



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 3, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Federal Immigration Policies

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickee), 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.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I am pleased to table, Madam Speaker, the 1994-95 Annual Report of the Vital Statistics Special Operating Agency and also the Report of the Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Speaker, it is my privilege to table the 1994-95 Annual Report of the Department of Northern Affairs.

Madam Speaker: I am pleased to table today the Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on The Elections Finances Act 1994.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 200—The Legislative Assembly
Amendment Act

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: I rise just to give a brief explanation according to our rules in terms of the intent of Bill 200. We gave notice at the beginning of this session of our intention to introduce this particular bill.

This bill would enable the Legislature to elect the office of Speaker. I would like to point out this is being adopted in a number of jurisdictions, and it was recently adopted by the House of Commons in Ottawa.

We are hoping this bill will give MLAs the opportunity to debate whether Manitoba should consider following a practice that has been fairly well established by the House of Commons.

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

Bill 204—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that leave be given to introduce Bill 204, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Martindale: The purport of my bill is to do what this government under two Ministers of Family Services, the current one and the previous one, refused to do, and that is to amend The Child and Family Services Act to require that the Children's Advocate report to the Legislature instead of to the minister. I believe this is something that would protect the independence of the Children's Advocate similar to that of the Ombudsman and would be an improvement over the current situation.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 208—The Elections Amendment Act

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), that leave be given to introduce Bill 208, The Elections Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi électorale), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, this bill gets patronage out of the administration of elections. It takes the power to appoint returning officers from the cabinet and gives that power to the Chief Electoral Officer to be exercised by considering merit.

I cannot imagine an area where patronage is more repugnant than election administration. The bill will ensure that returning officers are both seen to be and are impartial and will ensure timely appointments and professionally trained administrators.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery, where we have with us this afternoon fifteen Grade 12 students from Kelvin High School under the direction of Mrs. Ethier. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale).

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

* (1340)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Emergency Physicians' Strike Mediator's Report—Tabling Request

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

Unfortunately, last night, Madam Speaker, the emergency doctors at community hospitals and pathologists were unable to reach an agreement with the provincial government through their elected representatives.

As we understand it, the parties were meeting with a mediator, Mr. Jack Chapman, who was appointed by the provincial government, and Mr. Chapman has reported to the Minister of Health at one o'clock today. I would like to ask the Premier, will he agree to table in

the House the mediator's report in that it is a very, very important public issue, the whole provision of emergency services in our community hospitals? Will the report be tabled in the Chamber and before the public so that we can read the recommendations of the mediator?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I was very disappointed, as I am sure all honourable members would have been yesterday, when what appeared to be a hopeful situation turned out not to be such by the end of the day. However, I have received just moments ago the report of the mediator, Mr. Jack Chapman, QC. I would like to thank Mr. Chapman for his work with the parties. I personally delivered copies of Mr. Chapman's report to the two parties.

At this point, I have not been able to go through in detail the mediation report, but I have asked the parties to make a response to the mediation report by the end of the business day on Friday.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, I am quite surprised that the Minister of Health would allow the parties to deal with this matter in a private way until Friday. I think it is important for the public which is intimately involved in this dispute—it is not a dispute just between the doctors and the government. The public is affected by the withdrawal of services at our community hospitals. Surely the public has a right to this mediator's report, and surely the public has a right to move the parties along and not allow this report or the material within this report to be dealt with on Friday, just prior to another long weekend.

I would like to ask the minister to table the report today and to shorten up the time line to get this thing resolved, Madam Speaker. Friday, I believe, is just leaving it a little too long. The report has been conducted. Let us make it public and let us get this thing moved along and get it resolved.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, if my wish comes true, the parties will resume discussions almost immediately. That would be my wish, and I do not want, by following the advice of the honourable Leader of the Opposition, to in any way precipitate problems

between the parties that we really do not need. We have enough problems already without the honourable member's idea of negotiating this thing in the public media. That seems to be his way. Maybe that is the way he has always done things, but it does not always get the proper result or the best result for the public.

The result that I would like would be the safest and the best emergency services possible. The honourable member's only concern is how we can make some points for him and his colleagues in Question Period. Madam Speaker, we have more serious work to do than that.

Mr. Doer: Again, it has been over a month that the strike and withdrawal of services in our community emergency wards has taken place, Madam Speaker.

We wrote to the Minister of Health long before the session started and before the strike and withdrawal of services took place. We did not talk about the fact that one party is allegedly at zero percent and the government is at minus two and the lack of flexibility that we see with the government in terms of what they did for casino workers.

All we are asking, Madam Speaker, is that government release the mediator's report and move the deadline up to get this thing resolved.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier, does the Premier not feel that the mediator's report should be released to the public insofar as public service has been withdrawn and it is a public service, that health care services will be provided in the emergency wards?

Surely the public has a right to the mediator's report. It is not a dispute between two private parties. It is also a dispute that affects the public of Manitoba, and we should have that report. It should be released in this Legislature to the public today, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has said, it is certainly our deep regret that the emergency room doctors, having been given an increase of 26 percent just two years ago, now demanding 15 percent

increase, have withdrawn their services from the public of Manitoba.

That is certainly something that we are not happy about, Madam Speaker, but what we are committed to do is to do everything that we can to try and resolve the dispute and let it come together with our encouragement and our active participation.

That is not necessarily served by the suggestions of the Leader of the Opposition. All he wants to do is have another political football for him for Question Period. We want to solve the problem, Madam Speaker.

* (1345)

Emergency Physicians' Strike Government Action

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, we wrote to the government asking them to step in before the strike. We asked for binding arbitration from the government during the strike and there was no response. The minister gave the mediator two weeks to make a report, two weeks in the midst of an emergency doctors' strike, and now the minister has stood up and said, now we are going to give the parties until Friday to come back. It is totally inappropriate for this government to continue its hands-off attitude.

My question for the minister is, why will the minister not ask the parties to return their responses tomorrow and not Friday, and will the minister not take some assertive action, rather than waiting till Friday, before the long weekend?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member suggests some kind of assertive action and suggests perhaps binding arbitration, in fact urges binding arbitration. It is my understanding that neither of the parties want that. The MHO and the MMA, as I understand their position, do not want binding arbitration, so that is hardly a very good place to start.

Madam Speaker, the other point that I make is that some time before Friday would be just fine. As a

matter of fact, I said to the people who were asking me just a few minutes ago, I said that two o'clock this afternoon would be fine or 1:45 p.m., but we have already passed that time line.

There was talk of deadlines, and I think the honourable member wants to maybe try to bully his way through this process. I suggest that if we followed his advice, the next comment he would be making would be that we are bullying our way through the process, which we do not want to do.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my question for the Minister of Health is, can the Minister of Health explain to this House whether or not the report indicates that the doctors, whom the Premier (Mr. Filmon) called the aggressors and who again reiterated that today in Question Period, in this strike, whether or not the doctors were flexible and had considered and had moved down towards the area of zero percent or in that range in terms of the settlement, whether or not that is the case, and it is the government through its negotiators at MHO that has been inflexible with regard to this? Can the minister confirm that?

Mr. McCrae: Well, let us remember that even though the honourable member has referred to the action taken by the doctors as an artificial strike, I certainly do not accept that. Every day I am reminded that we are in a very real strike situation, Madam Speaker.

The honourable member is asking questions about the process and about the positions being put on the table. The answer is basically the same as the one given to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), that the matter is for the parties to work out and not for he and I to negotiate here in the Legislature and in the media. I think that asking the parties to respond to what the mediator has had to say is a reasonable thing to do, and I hope that the parties will come together and put an end to this business of withdrawing emergency services from people in this province.

Mediator's Report—Tabling Request

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, can the minister who seems to forget that there are 700,000 Winnipeggers involved in this dispute as well,

who forgets the public involved in this dispute, indicate whether or not the government who are the 100 percent funders and are the other side in this dispute—can the minister advise this House whether or not the issues of recruitment and retention of emergency physicians, as well as some form of arbitration for some issues, are contained in this report? Will he table it finally?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I received the report only about 20 minutes ago, 30 minutes ago from Mr. Chapman, and I have not reviewed the whole report to this point. I will be doing so and I certainly hope the parties to this dispute, the MHO and the MMA will review the mediator's report, get back together, come to an agreement so that we can put an end to what is going on here.

* (1350)

Dauphin Regional Health Centre Layoffs

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, during the provincial election the Filmon team denied there were cuts on the horizon for the Dauphin Regional Health Centre and New Democrats were accused of fearmongering. Today, however, 32 nurses, 15 support staff and five management people are being told their jobs are being restructured, resulting in a reduction of at least 10 positions.

Will this minister admit that these health care workers are being laid off as a result of a \$1.4-million reduction in the budget to the Dauphin Regional Health Centre which is money it receives from this minister?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I believe the honourable member is speaking about action being taken by the Dauphin Regional Health Centre in response to the report of the committee studying the staffing guidelines in the province of Manitoba at the various facilities.

That report was known to the people at Dauphin Regional Health complex late last year, long before any electoral matters taking place in this province. The honourable member ought not to mislead anybody about that.

Mr. Struthers: Is this minister telling this House that these layoffs and reductions in service would have occurred even if funding levels from this minister had remained even with last year's?

Mr. McCrae: The staffing guidelines, Madam Speaker, assist everybody in the sense that they allow us to, in a rational way, set funding levels in accordance with the needs at the hospital, the needs at the hospital as set as a result of recommendations made in their dietary areas, the nursing area, the administration area and the plant and equipment area of the hospital.

All of those main areas were the subject of subcommittee work. There was very, very significant input from staff of hospitals in this province, not to mention the MALPN and the MARN and the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

Mr. Struthers: Instead of passing the buck, Madam Speaker, can this minister assure this House that his cuts were only the result of the provincial election and that residents of Dauphin and the Parkland can rest assured without this minister cutting services further?

An Honourable Member: Fearmongering.

Mr. Struthers: Those are the facts.

Mr. McCrae: Quite often, Madam Speaker, we are accused of not answering questions and yet honourable members do not listen to the answers when they are given. I gave the honourable member an answer to the question about the staffing guidelines and the way the business is done between the government and the hospital involved. I do not know what more I can say to the honourable member but that which I have said, and I have repeated very many times that staffing guidelines can be set but only with the patient being the No. 1 priority and patient care being the No. 1 priority and that remains the policy.

Emergency Physicians' Strike Back-To-Work Legislation

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

emergency services strike. It has become fairly apparent that this government's priority, as the minister just finished stating, that the patient is in fact our first priority, is not in fact the case.

We have seen yet another mechanism that this government's attempt to resolve the strike appears to have failed, and we are going to ask once again, will this minister now entertain the possibility of supporting back-to-work legislation?

In fact, we have had Legislative Counsel over the last four days develop the necessary legislation. Will this minister be prepared to support back-to-work legislation?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): At every opportunity the honourable member has made sure we all understand his position, that to heck with any negotiations, just legislate them back to work.

We know the honourable member's position, and we just wish that he would, instead of advocating that sort of approach, discuss issues with his counterparts in Ottawa who have so much to do with the pressure that all facilities and all health functions right across this country have to deal with because of the speed with which the federal government is taking out hundreds of millions of dollars from hospital budgets throughout this country.

* (1355)

Mr. Lamoureux: I would put the question in this way to the Minister of Health: Is he prepared to live up to what he just said a few minutes ago, the best emergency services possible? This is what the Minister of Health has said.

Is this minister prepared to live up to those words along with the words that he has said in terms of putting patient care first and indicate to this House that he is prepared to look at legislation to go back to work?

Mr. McCrae: If there is a time to look at such things, it is not now because we have just received the report from the mediator, and I have asked the parties for their response to the mediator's report.

It seems to me the appropriate thing to do would be to await their response.

Mr. Lamoureux: Then will this Minister of Health indicate to the House that in fact the emergency services are going to continue in that 24-hour, seven days a week after the strike is over and settled?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member asked me this question yesterday. I told the honourable member that given the capacity that we have in the city of Winnipeg for emergency services, our commitment is to provide the highest quality and best emergency services to Winnipeggers and Manitobans that we can possibly provide.

Social Assistance Amalgamation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, the provincial government is currently negotiating with the City of Winnipeg to take over the social services caseload, over 16,000 cases.

The City of Winnipeg has many advantages and in many ways is superior to the provincial system. They have better-trained staff, they have a more sophisticated computer system, they have more and better job creation and job training programs and a more efficient ratio of staff to recipients.

I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if she can assure the House that when they take over the city's Social Services Department, they will keep all of the good features of this system, including the better-trained staff.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I am not so sure I can thank my honourable friend for that question, calling into question the staff of the Department of Family Services that were the same staff that were there under an NDP administration and indicating his lack of confidence in any ability for our staff to deliver anything.

I have to say, Madam Speaker, that I believe there are many good people working with our Social

Allowances Program at the provincial level. I believe there are many good people working in the city system who have the needs and the interests of those who are most vulnerable in our community at heart, and we will endeavour through any new programming to ensure that we utilize the very best people who are available to deliver the service.

Mr. Martindale: Will the Minister of Family Services assure Manitobans, particularly children on city social assistance, that she will listen to the City Council of Winnipeg which passed a resolution on September 27 asking this minister specifically to maintain current child clothing, food and personal needs allowances and adjust them annually according to the consumer price index, or does harmonizing the rates mean lowering the rate for food for 7,000 children on city social assistance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I do thank my honourable friend for that question because it does allow me to put on the record again that our first priority is for children and for families and those who are in need.

Madam Speaker, we will look at a standardized rate that treats all children in the city of Winnipeg in a fair manner, taking into account, of course, something that we all know, that the dollars that are allocated for food in every instance do not get into the mouths of those children who need that nourishment and that nutrition.

The programming that we are going to have to put in place, Madam Speaker, is going to have to address that issue and try to put into place the tools that will provide families with the ability to understand that nutrition and support for their children has to be of paramount priority.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister if her idea of fairness is to tell the parents of children on city social assistance that love is more important than food, understanding that all of us need to be loved, but is reducing the social allowance and telling these people that they can eat love, is that the way she is going to treat the 7,000 children on city social assistance?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity over this past weekend to have a fairly long and thorough discussion with a mother, a single parent, in our Winnipeg community who is struggling to make ends meet. She was with her young daughter and said to me, I want you to look at my daughter and tell me whether you think my child is living in poverty. I had to agree with her that she was putting her child first in all of the issues. Even though there was not much income, she ensured that her child came first and that she was well nourished and well loved and well supported.

Madam Speaker, I think that is the key issue we are talking about. If, in fact, we can provide the tools for all parents to accept the responsibility of putting their children first as we are trying to do as a government, that is what we will be doing in any new programming and any new direction of resources into the future.

* (1400)

Social Assistance Housing Standards

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, the reality for low-income families is that the highest cost they face is housing and rent. Many families on social allowance who live in private rental accommodations are paying more than 50 percent of their social allowance for rent, and often this is going to landlords who are not complying with the government's own safety and health standards for housing.

I want to ask the Minister of Family Services if she will confirm that more than \$50 million of social allowance money is going to rent, and how much of that money is going to housing that is not meeting government standards and is not up to health inspection standards under City of Winnipeg regulations and regulations for the Manitoba government.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for that question, because I do want to indicate to all Manitobans that indeed the amount that we pay for rent under our Social Allowances Program is an

amount that is adequate to cover the rent requirements in subsidized housing that is available throughout the province.

It also covers much other rental accommodation. In fact, as money is provided to social allowance recipients, they can make choices. They can make choices to live in rental accommodation that is higher than what is allocated, but I know that the social allowance dollars that we provide for rent accommodation is covered in subsidized housing. There are many other rental accommodation spaces available within that guideline.

Ms. Cerilli: I would think and ask the government, will she not jump at the chance to ensure that all of the social allowance money being paid for rent in this province is going to housing that meets the standard of health for this province, and will she not work with the municipalities, the minister for Residential Tenancies, to ensure that health inspection orders automatically go to Residential Tenancies so we will ensure that Manitobans do not have to choose between food and adequate housing but they are going to be guaranteed that the rent money is going to adequate housing?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): What the member for Radisson is alluding to in effect is the fact that the housing that was put forth for occupancy is based on rent geared to income which is 27 percent of what the income is coming about. If the member has incidents of where someone is in public housing where they are paying more than their 27 percent, then we would be willing to look at it.

As for the safety and the health of the persons that are living in public housing, that has always been the first and primary concern of anybody that is going into any of our public housing. It is done on an inspection basis before the person goes into the housing, and it is an ongoing basis.

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

Ms. Cerilli: I just want to have you call the government ministers to order, and if they are going to refer questions to their minister—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Radisson was recognized for a final supplementary question. Will the honourable member please put her question now?

Ms. Cerilli: On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

An Honourable Member: She rose on a point of order.

Ms. Cerilli: I rose on a point of order.

Madam Speaker: I did not hear the honourable member say that she was up on a point of order.

Ms. Cerilli: I apologize if I did not say "a point of order" loud enough, but I would like to make a point of order.

