but I think it would be wise for a woman to consume no more than one alcoholic drink per day, as according to the British Medical Journal of 1991, but that is debatable.

In a recent New England medical journal article—in fact, some studies have indicated that it is beneficial for a pregnant woman, but we do not want to send mixed signals. We have children being born in Manitoba with FAS to certain targeted groups. Four years ago the Yukon Liquor Corporation began affixing labels to liquor and wine bottles and beer cartons warning of the dangers of FAS. In an earlier resolution this session the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) commented on this, and in an earlier question from the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) they talked about the labelling of bottles.

I am not convinced that the labelling of bottles is the way to proceed. I am sure the committee is looking at that. Quite often what happens is women who are the heaviest drinkers and thus a greater risk are unlikely to read the warning labels, so the value of those warning labels has to be thought about before we spend large amounts of money or have anyone else spend large amounts on something that would be ineffective in the search of just doing something. Women who drink heavily are identified as being at the greatest risk of FAS. Prevention of alcohol-related birth defects requires developmental programs directed as specific needs of these women.

A national study done by Angus Reid in 1991 noted that 92 percent of the population was aware that excessive consumption of alcohol causes FAS. Amongst women of child-bearing age, it indicated 95 percent of the women were aware of it. So the 5 percent who were not, they are the targeted group, and

they are the ones that we have to take measures with. Again, we should compliment the work that is being done by the committee on alcohol and pregnancy and encourage them to continue on their work.

My own personal experience as a police officer in the core area, and as the Justice minister has said earlier, in the system there is a direct link between FAS and the criminal justice system in that many of the people who are mildly affected with FAS end up in our jails and prisons at a cost to taxpayers. I have arrested a 15-year-old girl the day after she had given birth to an FAS child to find herself out prostituting herself on the street to garner money so she could once again purchase more intoxicants. Again, the next child she would have would be another cost to the taxpayers of Manitoba, not even to mention the personal tragedy that child will face for the rest of his life.

So, again, I ask all members to look at the resolution. I welcome any constructive amendments to this resolution, and that we join together to address this issue.

* (1610)

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, I share the feelings of the honourable member for The Maples in sharing the intelligence that he has offered to this Chamber with fetal alcohol syndrome. I think that we in this Chamber also have to be very cognizant of the fact that there are young women and young mothers out there and possibly some older ones as well that are using this as a form of—for lack of a better word, I guess—enjoyment without giving due consideration to the young children that they are about to give birth to.

It is unfortunate that we are unable to do anything about this in terms of legislation. I think it is a lot with regard to a lot of things that we as legislators tend to do in trying to give the right message to those people who are going to be affected and those people who have no control over really what is going to happen to them. This is a prime example of that. I think it is an unfortunate situation, and the member for The Maples referenced the fact that a lot of the children born from women who have consumed excessive amounts of

alcohol or used drugs in a way that will affect their newborn. I think it is unfortunate that society has to bear the brunt of that in many cases, with our police forces and in our jails.

I do not have any percentages of numbers of people who are in institutions because they are victims of FAS, but my guess is from the experience that I have had with that—and it is not a great amount—but the amount of experience that I had in travelling the province on the drug, alcohol and substance abuse task force in 1991. The aspect of that information that was brought about through that suggested that that number was significantly higher than a lot of people would be aware of. I think that we have to be very cognizant of the fact of what it is doing to us and what it is doing to society.

I agree, a few years ago it was suggested by the opposition members that we should simply put on the label of bottles, the alcohol bottles, that people are consuming that this is dangerous to the health of a pregnant woman and that it is going to affect their baby when the time comes to give birth. I think that it is really misleading in many ways, and I think that it would achieve nothing, because for the simple reason, and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) referenced the fact that 95 percent of the women when they were polled by Angus Reid knew the difficulty it was going to cause. I think it is more than the 5 percent of the women who are pregnant and are about to give birth—it is certainly more than 5 percent that do actually use drugs and alcohol even though they know that. I think it is important for us, and really it is almost impossible for us to take that responsibility as legislators to impose that by any legislation that we could bring forward. I think it boils down to merely a matter of responsibility.

How do we legislate responsibility on individuals? I think this is where we differ from the official opposition in terms of the responsibility and imposing responsibility on individuals. I think it is really something that—although we have compassion for these people and we would like to be able to get them to do the right things, governments cannot be all things to all people who do not want to be helped and who see other ways or other means of dealing with their problems. Usually, in many cases, where those young mothers are

daily affecting their babies by consuming excessive amounts of alcohol are doing so because of other problems. They are dealing with another problem. That was one of the things that came out fairly loud and clear on the task force, that until you deal with the initial problem of these young mothers, you are not going to address the fetal alcohol syndrome problem or solve that issue.

It is a bigger thing. We have to deal with this in a holistic manner and to deal with all aspects of it. I certainly support what the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) is proposing with this resolution. I think that all the members here in the Legislature would probably feel the same way, because we do not want to continue to have this go on, and hopefully there is something that we can do. I appreciate this opportunity to put these few words on the record and to support the resolution. Even though I do not support everything that he has given, I certainly support the aspect, the principle of the resolution in the form.

I think it can be improved on. I think that maybe we can give a lot of consideration to a lot of these things, but I think there will be other members on the government side that I am sure will be speaking on this, and we will be able to have an opportunity to share their views on it. I do thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to the rest of the comments from the members of my colleagues in the Legislature. Thank you.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I thank the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) for this resolution. We are going to propose a couple of minor amendments in due course. I believe that they are amendments which the member has already agreed to, and I hope all honourable members opposite will also agree to. The business of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect, FAS and FAE, are well known to those of us who have been involved with children and children's disabilities for a number of years.

They are very difficult to detect in their—particularly in the FAE, the fetal alcohol effect form, because the problems that moderate levels of alcohol intake cause for fetuses are difficult initially to discern, difficult to diagnose. It is because, as the member for The Maples

has pointed out in his resolution, there is no safe minimum level of alcohol ingestion during pregnancy. People who may think that they can consume moderately will nevertheless be doing some level of damage. The question is whether it is so subtle as not to be able to be detected initially or whether it is more major.

* (1620)

For that reason, Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), that

1. The letters "FAE" be added wherever the letters "FAS" appear;

That is to amend the resolution to include fetal alcohol effect as well as fetal alcohol syndrome.

2. Further, to add the words "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this government work with the Manitoba Medical Association to develop diagnostic procedures in identifying FAS, FAE."

I have signed the amendment to that effect, Madam Speaker. Do you wish to consider the amendment before I speak further?

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Now, I assume the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) is on his feet to speak to the amendment. Traditionally, procedure would dictate that the member speak to his amendment before he proposes it and then relinquish the floor for continuing debate by other members on the amendment.

