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Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

Name	Constituency	Party
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	Rupert Island	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

Thursday, September 19, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Rail Line Abandonment

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Candice Lasuik, Lloyd Debruin, Ron Highmoor and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Findlay) and federal Minister of Transportation to ensure that the communities currently using the Cowan Sub and Erwood Sub be able to continue shipping their grains to market.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Seasonal Camping Fees

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT provincial parks have provided affordable and accessible recreation for many Manitobans and tourists; and

THAT the provincial government has ended one-day passes, eliminated passes for seniors and made other changes that discourage people from using our parks; and

THAT the provincial government has announced increases in camping fees of up to 100 percent; and

THAT these increases far exceed any cost-of-living increases; and

THAT increases in camping and entrance fees make park usage unaffordable for many Manitobans and will discourage tourists from using our provincial parks;

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to review camping fees in line with cost-of-living increases and return to daily entrance permits to encourage the continued use and enjoyment of Manitoba's provincial parks.

Rail Line Abandonment

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

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

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

WHEREAS rail access is vital for the shipment of grain and other farm commodities in rural communities; and

WHEREAS the proclamation of the Canada Transportation Act on July 1, 1996, gives railways the ability to abandon lines throughout Canada with minimum notice; and

WHEREAS on July 2, 1996, Canadian National announced that it plans to abandon four rail lines in Manitoba including the lines from Dauphin to Minitonas and Swan River to Birch River; and

WHEREAS the abandonment of these lines would put the future of grain elevators at Birch River, Bowsman, Ethelbert and Fork River amongst others at great risk; and

WHEREAS the federal government sold CN without any conditions other than the headquarters of CN remain in Montreal; and

WHEREAS the loss of these rail lines will have a major negative effect upon the overall provincial economy; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has not made any plans to cover the costs of upgrading roads in the areas where rail lines are threatened with abandonment; and

WHEREAS the federal government has not committed any money from the Western Grain Transportation Adjustment Fund to upgrading roads in communities where rail lines are being abandoned.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Transportation and the federal Minister of Transport to ensure that the communities currently using the Cowan Sub and the Erwood Sub are able to continue shipping their grain to markets.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Law Reform Commission and also the Tenth Annual Report, '95-96, of The Manitoba Law Foundation.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report, 1995-96, for the Manitoba Arts Council as well as the Annual Report for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

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 Mr. Mark Minenko, former member for Seven Oaks from 1988 to 1990.

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Cabinet Ministers Spousal Travel Expenses

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the Premier.

Madam Speaker, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) has maintained that it is the government's policy that it is acceptable for taxpayers to pay for spousal travel on commercial flights. Minister Praznik, or the Minister of Energy and Mines, last week said, and I quote: It is unacceptable for taxpayers to pay for commercial flights for family members of cabinet ministers. It is totally and absolutely unacceptable.

I would like to ask the Premier: Who was telling us the truth about the policy, the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik) or the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) of the Province of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, my understanding is that the Minister of Energy and Mines was referring to having the spouse along on a business trip by the minister. We have said before that where we are going to things such as conferences—and this was done in the time that the New Democrats were in government where spouses were included on the program, where there are other types of trips in which spouses were included in the program because there were events that specifically included spouses. I talked about the Team Canada mission and so on, that that is certainly part of the policy.

Mr. Doer: I would like to ask the Minister of Energy and Mines, in a supplementary question, where he stated last week on September 10, 1996, that it was absolutely unacceptable for the taxpayers to pay for family members of cabinet ministers and politicians. This is nothing but their own business, he says, and I quote: As long as they are not adding to the cost of the taxpayers, it is acceptable but they must pay the commercial flight travel.

I would like to ask the Minister of Energy and Mines, was he telling us the truth last week on September 10, or has he a new version of the truth as the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) has this week?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Energy and Mines): Madam Speaker, I would be delighted to

answer that question because as a politician I am sure the Leader of the Opposition knows that when one does an interview, only pieces and clips come from that interview.

Madam Speaker, the question was answered in the context of family members travelling with a minister when they had no role or function on that particular trip, and what the Leader of the Opposition does not know—and I appreciate because it was not reported—is that the next question that came after that was, what is the case if there is a role or if there is a business purpose for that family member to travel, in which case I indicated that there were rules, and I had not been in that predicament, but that there were rules that govern those situations.

Spousal Travel Expenses—Tabling Request

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, I can read and listen to the two answers given by the Minister of Energy and Mines, and I guess they have all got the Atlanta Olympic disease from the Premier, the First Minister, in terms of his twisting and turning about who paid for his hotel room.