Point of Order

Ms. Cerilli: My point of order is when I ask a question to a certain minister and a different minister answers the question that is not even relevant to the tasks in that department—it was more likely that it could have been answered by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Ernst) who is responsible for the Residential Tenancies Branch, but this minister has no responsibility in this question at all—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Radisson does not have a point of order, and I remind the honourable member for Radisson, according to Beuchesne 420, "the Chair will allow a question to be put to a certain Minister; but it cannot insist that that Minister rather than another should answer it."

* * *

Ms. Cerilli: I will ask the Minister of Family Services if she will not ensure that money from social allowance to pay rent is going to go for children and families ahead of slum landlords who are not providing adequate housing. Will she ensure that?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. A question has been put. I am sure all honourable members would like to hear the response.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I want to indicate clearly the policy of this government, our government, is indeed to ensure that families come first and children come first, and every effort around any programming that will be available into the future for Manitobans most in need will have that as the priority.

Provincial Auditor's Report Health Care System—Bed Counts

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance responsible for convening the Public Accounts committee.

In the Auditor's report tabled yesterday in the House, the Auditor noted the need for a reporting time frame for the Quality Health for Manitobans action plan that was tabled several years ago in this House. Yet, in the most recent report of the Health department, critical information that would allow Manitobans to judge whether there has been progress or not on that action plan, namely bed counts and crib counts, has been for the first time ever omitted from the annual report.

Will the minister please answer the question of whether this critical information is being suppressed so that bed closures will not be able to be noted by Manitobans when they read the annual report?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I understand what actuates the honourable member's question today and basically agree with what he is saying, agree also with the Provincial Auditor in recommending that actions flowing from the action plan of the spring of 1992, that we make more full public disclosure. I agree with that. Indeed, in many ways we have been doing that, but the way suggested by the Provincial Auditor is quite satisfactory to us.

We will be bringing something to the House by way of a status update of all of the changes that have happened thus far and all of the changes we expect to see in the future. There is a good reason for doing that. I assume the Auditor agrees with this, and that is that

the more public input and the more public understanding and education about all the health issues there is out there, the more likely we are going to succeed in all of our reform initiatives.

ARCOR

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, my question again is for the minister responsible for Public Accounts committee.

Can the minister tell the House whether he is in agreement with the statement of the Provincial Auditor found on pages 73 and 74 of the report, which notes that a departmental review of the business plan of ARCOR would have challenged their optimistic forecasts with a view to assuring that they were attainable, that based on their conversation with departmental officials, the department representative's role could have been strengthened, perhaps preventing the loss of many millions of dollars? Does the minister responsible for Public Accounts agree with the Auditor's comment, Madam Speaker?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, the Auditor's report—I believe even prior to the tabling of this report, action had been taken by the government to act in the public interest. A serious attempt was made to create an industry, to develop an industry, which would have been very positive for the province.

The actions that have been taken by the province following the management decisions that were taken and the recommendation from the board have, we believe, been a responsible move to make.

* (1410)

Standing Committee on Public Accounts Meeting Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Finance, in light of the comment of the Auditor on page 7 of the report indicating the need for meeting more frequently on a regular basis of Public Accounts during the year, will the minister today commit to the House that he will convene at least one

more meeting of the Public Accounts committee before the rise of the House on November 3 to consider Volumes 1 to 3 of the 1993-94 Public Accounts?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, the member for Crescentwood refers to certain recommendations on page 7. I would remind him that the recommendations from the Provincial Auditor in terms of how the Public Accounts function go much further than purely the issue of how often the committee meets.

She talks about the need for clarifying agendas in advance. In previous reports, she has talked about the need for putting questions in writing. So, as he and I discussed at Public Accounts and subsequent to the meeting, I think there are many things that could be done to enhance how Public Accounts functions.

If there is a genuine and sincere effort on the part of the opposition to want information, to want quality information provided to them, we are certainly more than prepared to undertake to provide that kind of information, but it requires significant changes to how Public Accounts functions, how Public Accounts meets and deals with issues beyond purely how often they meet, and as we discussed in terms of the next meeting of Public Accounts, that is an issue to be resolved between the respective House leaders.

Mineral Exploration Incentive Program Audited Statements

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines.

In yesterday's report released by the Auditor, several very serious concerns were raised about the lack of accountability and procedures for the Mineral Exploration Incentive Program. Given that over \$7 million has been approved through this program, why did this government not enforce its own regulations requiring audited statements?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question.

One of the things that we have been doing in this particular department since I assumed responsibility on the 9th of May was to review that particular program.

I am pleased to indicate that we have ended the existing rules for that program and have put in place another exploration incentive program which I think takes into account the concerns that were raised by the Auditor as well as several other concerns that we had in terms of the operation of that program.

Ms. Mihychuk: Can the minister inform the House why the government did not enforce its own regulations and why they chose to ignore Part 8(2) of those regulations? On what basis did it choose to ignore those regulations?

Mr. Praznik: I can assure the member that the department's staff who administered that program were quite aware of the program and its operation to ensure that the public did get value for money expended. There were some problems with the way that program was originally established which we have endeavoured to correct.

I say, Madam Speaker, we recognize the concerns that were raised by the Auditor, and we have taken the steps to make the appropriate corrections. That will not be the case under our new program.

Ms. Mihychuk: My final question to the minister is, why did he not take the lead? Why did the minister not take measures to ensure that the government was not making payments for these incentives without determining the reasonableness of the claim and increase those inspections on the work programs while tightening auditing?

Mr. Praznik: The member asked why this minister did not take those steps. This minister was appointed on the 9th of May, and how quickly members forget.

I can assure the member that my predecessors in office and the staff of the department who administer that particular program have taken, I believe, reasonable steps to ensure that the expenditures under that program were properly incurred and that in fact the taxpayers of Manitoba have not been put at risk or have

unwisely spent dollars in the improvement or . . . exploration program.

So I think the member's point simply is that the rules and processes should be in place. We have fixed that. In fact, I do not think there was a problem in fact or practice with how that program was carried out, but the rules have been corrected in the new program.

Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation Marketing Restrictions

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, my questions are directed to the First Minister.

Under current regulations of the Freshwater fisheries, fishermen from north of the 53rd are not permitted to sell fish south of the 53rd.

I would like to ask the Premier whether he or his staff have ever discussed this matter with the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation with a view to changing this policy which is, in my estimation, grossly unfair and discriminatory.

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

Mr. Lathlin: I would like to ask the Premier, again for my second question, since a handful of fishermen in the Gimli area are allowed to sell fish both south and in Winnipeg and also north of the 53rd parallel, has the minister asked for the same rules to apply on both sides of the 53rd parallel?

Mr. Filmon: I will take that question as notice, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lathlin: I would like to ask the First Minister again, will the Premier meet with officials from the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation to see why fishermen at Pukatawagan cannot get permits to sell pickerel and other fish from their area elsewhere in Manitoba and elsewhere as the Island Lake area fishermen have been granted?

Mr. Filmon: I will take that question as notice, Madam Speaker.

Infrastructure Works Agreement Selection Criteria

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the Minister of Finance responsible for the infrastructure program.

An analysis of the infrastructure program shows that province-wide Conservative constituencies receive 52 percent more per capita than NDP constituencies and in rural Manitoba 46 percent more. In the city of Winnipeg, Conservative constituencies receive 35 percent more per capita, but when we remove those projects that affect more than one riding, we find that per capita expenditures are 49 percent higher in Conservative constituencies in Winnipeg.

How can the minister possibly justify these excessive expenditures in Conservative constituencies?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, without accepting any of the analysis done by the member for Brandon East, I want to remind him of the approval process when he brings to light those kinds of accusations.

The approval process for \$60 million out of that \$204 million is on the recommendations of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities. The recommendation for another \$60 million, that comes from the City of Winnipeg, is based on the elected council and mayor of the City of Winnipeg, and the remaining \$84 million is based on the recommendations from a Liberal federal government and a Conservative provincial government, and that is the basis of the distribution. So I really am offended by his suggestions and accusations about where the money ends up.

The process is all-inclusive. It includes people of all political stripes, of people from various elected levels of governments, and it has been a process, Madam Speaker, that is being modelled right across Canada.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Brandon East for one very short question.

* (1420)

Mr. Leonard Evans: Is the minister telling us that this government has no role whatsoever to play in decision making? Madam Speaker, how can the government justify spending millions and millions of dollars on so many noninfrastructure projects, such as cultural and recreational facilities, instead of the very basic infrastructure that is badly needed in this province such as water, sewer, roads and bridges?

Madam Speaker, there are millions of dollars spent on noninfrastructure projects and many worthwhile infrastructure projects have been denied throughout this province.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Finance, for a very short response.

Mr. Stefanson: Well, Madam Speaker, the member did not listen to my first answer. I did not suggest for a minute that we do not have a role to play, but I also pointed out very clearly to him that it is also a role that includes the federal government and municipal governments from across this province.

In terms of his suggestion about priorities for traditional municipal sewer and water and so on, 120 million out of that 204 million was allocated very specifically for those needs. But is he calling into question that the infrastructure requirements, whether it is the arts or the cultural or those kinds of communities, a rural gasification and so on, do not add to the economic development of our province? I would suggest to him that they do, and they do in a very significant way.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for Wellington (Ms. Barrett); Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) for Thursday, October 5, 1995, for 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you call Bills 2, 12 and then the balance of the bills as listed on the Order Paper.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 2—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on Bill 2 on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et apportant des modifications corrélatives) standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and to speak to Bill 2, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act.

Whenever I think of Bill 2, the proposed balanced budget act, I cannot help but think of the television commercial featuring Don Cherry flogging Sport Select tickets using two dogs balancing—or trying to balance—on a plank. I guess it is not really a plank but a seesaw or what we used to call a teeter-totter.

At any rate, the heavy dog at one side of the plank forces a small dog at the other side of the plank into the air. Along comes Don Cherry and by manipulating the fulcrum or using a point spread or whatever equalizes the weight of both dogs and if, by magic, the little dog and the big dog are balanced. Perhaps the government

should hire Don Cherry and his dog, Blue, as a consultant or consultants to visually demonstrate to a skeptical public how the balancing act works.

I presume that the spoiled little dog up on the high end of the plank, before Don Cherry interferes, is the amount of money the government spends and the big working-class dog at the low end of the plank is the amount of revenue the government collects.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty in hearing the remarks from the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Jennissen: Madam Speaker, I repeat, I presume that the spoiled little dog up on a high end of the plank before Don Cherry interferes is the amount of money the government spends and the big working-class dog at the low end of the plank is the amount of revenue the government collects. Don Cherry is the great equalizer, the one who interferes on behalf of egalitarian principles, I presume. I guess one could say he represents the government's version of the dog and pony show, balanced budget legislation.

Now, on the surface, just about everyone agrees that balanced budgets make sense in most cases, and I am no exception. Families try to balance the budget. So do businesses, so do fishermen and farmers, but I do not know of any family or business or fisherman or farmer or student, for that matter, or individual who at one time or another did not go into debt. That is perfectly normal. [interjection] Astute observation by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

No family or business or individual wishes to increase the debt load year after year. When a young couple buys a home, a house, they slowly pay off their mortgage. Their home is a long-term investment, an asset, and at some point they will own that home, that house.

Using the logic of Bill 2, this young couple would never attempt to purchase a home, because they could not pay for it entirely within a given fiscal year. So much for helping the construction industry. Similarly,

a small business would never get started because, obviously, a small business does not pay for itself until perhaps the third, fourth or fifth year running.

Using the model of the proposed balanced budget legislation, Bill 2, our small business would never get off the ground. Suppose a farmer wishes to expand land holdings because in a very competitive world he or she feels that expansion is necessary in order to survive. If that farmer purchased a half a section of land at, say, \$150,000, does one seriously expect that the farmer has that amount of money in a savings account?

Perhaps a few farmers do have such amounts saved, but most are barely surviving. The agricultural markets can fluctuate wildly, yet using the analogy of Bill 2, a farmer would never take a risk unless the farmer was a millionaire to begin with. Using Bill 2 logic, the farmer would never buy more land or cattle, would never buy new tractors or other machinery, would never invest heavily in chemicals and fertilizers in order to improve production.

Again, using Bill 2 logic, no student would ever take out a student loan. How many students can repay a loan in the same year that they take out the loan? It is patently absurd. At all levels, there are long-range investments, long-range debts, that will eventually be paid off, the debts, but can never and were never intended to be paid in one year.

Using the same logic, how would municipalities, towns and cities ever improve infrastructure? How could bridges, schools, hospitals, libraries ever be constructed if these costs would have to be paid within the same year of the construction? For example, the city of Flin Flon needs to upgrade its water and sewage system. That is a costly thing that has to be dealt with in the near future, and even with federal and provincial help, and I am not so sure how much help is available or how much help the city will eventually receive, it will still be a cost that will run into the millions.

Similarly, at Channing, which is a suburb of Flin Flon, it desperately needs a water and sewer system. It has not had one yet, and in order to put that into

position would require millions of dollars, and those millions of dollars cannot be repaid within a year.

Bill 2 works only on paper. In reality, it is going to create serious problems. I am sure these problems were foreseen, but for short-range political gain the government tied itself to balanced budget legislation. It is tying rather its own hands for the responsiveness and flexibility it will need in the future. In fact, even the analysts from Standard and Poor's say that same thing. Therefore the limitations of Bill 2 are fairly obvious for all to see.

These limitations are not merely a whim we have dreamt up on this side of the House. If the proponents of Bill 2 do not wish to listen to us, let them at least listen to the academics, to the professors, to the bond rating agencies, to the press, to the people who have really looked at the long-range implication of Bill 2. They all know that public services will be negatively affected.

* (1430)

In fact, if we talk about the press, I could read you some headlines regarding Bill 2: Prepare for the lean years; bad law; devious phrases; proposed law protects the rich; budget fantasy.

I especially like the lean years one because we have already had seven lean years. I do not know if we should expect any more.

Talking about tax referenda, I did not see the Premier rush to a referendum when the public could have been asked about their views concerning the use of public money to pay Jets' losses. In fact, the Premier rejected the idea out of hand. He rejected the idea of a referendum. Why is a referendum useful now for the government when it was not before?

I understand the government's concern about deficits and debts, but all this must be kept in perspective. We cannot allow ourselves to be stampeded into making simplistic decisions now that will hurt this province later on. I think we need to have a good, close look at debt.

The government pays approximately 12 to 13 cents, using its own figures, on the dollar for debt servicing.

An Honourable Member: Is that so bad? I should be so lucky.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, the honourable member says, we should be so lucky. That is not super high that 12 to 13 percent. That is not super low either, but it is manageable at present. It is not a panic situation.

But the government has painted itself into a corner. The government campaigned before the election on fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets. Not too many people disagreed with that motherhood and apple pie vision. After all, no one has ever argued or ever campaigned on this, that governments should be fiscally irresponsible or should encourage reckless spending or should incur huge debts. Of course governments have to be responsible. That is a truism. But does responsibility have to be legislated in such a narrow, inflexible way?

But once a promise is made or is even overstated before an election, it has to be kept more or less after an election. The government is held prisoner by its own earlier rhetoric. It has to live up now to its own boasts.

The government knows full well that the bill, that is Bill 2, in many, many ways was an election gimmick. They know full well that massive projects such as Duff's Ditch would never have been built in the past using their own balanced budget logic. The government and its ministers are fully aware of the smoke-and-mirrors aspect of the Bill 2 legislation.

A few days ago I had the privilege of attending the official opening of the Photo Lake Copper Mine at Snow Lake along with the honourable member for the Maples (Mr. Kowalski), the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs and Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik). While the Premier and his minister were praising the mining initiative, the jobs that were being created, the boost that this mine would give the northern economy, all true and very commendable, were they also aware that had HBM&S,

Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, used the logic of Bill 2, the Photo Lake Mine would never have opened?

From the day the first tree was cut at the mine site to the day the first ore sample was hauled above ground was exactly one year. By mining standards, that was a very short mine development, period, but did HBM&S balance their Photo Lake Mine books that year? Of course, not. That would be absurd. Millions and millions of dollars were spent that year on Photo Lake Mine. Not a cent has yet been recovered, but the ore is very rich, and in the next few years Photo Lake Mine will make handsome profits. It was a good investment for the future.

Madam Speaker, 60 to 80 people are working at that mine. Snow Lake, one of the most beautiful communities in northern Manitoba, was given an economic shot in the arm. Thank God that the mine developers did not use Tory Bill 2 logic, because if they had been blinded by the simplistic notions of balancing the budget every year, no such mine would ever be constructed or would ever have been constructed.

Photo Lake Mine would have been doomed from the start, and I am sure that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) would agree that HBM&S, that is, Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting, is hardly a bastion of socialism, but HBM&S did not follow Bill 2 logic. They know that mining ventures demand enormous pools of capital for a year or two, and then after the mine is in operation, the money is invested, the debt will be repaid, and profits will be made, usually.