There is a way around this. I will ask the House if there is leave to deviate from normal procedural. Is there leave to permit the honourable member for Crescentwood to speak to his amendment? [agreed]

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I thank honourable members for leave. I would simply say that I think that it is very important that we develop better diagnostic protocols to establish damage, particularly the lesser

levels of damage that occur from what is called fetal alcohol effect. It is called that precisely because it is very difficult to determine what the effect is.

I appeal to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and welcome him back from his conference with his colleagues and with the federal minister. I appeal to the Minister of Health to join with all of us in supporting this resolution which I think can only be for the benefit of Manitoba's unborn children and its mothers and fathers.

So with those remarks, I will open the floor to others to speak on the amendment, and I thank honourable members for granting me the privilege to speak now.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The honourable member for Crescentwood has moved an amendment, and I am seeking clarification.

The amendment includes the fetal alcohol effect aspect in all places in the resolution, which is something I could agree with. I do not have a copy of the honourable member's amendment in front of me, but I believe his intent is to include certain groups in our consultation process if I understand correctly. So maybe, since the honourable member may still have some time, he may just clarify that for me. Then I would seek, if the honourable member answers in the affirmative, and we find what he says acceptable.

If that amendment were to go forward, would that then move the whole resolution or would I still be in a position to perhaps further improve on the resolution? [interjection] I am seeking another opinion.

Madam Speaker: For clarification procedurally, for the honourable Minister of Health. The honourable Minister of Health I know is seeking guidance from the mover of the amendment, but no vote is required on the amendment prior to the honourable Minister of Health, if he indeed has the floor, in proposing an additional subamendment.

Mr. McCrae: Then might I suggest the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) answer my question, and then I could seek the floor for my purposes.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Crescentwood have leave to make clarification? [agreed]

Mr. Sale: I thank the minister. The intention is to include "fetal alcohol effect" wherever the words "fetal alcohol syndrome" are put in initial form in the motion, and the only addition is to ask you in your capacity as minister to work with the medical community to improve on our ability currently to diagnose either fetal alcohol effect or fetal alcohol syndrome. There was no addition of other consultative groups in my intention, Mr. Minister. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. McCrae: In opening my comments on this resolution placed before us by the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), I would like to thank both the honourable member for The Maples as well as the honourable member for Crescentwood for not only his recent explanation of his amendment, but also for the amendment itself which in my view simply assists us in a better understanding of the whole concept of fetal alcohol syndrome and the effects thereof.

Also, it is always in order, I suggest, and supportable that we seek to improve what are already very good working relationships that we have with organizations like the Manitoba Medical Association, although on any given day one could argue that there are always pressures and tensions and little strains and things like that in those sorts of relationships. I maintain, however, that we still have a fairly good working relationship with the Manitoba Medical Association in our dealings. We share work on councils like the Medical Services Council, the Physician Resource Committee and many, many more of our reform committees that the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) refers to from time to time.

I do not see a particular problem with the amendment brought forward by the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) in the sense of attempting to develop diagnostic procedures. The honourable member, as well as the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and everybody else in this Chamber, is fairly well aware of some of the tragic results of fetal alcohol syndrome in our society, and there are indications that we are going to be seeing more of that than we have,

especially if we do not do anything about it. So any suggestion or any resolution that would move us along in that direction should be the subject of support in this place.

* (1630)

I remember some pretty sad stories from my days in the Department of Justice dealing with offenders in the criminal justice system who arrived in front of the judge with the only defence available that perhaps there could be some leniency or there could be some kind of a disposition in the case that would take account of this particular syndrome and the effects thereof whereby somebody could somehow be helped or society could show some understanding for someone who becomes an offender and that one of the contributing factors is fetal alcohol syndrome.

These efforts today, in my view, are supportive of the strategy for health, especially that strategy laid out by Dr. Brian Postl and all of his colleagues in the development of the Child Health Strategy. Fetal alcohol syndrome is something that adults can suffer from, but it is not something that just started when they became adults because they were born with it. This is, some would call it, being dealt a pretty bad hand. Some might call it a pretty unfair situation for anyone to have to deal with for all the days of their life.

Women and children are at high risk, Madam Speaker, for adverse health and social outcomes associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs. Certainly, we know that there are problems associated with the consumption of alcohol but also with drugs taken prenatally and the impact that can have on the fetus and on the future child.

The Manitoba departments of Health, Family Services and Justice are represented on the committee on alcohol and pregnancy, which involves the development of an FAS and FAE resource centre and network, raising awareness through northern consultations and working with representatives of parent groups of FAS- and FAE-affected children. An FAS support program will include direct assistance to the children and their families, as well as training to child care workers and support workers.

The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba and the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission publish and distribute valuable information about alcohol and health that encourages positive lifestyle choices. The AFM provides education and resource materials to health professionals and the general public. Residential and nonresidential treatment programs are provided for women experiencing problems with alcohol and drug abuse, and that includes pregnant women.

We have been pleased recently to establish the Children and Youth Secretariat. This secretariat identifies years zero to five years of age as a priority target group for their work, and this would include strategies for the prevention of FAS/FAE. Manitoba Health distributes resource material promoting healthy lifestyles during pregnancy, including limited use of alcohol, to prenatal educators across Manitoba.

Public health agencies in community health clinics throughout the province provide programs directed to populations at highest risk of alcohol and drug use in pregnancy such as Brandon's Special Delivery Club and Mount Carmel Clinic's Perinatal Program. Currently, a section on FAS is included in the Grade 9 family life curriculum. Manitoba Health frequently liaises with the Department of Education on health curricula issues.

As I said when I started, Madam Speaker, I have an amendment to move to the initial resolution, and I leave to your Honour to figure out how best all of this is going to work, the two amendments and the one resolution, but should it all pass, I suggest we have made some progress. Even if it does not, what I have set out are some of the initiatives being taken by the government of Manitoba to deal with FAS/FAE. As I talk about those initiatives, I would never want to imply that all that can be done has been done, or is being done, because as long as someone out there in the future is going to be affected by this then we have not finished our work.

In recognition especially of the contribution this afternoon to the debate by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), I would like to move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek:

THAT Resolution No. 9 be amended by deleting all the words following the first "WHEREAS" and replacing them with the following:

WHEREAS women and children are at high risk for adverse health and social outcomes associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has promoted policy approaches which focus on illness prevention and healthy lifestyles; and

WHEREAS the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) and the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission publish and distribute valuable information about alcohol and health which encourage positive lifestyle choices; and

WHEREAS AFM provides residential and nonresidential treatment programs for women experiencing problems with alcohol and drug abuse, including pregnant women; and

WHEREAS the Children and Youth Secretariat identify zero to five years of age as a priority. This would include strategies for prevention of FAS/FAE, and currently a section on FAS is included in the Grade 9 Family Life curriculum; and

WHEREAS public health agencies and community health clinics throughout the province provide programs directed to populations at highest risk of alcohol and drug use in pregnancy, such as Brandon's Special Delivery Club and Mount Carmel Clinic's Perinatal Program;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the government of Manitoba continue to pursue a multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach to FAS/FAE; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT public awareness and community support for women at greatest risk for alcohol and drug dependency continue to be important components of this approach.