What was done at Photo Lake on a large scale is done all the time, every day, on a small scale. Individuals borrow money for useful projects or investments, and that debt is paid off over time. It is not paid off in one year.

While we are on the topic of balanced budgets and mines, there is a second major operation swinging into production at Snow Lake. That is the new TVX gold mine on the site of an older mine. TVX employs 160 people. The shaft is being deepened, and new and renovated equipment has been installed. Now here we

have an exciting, innovative project that has been underway for several years. The people at TVX have already spent close to \$50 million, and not a single ounce of gold has yet been cast or has yet been recovered.

Now, will this mine produce gold? Of course, it will. Surveys indicate it will produce millions and millions of dollars worth of gold. This mine will go into production very soon, and as much as 600 tonnes of ore will be processed each day. Now, suppose the creative and innovative group of people at TVX had used Manitoba Tory logic, had used the inflexibility of Bill 2 as a model. Would that mine have been constructed? The answer, of course, is no, of course not.

Millions have been sent, many more millions will be spent, and only in a number of years will TVX mine break even, and after that, it will be extremely profitable, I am sure. TVX did not attempt to balance its books in one year. It does not work that way for mines, for businesses, for farmers, for homeowners, for students, for individuals.

Only the super-rich can balance their books each year or perhaps the extremely frugal who do not take chances or establish businesses or students who have worked for a number of years or older homeowners whose children have grown up, whose homes are paid for.

I suppose, if you are given a home or business or a farm or if you inherit large amounts of money, then you can indeed balance the books at all times.

An Honourable Member: Win a lottery.

Mr. Jennissen: Perhaps win a lottery, as the honourable member says, but we do not all win lotteries.

What surprises me is that Tories who are always supposedly extolling the virtues of the marketplace, entrepreneurship, rugged individualism, making it in big business are now stressing the importance of Bill 2 which goes against the very notion of creative and sensible risk taking. It goes against the very notion of investing in the future.

The bill is obsessed with a deficit side and gives short shrift to the revenue side. How does Bill 2 fit in with wealth creation? Instead of fighting over an ever decreasing revenue pie, how about increasing the pie? The timid measures of Bill 2 do not address this, do not allow for large-scale expenditures or megaprojects that would create jobs right now.

Bill 2 is part and parcel of the right-wing theory which holds that a government can hack and slash its way to prosperity. It is a deliberate attack on social programs, education and health. Show me a country where the hackers and the slashers have restored prosperity. We did not get out of the depths of the Depression in the 1930s by more hacking and slashing. Look carefully at Roosevelt's New Deal that eventually pulled the United States out of its economic doldrums. The same was true elsewhere.

In difficult economic times, governments should intervene. Even this government intervened in the recession of 1992-1993, even though its deficit was probably \$400 million higher than it wishes to admit. Does this government seriously want to weigh in on the side of Mike Harris, Ralph Klein, Roger Douglas, Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan?

I am not convinced that the government is even serious about Bill 2. Many other speakers have pointed out the weaknesses and the loopholes in Bill 2. On September 1, here is what Paul Martin had to say about the balanced budget laws, and I quote: They are not the way to go. Apart from limiting the choices of duly elected governments, this legalistic approach simply encourages ingenious politicians and bureaucrats to spend time looking for ways to get around the rules through accounting hocus-pocus and subterfuges of various kinds.

Now that was the federal Finance minister speaking, Madam Speaker, hardly a popular person or cultural hero in this House except for perhaps two or three members, but still he is the country's Finance minister and he uses words that should give us at least a pause, words relative to the balanced budget, because these words are fairly harsh. He is saying things, and I quote again, "ingenious politicians," "bureaucrats," "hocus-pocus," "subterfuges."

* (1440)

One Winnipeg tax lawyer quoted in the Free Press on September 25, in the article entitled "Proposed law protects the rich" stated, quote: "(The tax referendum provision) is so loose you could drive a truck through it." That is on those roads you can still drive trucks. It does not include parts of northern Manitoba.

The person I just quoted is correct. The referendums, or is it referenda, according to Bill 2's proposal must be held to raise the rates of various taxes, such as sales taxes, income taxes, corporate taxes, payroll taxes. These are the kinds of taxes that are most likely to hurt the rich, the natural allies of the Tories. Bill 2 is the shield or the wall to protect the wealthy, but no referendum or referenda is or are needed for the other taxes or licence fees or tax credit eliminations which impact mostly on the poor. So, once again, we see typically right-wing agendas of transferring wealth away from those least able to pay. Those who are already wealthy get the breaks. In other words, the rich get richer, the poor get poorer. That is Ronald Reagan's agenda, and he was very successful at it. The rich did indeed get richer, and the poor did indeed get poorer. But is the two-tiered system so beloved by Ronald Reagan, the great communicator, also to be made a reality here?

Madam Speaker, the negative aspects of Bill 2 are not going unnoticed here. Speakers on this side of the House have pointed out the shortcomings and the dangers of Bill 2, the cutbacks to services especially. But not only the speakers on this side of the House, even analysts for Standard and Poor's have concerns about the referenda. The responsiveness and flexibility of the government could be severely hampered by the bill. Besides, governments are elected to govern, not institute self-serving referenda.

An Honourable Member: I do that every day.

Mr. Jennissen: I am glad the honourable member does that every day, but he is probably the exception.

The government's grand strategy has been obvious to most Manitobans—at least to 60 percent of the Manitobans. Create legislation, laws, committees to

hide behind. Do not admit you are imposing health cuts. Blame it on some advisory group or committee. Failing that, blame it on the feds. That is the approach this government takes. Do not admit to education cuts. Blame it on the committees or the school board or a municipality. Failing that, blame it on the feds. Blame it on Ottawa. After all, fed bashing is an honourable tradition in the West, and at most it will make only three members in this House feel the slightest bit uncomfortable.

If there are disputes over social assistance, South Indian Lake or Granville Lake, it is this government's knee-jerk reaction to blame it all on the feds. Now that is convenient, but it is not always true. The federal government may cause some of our problems, but they do not cause all of our problems. The people of Manitoba have elected this government, and it should govern. This government was elected to govern, not to avoid governing. You cannot hide for long. The opposition, the press, the public are catching on. In fact, Frances Russell—she may not be a favourite with the people opposite—in the Free Press editorial mentioned earlier, summed up the referendum aspects of the balanced budget legislation astutely, I think. She said, and I quote: "The balanced budget tax-referendum legislation is not about sound fiscal management. It's merely a tool to slash public services and reward the Conservatives' core supporters."

I happen to think that Frances Russell is dead on. We can look at the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jennissen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As I will work my way around the words of the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I will continue—the very good words from the member for Inkster.

We can look at the California experience, Madam Speaker, where referenda and property tax cuts have indeed lowered taxes, but social services, health and education have taken such a hard hit that California is in danger of becoming a have-not state. The poor have become much poorer. Unrest and violence grow daily

in California. California jails and prisons are the only real growth industry, unlike Manitoba, where it is food banks, I believe.

Anyway, who benefits from such a system? Not the disadvantaged, not the sick, not the elderly, only an upper strata of well-to-do or rich Republican-minded citizens who believe in applying the law of the jungle to all those less fortunate than themselves.

I am not saying that Bill 2 referendum legislation is as nasty as that of California's, but it is drifting in that direction. Also, I take with a grain of salt, actually a truckload of salt, as a member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) mentioned earlier, the idea that cabinet ministers' salaries would be reduced by 20 percent if the third quarter financial report projects that expenditures will exceed revenues in a way not authorized by the bill.

As my colleague for Osborne has already pointed out, considering the income tax bracket of a cabinet minister, the net loss would not be catastrophic for that minister. It could be more in the nature of a minor inconvenience. Actually, I suspect that the penalty clause affecting ministers who overspend their budget might well be a clever election ploy. The year before the election, the ministers overspent to mollify the electorate, giving them the proverbial goodies before the ballots were cast, and then the ministers are chastised after the election by losing part of their salary. The electorate will love it because it is a tough, responsible Premier or perhaps a tough, responsible Finance Minister chastising the other ministers.

If ministers do not tighten their belts as the electorate must do, then such ministers will pay the price. That would be the message, and I think it would be a good election message. I am suggesting that perhaps there is an element of that in the bill, that it was created for election purposes. It has the potential for becoming an election ploy.

All of us in this House believe in fiscal responsibility. I would like to get away from the notion that we are the free-wheeling drunken-sailor-type spenders on this side and the real prudent money managers, tight-fisted types are on the other side. I do not believe that is true.

An Honourable Member: No, the record proves it.

Mr. Jennissen: The honourable member says the record proves it, and I have never doubted her veracity in anything.

An Honourable Member: Highest deficit in the history of Manitoba.

Mr. Jennissen: Yes, my honourable colleague says they racked up the highest deficit in the history of Manitoba, which is also a truth. That does not match well with the present legislation. No one party and no one group has the claim to fame that only it or they will balance the books. I well remember how Tommy Douglas, Woodrow Lloyd and Allan Blakeney balanced the books in Saskatchewan. In fact, I believe that Allan Blakeney's government showed a balanced budget when no other province and, I believe, no other state did. So the Tories do not have to lecture us on balanced budgets. Talking about Saskatchewan, then came the Devine—[interjection] The honourable member calls me a closet Tory. I do not believe in masochism. Back to Saskatchewan—then came the Devine intervention, the Grant Devine Tories—

An Honourable Member: He was a disaster.

Mr. Jennissen: Indeed the member for Inkster is correct. He was a living disaster, Tory or otherwise. This particular Premier did not balance the books, and he left Saskatchewan as an economic basket case that now Premier Romanow has to try and balance. Once again, the NDP has to clean up the mess. Yes, Romanow will balance the books, but his approach is much more flexible and it is based on a four-year span rather than the one-year span here. There is no tax referenda. We on this side of the House do not need lectures from Tories about balanced budgets—repeat that again. The government, in fact, over there would not recognize a balanced budget if it saw one.

An Honourable Member: Over there? No.

* (1450)

Mr. Jennissen: Right. This government has not balanced its books yet in the seven years or more it has

been in office. The last time there was any money left in the kitty was in 1988 when the New Democratic Party government—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jennissen: —left a \$57-million surplus.

An Honourable Member: 1988.

Mr. Jennissen: 1988.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Jennissen: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for bringing to heel the red baiters or whatever they are. In conclusion, although everyone using common sense will support a balanced budget in theory, this bill, Bill 2, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act—sounds like a bowl of alphabet soup—is not based on common sense.

This bill is as illogically driven as the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik) full well knows. It is illogically driven, aimed at electioneering. It is inflexible and has many negative implications for citizens least able to help themselves. Fiscal responsibility, yes, sham fiscal responsibility, no.

As my colleague for Broadway (Mr. Santos) has said, and I think he said it very well in his opening statement on this bill, he said something to this effect: the bill is symbolized by what looks like a bottle of perfume. It has a wonderful smell but in reality it is a poison. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I am pleased to have this opportunity to rise and speak on Bill 2, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act.

A very big name for a bill that I think the party on that side really did not think they would have to

enforce. It is really a bill that I think holds a lot of different agendas, and I will take some time to go through some of the reasons why I do believe in balanced budgets, having come out of a local government where we did actually balance a budget, contrary to the record of this government which has not had that experience yet.

However, I can assure you that the economic cycle of a school division, for example, is not one year, and if this bill as presented is passed, unfortunately, this government too will see that an economic cycle is not one year. When we try and balance the budget at times when things are very tough, it is usually those that are weakest who get hurt the most, and that is what the fear is in terms of this legislation. No one in Manitoba wants governments to run up huge deficits, to incur debts. Nobody wants to see our children belaboured by a debt load created by government's irresponsible spending. Nobody wants it, and we have seen it consistently through various governments, through years of Conservative rule here in Manitoba, federally, to a much higher degree by the Conservatives and Liberals in Ottawa. We have seen total irresponsibility, a debt load of almost 45 cents on our dollar, but here in Manitoba the situation is not quite so bad. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, New Democrats believe we must review the balanced budget legislation in the context of how we run our own family finances. In my family, in our families, we pay our way for our day-to-day expenses and invest for long-term assets. We believe that if we applied the restrictions that are set forth in this bill, only the very richest in Manitoba, only those richest families, would be able to function. Families work to balance their budgets, and we believe governments should too, but we do not believe that this legislation is in keeping with the running of our government like we do in our families.

Under this legislation, only the richest families would be able to buy houses without borrowing for the mortgages. Who in this room would recommend to their children or to themselves that it would be wiser to rent than to take out a debt, a loan, and buy a home? [interjection] That is true, absolutely. It is absolutely

true that it makes more economic sense to incur a loan, a debt, to pay off your assets. Eventually you end up with an asset, your home, even though you do have to make monthly payments. Some of those payments do go, you know, to pay for the interest, and we would all like to accelerate that as much as possible, but we do not sacrifice the health and well-being, for instance, of our children. We also try to ensure—I mean, with this legislation we would not look at the opportunity of perhaps borrowing to go to university. I do not know how many of the members on that side had to take out a loan.

An Honourable Member: I did.

Ms. Mihychuk: I did too. I see a couple. I can assure you that—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Strange, but I keep hearing all these voices, many different voices in fact, beyond the one individual that I had recognized to be speaking at this point in time.

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. In fact, if we use another analogy, and we are talking about families running their own homes according to the provisions of this bill, it would be like a family deciding to sell their home to pay for their food and their heating bills. It is a ridiculous idea. It is not a wise investment. It is not something we would recommend. It is not something we would do at home, and I would suggest that that is one of the greatest flaws in this bill.

In fact, if we look at—I would like to cite the Winnipeg Free Press, September 22, which cites this bill as being the most restrictive balanced budget legislation in Canada, if not North America, and the members across the way are cheering the most restrictive balanced budget legislation in Canada and North America.

That is exactly the reason why it not only says this government does not have confidence in its own ability to govern, to balance its books, it requires the strongest, most stringent legislation. It is also the reason why this balanced budget legislation presented before this House is indeed flawed.

Many governments of all stripes are looking at balanced budget legislation, quite different from the balanced budget legislation that is presented before this House. One of the major flaws in this bill, or in the way that the government has been performing, especially in the past couple of years, is in terms of our Crown corporations. In our family we do not sell our assets, our long-term assets, to pay for everyday expenses, but here in this bill the proposal is that we do just that.

This bill promises more of the same kind of sleight of hand that we have seen in this year's budget. In 1994, this government sold McKenzie Seeds, a money-making Crown corporation, an asset to the people of Manitoba, an asset to this government who does not see the value of what we have built up over the years.

The government sold McKenzie Seeds, manipulated that sale so that the proceeds were put against the '95-96 expenditures of this government, contrary to reasonable accounting practices, contrary to common sense. Would you, for instance, go and sell your cottage, your car? Would you sell your tent trailer to pay for the heat bill?

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Mihychuk: Would you sell your home?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

* (1500)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind all honourable members that their remarks should be addressed through the Chair, through the Speaker, and that the members should not be questioning members on the opposite side of the House, if they really want co-operation from the Speaker in maintaining order.

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you, I just want to continue talking about the balanced budget legislation before the House. I would just like to point out, in fact, if you do have to sell something like your tent trailer, something like your—whatever asset you had the good fortune to build for a bad year, for instance; and if you take that into

what you consider your operating funds, what are you going to sell next year? Your couch? Your buffet? Maybe that is all right. What do you with the year after?

Eventually, you will run out of assets, and you will not be able to maintain your current expenditures. That is the major flaw. That is the deceit in terms of balancing the operating budget by selling off assets and putting them into your operating line.

The other point that I would like to make is that if you do decide—and philosophically the government has taken a position of selling off Crown corporations; they believe that private enterprise is a better vehicle. I am not here really to debate that. I know that that is the philosophy. I do not agree with it, but if they were to sell off a Crown corporation, if they do sell off an asset, if you do have to sell off something at home, something that you have built and you have as an asset, do you sell it when the time is right? Do you wait until you can get a good market value? Of course. That, Madam Speaker, is the time to sell.

Given that the government's ambition to balance the budget has caused the sell-off of McKenzie Seeds, can the people of Manitoba be assured that top dollar was received? Was the priority to balance the budget more imperative than ensuring that we have good value for that Crown asset? That is the question, and that is what this bill is proposing to do for our other Crown corporations.

With this legislation in place are we going to see more of the same? Are we going to see a desperate sell-off of the province's resources? Are we going to see this government sell off our telephone company or our hydro company? Today, as we were talking to the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission and noted that they brought to our revenues over \$140 million annually, are they going to sell off our Liquor Control Commission? What are we going to have for tomorrow? Sell it off for a short-term balanced budget and you lose your assets.

There was also, in this government's record of trying to balance their budget and looking at various things, selling off and pulling money from here and there, a

special lottery slush fund that was created, which was credited as an asset of the province. This was drained and included in the current year's revenues.

What are you going to do next year? Obviously, these types of special accounts to bring into operating is not a wise way of accounting. It is really a short-end measure to create the illusion that you are balancing the books. I have to say that, for the most part, those kinds of manipulations, accounting manipulations, have been done very effectively by this government. Is it honest? Is it open? Are you being clear to the people of Manitoba? That may not be true. What the people of Manitoba do want to know is the truth and a clear accounting of what is true value for Manitobans.

We cannot support any legislation that will promote the sale of our Crown corporations for the short-term political gain of the Conservative Party. We have seen this. We spoke against the sale of McKenzie Seeds, and we will be there to speak against the sale of other Crown corporations in this government's agenda to balance the budget in a short term.

How does this bill compare to proper accounting procedures? The same practice of selling long-term assets is unacceptable to our rating agencies as the Conservative government found out during the election. I am sure they did not like to hear the news when the Dominion Bond Rating Service said that Manitoba's boast of a balanced budget was really a deficit of \$96 million. Truly, they did not want to hear this news. Again, cooking the books, moving money from the sale of an asset and putting it into operating.

Just last month, Madam Speaker, the Canada West Foundation pointed out a disturbing and confusing part of the Manitoba budget is that the province is reporting a surplus this year, but the tax-supported debt of the province will actually grow this year by \$141 million, over 166 for every Manitoban. This prediction of a surplus was nothing more than creative accounting to slide the Conservatives past the election, and this legislation promises more of the same kind of deceit.

Dr. Norman Cameron, an economist at the University of Manitoba is cited as stating he expects the government will wiggle out of its self-imposed

straitjacket, meaning this bill, by resorting to accounting tricks. They—Dr. Norman Cameron is referring to the Conservative government—have proven themselves pretty creative, he goes on to say, where finances are concerned, too creative, in fact.

I think that when we look at the bill, we must remember that the Filmon government's record on deficits has been quite atrocious. First, the 1988-89 budget that they inherited from the NDP resulted in a budget surplus of \$58 million. Both the Provincial Auditor and the Dominion Bond Rating Service confirm this, a level that has not been matched since. In fact, in the last 25 years, the only two budget surpluses that were incurred were by the Schreyer government and by the Pawley government, both NDP governments, something this government does not want to talk about.

In fact, let us look at this government's record. In 1992-93 the province recorded the highest deficit in its history, \$742 million, according to the Provincial Auditor. They did not tell us. They tried to cover it up. In those seven years in government, they have not yet bettered the achievement based on the budget set forth by the NDP.

This government takes a short-term view of the future of this province. Gone is the long-term vision of Roblin and Schreyer who could see that a timely investment in the present could save many more dollars in the future. In fact, if we look at the Free Press dated September 27, Dr. Loxley, an economist at the University of Manitoba, is quoted as saying: It requires not just balance every year or, in exceptional circumstances, balance over a two-year period, but also requires significant surplus to finance both the FSF and the DRF. Whereas the economic cycle spans four to eight years, this bill assumes only a two-year cycle at best.

* (1510)

The economic cycle for Manitoba, Madam Speaker, is between four and eight years. This bill, in fact, moves it to a one- to two-year cycle. Talk about short term, clearly this bill is focused on the short term, not for the economic health of Manitoba.

If this shortsighted view of the government finances outlined in this bill were in place when Duff Roblin was Premier, the floodway may have never been built. Each spring thousands of Manitobans would have suffered flood damages to their homes. Each one of us would remember doing some sandbagging along the Red River, trying to prevent serious flooding to homes. We know that type of flood has a frequency that is fairly rare.

However, the investment paid off many times over with the wisdom and foresight of that government. After all, it was Roblin himself who said: Who can say what the monetary cost is of not building a road, a school or a hospital?

So too the Schreyer government was prepared to invest in schools and personal care homes. So today we have these assets for the benefit of our parents and our children.

In the last seven years, we have borrowed. This government has borrowed, the people of Manitoba have borrowed, to create The Forks development, a development which created jobs, a major tourist destination, and reclaimed our history, our heritage for generations to come. Could we do that if this legislation was in place? Likely not.

In the future, we may wish to invest to secure the future of the Churchill spaceport. Could we do that if this legislation was in place? Would we have a referendum of the province of Manitoba? Would they understand the complexities? Would we be able to develop the spaceport in Churchill? Likely not. Could we do that if this legislation was in place, or do we doom Churchill's future because of this inflexibility?

I find it incredible that this government, with so many senior ministers—the minister from the Interlake, for example, who has been in government for many years, understands that government needs the flexibility to look at a longer cycle, not to be held by the confines of legislation which do not allow duly elected representatives to do what is best for Manitobans.

They are moving their responsibility from this Legislature into a bill. They are tying their own hands,

and I say to them, I am surprised that senior members of this government would be in support of a bill that did this.

Under this approach to balancing budgets, most small businesses would be unable to operate. Madam Speaker, we know that when we wish to start a small business, we have family and friends that have tried to do so, they have had to incur a loan, take out a debt to get established. That is a wise investment. We may not know whether the business is going to be successful immediately. In fact, statistics indicate it is going to be very tough in the beginning. It may take two, three, four years before you get on your feet. Are we to say no to the challenge? Are we to say, we cannot invest in this business, we do not believe in incurring a debt? Hardly. That does not make sense, and we would not have small businesses. Following through on legislation like this, we would not have small businesses being created in Manitoba.

Not only do small businesses require debt to get going, but many farmers require debt to get going. Unless you inherit your farm, it is virtually impossible to get into farming without incurring debt. The cost of equipment is enormous. If you want to become modernized, at the top of the line, you are talking about millions. The equipment now that we see travelling across our fields is worth a great deal of money, and that investment is not coming out of their savings account.

Obviously, farmers must incur a debt, must take out loans to operate farms. They have a long-term debt, which is their combine, the sprayer, their tractors and other equipment. Their short-term loan that they require is in the beginning of the year when they may have to incur a loan to buy the seed to put in the ground. They then recover the capital—

An Honourable Member: Not always.

Ms. Mihychuk: No, not—they recover the capital usually during the year, pay off their initial loan for the seeding and have some profits to pay down their debt on their combine. Sometimes that does not happen, Madam Speaker. Sometimes the farmers in a cycle where it has been bad times—and farmers have known

bad times for actually too many years—lousy prices, Crow rate dissolving, disappearing, those challenges on the farm have been incurred over several years.

We have seen farmers have to incur even a larger debt but with the view that, maybe not next year, maybe in a couple of years we will see the cycle turn around. The economic cycle of farming will turn around and those farmers will be able to then pay off part of their debt. You do not go and sell your farm operation in one year because you may have incurred a slight loss in one given year. I am sure that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) would agree it would not make farming sense, would not be good for the province of Manitoba. So the same analogy can be used in this bill.

I want to look at the family budgeting and how the average Manitoban family runs its finances. Unless a family has a large pool of inherited wealth, it must balance its income against its expenses. Manitobans balance their interest, their food, clothing and other bills with their income. At the same time, they also budget for a mortgage to buy a house or a loan to get an education. As the members on the other side will realize, that is happening to more and more people through their working life.

Many of us are being challenged to go back to school to get upgrading, to change our careers, and there may be times where you will incur an educational loan, a wise investment most would say, a needed investment, important to get retrained, look at another direction so that you, too, can be an active participant in Manitoba's economy. We would say, yes, it is a wise investment to take out the loan to go and get educational experience. If Manitoba families had to operate like the government proposes to operate, they could not afford to buy a house or to attend a university or college.

This bill is also extremely inflexible. The inflexibility of this legislation means that our services will not be able to withstand any minor fluctuations in the economy. If a combination of a drop in metal prices—and we have seen that for a sustained length of time in the mineral industry. In fact, we are now seeing a miniboom, and, hopefully, it can be sustained, of metal prices, but we did see in the not-too-distant past

a drop in metal prices and a reduction in equalization payments from the federal government, which we expect, drops provincial revenues by \$200 million and in the total budget, Madam Speaker, we know that that is not unrealistic.

Programs will be cut to meet the balanced budget target, programs that we have built, programs that serve Manitobans, programs that serve those who need those programs. There will be no exceptions, no excuses, and, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) pointed out in his last budget, a cut of just half of that amount in education would be the equivalent of a doubling of college and university fees. Madam Speaker, what would be the impact of that to the families in my riding whose income may not be more than \$20,000 a year, maybe less than \$20,000 a year? Would families be able to afford one member to go to college? No, that would be out of reach for most. That is why those types of situations would only be accessible to the more wealthy in Manitoba.

* (1520)

We, as a government, whether it is the Conservative or NDP, have tried to provide opportunities for all Manitobans. Is this government now saying that there is only going to be access for those who are wealthy? I am sure that there are members on the other side who may have had to take out a loan, may have taken the opportunity to get an education. They would not want to cut off those opportunities to other, perhaps, young Conservatives who would not be able to afford the university and college fees. They would not want to reduce those opportunities. That is one of the flaws with this legislation. That is one of the consequences of the legislation, Madam Speaker.

The result of these cuts is a vicious cycle, Madam Speaker. Fewer costs and increased services means less people can afford training opportunities. Fewer people being trained means more prolonged unemployment. Prolonged unemployment means higher welfare costs and lower tax revenues and the cycle continues to spiral downward.

Madam Speaker, let us look at the debt costs. We must always look at the full balance sheet. We must

look at our debts and our assets when assessing our overall financial situation. Today, the costs of our debt service are amongst the lowest in the country; something that I do not think most Manitobans would understand; something I do not think that this government would like to make very clear to most Manitobans.

If Manitobans realized that our debt service was at 12.7 percent of total expenditures, most would be very surprised, most would say, I wish that was my situation at home. Is it the case of most families in your ridings, of most Manitobans who carry a mortgage? Are we looking at 10 percent, 12 percent?

An Honourable Member: Not everyone carries a mortgage.

Ms. Mihychuk: A member on the Conservative side says, not everyone carries a mortgage. Well, that may be true, but I can assure you that most of the people in my riding carry a mortgage. I carry a mortgage. Many of the people in my family carried a mortgage and took many years to pay off that mortgage. We work hard, and we make the payments that we can. It is not very easy paying off a long-term debt. We have to look at a longer cycle, which we do.

If our debt load was only 12 percent, I think we would consider ourselves very healthy. In exchange, we have a great deal of assets. We have roads, which, unfortunately, because of shortsightedness, have become not well maintained, particularly in the North.

I had a recent example where an elderly woman who lives in my riding went to visit her son in Lynn Lake and, on the way back from Lynn Lake to Thompson, incurred \$700 of damage on the road that this government has not maintained. Can she submit that bill to the government for reimbursement?

Short-term goals. They cannot maintain our roads. So what happens? You incur greater costs for the people of Manitoba. If that one individual travelling on that road incurred \$700 worth of damage, how many citizens of Manitoba have had their vehicles damaged because that road and those roads in the North have not been properly maintained?

We do have a road system. We have schools, schools which we consider an asset. However, we have also seen short-term gain drain the capital upgrading of schools over the past five or six years. The budget for capital improvement of schools has been cut consistently year after year after year to the point now where some schools are in desperate need of capital upgrading, capital upgrading that this government does not see as a long-term investment. They have said no to schools. They have said no to the children that are in those schools.

This government is looking at a short-term balance sheet, not the long-term, good investment for Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, we also have hospitals; we have power plants. We have power plants that we reap the benefits of because of the wise investment of previous governments. If you have ever been to the Jenpeg or Limestone power stations, you know that the investment was a wise decision. We invested in those hydro dams to create revenue for the province, the ability to sell power to other jurisdictions in Canada and in the United States to reap benefits for the people of Manitoba. A wise decision for our future.

Relative to most of Canada, our finances are in good shape. Let us look at tax increases and the Filmon record. I believe that the Filmon rhetoric in this case is that there have been no tax increases. However, if you asked those citizens of Manitoba, would they say that there have been no tax increases? Hardly. Again, we say smoke and mirrors. The hypocrisy of the Filmon government taxpayer protection policies is made clear by their record. In 1992-93, when the government raised taxes by \$400 per family, not one of those taxes would today be subject to a so-called referendum, and the government came and claimed that it was not a tax. The people of Manitoba did not agree. They knew. They saw the cost of their living increase. They saw those taxes incurred in their local levels. We saw the taxes rise for families.

In the Premier's own briefing note, it indicated that the tax increases, that \$400, amounted to 5.6 percent in income taxes or 1.4 points of sales tax. Tax credits were reduced and the sales tax was broadened and fuel

taxes increased. It is clear that the intention of the Filmon government is to do more of the same, stay away from the taxes listed in this bill, but increase user fees, decrease tax credits and offload costs. The result is more cost for the middle-class taxpayer and a clearer understanding of the kind of deficit practised by this government.

Madam Speaker, a brief overview of one of the more controversial new laws the Filmon Conservatives have introduced, a reintroduction of their balanced budget legislation and an effort not just to fulfill a campaign promise but I also believe an election gimmick to bind themselves into an irresponsible fiscal straitjacket.

The Filmon Tories have been cooking the books for the last eight years in an effort to confuse and manipulate public opinion about the province's overall financial position. They have used the serious but not fatal debt situation to justify a very mean-spirited and regressive measure directed at those in our society with the least ability to defend themselves.

* (1530)

However, the debt did not appear to have been a factor when they signed the blank cheque Jets deal in 1991 or a more recent \$40-million post-election surprise arena fiasco, Madam Speaker.

The reality in Manitoba was that when Filmon took office in '88, in that year the province actually ran a \$58-million surplus. The Conservatives instead borrowed more money that was not needed and set up the Fiscal Stabilization Fund—

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

As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Bill 12—The Louis Riel Institute Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik),

Bill 12 (The Louis Riel Institute Act; Loi sur l'Institut Louis Riel), standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure today to rise to speak to this particular piece of legislation brought in by the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik), Bill 12, The Louis Riel Institute Act.

I want to begin by stating that we on this side of the House will be supporting this bill. I encourage other members on both sides of the House to speak to the bill. This bill allows for the incorporation of a Metis cultural and educational institute to promote education and training for Metis people and foster understanding and appreciation of Metis culture. It also will serve as a centre of research in Manitoba's history, a history that all members of this House recognize as being very important to the development of this province and, in fact, a very colorful history.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was just yesterday that myself and, I know, several other members of the House had the opportunity to participate in a ceremony just outside these chambers honouring Father Ritchot and his contribution to Manitoba. It was stated at that ceremony that Father Ritchot was the individual who named the province Manitoba, an individual who led the negotiating team that was brought together by Louis Riel to negotiate with the federal government The Manitoba Act, which concluded with this province of Manitoba coming into being in 1870. It was quite important, I thought, to be there and to recognize his contributions to this province.

The institute is to operate exclusively as a charity and nonprofit corporation without shared capital. There will be a board of 11 appointed members: seven appointed from the Manitoba Metis Federation; one

Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council appointee; three academics, one from the University of Manitoba, the University of Winnipeg and Brandon University; and the Governor-General will have one appointee as well. The institution will have the power to acquire and hold interest in property, to sell mortgage, lease or dispose of property, to solicit and receive donations—I know they are starting to do that now, I believe—to borrow money, to invest funds for operation in any manner, to make banking arrangements, and so on. Members are to be appointed or reappointed every three years.

As I state, we do support this particular piece of legislation, although we on this side of the House have been very condemning and will continue to criticize the government for some of its actions as it relates to aboriginal and Metis people in this province, and, in particular, one of the more insidious cuts a number of years ago was the complete 100 percent withdrawal of funds to Indian and Metis friendship centres here in this province.

I know that, in my own particular case, the friendship centre in Selkirk lost three employees as well as they had to discontinue very useful services to members, both native and non-native, in the Selkirk community. Some of the important programs that friendship centres used to provide were the assistance to elderly individuals, to the homeless, youth programming.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear a lot today of the problems associated with youth. There was the friendship centre program in Selkirk, and I know in the city of Winnipeg and throughout this province they had a number of programs that were designed to help young people. We on this side of the House were always supporting the friendship centre movement and the different services provided by the friendship centres, and, in particular, one of the better programs, we thought, was the program that dealt with young people here in this province.

The socially disabled families in crisis, recreation and cultural programming, some of the programming that this bill will now—I hope this institution will help to take up some of, unfortunately, the slack that the friendship centres can no longer perform.

As well, they used to provide housing relocation, fine options counselling, court assistance, a number of different and important programs that friendship centres used to offer, but, unfortunately, this government saw, in its infinite wisdom of a few years ago, to cut those programs. There are also the cuts to Access Programs, to New Careers, to the northern freight fish subsidy which benefitted northern fishermen. Most of those fishermen were aboriginal, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But I do not want to be completely negative of the government. I will give it credit. I will give the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the government credit on recognizing an important person in my community, a Metis leader, and that is Senator Elsie Bear. The government in 1991, I believe—she was awarded the Order of the Buffalo Hunt, and I know this is a very prestigious honour, and I do congratulate the government for recognizing Mrs. Bear, her contributions to Metis people and to all the people of the province. She is very well known, and it was fitting that she was to receive this honour. I know that she prizes it along with the many other awards and shows of recognition that she has received over her many years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am speaking on this bill today because in my background, I am a person of mixed native and European blood. My European ancestors arrived in this part of Canada; in fact, basically in the Selkirk area in 1813, 1814, around that. They were young men who left either London or the Orkney Islands, the Shetland Islands. They were Scottish and Englishmen. They left their land, their impoverished land, to seek out an opportunity that existed here in this part of the world. They left to work here in the Hudson's Bay Company. All of them were in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. Their names are Smith and Massey, Hourie, Sinclair, Swain and Dennet, Cochrane.