I thank my colleagues and I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The amendment that the honourable Minister of Health has proposed is not a subamendment, and I thought I made it clear that a subamendment at this point in time was acceptable. A subamendment would mean that the minister would have the opportunity to amend the amendment.

Having said that, what the honourable Minister of Health, which I will now have to declare not in order, has done is moved an amendment to the original resolution, and the only means by which the Minister of Health would be able to ensure, if so granted the floor, got the eye of the Speaker, that his amendment were to be dealt with, would be to deal with the amendment which is currently on the floor and dispose of it.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I call for the question.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. We have an amendment on the floor to be dealt with.

Point of Order

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on a point of order, yesterday we heard from the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) as to the background, the history and some of the things that we do in private members' hour, the reason for private members' hour, the reason why expressions from members of the House can have an opportunity to be debated.

* (1640)

Madam Speaker, for the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) to call the question at this point certainly flies in the face of all of the principles and all of the reasons behind private members' hour. I know that there are other members who wish to speak to this very significant proposal, and I think to deny them that by virtue of his actions is certainly not anywhere close to the spirit of which private members' hour is intended.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): To the same point of order, I concur with many of the remarks that the government House leader has just made. In fact, a similar event happened this morning for me, and being

consistent with what happened this morning, I know that both myself and the member for The Maples would be more than happy to provide leave for any member to be able to add words to the resolution.

Madam Speaker: On the honourable government House leader's point of order, I appreciate his advice, but it really was not a point of order.

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), indeed, I recognized him to speak to the amendment that was on the floor, which is currently still on the floor. I did not ask the question on the amendment, and it is my understanding that the will of the House is to continue the debate on the amendment. Agreed? [agreed]

* * *

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Madam Speaker, maybe eventually I will move to Pembina, I am not sure. It depends. [interjection] I am sure they would.

Madam Speaker, all members of this government are concerned about the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome and its effects on women and children in Manitoba. I guess by discussing this issue here in the Chamber today, we are taking another step in combating this problem.

The best away to eliminate fetal alcohol syndrome is by preventing it from occurring. We do that by using the tools that we already have here in Manitoba, by creating a greater awareness of the problem and the ways to prevent it. We have heard for years about the effects that alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse have on an unborn child and we know that abuse substances places these children at high risk.

Madam Speaker, that is why our government has representatives from the departments of Health, Family Services and Justice on the provincial committee on alcohol and pregnancy. That committee is involved in the ongoing development of a resource centre and network to raise awareness about fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects. This organization is also involved in consultations with northern communities. This committee is also working closely with federal health authorities in areas under their

jurisdiction and with the Association for Community Living-Manitoba and the Manitoba Medical Association.

Health Canada, through the Brighter Futures initiative, has provided a grant for \$300,000 for three years, January 1994 to January 1997, to this Association for Community Living. This also means bringing together representatives of parents of affected children which is very important in this process because the parents can help establish some of the parameters by which fetal alcohol syndrome can be addressed. They will help us as we work toward a long-term solution, and the advice that they give us is going to be invaluable.

We also understand that you cannot stop somebody from abusing substances that lead to these devastating effects on children and their families. However, by creating a greater awareness and working with those at risk, we can significantly reduce this problem. We are already starting to see the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome coming into our school systems in larger and larger numbers. This has the educators addressed with a very serious problem as to how to cope with these children in the classroom. So it is becoming more and more of an issue in this province.

We must also understand that the syndrome is something that can occur in all elements of society. Through the committee on alcohol and pregnancy and other agencies, we are able to target those risk groups. It is also important that leaders in communities that have a known problem get involved in creating awareness through their community organizations and local health authorities.

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

The Addictions Foundation in Manitoba and the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission are both keenly aware of this issue. They have taken steps by publishing information about alcohol and health to ensure people have the necessary information about making positive decisions and choices for their lifestyle. The important thing is to get as much of this information into the hands of those groups that are

targeted, as well as those groups in our community that can have an effect working with would-be parents, young mothers and pregnant mothers to ensure that this fetal alcohol syndrome is avoided.

* (1650)

These initiatives also include specialized training for child care workers and support workers to help them better understand and identify those at risk and work on the front line to help reduce the problem. There is a great deal of information available to the public on this issue, and it is a case of trying to get this information and making sure that this information is disseminated out throughout the province.

The Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has regular public awareness campaigns through the use of posters and other materials that caution women on the use of alcohol during pregnancy, and that is as much as one can possibly do, is to make sure that people are aware of the effects of alcohol, to make sure that the warnings are there, to make sure that the information is there so that young women can make this choice. The commission, along with the distillers association of Canada and the Addictions Foundation, has also published informative booklets outlining in detail the effects of alcohol on health.

The question of how liquor will be labelled in the future, which is an area of federal jurisdiction, is also being addressed.

Resources in Manitoba include community programs directed at those in high-risk groups. We are not just talking about alcohol consumption, we are also concerned with sniffing of substances and other drug abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome and the fetal alcohol effects.

Mount Carmel Clinic and Brandon's Special Delivery Club are two institutions that are addressing these issues in direct programs; other public health agencies and community clinics are also involved in working with those in high risk.

On the prevention side, the provincial Department of Education is also actively involved. They work with

the Department of Health to include study on fetal alcohol syndrome in the family life curriculum in Grade 9. This is where we are working as a group to try and attack symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects.

This is also an issue that should be addressed by Manitoba families that do not see themselves at risk. By openly and honestly informing youth about the seriousness of this issue, they are less likely to find themselves in a high-risk group later in life.

These examples that I have talked about are examples of a sweeping education and prevention program across many sectors of society. We should also be aware that other organizations such as church groups, parent support groups, even recreation groups, can help in this area.

I am sure that all members of this House would agree that prevention is the best medicine. The good news is that this is something that can be prevented. It is certainly not an easy issue to resolve, but we must ensure that we continue to support a multifaceted approach to this problem and hopefully prevent drug- and alcohol-related birth defects in children.

So I ask all members of this House to support the government of Manitoba in its efforts to continue to create a greater public awareness and understanding of this issue. Thank you.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my privilege and pleasure to address the House on this resolution. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) says, kill this resolution. He may have intentions of killing it, but I certainly do not. What I want to do is contribute to the discussion on this resolution, and I believe I have some professional experiences to bring to bear. If members on the other side say I do not have a right to speak, let them stand and say why I do not have a right to speak. Are my comments of any less worth than the members opposite?