* (1540)

All these individuals left—[interjection] Well, my Dewar ancestor arrived significantly later, in about the 1870s. He came from Ontario, but the other ones on my mother's side and my dad's mother's side arrived in

the early part of the 19th Century. They were young men who left their homes to seek an opportunity here in this part of the world. They worked for the Hudson Bay's Company until the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company were amalgamated. I believe it was around 1824 or 1823, around that time, and they decided not to return to Scotland or to England. The opportunity was there for them to return to these areas, but instead they decided to stay here in Canada and in Manitoba and seek out their livelihood here in this community.

I have had a chance to do a little bit of research into my family's background, and from here at the Archives I found a considerable amount of information and discussed these with my mother and my father. Those young men who decided not to go back were in their 20s and their 30s, decided to stay in this land and to seek out their opportunities here. For the most part, I believe, basically from what I could discover in the records, they all married First Nations women at that time and the union of these two nations, the Europeans and the First Nations here in Canada, the product of these two groups was the Metis people. The Metis people were generally of French and Indian background, but my background is more of Scottish and First Nations or whatever they called them, country born or, in a more derogatory term, they were called half-breeds.

It was these individuals who for a large part were responsible for some of the institutions that we have here in the province today. In fact we all recognize the Metis contribution of Louis Riel and the first council, his provisional government, which negotiated with the federal government the rules and the regulations which allowed the Province of Manitoba to come into existence. This was done around 1870. So we do support the concept of this institution. We recognize that there is a need for Manitobans to do more work and to really discover this unique part of our history, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As I said, there were basically two groups that emerged from these unions. One was the Metis people. These, I have said, were the result of French and First Nations marriages. As well, there was the European or, I would say, Scottish or English marriage with Indian

women and they were called country born or, in the more derogatory term, half-breeds. The country-born individuals were clustered within their own district of the settlement, usually in the parishes of Kildonan, St. James and later St. Paul and St. Andrews and St. Clements and Headingley, and they were generally Protestant. Most of them took, as their living, farming, although I know some of my ancestors worked as educators and clerks.

Of course, this division of occupation was not hard and fast. Many country-born individuals earned their living by hunting buffalo; Metis families were also full-time farmers. But, in general, the Metis people, as we look at a Metis person, are a combination of French and First Nation, and they made their living in the buffalo hunt.

This area that we live in now was a significant centre of the fur trade. The Metis people specialized as buffalo hunters. They supplied both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company with pemmican. We are all familiar with pemmican. I am sure that it is a staple of the diet of individuals years ago. Pemmican, of course, was a combination of buffalo meat and buffalo fat. It provided the fuel for the running of the fur trade and that particular system of commerce in the 1850s, in the 1860s, in the 1870s, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In fact, it was the First Nations people that allowed many of these individuals to exist when they arrived 150, 170 years ago. It was the First Nations people that provided Lord Selkirk settlers with shelter and with food to allow them to survive those early years when they arrived in 1813. So we on this side of the House recognize the importance of this particular piece of legislation. We recognize the importance of this institution, which will be created to look into the history of Manitobans and particularly the history of Metis people and First Nations people. I hope the mandate is expanded to include that as well. I am sure that it will be.

We on this side of the House support this piece of legislation, and we look forward to going into committee stage, and we look forward to hearing the individuals there. Thank you very much.

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to add my comments to Bill 12. The speakers before me have eloquently spoken on the contributions that Metis people have made to the development of this province and certainly to the rest of Canada over the years.

The Metis people have in the past been regarded as the forgotten people, people that were not Indian and people that were not white. In recent years, many members here will realize that if you looked in the dictionary and you looked for the word "Metis," you found in the dictionaries that Metis translated to something to the effect of somebody or something that was a mixed-bred animal.

Fortunately, history has changed a little over the years and now the Metis people have taken their rightful place in Canada's reality. I believe that Metis people have made significant strides in that recognition for their contribution to this country, not only with Louis Riel being regarded as the father of this province, but indeed in 1982 during the constitutional debate when the Metis, the Inuits and the Indian people became part of Canada's Constitution.

I remember travelling with my late father and other elders from our home community in Norway House and Cross Lake, and in 1967 I remember being a young boy coming to the old Royal Alexander Hotel in Winnipeg. There was a conference convened by the Indian and Metis leaders of this province

My father was a part of that movement at that time. There was a considerable amount of discussion at that time at the old Royal Alexander Hotel as to the aspirations of the Metis people and the First Nations of this province.

There came a decision following a couple days of heated debate that First Nations people indeed have a different agenda and that Metis people or non-Status Indians have also another agenda. It was at that time that I watched the leaders of that day, including the late Grand Chief David Courchene and the late president of the Manitoba Metis Federation, Angus Spence, and the late Alfred Head, who was from Cranberry Portage, and his good wife, Margaret Head, and many of our

Metis elders that are still with us and providing guidance for our leadership today who were part of that movement.

* (1550)

It was the late Angus Spence who took the helm as president of the Manitoba Metis Federation at that time and set a course to correct some of the injustices that Metis people have faced in this province over the years. It was under his leadership as president of the Manitoba Metis Federation that we saw a change happen in the aboriginal politics of this province. We saw the First Nations undertake their own course of action with the Manitoba Indian Brotherhood with David Courchene, the late David Courchene being the grand chief, originally from Sagkeeng and a mentor for many of us First Nations people and, of course, Angus Spence, who was the first president of the Manitoba Metis Federation.

There have been many presidents of the MMF that I have become acquainted with over the years, including Edward Head, whom I had an opportunity of talking with a little while back, John Morriveau, Ernie Blais, Yvon Dumont, of course, who is now our Lieutenant-Governor for the Province of Manitoba, was the leading figure with the Metis National Council in having the Metis people recognized in Canada's Constitution during the constitutional debates in the early '80s and then resulting, of course, in the Metis people being recognized in Canada's Constitution in the Constitution Act of 1982 and, of course, now Billyjoe DeLaronde, who is at the leadership of the Manitoba Metis Federation. All these gentlemen that I have mentioned, and many other men and women who have been a part of the Manitoba Metis Federation, have contributed significantly to the progress that the Metis people have made and to the ongoing life of their nation and of their truly unique way of life.

My colleague the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) and also the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), my colleagues both talked eloquently about the Metis people. Having grown up with people who are known as Metis people and, in some cases, being relatives or having close family relations with Metis people—unfortunately, what aboriginal people have

experienced over the years is that some were categorized to be Metis people when in fact they were rightfully non-Status Indians. In our community where I grew up, we had the opportunity of growing up side by side, the Metis people, the First Nations people.

I will forever treasure that opportunity for being able to grow up with these people who today, some as a result of Bill C-31 proclaimed in 1985 by the federal government, many are no longer designated as Metis people but in fact are now Bill C-31 Indians as the law set out to do it to correct some injustices that occurred in the past. For example, when a First Nations woman married an outsider, and our people were incorrectly labelled as Metis people, perhaps when people went off to war in order for them to be around their friends, to be in drinking establishments, they forsook their treaty cards and became non-Status Indians or blue card-carrying Indians as they were known back then. Many of our people lost their status as a result of marrying non-Status Indian people. Only that injustice was corrected in 1985.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, today we are faced with another reality. We have hundreds of people who are running around saying they are Metis people, whereas before they would not disclose their aboriginal nationhood. For whatever reason, we certainly are of the opinion on this side anyway that our Metis nationhood is gaining in strength and certainly gaining in numbers. The struggle of aboriginal people in general, including the people as defined in Canada's Constitution—the Inuits, the Indians and the Metis—are trying to find their way out of the situation they are in today.

With respect to the Louis Riel Institute, we do have some questions, and my colleague mentioned some of the concerns of our party with respect to the make-up of this institute. We are looking forward to this act going into committee. We do want to talk in great detail about the significance and the role that First Nations people and Metis people have had in the development of this province.

Perhaps it goes unnoticed that in fact aboriginal people, too, have had a role to play in the development of this province. It was aboriginal people who were on

the front lines during World War I, World War II, the Korean conflict to protect the freedom that all Canadians now enjoy and perhaps some take for granted, and again we congratulated the government of Manitoba last year on November 8 when it was proclaimed Aboriginal Veterans Day. We took our hats off to the government at that time.

This is something that aboriginal people are all proud of throughout this province because for once we were acknowledged as being a contributing factor in the development of this province and not simply as being a tax burden that, unfortunately, aboriginal people are labelled as in today's society. That is the reality of the situation that aboriginal people are faced with in this province and in this country.

In 1870, after the Red River Metis under Louis Riel failed in their attempt to maintain an independent government, the people of the Red River settlement entered Confederation as the tiny Province of Manitoba, the first province created under the new Dominion government. For a time Manitoba was often called the postage-stamp province because at first it only covered an area of 11,000 square miles, its northern boundary traversing the lower part of Lake Winnipeg. Its population comprised approximately 12,000 persons, only 13 percent of whom were white, 5 percent were Indians, and 82 percent were mixed blood. To the north and west lay the vast reaches of the Northwest Territories with their sparse nomadic Indian population and scattered white tribes.

The questions that we have with respect to the act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are, first of all, who are the students of the institute going to be? Is it going to be the average Manitoban? Is it specifically geared for high school students, or is it going to be geared to mature students? Secondly, is this an institution with its own campus where students will attend classes on campus? I know that the Education minister indicated that it is to provide an increased awareness of early Manitoba history. To whom is she referring to as benefiting from increased awareness?

Those are some of the questions that we have, and I imagine we will have an opportunity to further discuss this when we get into the committee stage or in third

reading. Also, will the information gathered by the institute complement the present history curriculum in primary, secondary and post-secondary schools?

Those are some of the questions that we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Are there going to be tuition fees? Will students receive credit? Will credit be recognized at other institutions, and certification? Those are some of the other issues that we would like to ask.

* (1600)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

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

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 27 minutes remaining.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 201—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 201 (The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie), standing in the name of the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 20—Immigration Application Fees

Mr. George Hickey (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), the immigration application fees

WHEREAS immigrants face many barriers before arriving in Canada; and

WHEREAS the current application fee of \$975 limits the ability of the less fortunate to apply to immigrate to Canada; and

WHEREAS the application fee of \$975 means that immigrants are subsidizing the federal Department of Immigration; and

WHEREAS significant additional financial barriers for potential immigrants have been created by drastic increases in processing fees, which have doubled in some cases; and

WHEREAS there are extreme differences between average annual incomes in various countries of origin.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED a that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the federal government to consider reviewing application fees in the country of origin; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly direct the Clerk of the Assembly to send a copy of this resolution to the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and to all Manitoba members of Parliament.

Motion presented.

Mr. Hickey: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to be able to rise today to speak on behalf of this resolution, and I hope we will have all-party support because, as we all know, immigration is crucial to the advancement of our province. We know that through our immigration policies when we have people that immigrate to Manitoba they bring in a net economic and social benefit for all of the province. Also, immigrants provide labour and investment, purchase goods and services, attend our universities and stimulate the job creation opportunities.

When you look at immigration in Manitoba and you welcome individuals into our great province, and when they do arrive I think one of the greatest advantages that we all have is we all speak on the importance of

families. When we talk about families and people emigrating from other countries we have to ensure that our family reunification will maintain to be a vital component of our immigration policies. Because when you have someone that comes from another country, let alone when you have family members move to different provinces, it is very difficult and oftentimes very lonely when you are separated from your family members.

So I think we have to look at encouraging and increasing our family reunification for immigrants that come to our province, because a lot of times when you are looking at family reunification you are looking at brothers and sisters and a lot of times parents and grandparents. When you come from a different country and you speak a different language and you are exposed to a different culture and a different way of life, I think it is very important that the family that moves to Canada to make their new home from other countries will maintain their values and maintain their culture, and hopefully will retain their languages. Who best to teach that in the family unit? It is usually the grandparents or the parents. A lot of times when you have people moving to Manitoba or to Canada, when they are able to bring in their parents or their grandparents, the children spend a lot of time with their grandparents as a family unit.

If you look at the introduction of a \$975 fee, I think it is a message that we are discouraging immigration from Asian countries and we are encouraging immigration from European countries.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I say that, all we have to do is look at the wage structure in Asian countries and the wage structure in European countries. When you look at the European countries, Britain, France and all over, their wage structure is very similar to ours. When you look at a head tax, or whatever you want to call it, of \$975, it means a lot less than the person that is coming from an Asian country where a lot of times that \$975 is even more than a family is able to earn throughout the whole year.

When you look at that fee, if there is anyway possible where we could encourage the federal government to either reduce it or take it out altogether,

I think Manitoba will benefit greatly by that. As you know, immigration to Manitoba has steadily declined over the last four years and now reflects only 1.8 percent of Canada's immigration instead of the 4 percent of Canada's total immigration to which Manitoba is entitled. I hope that we can raise our immigration population back up to the 4 percent that we are entitled to under the agreement, provincial and federal.

This year immigration to Manitoba has dropped nearly 20 percent. If you look at the reasons why immigration has dropped that much, I think you could easily look at the whole processing fee that has doubled and the introduction of the \$975 landing fee or head tax, whichever you want to call it, because \$975, like I mentioned earlier, a lot of times exceeds a family's income for a whole year. That is only one adult fee of \$975. A lot of times when people immigrate to Canada there is usually a family, so you are looking at two adults. Instead of \$975, you are really looking at \$1,950. How long would it take an individual in some of the Asian countries to save up \$1,950 just to apply to immigrate to our great province?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also know—that is according to federal stats—that immigration to Manitoba for the first six months of 1995 fell by 18 percent from 2,045 last year and only 1,679 this year. We have a decrease in immigrants coming to Manitoba. When you look at that \$975, it has a tremendous impact on people that are willing to move to our great province.

Also, since 1990, total immigration to Manitoba has fallen by 45 percent. I am sure a lot of that is due to federal legislation which has been introduced, which has restricted family-class immigrants which make up the bulk of the total immigration to Manitoba.

Like I mentioned earlier, when people are moving into another country, and we all stress the importance of family, they too would like to have their family close and to be with their family.

If you just look at the whole structure, like in various immigration populations, a lot of the grandparents are really, when the children are very young, the ones that have taken on the responsibility of looking after the

young until they go to school, because when you look at the whole process of daycares, babysitting, a lot of the individuals that come here are forced into low-paying jobs and cannot afford the expenses of daycare and babysitting costs. So it is the grandparents that take on that role. It is the grandparents that really take on the responsibility of ensuring that these children maintain their own language, appreciate their own culture and are educated of who they are.

If you are raised through life and you do not know yourself, how can you know others? I think it is very important to have that identification of who you are, appreciate and to be proud of who you are.

* (1610)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also we have to look at the whole process of our negotiations. I was very pleased to see our provincial Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer) go to Ottawa to meet with the federal Immigration minister. I was very pleased to see that because I am sure that our provincial minister will stand up for Manitoba, will stand up and say, yes, we need immigration, we encourage immigration. All we need to do is sit down to negotiate a very positive negotiation process to encourage immigration and to increase our number of immigrants.

We look at the garment industry where there is a great need right now. No one has to convince our provincial minister of that because he is aware of it. He has raised it himself. He said, I would like to increase workers in the garment industry and other areas.

I know we all have the full support and commitment of the provincial minister to ensure that positive negotiations will take place. Like I mentioned earlier, I am very proud of the fact that our provincial minister took the steps to go to Ottawa to send that message to not only the new immigrants who would be willing to come here but to the people who have immigrated previously, who know that through co-operation things can be achieved. I would like to take this opportunity to applaud the minister for those positive steps. I am looking forward to positive results from those meetings that he has undertaken, and I am sure that there will be more meetings in the future.

With those few words, I would just like to once again state that we must support family reunification to our province. We must encourage the federal government to try and either eliminate or reduce the \$975 fee because it will not encourage family reunification, and when people move to a strange new country which they want to make their home and which a lot of people are very proud of once they settle here, to help the families to bring their extended families to what they are now very proud to call their new home.

With those few words, I thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that we will get support from all members of the House to send a loud and clear message to the federal minister and that we in Manitoba want to co-operate fully and we want to ensure that the right things are done for the province and for the people of Manitoba.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you very much.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this resolution that has been brought forward today by my colleague, and I thank him for bringing it forward and, I think, raising the awareness of this issue. I can say to him and to all members that I think the issue of immigration and the awareness by all members in this House and by the public in general has really been raised through efforts such as this and through our debate in Estimates and through the discussions that have taken place over the last number of months to the point that all Manitobans realize at this point the importance of immigration to our province. There is widespread support among Manitobans to address some of the economic and people needs of our province through immigration.