I know the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) made some very, very good comments, and I would like to support some of those comments that were

made. I know that many years ago I had the privilege of acting on behalf of the director of child welfare in northern Manitoba. In that respect I acted on behalf of the agency of the director who was charged with ensuring that the best interests of the children of Manitoba were met. In that context I had occasion to deal with many cases involving these children. The terrible thing about this was that often the children who were the topic of these court actions had mothers who were no more than children themselves and often in fact victims of the same syndrome. This, unfortunately, is not a new situation.

It is a serious situation, and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) should be commended for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. Often, though, back in those early years, things were not as co-ordinated. That was during the early 1980s. A lot of good intentions were often wasted because the government programs had not yet coalesced and people were not approaching this problem in a multi-disciplinary fashion. At that time, in working with the child care workers, they often expressed that need. So I think, bearing in mind the comments of the member for The Maples, it is important that government recognize this very, very important problem, serious problem, that we take steps, not just department by department but in a co-ordinated fashion.

I know that in listening to the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), the Minister of Health, I am certain that his department will take the comments made by the member for Maples and work together with the member for Maples, and indeed all members, to ensure that we have a multidisciplinary approach in dealing with this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Just to inform the honourable Minister of Labour, he is speaking to the amendment from the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale). So if the honourable member could speak to the amendment, it would be in order.

Mr. Toews: Thank you for that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was getting to the amendment. I was putting the comments of the member for Maples into a context that would then deal with the amendment. I do not want to

lessen the significance of the comments of the member for Crescentwood. They are very important, too. That is why I thought I had to lay out that groundwork, in order then to get to the amendment, but I do thank the Deputy Speaker for directing me in that fashion, and I appreciate that direction.

In dealing with the amendment then, I want to make sure that the amendment does not lose sight of the motion put forward by the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski). It is all right to bring these amendments forward and to say this is better or that is better, but one has to question whether the amendment does not detract in some way from the very good points and principles raised. [interjection]

There are some comments coming from the official opposition. If they want to stand and make those comments and address a question to me, I would be happy to answer it. I did not catch those comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I will just go on then addressing the amendment. [interjection]

The member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) has a comment to make. Maybe he could say it right into the record. I know I am trying to get through my comments here. I realize that time is very short, but if there are these constant interruptions I will never get through my comments in time to bring this matter to a speedy and proper resolution.

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

* (1700)

The hour being 5 p.m., it is now time for the second half of private members' hour. We will be dealing with Resolution 10.

Res. 10—Improved Benefits for Part-Time Employees

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), that

WHEREAS in the last 15 years economic, technological and social influences have created significant changes in the workplace and within the workforce presenting difficulties for both employees and employers; and

WHEREAS almost 20 percent of Manitoba's workforce is employed part time; and

WHEREAS most of the 94,000 part-time workers do not enjoy the same benefits as their co-workers who work full time; and

WHEREAS in today's economy two-income earner families and single-parent families are the rule rather than the exception; and

WHEREAS there is a need to create a better balance between part-time and full-time workers benefits.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the provincial government to consider introducing legislation amending The Employment Standards Act to provide for prorated benefits for part-time employees, including prorated sick leave, pensions, termination rights and vacation.

Motion presented.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my honour to introduce this resolution for consideration of members of this House. It has been an issue that has been before us for some time. I know it has come before this Chamber in the last session, and it was originally introduced by our Leader, the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer). I think that this resolution is still pertinent today, still timely in that it is an issue that has yet to be dealt with by this provincial government.

This resolution, as the words explain, is intended to provide some fairness or some equity between those that are currently employed in the labour force, between the full-time and the part-time workers of this province.

This resolution, when it was introduced for consideration of the members of the Chamber here,

showed the numbers, 94,000 part-time workers. Those numbers I believe have increased, looking at the latest figures that we have available to us, and I believe it is some 97,000. So while the figures of the resolution are somewhat dated, it is still pertinent to the consideration of this resolution.

One of the difficulties that we have had is changes in the lifestyles of the working people of the province in that working people, through the way the economy is structured and the needs of the employers of the province, have been changing. There is a definite shift away from full-time employment towards part-time employment. If you look at the numbers, as I have here before me, if you take a look at the yearly average, not just the month-to-month, you will get a more accurate picture.

In the part-time employment that we have in the province of Manitoba, there were 97,000 part-time employees in this province. Of those, 69,000 were women; 29,000 were men. So you can see that there is a significant difference in the way the workforce of our province is employed through part-time jobs and that it is very obvious that women fill most of the part-time employment opportunities.

Now that, of course, has been something that has been important to members on this side of the House. I know we have had many discussions on it, and I have had the opportunity to talk with people in my own constituency on it going door to door.

People are very concerned that there are not benefits which they would be entitled to as part-time employees, similar to what they might find for employees who they might be working side by side with, and that those full-time employees would have those benefits.

What we have seen and what appears to be taking place is that employers, I believe in an effort to keep their costs under control, have used the part-time workers as a way to contain their costs. By that, I mean the employers hire people on a part-time basis. The employers then would not be responsible for benefits for those employees and therefore would keep their costs under control.

By benefits, I will give you an example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the employers in a lot of cases where you would find benefits for full-time employees such as sick time, dental plan, ambulance, semiprivate hospital, parental leave, pensions, vacation that might accrue to someone who is working on a full-time basis that if they had been there for an extended period of time that vacation would increase the longer they would spend with that employer.

It is my perception, and I am sure that the people of my community that I talk to feel the same way, because they have related these issues to me, that we need to take some steps to restore a sense of fairness or a sense of balance. I know members opposite in their own families may have children who are in the workforce and maybe the children are working at part-time jobs.

I know from going door to door that there is a sense of despair among some people who are unable to find employment other than part-time work, but if we had in place some provisions that would restore the sense of balance or sense of fairness, that people working part time would have entitlement to certain benefits that other full-time employees in the same operation would have, then the people would sense that they were being treated fairly.

This is not occurring to this point in time, and I think that it is something that needs to be dealt with; it is past due. There is an opportunity for the Employment Standards branch in this province to take the necessary steps, but I believe that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) can deal with that, and there is a way that I would suggest to the Minister of Labour.

I know when we had the opportunity to go through the Estimates debates for his department just this past June, the minister referenced several areas that he thought would require some revision or some changes within his department, the various functions. I might suggest to the minister that perhaps he could assign to the Labour Management Review commission the task of investigating, consulting the various stakeholders of the province including the employers and the working people of the province and come back with some concrete proposals where we could implement a plan that would include benefits for part-time workers.

I believe the Government of Saskatchewan in 1994, I think it was March of 1994, came forward with their proposal to prorate benefits for part-time workers. Now, it had some discussion in the province. I know the employers were upset, and I believe the Canadian Federation of Independent Business for one took issue with the changes the government was proposing at that time, but if you look at the employment levels in the province of Saskatchewan, they are leading the country in employment. Their unemployment levels are very, very low. They were for a long time the lowest unemployment in the country and therefore the highest employment, and yet—[interjection] No, the people are not leaving there, they are not leaving Saskatchewan like you might see here.

I just need to reference the fact that I see in my own community over the last two or three years signs "leaving the province, unable to find work." Garage sale signs on the corners of the main streets in my community, to me, give a pretty good indication of the perception of the public. [interjection] No, I am not taking it personally, but I am saying, that is the perception of the people of my community of their opportunities, their employment opportunities in this province.

* (1710)

Now, that is something that I witness as I drive around the various communities, and I relate that to members of the House so that they too might be aware that people are leaving Manitoba because the employment opportunities are not here. What I am suggesting here is that, because the number of people working part time is increasing, that number is growing, and I believe it is in part due to the fact that there are certain requirements or need on the part of employers to contain costs. Employers are taking advantage of the provision that there are no prorated benefits for part-time workers and if we were to have such a provision, such a piece of legislation in this province, it would encourage full-time employment in Manitoba.

Full-time workers, I am sure we all know, are able to buy more, purchase more goods and services obviously because they have more income and therefore

hopefully more disposable income. If we have people who are working at full-time jobs, and I know I have encountered people in my own community, residents of the community and friends and others who are employed in several part-time jobs and only have to do this because they cannot find full-time employment. To pay the bills that they have, they have to take on several part-time jobs. The benefits are not there for them.

They do not have the ability to have the quality of family life that we all want, most of us have for ourselves and our families because fortunately for us in this Chamber here today we are employed full time, but for the people that are working part time there is not— [interjection]

Full time plus, perhaps I should say, in a lot of cases. Term employment. There is not that opportunity to have the quality of family life that many people would have. If you have one partner in the home that is working in a part-time job and has certain hours and the other partner has to go and work at another part-time job at different hours, now if there are children, that might be okay to look after the children, but it does not contribute to the overall quality of family life.

So we need to have in place legislation similar to what they have, I believe, in the province of Saskatchewan which would allow for the prorated benefits for those workers. I know that we have had the opportunity, myself personally as well, to talk with some supporters of the members opposite and even they too would like to see some change to that. Maybe the members opposite have had the opportunity to talk with members of their own constituency and maybe even some of their own supporters that maybe have lobbied government members to bring in such a change.

What we need to do is bring back the principle of fairness and to ensure that we create more full-time jobs. The only way to do it that I can see this taking place is to bring into place a provision that would allow for the prorated benefits. I think it would contribute greatly to the quality of family life in the province and at the same time would create increased economic activity.

I will give you an example of what is taking place in my own community, and I had the chance to raise it here today in Question Period. The railworkers of the Transcona CN Shops operations that have been laid off and those that have been laid off before this announcement yesterday are now finding themselves in the unenviable position of having to find work. Members opposite would say that work is readily available. I am not so sure of that judging from the comments that I have heard from the unemployed in my community.

There are part-time opportunities available, but that will not sustain the families because quite often those jobs are relatively low paying in consideration to what they had been making previously as a skilled tradesperson. These people then are unable to buy the homes, they are unable to buy the cars, they are unable to do the normal activities, buy the durable goods they might like to do or might expect to do as part of normal daily living. That in turn has a snowball effect and goes down and creates impacts further down the other employment sectors, the other sectors of the economy. Because people are less able to buy or make those purchases, it has impact all the way down the line.

So creating the opportunities for people to receive benefits would give the encouragement for the employer. Because there are no incentives then to hire part-time people because they still have to pay the prorated benefits, it would encourage more employers, I believe, to hire people on a full-time basis and, therefore, give people a vision or a hope for the future that they have an income that is there for them to spend as disposable income. That would spin off in the economy and create more economic opportunity in other sectors of the economy.

So I think it is important that the government take the necessary steps, and, as I have suggested to the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), perhaps he can refer this matter to the Labour Management Review commission for further consideration and to report back within a fixed period of time, perhaps the end of the year or early into the new year, with some recommendations on how we could implement such a proposal. I believe it will be to the benefit of all the

working people in the province of Manitoba and will help to stimulate the economy of Manitoba as well.

With those words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to raise this resolution.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Mr. Deputy Speaker, again it is my privilege to address the House in respect to this resolution. I, however, cannot support the resolution. I will, of course, explain my reasons why I cannot support this resolution.

First of all, though, I would like to indicate that I know I have been referred to by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) as the member from Great-West Life. Now, if I truly was only representing Great-West Life in this House, I may in fact consider supporting that kind of resolution, but I understand my duty to be much broader, to the citizens of Manitoba as a whole rather than one corporate entity.

This particular resolution has also been considered in two provinces, British Columbia and Saskatchewan. As for the suggestion that we bring this to a committee to study it thoroughly, perhaps members opposite should consider the Thompson report out of British Columbia, where their sister or brother party in that province authorized that task force and to come back with a report. What indeed did the government do with the recommendations at that time?

Well, there was a recommendation made by the Thompson report for benefits for part-time workers, and, in a news release, the Minister of Labour, Mr. Dan Miller, in British Columbia, indicated that they had considered the report in detail. They had looked at all of the issues. There was a report entitled Rights and Responsibilities in a Changing Workplace, and it was delivered after extensive consultations with members of the business community, members of trade unions, members of the public, and what did the Minister of Labour of the NDP government in British Columbia say in response to Mr. Thompson's report, who was a UBC professor, a very learned man? He said, the changes that they will implement, however, in spite of the Thompson report, are measured and careful and the product of thorough discussions with B.C.'s business community and workers.

He said, we have discarded those recommendations that we felt were unworkable or unfair, and we will follow through on only those that are both fair and practical. We will continue to listen to both employers and employees as the government proceeds with implementation.

* (1720)

What recommendations, then, did the NDP government in British Columbia follow through on? Well, what they did not proceed with was benefits for part-time workers? Essentially, they said, why did the government there decide not to introduce fringe benefits, they responded? It raised a lot of questions about how this would work. Quite frankly, it was unworkable.

In a news release, Miller said, the government has attempted to present a package that balances the interest of business and workers following discussions with both groups. The government will not proceed with some of the recommendations from the report, including extension of benefits to part-time workers simply because they were unworkable.

Now, the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) says, well, let us take a look at the Saskatchewan experience. We should go there because, in fact, they implemented this provision to create benefits for part-time workers. Well, again, let us take a look at what they did in Saskatchewan. It is true that the NDP government in Saskatchewan enacted legislation giving benefits to part-time workers. Not only did business hate it, but others in the community hated it. In fact, what the government did in response to many, many criticisms of that bill was water it down, so that the legislation now, the legislation in Saskatchewan that members opposite champion, affects approximately 7 to 10 percent of part-time workers. They knew they had a political problem on their hands. They knew the legislation was unworkable, and they reduced the application of that legislation to a very small minority of their workers.