As all members know, Canada has a very proud record over the many decades that this country has been in existence of accepting immigrants and refugees from all parts of the world. In Manitoba we are truly blessed with that ethnic diversity that we see in our festivals here, and we are proud of the fact that these people are full-fledged citizens making meaningful contributions to our society in so many ways, whether it be in the workplace, whether it be in education,

whether it be sharing their culture with others in our province. So I thank the member again for bringing forward this resolution and making Manitobans aware of some of the needs.

I think that the points have been made with the federal government, that there is a better understanding amongst our federal politicians from Manitoba, that Manitoba has some unique needs, and that Manitoba is wanting to increase its share of the immigration numbers coming to Canada. The member is quite right in promises made throughout the election; the federal government has decreed and indicated that they would work towards increased immigration to Canada. Our numbers are down from historic levels, as my honourable friend has said; we would like to think that we could attract some 4 percent of the immigrants who are coming to this country.

Having said that, though, there is only one gatekeeper, and that is the Government of Canada, that makes the decision on who comes into the country, the numbers, the rate at which they are coming. We have been working very strongly with the federal Department of Immigration to try to bring about an understanding whereby we can have an immigration agreement. While certain events have taken place in recent months that have perhaps moved this initiative offtrack, I am pleased that I did meet with the federal minister last week. He is taking a special interest in the situation here in Manitoba. I believe that he is going to act on some of the irritants that have been mentioned both in our Estimates process and what the member has mentioned today. He has given a commitment to try and understand the Manitoba situation and also to work with his Manitoba colleagues to try and remedy the situation.

At the present time, the Manitoba economy, of course—and my colleague the Minister of I, T and T (Mr. Downey) will maybe have an opportunity to speak a little later about the Manitoba economy and the fact that we have a very, very low unemployment rate here in Manitoba. A number of sectors in our economy are looking for increased workers.

This brings me to the point where we have to have an understanding that it is not only one federal department

involved here. There is also a second federal department that deals with the human resources in this country, and they have a policy of Canadian first, and I have no objections with that. I think most Canadians have no objections that if there are jobs going wanting we must try and fill them with Canadians who are unemployed, who are underemployed, people who want to make a contribution. Perhaps they are on social assistance. Perhaps for one reason or another they have been laid off. So the Canada-first policy is something that I do not think many people would disagree with.

What we have to make the Human Resources Canada realize is that there are sectors within the economy that simply cannot be filled by massive education and training programs. They cannot backfill by recruiting across the country, but we must blend that with some immigration, targeted immigration for certain sectors, open to immigrants from any country in the world to try and make up that shortfall that we see in those particular sectors.

The government of Manitoba, through a number of departments, is able to provide a certain number of training dollars, whether it be within the Department of Education, whether it be within the Department of Family Services or the Department of I, T and T. I can say to you there is a will on the part of our government to identify those training dollars, to work with those Manitobans who are currently unemployed and who would want to be part of the solution. So we are prepared to make every effort there so that Human Resources Canada understands that it simply is not a one-dimensional approach to the solution of this problem. It is very important that we accept their Canada-first policy and we find a multifaceted way of resolving the shortage of labour in certain targeted employment sectors.

* (1620)

The Province of Manitoba, of course, is responsible for the settlement issues, and as I met with the federal minister last week and have talked with members of this House and people from across the country, we are well aware that Manitoba's settlement programs are amongst the finest in the country. The English as a

Second Language, the ability of Manitoba to find solutions to housing and training programs is second to none. So we are working within our government to provide those services that are needed, and it is important that we get an agreement.

I believe that we have started a process by which the federal government has a better understanding of Manitoba's needs. There is always a tendency at the federal level to think that one policy will serve the entire country, and that simply is not true. We know in the immigration field, for instance, many people from across the world do not necessarily immigrate to a certain province.

They know about Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal, and I think the federal government would be well served by entering into immigration agreements that allow us to direct and target immigrants from certain parts of the world into certain sectors, from any part of the world into certain sectors, where there are job vacancies at that particular time.

So we have, I think, started a process with the federal minister, and direction has been given to senior bureaucrats to find some creative solutions. Those are the words of the federal minister. They want to cooperate and work with the government of Manitoba and with bureaucrats from a number of our departments and from a couple of federal departments to find those creative solutions which will bring more immigrants to Manitoba and resolve some of the issues that we have at this time.

Provinces like Manitoba have historically grown not only through the birthrate but through immigration, and Manitoba has historically had a relatively low birthrate that requires that immigration for sustained growth, that it is important to this province in terms of the transfer payments from the federal government that we maintain our share of the population.

As well, immigrants from around the world have found a friendly home in Manitoba and one only has to do some travelling within the city to recognize that Manitobans very openly accept the fact that we have signs in many, many different languages within the city of Winnipeg and other parts of Manitoba.

Manitobans perhaps have a unique perspective on this global marketplace whereby we see this as a real advantage. Problems have been encountered in other cities of Canada, in other provinces in Canada, whereby some of the issues around criminal activity or some of the issues around social assistance are laid at the doorstep of people who have been recently immigrated to Canada.

The Manitoba experience is different. The Manitoba experience has been a very rich one and an experience whereby immigrants are welcomed, and one only has to travel to many sectors of this city to see how well the immigrants have integrated into our society, how their customs, their language, their abilities have been widely accepted by the people of this city and this province.

So Manitoba is a unique place, and I think that in finding those creative solutions and that sense of cooperation that the federal minister talked about last week we have an opportunity and we want to take advantage of that opportunity. The provincial department that works with immigration has put forward a number of proposals. Those proposals have gone to the federal government, and they have agreed to take a second look at these, but they do recognize that this province has been very proactive in putting in place some ideas that will assist us to advertise not only the jobs in Manitoba that are going wanting but also the opportunities that are here. Our department and this province are given a great deal of credit for the advertising at our posts overseas, and we are targeting that advertising to overseas posts so that individuals in other countries who want to immigrate will not only look at immigrating to Canada but also focus in on Manitoba.

One of the creative things that staff within the department have done is to put some of the information about Manitoba on the Internet, and this has been very, very successful in that people who wish to immigrate to Canada are contacting us as a result of the information on the Internet. These people are contacting us from all over the world. There are certain countries like Great Britain and the United States where the people who are contacting us originate from other countries, and that is a stopping-off place in their

search for a place where they can find employment. So the Manitoba government and particularly this department is being given a considerable amount of credit for being itself creative in trying to attract immigrants to this particular province.

So I am pleased again that the federal minister is taking some special interest, and I know that the federal members of Parliament are also feeling the need to get more involved with this issue, that they too have read the comments that the immigrant community is making, that Manitoba politicians are making. I think it is all part of raising the awareness of this particular issue whereby we are going to get some support from our Manitoba parliamentarians who, being closer to the scene, will have the ability to talk to the Minister of Human Resources who is in a great position to give the green light to some initiatives that are coming forward from the community.

I wanted to touch briefly on some of those initiatives. Probably the one that is most familiar to Manitobans is a project that has been put forth by the Manitoba fashion industry where we now have a shortage of probably 1,000 to 1,200 jobs, it is estimated.

One of the commitments that the federal minister has made to me is to have senior staff from his department and Mr. Axworthy's department come to Manitoba in the near future to get a bird's-eye view of the needs of the fashion industry where we could use those people immediately. I have indicated before that we simply cannot find the workforce by training them in Manitoba fast enough, by recruiting them across the country, that we must have immigration as well.

We believe that we are getting that support now from a number of our members of Parliament, and we are going to be able to hopefully pursue those discussions in the near future to make the federal members more aware of the Manitoba needs and for them to put Manitoba first. It is fine for us to say they have a Canadian-first policy, and I have said we agree with that, but they also have a special responsibility as parliamentarians for Manitoba to put Manitoba first and to see that we have a creative solution here, that we have an industry that is badly underresourced in terms of manpower.

While Manitoba will put forward the training dollars as best we can from the various departments to train those people in Manitoba who want to work, who have an interest in that industry, we will do, with that industry, a recruitment across this country to try and find people in other provinces who are unemployed and who have worked in the fashion industry. We also feel we need that assistance to go to the immigration department and to be able to recruit immigrants from across the world to come to Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is actually a pleasure for me to be able to stand up and add a few words to this particular resolution. I listened very closely to the two previous speakers before me in trying to get a better understanding in terms of where it is that they might be coming from on this particular issue, and I must admit to a certain degree, relatively pleased with comments coming from both speakers.

It is interesting. This has been an issue, and I am talking strictly dealing with the \$975 fee and will expand upon that as time will permit me to and to comment on other aspects of immigration that no doubt this fee could have an impact on.

Over the last number of months I have seen two types of approaches, if you like, in trying to deal with this issue. One is a much more positive one, such as what has occurred over the last half-hour where we make reference to a federal government policy decision and then we try to have input directly into private members' hour in hopes of seeing it passed forward.

I read the resolution itself. Even though I might not necessarily agree with every aspect of it, I do believe in this particular case that the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) is being relatively genuine. I do not want to misquote the member for Point Douglas, but he made reference in his speech, you know, that what we should be doing is lobby to eliminate and if not that to reduce or to lower the fee. At least, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I see that, at times, quite possibly all members of the Chamber can be very creative in terms of trying

to influence the national government, particularly the Ministry of Immigration, to try to change what we all believe. I believe also that the way in which it is currently being done is something that I do not support. Ideally, I would like to see no fee, in fact I would even love the opportunity to see the processing fee even change.

* (1630)

I have some personal thoughts on this particular issue because it is so important to me. To continue on the point that the member for Point Douglas brings out in terms of eliminate or reduce, given today's fiscal reality and the attempt by the Chretien government to come to grips with the deficit and try to come up with revenues where they can, I do not know in terms of how successful we would be in terms of lobbying government to eliminate this particular \$975 fee, and to that end I would say that it should not prevent us from trying to lobby, that it never hurts for us to do what we can to lobby, but it also does us well if we can come up with other ideas in which the federal government and particularly the Ministry of Immigration might be able to resolve this issue or at least make it not as upsetting to so many people that are out there.

As the member for Point Douglas talks about in terms of reducing as a possible alternative, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would point out another potential option that is out there, and that is for a lot of immigrants or would-be immigrants, when they come to Canada, it is very difficult to get that \$975 up front or to apply through the loan process that has been put in place.

I would like to see, if the Minister of Immigration is unable to reduce or eliminate the \$975, to seriously look at having that \$975 paid only if a potential immigrant has, in fact, been accepted.

There are to a certain degree a number of ideas that we all would like to be able to express to the Minister of Immigration, because this issue, if you like, has a significant impact on some MLAs more than other MLAs, depending on the area which you represent.

I can assure you on immigration matters that I have a very keen interest primarily because of the area that

I represent. A good percentage of my demographics is made up of first-generation immigrants, and I try to keep as informed as possible on the different issues, and that is why I felt that it was necessary for me to meet with the Minister of Immigration in Ontario, and I did take that opportunity to do just that so I could express some of the feelings that I have regarding this particular issue, along with others.

These are the types of lobbying which I think could, at some point in time, bear fruit, and, hopefully, we will see some form of a change with respect to the landing fee.

There are other ways of approaching this particular issue, and the other ways are virtually what I have seen all the way up to 45 or 35 minutes ago. I recall during the provincial election, for example, where there were candidates who were quite prepared to give out misinformation. A lot of that misinformation people bought into. To give you an idea, you would talk about, let us say, a family of four being charged in excess of \$4,000 in order to come to Canada. Even under the current system, the current proposal, if there are absolutely no changes, that figure is off considerably. It could almost be cut in half, yet these are the types of responses that I was getting at the door.

You know, every day we have a petition that is tabled, and that petition—and I just want to quote from one portion of it, where it states, WHEREAS the fee increases for immigrants instituted in the 1995 Federal Liberal Budget are neither fair nor justifiable and border on racism, Mr. Deputy Speaker, "racism" is a very strong word. In fact, I recall the last time I talked about the \$975 fee inside the Chamber I made reference to the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) making the allegation that the federal government was, in fact, racist and labelled it as a head tax, as many people have, and, of course, the member for Wellington had stood up on a point of order, and I believe that point of order is still on notice, that there was not ever any report on it.

But I ended up quoting from a letter in which the member for Wellington actually had written and sent out. Inside that letter, of course, the word "racism" was, in fact, used. I bring it up because again when I

was knocking on doors during the last provincial election this is the type of issue that was coming up, that I was being told that here is a policy the federal Liberals have put in, and that it is a racist policy.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too would like to see changes. But to go out and tell individuals that a government of whatever level is administering racist policies, I think, is not an appropriate way of dealing with an issue.

Given the nature of this particular issue and just how very much and how very important it is to so many people, that is why, when I initially thought I would be speaking on this resolution, I felt that I would probably consume my 15 minutes on talking about the ways in which the New Democratic Party in particular was addressing this issue and tried to give the impression—or I would attempt to give the impression—that the party was doing this for their own political gain as opposed to dealing with the issue at hand.

To a certain degree, I still believe that, but I am pleased with the manner in which the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) addressed this issue. For that reason I will not question the member for Point Douglas's motivations on introducing this resolution to the Chamber.

What I would like to be able to do is, because individuals, the two previous speakers, took the opportunity to comment on different aspects of how immigration has an impact on the province of Manitoba, is to pick up on that. I see, like everyone else no doubt, firsthand the many different benefits that we have derived as Manitobans because of immigrants. We are, in fact, all immigrants to this land. It is just a question in terms of time and when people, different immigration waves, if you like, came to our province.

Many would argue, and I too, to a certain extent, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only exception to that would be our native people. We have to acknowledge that they do have that very special place in terms of the history of our nation. I think that for the most part there has been a great deal of work from all sides to try to acknowledge that.

I recall even during the constitutional debates that all of us had participated in in one way or another, that that was one of the issues that in fact was talked about. Of course, the broader issue was how wonderful this multicultural society that we live in is and how it is that we all benefit from it.

* (1640)

Having said that, I would like to comment specifically now on some of the immigration issues in which we need to be dealing with as a province because it is becoming more and more clear that there is a need for provincial governments to get involved in immigration matters. One of the highest priorities for me personally, and I like to believe the government, is to achieve an immigration bilateral agreement with Ottawa. I think this is absolutely essential. We have seen over the years where Manitoba has not been able to meet the demands in many different classifications of immigrants, if you like, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, by achieving a bilateral agreement, I do believe that it will go a long way in ensuring that Manitoba will achieve what we believe our region of this country requires. I think that that would be very positive.

I get very excited about the whole new clause that is being proposed and being talked about, and that being the new provincial nominee class. I think that that particular classification will assist us well into the future and would anticipate that that particular clause will be one of those that would definitely be included into whatever agreement is ultimately developed. I have personally sensed a much better atmosphere in seeing agreements, this particular agreement, achieved, and I applaud all efforts, both provincial and federal, at trying to resolve this very important issue.

The other issue that we need to address immediately—and I emphasize the word "immediately" and ultimately would argue that it needs to be fast-tracked—is something that the Minister of Culture and Heritage (Mr. Gilleshammer) spoke about, and that is our garment industry. I have had opportunity to tour a number of facilities, industry facilities, and had opportunity to have discussions at many different levels, Mr. Deputy Speaker, regarding this particular issue. I do believe that time is of the essence.

I have made commitments to numerous people that, in terms of the party politics, I am prepared to put this issue first and foremost ahead of my party if need be and take a very strong stand. My intentions are to follow through on that because I recognize the importance of this industry to the overall economy and social fabric of the province of Manitoba.

I thank you for being patient. I look forward to these immigration issues being addressed in the not-too-distant future. Thank you.

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased this afternoon to also add a few remarks to this issue in conjunction with my honourable friends today. I would like to add, from a personal perspective, the importance that I see for immigration to the province of Manitoba, and I would feel that this is a very crucial issue to get on the record in Manitoba in order to persuade our federal associates. I take great heart from hearing the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer) say that there are ongoing and vibrant negotiations between Manitoba and Ottawa.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

I bring a personal perspective to this issue because I am a son of an immigrant. My father came into this country with \$7 in his pocket. He was an English sailor who got lost, missed his boat and was coming to Manitoba to shoot a moose. He walked into this province literally with \$7 in his pocket, and he stayed to carry on business, raise a family and settled the rest of his life here.

An Honourable Member: Did he get a moose?

Mr. Radcliffe: He got his moose.

One of the first events that I had the honour to attend as an MLA for River Heights in this Chamber was the swearing in of 125 new immigrants who were taking the oath as citizens of Canada. I think that this was in fact a stirring and moving event and put this whole issue in the right perspective where I saw I was pleased to sit in these benches and see new Canadians, people who had made a visible choice to leave their homeland,

to leave their backgrounds, to leave everything that was familiar and known to them and come to this country to carve out a new life. Madam Speaker, this takes incredible courage, incredible fortitude and incredible ability. It is the least that we can do as Canadians to welcome these people, these strong, vibrant people who bring their skills and their abilities to our shores and to our province.