So the experiment in Saskatchewan has failed, although one must commend them on their desire to at least follow through on what they had promised they

would do. In practice, it does not affect part-time workers and in respect of the administration of that bill, again it is unworkable. It does not work.

In fact, the resolution that the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) is bringing forward today is essentially the same resolution that was brought forward a year ago. And again, there was nothing that justified the adoption of such a resolution in this House at that time, and there is nothing that justifies it now.

The job, I think, of this House is to ensure that we bring things for consideration that have some measure or some ability to succeed. This clearly has none. Not even the two governments in British Columbia and Saskatchewan were able to make that type of legislation work.

What this in fact does is goes back to the type of philosophy that says let us create jobs by legislation, let us create an economy by legislation, let us regulate things and create jobs.

We know that that is not the way to secure employment. That is not the way to create more jobs here, to create better jobs here. The union negotiators who used to come and say, after tremendous bargaining in good faith on their part, would have to go back to the employees that they represented and say, well, I have got some good news and I have got some bad news. The good news is that you have got benefits for part-time workers. The bad news is that your jobs are gone. Well, that is not the kind of government we want.

In speaking with union leaders and in speaking with employees, I find in this province a pragmatism by these people, unfortunately, a pragmatism that members opposite, specifically the New Democratic Party, has not yet caught on to.

I would prefer to see, if benefits for part-time workers are workable, let us do it through the collective bargaining process. Let us let the unions certify groups of employees and bargain on their behalf. Let us not take jobs away from the unions.

I know that the statistics here in this province are that, of two-thirds of the collective agreements in this

province, two thirds of those agreements give benefits to part-time workers. What does that say to you? In a third, it does not. Why? Because the negotiators have learned it does not work there. Why should the heavy hand of government come in and—

An Honourable Member: And protect the dignity of workers. That is right.

Mr. Toews: Yes. As the member for Osborne says, why should government protect the dignity of workers? I can tell you why government should protect the dignity of workers—because that is our job. And if he has any questions about protecting the dignity of workers, he should understand that resolution in its entirety, and I was going to explain that to him but he keeps on interrupting.

An Honourable Member: Crescentwood, by the way.

Mr. Toews: Crescentwood, I am sorry. It is the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) who keeps on interrupting.

So there are opportunities in the collective bargaining field to get these types of benefits into collective agreements, and that is where it should be done. I took heart this morning when I looked at the newspaper, the Winnipeg Sun. I will tell you how to create security for workers in this province. I will tell you how to create benefits for workers. The answer is to elect a Conservative government, and this the people of Manitoba have done three times successively.

As a result of that, the Winnipeg Sun says, "Exports drive growth in jobs." There is a glowing article. [interjection] Well, I do not have all the expertise like my learned friend from Crescentwood. I sometimes have to rely on other people's advice. What the Winnipeg Sun is saying is that Manitoba is booming in terms of jobs. It says: "It doesn't take a mathematician to figure it out—it's a simple enough equation"—simple enough for the member for Osborne. [interjection] Crescentwood, I am sorry.

Statistics Canada figures for the first six months of '95 reveal Manitoba increased its U.S. exports by 26.8 percent. We are sustaining growth in this province.

We are sustaining jobs, and that is the way we create benefits for part-time workers. That is how we turn part-time jobs into full-time jobs, and that is how we get benefits. That gives our young people hope that there is future in this province, that they stay in this province. I can only echo the comments made by some of the members on this side, jobs and growth. That is what we have to talk about.

* (1730)

Let us move away from this idea that regulation is going to create jobs. Let us move away that it will create security. If we regulate, that will create security. In this global economy, we have to be very, very sensitive. Jobs can disappear overnight in a changing economy, in the globalization of investment, in the globalization of trade. Those are the things we have to be concerned about. If we build up regulatory walls in this province, we shut ourselves in.

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

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a pleasure to support my colleague from Transcona and speak in favour of this resolution.

I believe that part-time workers should be entitled to the same kinds of benefits that full-time workers are entitled to. In fact, I think there is a considerable amount of evidence that companies hire part-time workers for the very reason that they do not have to pay them the kind of benefits or that the company does not have the associated costs that they have with full-time benefits, and that is true of many retail businesses.

In fact, if you were to examine who works in the service sector, you would see that the service sector is vastly overrepresented by women who are therefore in lower-paying jobs, frequently nonunionized jobs and frequently part-time jobs which do not have the same kind of protection and the same kind of benefits that full-time employees have.

So I think it is a matter of fairness not only to women but to all employees that companies be required to extend benefits to part-time workers. In fact, I have

recently has some casework which I am still working on and intend to follow up on whereby an individual because they were a contract employee had no protection of the law.

I think this is an area that we have not looked at very much, but we probably should because in this particular instance the individual complained to their employer, which happens to be a publicly owned corporation, of sexual harassment. The result of that was that she was no longer called in to work. There was nothing illegal about that because, as a contract employee who was on call, the employer had no obligation to call her in to work. In effect, this individual was dismissed from her job for complaining about sexual harassment, and I find that really offensive and I intend to keep pursuing it. I will be pursuing it on her behalf with the Manitoba Human Rights Commission. I have already talked to staff in the Department of Labour, and, if necessary, I am going to talk to the general manager of the public corporation and see if we cannot do something about it.

But I just use it in this debate as an example of what happens when a part-time employee has no protection, even protection I presume of labour laws that other people would be entitled to by virtue of the fact that she was an on-call employee. She is very upset and justifiably so, and I have heard that other employees are being subjected to sexual harassment from the same individual who is still there, and I am going to collaborate their stories and send that information to the Human Rights Commission. I also discovered to my surprise that I could not phone up and talk to the investigator. It is not allowed, so I have to write to the executive director and hope that the executive director will put it in the file and that my comments and my suggestions on how to follow up will be taken into consideration.

There are other examples that I could use of employees who do not benefit from company benefits because of either company rules or loopholes in the law. For example, when my wife was employed by Simpson's in Toronto a number of years ago, she joined the company pension plan and she made contributions on every pay cheque and so did the company, but they had a provision that you had to be in the pension plan for five years or it was not locked in. The result was

that she left the employment after three years. Her contributions were returned to her but without interest, which means that the company had the use of her money for three years and could do whatever they wanted with the interest. That may not seem very significant for one employee, but if it were thousands of employees who may have worked anywhere from a matter of weeks up to the maximum of five years, it could have been a considerable amount of interest. So I think that is another example of where employees are not covered by pensions.

Now I would like to continue talking about pensions because many employees do not have pensions and this causes a problem when they retire. In fact, I have talked to individuals and constituents who have been employed—I remember one case. An individual was employed for 40 years and happened to work either part time or for hospitals or other organizations that at that time had no company pension plan. The result was that when this person retired, they were basically living in poverty, they were being supplemented by the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement.

(Mr. Mike Radcliffe, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

I think that this is one of the undesirable outcomes of the current practice of not extending benefits to part-time employees is that when they do retire, if they do not have sufficient income, they become dependent on government transfers, notably the Guaranteed Income Supplement or, in Manitoba, the 55 Plus supplement.

Now we do know that the one group in Canadian society who have fewer or a lesser percentage of poor people are seniors, that the only category of Canadians where there has been a declining rate of poverty in the last 25 years is amongst seniors. There are some very definite reasons for that. One is that more companies do have pension plans. Another reason is that more women are in the paid workforce. The result is that these employees are retiring either with savings or with company pensions or Canada Pension or even all three, and so that is a good thing.

Now many people today are opting for RRSPs. All of us here are familiar with that because we no longer have a pension plan. In fact, some of us are quite

happy to tell voters that because they assume that we are like federal members of Parliament and have quite a generous pension plan. So it is a pleasure to be able to tell our voters, no, we have no more pension plan, we have an RRSP and one of the main differences is that it is a totally funded RRSP as opposed to an unfunded pension plan. [interjection]

We could probably debate this but not on the record. Besides, the debate is in the past, and we all voted for the changes, I think I recall.

So it is good to encourage people to save. Of course, the saving here is encouraged by the tax system whereby RRSP monies are tax sheltered. So it is a very good way to save because if you can afford to put the money in the RRSP in the first place, you save money on your taxes. It is good for government and for everyone to encourage people to save for their retirement.

The problem is that if you have an emergency, you are going to dip into your RRSP to tide you over for that emergency. It could be almost anything, including things that may not truly be an emergency. It might be your children's education. You thought you could afford to pay for their education and then you find that you cannot, and so the parents help out their son or daughter or sons and daughters by using RRSP money for their education.

* (1740)

Another example would be if you lose your job. You may qualify for UI—but then again you may not—and if you do exhaust your unemployment insurance and want to apply for social assistance, you have a very serious problem. Probably there are a lot of people in society who are not aware of this unless they are forced to apply for social assistance themselves, and that is that you have to exhaust all your savings down to a minimum of \$400, which is your liquid asset exemption, before you can go on social assistance. So you could have a \$100,000 in an RRSP and you would have to spend all of it except \$400 before you applied for social assistance. It would not matter how much money was in your RRSP. I just use that by way of example. You could have \$20,000. You could have

\$10,000 in an RRSP. You would have to exhaust all of it except for \$400 before you could apply for social assistance.

Not only that, but the rules are very strict, not just about RRSPs, but if you received a lump sum payment from Autopac or a life insurance payment or an inheritance from an estate, not only would social assistance require you to use it, to spend it, before you apply for social assistance, but they also will calculate how long it should have lasted you. So they might say, well, you had \$100,000 in your RRSP—and you might have spent it at the rate of \$40,000 a year in order to keep up an average standard of living, but they will say, no, you should make it last the same length of time according to how much money we would give you. So if they are going to give you \$6,000 a year, they can say to you, you have to make that money last 12 years, because that is the amount of money we would give you to live on in a year. So you have a very serious predicament if you ever lose your job and your unemployment insurance benefits and you do not have a second income in the family and you have an RRSP or any other kinds of savings or Savings Bonds, any other kind of liquid asset, if you apply for social assistance.

So even though RRSPs are a good form of saving, and they are tax sheltered and they are very popular, that is one serious disadvantage. People dip into them for emergencies. In fact, Stats Canada publishes information about the rates at which people not only contribute to RRSPs but the rate at which people withdraw money from RRSPs, and every year there are many Canadians who withdraw money from RRSPs, and, of course, usually at the lower income bracket.

So there is a huge advantage to having a company pension or a government pension or an employer-employee pension plan. That is that it is a kind of enforced savings.

Most of us, human nature being what it is, need some kind of incentive. I think probably if you look at the effect of RRSPs, because there is an incentive, people take advantage of that and salt away money for their retirement, but pension plans are much better in that the money is locked in and you cannot get it out until you

retire. That is why, you know, I recommend that part-time employees have the same kind of benefits, particularly pension benefits, that full-time people are entitled to.

I would like to talk briefly about sick leave and vacation. I think it is only fair that part-time employees be entitled to the same kind of sick leave benefits that others are. There is no reason why it cannot be prorated depending on the number of hours a week that people work. The same with vacation. I think that is another benefit that people should have even if they are part-time employees. In fact, Canadians take far less holidays, and so do Americans, than almost any country in the world.

If you travel to other countries, if you travel to Europe or elsewhere and you run into people as my wife and I did in Europe and we started comparing holidays, and we ran into people from Australia and elsewhere, we discovered that their average length of vacations is five or six weeks. Then you tell them, well, in Canada we start with two weeks and you have to build up from there, but there are a lot of people who only get two or three weeks holidays a year, and they are very surprised, because other countries have much, much more generous provisions for vacation.

I think that is all I am going to say, Mr. Acting Speaker. I concentrated on pensions, but also termination rights, because I used an example of someone who really had no rights when it came to termination. Hopefully this Legislature will approve and pass this very good resolution.

Mr. David Newman (Riel): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is my privilege to now rise to join issue with the proponents of this resolution and urge it to be abandoned or defeated.

You know, employment standards legislation has rarely been amended in this province. Certainly during my 26 years of labour practice it has been rare. There has been some piecemeal, as-needed approaches—some—which have been generally accepted in our workplaces by owners, managers, unions, employees, customers and creditors. It must be appreciated by all of us in this House, I submit, that in Manitoba we have,

metaphorically speaking, an ecosystem of employment. It is submitted that one cannot disturb that delicate system, which works well if appropriately nurtured and encouraged, unless demonstrably necessary.

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

So often, we are driven from the other side of the House, it seems, by doctrinaire or emotionally-driven, motivated, unilateral, mandatory interferences in this area of labour and employment law. Even if it is well meaning, it is submitted that often it does far more harm than good. This is such a resolution that is submitted.

Witness the aerosol spray deodorants. Witness the hair sprays which keep hair down. Witness DDT which kills flies in our homes and our cottages, or used to. Witness asbestos and what it was intended for, to provide insulation, and what happened. All of these apparently good ideas we can all agree have done far more harm than good, jeopardizing our essential-for-life ozone layer, contributing to brain damage, causing cancer. Impact studies must therefore be done and must be conducted before these doctrinaire or emotionally-driven suggestions. These kinds of ideas should be treated seriously by this Assembly.

In fairness to the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), in the carefully chosen words of this resolution, he has, it appears, simply invited our government to consider this idea. As an MLA speaking absolutely independently for myself and on behalf of the constituency, I can assure you I have considered this idea, and on the basis of my knowledge and experience and on the basis of readily available views of various factors in the community, I reject it.