I have had the opportunity to move about the province of Manitoba as the legislative assistant to the Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, and I certainly can attest that from looking at the events of the Folklorama festival, which is a regular festival presented in the city of Winnipeg, that this is just an indication of the multitude of different ethnic cultures which are presented in Manitoba. I can say without reservation, Madam Speaker, that the city of Winnipeg is a cosmopolitan centre right here in the heart of the Canadian nation, and the reason it is so cosmopolitan is because of the plethora of cultures which have found their way to our fair city.

I can recall that I was at a Chinese cultural dinner just two weeks ago, and I was awestruck at the numbers of the Order of Canada boutonnieres that I saw at that event. These are individuals who have contributed significantly to now not just the Chinese culture but the Canadian culture. These individuals in their address that evening were saying that they looked upon Manitoba as a mini United Nations, and I was proud to hear that remark.

Madam Speaker, this has very tangible and direct results for our economy, for our culture, for our perspective. One of the things which I think is very obvious is that these individuals who come from the shores of Asia, the shores of Europe, have contacts with their home nations, and they are very able to establish trading links, diplomatic links with their home nations.

The international profile that our nation, Canada, has abroad, with the small amount of international travelling I have done, is one that makes one proud to be a Canadian, because Canadians are well received in many, many nations in this world because of how we treat citizens of other nations who come to our shores.

We treat them with dignity, we treat them with respect and we are eager to share in their skills and in their abilities.

Before I had the honour to represent the citizens of River Heights in this Chamber, Madam Speaker, I happened to pursue the pursuit of law, and one of my most significant clients was the Hutterian Brethren in the province of Manitoba. This is a small group of citizens numbering some 10,000 people who have retained their distinctive cultural originality and characteristics, and these people are agriculturists in our province. They are participating and contributing a significant value to our country and to our economy.

I can personally attest that I have seen these people, a group of people in a colonial congregational entity, move onto what is in fact a bare piece of land, as bare and flat as the carpet in front of me in this Chamber, and inside of five years that property looks like a showplace. They can make it into a home with trees and shops and homes and garages and chapel and dining hall. This is some of the value and the magnificent skill that people of an entirely different background to anybody in this Chamber bring to our nation. We have all benefited from that.

* (1650)

Madam Speaker, everybody in this Chamber, their people are immigrants at some point in time. We look back to the Manitoba history to the waves of immigration that have swept through Manitoba, and that energy, that synergism has been the strength that has built this province to the position that we are in today. We have heard much from our honourable friends about the Louis Riel Institute, which were some of the remarks that were being addressed earlier, but in fact I think what is so significant about the Canadian approach to immigration is that we do not try to blend everybody into an amorphous melting pot in our nation. In fact we leave people the opportunity to foster their own culture, to nourish their own culture, and we believe that all the different attributes bring richness to the whole.

I think that that distinguishes Canada and our immigration policies, which make us unique in this

world. We are not trying to stamp out all the diverse different cultures in this nation but in fact the Canadian reality, which each one of us experiences today, makes us all truly Canadians, but we all bring this multicultural richness to our province. This is exemplified or manifested by the different churches that one sees about our province. In fact, when I was going to many of the Folklorama dioramas, we saw Greek Orthodox churches, we saw Ukrainian pavilions, we saw the pavilions from the Italian, the Portuguese, and the Caribbean groups in our community. These, Madam Speaker, made me feel like I was living in the crossroads of the nation, truly, by seeing all the people who were here.

I think an historical reflection is indeed significant, Madam Speaker, that the great civilizations of the known western world were those civilizations that granted religious and cultural tolerance to all their ethnic components. We can look to the Roman civilization, and we see all the plethora of different peoples that made up the Roman Empire, and the reason that the Roman Empire remained great as long as it was was because those administrators and those politicians and those managers respected the different cultural entities. In fact, the Islamic empire which ruled the territory around the Mediterranean between 700 and 1400 A.D. was also incredibly tolerant of different ethnic backgrounds.

Madam Speaker, when I have been walking the streets of River Heights, I am proud to say that River Heights truly represents this ethnic diversity. I am pleased to say that I was able to speak to citizens of River Heights under grape arbors. These were people from Italy who were growing wine in their backyard in River Heights. I was able to speak to people who wore skull caps, who were on their way to synagogue on Saturday mornings. I was proud to be able to speak to people of Scotch-Irish background who, like my own roots, were proud to be part of the commercial enterprise in this nation. In fact, this is a true cross section of our nation.

In fact, the most recent wave of immigration which has brought a unique diversity to our city and our province are those citizens who have come here from Central America, and these are, in fact, some of the

original Americans. We have heard much discussion today and over the last few days about our aboriginal citizens, and I can only speculate that the meaning of that word means that they are from the original, but, again, it shows that they are citizens today who are inextricably wrapped into the warp and the woof of our fabric today. They are citizens of Canada, experiencing the reality that we all have to meet, and while we are all scrambling for precedents, I believe that one of the essential natures of our political structure should be that we are all citizens in the same reality.

I think that that is one of the concepts that we will be moving to as we move along in this nation of ours, and while we talk about the two founding races, or we talk about the aboriginal communities having special precedents, I think that, in fact, respect for all immigrants to this country—because, in fact, that is what we all are. All our people are immigrants from somewhere, and that, I think, has to become one of the essential rules and outlook of our nation.

An Honourable Member: Keep going, Mike. You are doing well.

Mr. Radcliffe: All right.

An Honourable Member: Talk about the Roman Empire.

Mr. Radcliffe: The Roman Empire, you liked that.

I would further point out, Madam Speaker, and I am proud to note that the diversities of all our independent schools which we have in this province show that all our different immigrants have been able to retain our culture. There has not been the powerful sledgehammer of any one particular group trying to assimilate any individual culture, but rather we have the richness of choice in this province to offer to all our immigrants, to all our peoples, that there is room for each individual people's message, be it a Jewish parochial school, a Roman Catholic parochial school, a French language school, a home-based school. That has to be, again, one of the really significant manifestations of the importance of the immigrant culture in our province.

I thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to be able to address this issue and get these remarks on the record. These are points that I think we should never lose sight of in our province. Although we, as I say, are all vying from time to time to say that one culture should be more significant than another, I would want to put on the record and emphasize again and again that all our cultures have the significance—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I am listening very carefully to what the member for River Heights is trying to say to all members in the Chamber. It is definitely very interesting, and I am finding it most beneficial.

To the right of me, I hear the heckle of closure or let us call the question, Madam Speaker. I do believe that the member for River Heights should be given the common courtesy of being able to finish his speech before he is called to have to sit down and pose the question.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I certainly understand why the Liberal member for Inkster does not wish to bring this matter to question because of what has been done by the federal government, a party he strongly supports. I know that he is trying his best to make sure we do not have an opportunity to vote on this.

But I would just like to point out that members on this side of the House and, I am sure, government members would like for an opportunity to vote and to send a very strong message to Ottawa about the terrible action that has been taken by the federal government with regard to immigrants. I know the member is trying to stay away from that, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, the member for River Heights is a private member here, is entitled to debate and talk about this or any other issue in private members' hour as any member wishes. They are all equal here during

private members' hour. Each is entitled to deal with Private Members' Business.

It is not up to the members across the way. If you want to send messages or do whatever they want, it is up to private members individually to decide if they want to debate this issue or if they do not. So it is not a question of parties or anything else. It is a question of private members dealing with Private Members' Business.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster does not have a point of order. Any member can call for the question to be put at any time, and debate will continue.

* * *

* (1700)

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m.—actually, the honourable member for River Heights had about 10 seconds remaining prior to the point of order being raised by the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank you for this opportunity of being able to address these few humble remarks to this Chamber today. I would suggest that these remarks that were addressed today would be a very cogent message to our associates in the East. I thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., as previously agreed, we will now move to Resolution 21.

Res. 21—Home Renovation Program

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that

WHEREAS thousands of homes in Manitoba, particularly in the inner city of Winnipeg and in the North, need upgrading to make them more energy efficient; and

WHEREAS good housing is a contributing factor to good health; and

WHEREAS the need for an affordable home renovation program has been called for by many

organizations and residents in Winnipeg and elsewhere as a means of maintaining affordable housing stock and creating jobs; and

WHEREAS under pressure the provincial government finally announced a Home Renovation Program in the 1994 budget; and

WHEREAS in the same budget the Emergency Home Repair Program which assists thousands of low-income homeowners repair their homes had its funding reduced by over 90 percent; and

WHEREAS the provincial Home Renovation Program forces homeowners to spend \$5,000 or more on renovations in order to qualify; and

WHEREAS as a result, the vast majority of low-income homeowners have not been able to qualify for the program; and

WHEREAS in 1994, the provincial government spent more money on promotional advertising than on assisting homeowners; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has acknowledged that the program has not had the takeup expected but has not revised the rules so that low-income homeowners can qualify.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Housing to consider on an urgent basis revising the Home Renovation Program so that it is affordable for the vast majority of homeowners.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When the honourable member for Radisson read her motion, she inserted four words that are not in the original proposed motion. The only way that those words will remain as part of the actual resolution will be with leave of the House; otherwise, it will be the wording as originally proposed in the original motion.

Is there leave of the House to permit the honourable—order, please. Let me read it for clarification with the indulgence of the House, so you will know what leave may or may not be granted for.

WHEREAS thousands of homes in Manitoba, particularly in the inner city of Winnipeg—and now I will repeat the four words that were added that were not in the original proposed resolution—and in the North—need upgrading to make them more energy efficient; and—

Is there leave of the House to permit the honourable member for Radisson to add—

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Motion presented.

Ms. Cerilli: Madam Speaker, I appreciate your explanation of the rules with regard to private member's resolutions. I think it is important though that we give careful consideration to this resolution, so I am pleased that we have not had to waste time in dealing with those small changes. This is a resolution that points out I think this government's approach as a whole in governing. We have heard many times over the last couple of weeks in this session how this government does not want to acknowledge the fact that there are many families in Manitoba that are really struggling. There is an incredible problem of poverty in this province.

I think that when we look at the way the government has dealt with home renovation programs we can see that they have no sensitivity or awareness of the way that their programs and policies in government can either accentuate those problems or help to alleviate those problems.

The Home Renovation Program provides a good example of that, of how they eliminated the Emergency Home Repair Program which was much more reasonable in its requirements or criteria and allowed more lower income homeowners, those Manitobans who are of low income but do manage to own a home, qualify for the program. It had I think criteria that would really meet the needs of Manitobans.

The Home Renovation Program that was first announced by the current government in March 1994

was, I think, a bit of an election ploy. They, as I have said, eliminated the existing program, and then they brought in this program just before the election, and I think that they admitted it was a failure in the fact that they had to extend the termination date of the program because the uptake was so low, so the program was extended an extra nine months, till the end of December of this year.

The program has \$10 million from lotteries revenue, as I understand it, and we support this type of a program, but the difficulty as outlined through the resolution is that it is really not dealing with the needs out there in the community. It is not dealing with the fact that the program, by having a \$5,000 criteria for renovations, is eliminating a lot of people who are most in need of retrofitting and renovations on their home.

I am pleased to see we will not be having any self-serving amendments put forward by the government dealing with the resolution. I am hoping that it will come to a vote, and I hope that they will really take an interest in making sure that the Home Renovation Program is actually going to meet the needs in the province.

It is interesting when we look at what has happened with this program—and I said this was an election ploy, and when you look at where the uptake of the program has been, when you look at the fact that it has not been in some of the most needy areas of the city in terms of the core area of Winnipeg, in the Point Douglas and Broadway area—for example, in Point Douglas, there were only 16 residents who qualified for the program.

When you compare that to residents who live in Conservative constituencies, in more affluent parts of the city, you can see why some of us might think that this has been more of a partisan effort than a real attempt to revitalize and renovate the areas in the city that need to have that take place, when we look at the fact that in the city of Winnipeg, in particular, the vast majority of homes that were renovated were in the \$50,000 to \$100,000 range, that there was a very small percentage less than \$50,000 that received grants for renovations under this program.

* (1710)

I think when you look at that, you can see very clearly what we are talking about. There was a study done by a Saskatoon-based analyst for Canada Mortgage and Housing that said that the average renovation in Manitoba costs only about \$1,250, so with this kind of a program that has a criteria being \$5,000 spent to be eligible for a grant, we can see that is completely out of touch with what most Manitobans are able to spend on renovations. This was one of the things that contributed to the poor uptake, that there was really only 15 percent uptake in more than a half a year of the program functioning.

We also heard that there were problems with processing the applications, that there was a huge backlog with applications not being able to be processed. We heard lots of other concerns that there were problems with inspectors being actually out on the ground to approve those applications and renovations that were being conducted. So not only were there problems with the economics of the program meeting the needs of Manitobans, there were also problems with the administration. Both these things contributed to the fact that the program had a very poor uptake and the government had to admit that it was a failure and extend the deadline for the program.

I want to also talk a little bit about the importance of having renovation to homes as part of an urban strategy. I am currently quite concerned that the Winnipeg Development Agreement has less than \$4 million over five years for programs such as this. These are programs that do a number of things. They can contribute to energy efficiency. They can create jobs and they also can provide a better quality of life by improving the quality of housing for Manitobans. Then they can also contribute to the revitalization of neighbourhoods and the sense of safety and security in neighbourhoods by improving the quality of housing.

When I look at the fact that one other previous program, the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program and the Core Area Initiative, had criteria that were much more in keeping with the incomes and the needs of the community, I think that this is not a good trend that we are seeing, that we have these Core Area Initiative-type programs like the Winnipeg Development Agreement, and it is ignoring the fact that

a big part of that should be housing improvement and renovation and rehabilitation.

The other thing that I think points to the problems that this government has had with the program is, even though they have spent, I have heard, \$250,000 on advertising, they had such a poor uptake of the program. I think this also points out, as I said earlier, that it was not in line with the real needs in the community, and it was not formatted with addressing the needs in Manitoba.

When we look at the statistics for the program, and we know of the real need for improvements in housing in the North, and we look at the poor uptake in renovations in the North, where this program allowed less than \$500,000, as of February '95, to be granted in the North and it had over \$11 million, almost \$12 million granted in Winnipeg, we could say that while there is a lot more people in Winnipeg, if we had a truly need-base program that was going to look at where the housing improvement needs are the greatest, we would see that there has to be something done about the poor quality of housing in the North, the fact that there is a very extreme need for retrofitting and energy conservation in the North and this program has not, as the statistics indicated, addressed the needs in the North. [interjection]

The ministers across the way are talking about the need to have people who need help so that they can help themselves, but I think we want to ensure that there is going to be some equity in the program.

It is interesting. I had a letter sent to me from homeowners who had a suggestion about the program which I thought was reasonable. I have written to the minister about this, and I look forward to the response. They were also disqualified from the program, but that was because the reassessment of their home put it outside the criteria by reassessing their home greater than \$100,000.00.

This family has proposed that there would be a sliding scale, and I do agree with this to some extent if the sliding scale was going to make the criteria for the program reduce less than \$5,000 the amount to be spent to qualify, and in those cases, without decreasing the

amount that would be granted. For example, there could be a scale set up where the cost of the home would be relative to the amount that needed to be spent to qualify for a grant, so the less that your home was assessed at, then the less you would be required to spend to qualify for the project.

I think that another reason why the program is designed to fail is because it does not take into account that a family with a home that is of more modest means, that is of less value, is not likely to have the income to spend the \$5,000 required to qualify.

So it makes sense if we are going to take into account the true interest in meeting the needs in the community that there would be some attempt in this way to ensure that more Manitobans could participate by having some kind of a sliding scale. I would be more in favour of having the sliding scale go downwards for homes that are less than the \$75,000-range, \$50,000-range, and that those people would have to spend less than \$5,000 to qualify for the program.

* (1720)

As I said, I have written to the government about this, and I will be interested in hearing how they respond and interested in seeing if they are going to take the resolution seriously and they are going to re-examine this program.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, we do support that they would continue having home renovation and retrofitting-type programs to assist Manitobans and revitalize homes in our community, but we want to see them meet the real needs in the community and address the reality that a lot of homeowners do not have \$5,000 hanging around to spend on renovations.

With that, Madam Speaker, I thank you very much.

Speaker's Statement

Governor-General's Visit

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Prior to recognizing the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs and Housing, I have a statement for the House.

Their Excellencies the Governor-General of Canada and Mrs. LeBlanc will enter the Assembly Chamber at 11 a.m. tomorrow. Members and invited guests have been requested to take their places in the Chamber and the galleries by 10:55 a.m. For the convenience of all members, a two-minute bell will sound at 10:52 a.m.

* * *

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand up and talk on this resolution put forth by the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) regarding the Manitoba Home Renovation Program.

I must comment first on the addition of the four words that she put to her amendment, "and in the North." It is kind of ironic that there is a reference to the North because it is just very, very recently that I concluded a trip up to The Pas. At The Pas there was an announcement of an additional \$3.2 million to northern and native funding of housing in Manitoba. This was an increase of a budget line of the Department of Housing from \$4.8 million to \$8 million, which was a very, very significant increase in funding to the housing in the North and the rural area.

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

This was something that was initiated because of the recognition of the need for adequate housing and an upgrading of units in the rural area and the North of Manitoba. What it did was, it identified over 340 various small towns in Manitoba. It also identified 160 units that would be brought back on stream with their renovation program. It also indicated putting in sewer and water for the area of Pikwitonei and also for water into Nelson House, I believe it was, during that announcement.

So to say that this government does not have any type of concern of housing for the North and for the rural area is totally, totally out of line. It is absurd. The budget increased from \$4.8 million to \$8 million, an addition of \$3.2 million, and this was all in the last announcement back in August of this year. It shows the fact that the commitment of this government is to

recognize that there is a value and there is a resource to housing in Manitoba and particularly a commitment by this department and this government to provide housing and good housing that is fair and comparable of any parts of Manitoba.

In regard to the rest of the resolution that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) brought forth, there are a lot of things in there that I would like to correct. One of the first things that I would like to correct is the fact that the totals of the applications that were received are well over 7,000; in fact, well over 7,200 applications have been processed. The grants paid from that amount are just over 6,000; 6,141 actually have been paid out on this program.

It has received strong accolades in the community. The community has shown that they are receptive to this type of initiative regarding the housing and the availability of upgrading their housing. In fact, some of the figures in upgrades—57 percent of the total grants in the province have been paid out to the homes that were valued at \$75,000 or less. The idea that the member has put forth that the threshold is too high really is not a valid consequence because well over half of them were valued at less than \$75,000 and a quarter of all the grants were assessed at a value of \$50,000 or less.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am wondering if the minister would be willing to answer a question I might have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

On the honourable member's point of order, it is not a point of order. It is up to the honourable minister if he wishes to answer a question posed by the honourable member for Wellington, but we also need leave of the House for the honourable member to pose the question or she would not be able to speak on the motion a second time after.

* * *

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave for the honourable member for Wellington to ask a question of the minister? [agreed]

Ms. Barrett: I appreciate this, and I am not asking the question to take up the honourable minister's time.

I would just like to ask the minister if he has available the statistics that show how many of the housing units in the constituencies of Broadway, Point Douglas and Elmwood have an assessed valuation of under \$75,000 and how many houses in those constituencies have assessed valuations of under \$50,000.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question that the member is referring to has a certain amount of logistics to it that I do not have at my fingertips regarding the value of the applications and the value assessed in those particular constituencies. I believe she said Burrows, or was it Point Douglas?

Ms. Barrett: Point Douglas.

Mr. Reimer: Oh, Point Douglas. Pardon me. What I can try to do is to get that type of information for her and for the member for Point Douglas if he was wanting that information, too, but I do not have that type of logistics at my fingertips for the true answer for that question.

If I may continue on with my speaking. Thank you. I would also like to point out to the member for Radisson that in one of the WHEREASes here she is saying that the same budget the Emergency Home Repair Program, which assists thousands of low-income homeowners' repairs for their homes, had its funding reduced by over 90 percent.

This has been changed now. It is not a grant. We have now given them an interest-free loan that they can access, so the availability of funds is still there. It is just that it is now on a loan basis, and it is an interest-free loan. So the money is still there for the Emergency Home Repair Program, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The member has referred also in her WHEREAS regarding the advertising that was put out on the

program. But I must point out that in talking about advertising, we must remember back to when the NDP had the Jobs Fund and the amount of money that went out during that time and some of the programs that were put forth at that time.

We have to look back in our history, back to 1983 when there was over \$300,000 spent to promote jobs. It was calculated by the Free Press at that time that this worked out to \$36,000 for every job that was created. So there was a great amount of money that was spent by the NDP in promoting their Jobs Fund during the time.

An Honourable Member: Very clever of you to uncover that information.

Mr. Reimer: Well, these are things that should be brought forth, you know, when they are talking about this government and how we try to let people know. We try to inform the constituents of Manitoba of these programs that we have, and it is just a matter of course in giving some sort of information to them.

We also look back to some of the times of advertising. And we should mention Limestone and the \$300,000 that was spent—

* (1730)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable minister that we are dealing with the honourable member for Radisson's (Ms. Cerilli) resolution which is dealing with the housing Home Renovation Program.

The honourable minister is tending to lean away from that. I would ask the honourable minister to be relevant to the resolution before us.

Mr. Reimer: I thank the Deputy Speaker for clarification. We were talking in a sense about one of the WHEREASes regarding the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). We were talking about money that is spent by the provincial government on promotional advertising. I was sort of just elaborating on promotional advertising in all its aspects and the fact that even in 1985 \$2.9 million was allocated in the

Estimates of cultural affairs with the previous government.

So there is always this advertisement budget that is in there for any type of program that is coming up. But I would like to just point out to the members that in looking at the amount of grants that have been put forth through the program that what this has done has leveraged over \$40 million in private sector investment towards improving our provincial housing stock.

This has to have a tremendous ripple effect of not only the jobs that it creates but the spin-off effect of the consumer goods that are purchased, the taxes that are paid, the jobs that are created and the people who are investing in their homes and the improvements for their homes.

Like I say, there were over 26,000 applications that have been sent out. We are still waiting for some of the applications to come back but, at the same time, what has come back is, I have been fortunate that I get letters of commendation from people who have taken advantage of the program, and I would just like to read a letter, and this is from one of the constituents who lives in the constituency of Dauphin. I am sure the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) would like to hear this.

It says, and this is addressed to me: Your Manitoba Home Renovation Program grant of \$1,000 was gratefully received and appreciated. I am very proud of my home now. The men who came to do the work did a very good job and prided themselves in their job, especially one young man who has a wife and child to support and finally had work. He had not worked most of the winter. With this grant, it will help to paint the places where vinyl could not be raised. Thanks to all of you for your assistance.

This is just one of many letters that I received regarding some of the emphasis. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a whole file of letters that I could read, and these are where people have appreciated the fact that this government has taken the emphasis on trying to help them, the fact that the monies have created jobs, the fact that these people are working, the fact that the grant application process has been open and easy for

them to understand. The department has been very responsive to the whole application of this.

It is something that this government is very proud of. It was actually very far seeing by the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) when she mentioned that the North should be included in this, because, as mentioned, there was an awful lot of money that was put forth for northern initiatives, for improving the housing, to improve government funding in that area, so with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to give that type of emphasis to this program and the accountability of it all. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to be able to rise and put on the record just a few words in regards to the resolution that the honourable member has put forward, and I think it is important to note that the condemnation that is inherent in the resolution as it speaks to housing in general terms and the actions that our government has taken is only an indication as to how little attention the opposition members have paid to this whole issue, and I think it is probably somewhat of an indication as to why they no longer are in government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The NDP party, when they were in government under the Schreyer administration and under the Pawley administration, had a tremendous opportunity, had a tremendous opportunity, and that is to build the kind of homes that they are now professing should have been built. Yet, what era or what time were the NDP in power? Was it eight years ago? Was it 12 years ago? Was it 20 years ago? The honourable member in her resolution states that there were significant numbers of houses built in this city and in this province which she now says are substandard. Who built them? Who built them? Who built the homes that are now in need of the very significant renovations that people are telling us should be put in place? Inadequate insulation, inadequate structures and inadequate housing, in general, is the legacy that the previous administration has left us with.

So here we are addressing the issue in a very meaningful way, saying as a government that we recognize that the Schreyer administration left us with

a legacy that we now have to remedy. We are quite willing to as a government expend a bit of money in the form of direct grants to homeowners to upgrade those facilities that have been built during that era.

So I say to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the amount of money that has been expended by this government over the last couple of years to ensure that there would be adequate remedial action taken to ensure good housing for our citizens has been applauded far and wide in this province. People in my community, in my constituency, have played a significant role in that upgrade, and a significant number of people have in fact availed themselves of this program and have through that process provided significant employment to those people who work in the building trade.

So there has been a very significant spin-off effect of the program. Fifty-nine percent of the money has been expended in the city of Winnipeg; 18 percent of the money that has been expended has been spent in south-central Manitoba—that is my constituency—and in rural, much of rural southern Manitoba. Many of the communities in northern Manitoba have availed themselves of this program, and as the minister said just a few minutes ago, have applauded the program in general terms.

* (1740)

I think it is important to note the amount of money that has been put forward and put into the hands of people that own homes that needed upgrading was very substantial through the two programs. One is the loans program, and the other, the direct renovation grants program. That is when you see that the individuals, the 6,141 people in Manitoba, that have availed themselves of this program, are now employing a very, very significant number of people.

It does not matter whether you live in Assiniboia, Kirkfield Park, Elmwood, Sturgeon Creek, or whether you live in Altona or Emerson or Piney or Vita. It does not matter. What does matter is that these people are now taking the initiative and upgrading their homes. I think this program has had some very significant effect on the quality of housing that we as a government are now providing to those people that previously could

not afford to avail themselves of the kinds of renovations that were necessary.

I think it is also very significant that there have been some 26,000 applications sent out. I think it is also very significant that within that last month 740-some-odd of these applications were returned to our government as applications for the furthering of this program, so it is not a program that is going to end the day before yesterday. It is a program that will continue. It is a program that others will avail themselves of. I have spoken to many of my constituents asking—and they have asked for information as to how to avail themselves of this program.

I find it interesting that the honourable member opposite, in her address to the resolution, was very critical of the advertising, the amount of money that government has spent in advertising this program, but there are still a lot of people out there that do not know the details of this program. Maybe we should do some more advertising to make sure that all people in this province are aware of this kind of a program and the availability of this kind of program.

It is not the amount of money that has been ruthlessly spent on a daily basis as we used to see by the Pawley administration. It is some money that was set aside to ensure that most people in this province would have at least some awareness of the kind of grant program that we had put forward.

I would suggest to you that this kind of a resolution that has been put forward here really serves no purpose at all. The time that we spent or that we spend on debating these kinds of resolutions, in my view, is a waste of time.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the House that maybe what we should be debating, even in private members' bills, is a bill such as our budgetary bill ensuring that we would pass the kind of legislation that would not allow politicians that governed under the Pawley administration to borrow the huge amounts of money that they borrowed and got us into the entrenchment of the huge debt that this government has incurred. We now are paying huge amounts of money,

\$600 million a year, in interest costs which could be utilized and used to pay for better housing, more child care, better health care, better education—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am really having a lot of trouble hearing the honourable member. This is your time; it is running by the way.

Mr. Penner: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I apologize for raising the ire of the opposition members to the point where they can no longer contain themselves, but it is, I think, a reflection of the ill of this institution that we come here and we waste our time and our energies on debating issues, such as the Home Renovation resolution that was put forward, because it does not really address the true needs of the people of Manitoba.

If we really wanted to spend our time debating issues such as the Home Renovation Program or whether we wanted to spend our time addressing ourselves to the real needs of those people living in that inadequate housing as described in the resolution, then I would suspect that we would in fact focus on the real issue, and that is how you spend the money in the first place, where you get the money from in the second place, and how you focus the attention of that spending to ensure that the people of Manitoba are properly served.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we in this Legislature would focus more closely during private members' hour in that direction, we would, I believe, have a more meaningful process. Then the debate that would incur on this kind of initiative such as the Home Renovation assistance program would serve a more meaningful purpose.

That is really why I wanted to take a few minutes, and I would suggest to all of my colleagues that maybe not for this session, but maybe for a future session, maybe we would all want to pay more attention to the relevance of the private members' bill sector in this building. Maybe we would all want to pay more attention to the true needs and the debate in addressing the real issues that affect Manitobans and our constituents, and maybe that way we would not sit here and waste the time and the money that we waste here by talking about insignificant things.

So I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would encourage the members opposite to support our government's initiatives to, No.1, lower the debt, lower the interest cost, provide better services to our people, to spend more frugally, and ensure that there be proper housing provided in that manner to the people of Manitoba by allowing them to fend for themselves, putting more money in their pockets, by not having them pay the huge amounts of tax and interest cost that the previous administration foisted on us in this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Broadway.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I was up first, and the opposition specifically asked me to make a speech on this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education, on a point of order?

Point of Order

Mrs. McIntosh: On a, well—I guess it is who you see first. Mr. Deputy Speaker, notwithstanding that I stood first, I appreciate that you maybe did not see me first, but the opposition specifically asked me to speak on this resolution a few moments ago, and I would like to correct the misleading information placed on the record by the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The honourable minister did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts. I had recognized the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). He had caught my eye. This is the second or third time he has stood.

* * *

* (1750)

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) said, it is a waste of time talking about inadequate housing. What has he been doing for the last 15 years, the last 15 minutes? He has been wasting our time. The honourable member for Emerson also

said that the poor housing stock of Winnipeg is a legacy of the previous administration, the previous government. Who is the previous government? It is the Tory government. I can even go one administration back, the previous, previous government. It is still a Tory government.

The honourable member for Emerson also stated that it does not matter where a Manitoban lives, whether he lives in Kirkfield Park or in Broadway, but what are the statistics? When we obtained the statistics through The Freedom of Information Act, we found this information, the application as of the time it was extended from the end of March 1994 extended up to the end of this year, 1995. There were 125 approved applications from Kirkfield Park, which is the riding of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), as compared to seven approved applications in my own riding of Broadway.

Let us take another set of figures: 113 in Sturgeon Creek, applications approved, as compared with 16 in Point Douglas. How many from the honourable Minister of Education's (Mrs. McIntosh) riding? One hundred and ten approved as of this time compared to five in Rupertsland. So how shall we evaluate the program? What would a reasonable person say about the program despite the fact that most of the money was spent in advertising? There was more money spent on advertising according to the measurement we received.

So they always say, there is no place like home, and that is very true universally, especially if you do not have any money to go anywhere else like the people in Point Douglas, like people in Broadway, like people in Burrows.

An Honourable Member: How many applications in Burrows?

Mr. Santos: About 40. Yes. What can we say? The more money you have, the more opportunity you have to improve your own house. While dollars can build a house, I tell the members it does not necessarily build a home. It takes a lot of money, it takes a lot of dollars to build a home, to build a house, but then what do you find in a big house empty of love and concern for one

another? It takes a lot of understanding. It takes a lot of concern for each other. It takes a lot of sharing. It takes a lot of love to build a home. People think that because they have grand houses that are three bedrooms and more, they are well off and rich. They are not because, if the house is empty and devoid of love and concern, that is a miserable condition that a man can live, a person can live his life.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am really having trouble making relevancy out of the speech of the honourable member for Broadway. This is about the Home Renovation Program. I would ask the honourable member to be relevant.

Mr. Santos: What I am saying is that home renovation as a privilege is being granted to those who have the most. By definition it is depriving those who do not qualify to renovate their own home. This is exactly what is going on. That is what the statistics prove. All the money is going to those ridings where there are a lot of expensive houses and expensive homes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Broadway has the floor at this time, and I am really having great difficulty hearing the honourable member's presentation. The honourable member for Broadway, to continue.

Mr. Santos: The government, I would say, has a moral duty to help the needy in order that they may uplift themselves from their conditions of poverty, in order that they may enjoy at least a good quality of life. What happened when this government limited the qualification requirement that you must spend at least \$5,000 minimum before you can get a rebate of \$1,000? What happened, especially if your job is on the line, especially if you do not have any income that could generate savings of at least \$5,000? That means you do not qualify. That means you are a second-class citizen because you happen to be poor.

Any government that ignores the needs of the poor, that does not do justice to the afflicted and to the needy,

has no moral right to go there. The government should not rob the poor of the opportunity to improve their lot in life. It is their duty to help them. That is why this resolution says that we should lower the requirement. In fact, there should be no requirement.

An Honourable Member: Just give them the money.

Mr. Santos: No. It is not good to just give the money, because it will generate a lack of responsibility. The thing is that it should be at a reasonable level where everybody has an opportunity to access this privilege to improve their home. That level is not \$5,000. That is a matter for investigation on the statistics of the city.

The home is the best place for any person to be. According to the poet Robert Frost, home is the place—when you have to go there, they have to take you in. It is the place where our children grow up. It is the place where we rear our children, especially in the formative and developmental years of their lives. To be poor, to be in a dilapidated home, is to create an environment of a breeding ground for miseries and social problems and breakdown of ethical values, because poverty is not really a blessing.

Poverty is a condition, a fertile ground which induces people to hate society, to be alienated from the rest of society. The people who consider themselves deprived of privileges and opportunities in life, they were alienated. They blame everybody else but themselves, because they feel that they have been forgotten and neglected.

We should not ignore the plight—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have five minutes remaining.

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

The members will remember that we are gathering tomorrow at 10:55 a.m. for the address of the Governor-General.