The factions and the communities that have spoken on this issue have been from other jurisdictions who have had this sort of resolution put in the form of bills and suggested changes to legislation and have been commented on, the coalition of B.C. business, CFIB. The Manitoba Chamber of Commerce has commented on the resolution that was brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) last time, a year ago. There have been general comments, there have

been comments from the restaurant industry, Westfair and, I might say, even the co-operative movement. The sorts of comments are all negative.

From B.C., the comment that comes from a coalition of middle and small businesses is to the effect that it could cause a dramatic slowdown in the hiring of people and, in some cases, create actual job loss. It indicated the proposal could also lead to trade-offs elsewhere, such as lower levels of coverage for full-time employees in areas such as disability or dental insurance.

* (1750)

CFIB noted it would harm job creation efforts in Canadian jurisdictions. The general comments included that the result will be downsizing, that the arbitrary threshold is hurtful. There will be artificial company splits or greater shifting from employee to contractor status.

Restaurateurs have said, we believe this kind of legislation will result in less benefits for full-time employees and fewer jobs for part-time workers. Most part-time employees would prefer to have their money now. Rather than life insurance or pension benefits in the future, they would rather have it now.

We have the food industry, in this case, Westfair, saying in Saskatchewan, the grocery store chain was considering spending \$10 million upgrading O K Economy stores in Saskatchewan but is reviewing the decision because of labour problems with its union and new provincial labour laws.

Co-operatives, one of them in Saskatchewan made the strongest statement of all, and that is in relation to the legislation, and this is in November of 1994. Using the number of employees as a criterion as to whether or not an employer must apply standards is discriminating and puts organizations like co-operatives, due to their diversified nature, at a distinct competitive disadvantage in nearly every small community in Saskatchewan. Imposing employers that currently provide benefits to full-time workers, to also provide them to part-time workers discriminates against those employers that have provided benefits in the past, and

against workers of those that have not given benefits in the past and will likely not offer in the future.

Dictating how business owners, managers, schedule staff goes beyond the boundaries of what labour legislation should entail. In a democratic society, workers are entitled to be protected against suppression; however, this type of legislation goes far beyond that. If we have the basic right to control our own businesses taken away from us, failure will soon follow.

This bad idea in Saskatchewan was ultimately diluted to such an extent that only 7 percent of part-time workers were affected by it. As the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) indicated, in B.C. the proposed legislation never even surfaced, and it was defeated. It was defeated very early, and they did not proceed with it beyond the bill stage.

In Saskatchewan, what they did was to dilute it to such an extent that only 7 percent of the part-time employees were affected by it. This was done by arbitrarily drawing a line in the middle of small businesses, ensuring a lack of competitiveness and avoidance techniques which would detract time and resources from meaningful work.

Is it not probable that this failure to withdraw this bad idea was a unconvincing exercise in face saving? Having concluded that this recycled bad idea for Manitobans is unworthy of further consideration, I am tempted to stop here, but resist that temptation in case someone in this Assembly may still not agree with this view, that is, that the resolution should not be considered further. It is clearly on the record that the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) and his predecessor, the honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik), agree with this view. I would be surprised if the honourable members of the Liberal Party disagreed with this view.

I would be delighted if honourable members from the official opposition would show the independence of conviction and thought that the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) eloquently and convincingly encouraged yesterday during the private members' time in this House and allow this resolution to be put to a

vote and defeated now. I am getting the clear message that there is no opposition to this view. Silence means consent, so I move on in any event.

A provision of this resolution, if we move beyond consideration, is the last preamble, where it says, whereas there is a need to create a better balance between part-time and full-time employees. Now, a need to create a better balance between part-time and full-time workers—do 80 percent of the workers in Manitoba need this imposed balance? That is the full-time employees cited in the resolution. That is the statistic. Do they want this balance? Not likely. The coalition of B.C. business said that the proposal could lead to trade-offs elsewhere, such as lower levels of coverage for full-time employees in areas such as disability or dental insurance.

Do owners and entrepreneurs want this balance? Not when it will hurt job creation efforts as claimed by CFIB, B.C. coalition of business, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce and other organizations I have referred to. Do creditors want this balance? Not when it hurts entrepreneurship. Do managers want this balance? Not when it means unnecessary and difficult and costly administration and overrides existing negotiated collective agreements and employment contracts and costs of doing business and carefully constructed compensation and benefit plans in the workplaces. Do customers want this balance? Not when it increases prices of goods or services.

Do unions want this balance? Unions have the freedom to negotiate this change, and if they want to, the freedom to organize part-time employees who are unhappy with existing benefits for part-time employees. Would this stop them from negotiating for other minority groups? I mean, the union movement has taken on causes for minority groups before. If this is an important cause, take it on.

If the union movement in Manitoba were to support this kind of resolution, it would evidence that the spokespeople for that movement continue their practice too often, too often in too many cases during the last 26 years, of going to the government to impose universal standards on all workplaces with the misguided view that this will help employees.

I believe the union movement, through its new leadership, is now rejecting this kind of notion, and it is desirous of supporting entrepreneurship, job creation and mutual-interest bargaining. Therefore, it would want me as an honourable member of this Assembly to oppose this resolution. I do so.

That leaves me with part-time employees, and if we have the same reliance on the stat in the resolution, we are talking about 20 percent of the employees. Do they want balance with full-time employees? By the way, I mean, if as in Saskatchewan only 7 percent of the part-time employees in Manitoba are covered by this resolution in a watered-down, save-face method, this is equal to 1.4 percent of the employees in the province. If there are 94,000 part-time employees, this means 1,316 employees. On sheer numbers alone, is it worth going through this exercise with a bad idea, simply to save face?

Assuming that the resolution still were to proceed, would part-time employees in Manitoba want balance with full-time employees if it meant, and I submit it does, full-time employees got less benefits. Many part-time employees aspire to be full-time employees, as was pointed out by the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). They aspire to be full-time employees, and in the normal course if they aspire to that status and work for it and pay their dues to get there, they often achieve it. Would part-time employees in Manitoba want balance with full-time

employees if it meant less job opportunities, less chances for advancement? I think not. Therefore, after consideration and analysis of this resolution, it is submitted respectfully that it should not be considered further. It is not needed or wanted by any of the affected groups when adequately informed as to its implications.

Just a few rebuttal comments. My honourable friend from Burrows raised some points about pensions that really are not covered by this resolution. As we know, The Pension Benefits Act is far different from the days and the jurisdiction of Ontario; there is far more protective legislation in the interests of part-time employees in Manitoba than there was in Ontario at that time.

With respect to the observation that there is some justification given that this should be a tactic to discourage the hiring of part-time employees, I submit there are far better ways to use one's time and energy than to take the time of this House to suggest such a devious tactic to achieve that objective which is unworthy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Your time has expired. The resolution will remain open.

Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 21, 1995

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