Madam Speaker, a final question to the First Minister. Apparently, this policy on spousal travel during these tough times secretly changed, according to his press secretary, sometime in 1994, sometime after the swearing-in ceremony that the Premier attended for Kim Campbell, and apparently this policy changed secretly in 1994. I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the fact that there is no disclosure in any of the press releases from the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) and other ministers of the Crown on spousal travel, will the Premier today agree to table the taxpayer portion of spousal travel since 1994, the taxpayer-paid portion of the commercial flights and other travel so that all of us will have full disclosure and full accountability, which is allegedly one of the themes of this government? Surely that disclosure starts at the top. Let us get that full disclosure in tabling today.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, there has been no change in policy. The policy that prevails went back through the days when the New Democrats were in government, absolutely went back to the days when the New Democrats were in government, that where

there were events that required the attendance of the spouse, that the spouse was there and that took place, I can assure him, during the days of the New Democrats in government and it continues today.

* (1340)

Cabinet Ministers

Spousal Travel Expenses—Tabling Request

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, senior staff of the government, specifically Bonnie Staples, confirmed that there had been a change. Simply, the question was very easy. Will the First Minister table all of the travel since the change took place? A very simple question. Will he now respond?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, there has not been a change. Spouses have been included in travel from the time that New Democrats were in government all the way back to the time when, for instance, annual Premiers' conferences were begun. They were at that time to include spouses, and spouses have travelled for those annual Premiers' conferences throughout several decades and there has been no change.

Cabinet Ministers

Spousal Travel Expenses

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier.

Will the Deputy Premier, in spite of his attempts to mislead Manitobans, who now has told us that he caused his senior staff to use significant resources to carve out a role for his wife well before the trip left Canada—and while they were away he also has tabled information that shows that Canadian Embassy staff talked about Mrs. Downey's assistant, Mrs. Downey's handlers. The handler was identified as Mr. Durhack, a senior I, T and T official.

Will the Deputy Premier tell Manitobans the cost of his staff's time to provide services and support to Mrs. Downey before and during the trip?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, accepting none of the preamble, that matter has been dealt with.

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

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the minister now confirm in the House what he told the media in the hall yesterday, namely, that in spite of whatever staff work was done to support Mrs. Downey, and in spite of whatever good work she did, the trip of some 15 women tourism operators is not at all confirmed at this time, that it is in the planning stages, that no decisions have been made by that group as to where they will go this year? Will he now confirm that in the House?

Mr. Downey: Again, I appreciate what the member is trying to do here, and it certainly is not in the interests of bettering Manitoba, the Pan American Games and the overall tourism activities that were carried out and the positive outcome of the events which took place during the trip. My comments are the same as they were and will continue to be the same, that there are some 15 people considering coming to Manitoba, of which it flowed—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Downey: Well, Madam Speaker, they want to split hairs—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Downey: —of which flowed from a meeting that took place on Mrs. Downey's trip. That matter has been dealt with.

* (1345)

Physician Resources Rural Manitoba

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, today we hear about the partial closure of an emergency ward in Stonewall and the last two weeks the same problem occurred in Morden-Winkler. This summer the same problem occurred in The Pas and over the summer the same problem occurred in Ashern. It occurred over and over again over the past three and four years in Manitoba. The minister keeps promising he is going to do something. He keeps promising and promising.

Will the minister, who today again said he is going to do something, the same speech we have heard for the past three years, immediately announce a program of incentives, peer support and locum support as at least a first start to deal with the serious situation of rural Manitoba considering doctors' exodus?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The honourable member might, rather than asking for a menu of programs like we already have, rather than doing that, he might do well to lend some support to the regionalization of health services which has as one of its major goals the recruitment and retention of physicians throughout rural and northern Manitoba. That is one of the key reasons for regionalization.

He stands up today and he brings attention to a problem that we have right across Canada, and governments across Canada are regionalizing in an effort to make the environment more appropriate for physicians to want to practise their art and provide services to Manitobans. So I certainly recognize the difficulties that communities have when physicians leave or when physicians experience burnout because of overwork.

Another thing I would like to hear some support from the honourable member on is looking at alternative ways to remunerate physicians. I mean, he gives a little lip service every once in a while but let us give it some real support so that we can work productively with physicians in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: How does the minister, who on May 22 of this year promised immediate action in a letter to the Manitoba Medical Association, have the nerve to get up today and throw it back onto the regional boards and say he is going to do something when in fact the number of communities without service doctors has risen from 50 to 65 that are underserved, and there are 25 communities without adequate medical services in this province during this minister's watch and during this minister's inaction?

Mr. McCrae: Jurisdictions right across Canada have had a very difficult time in the last year, year and a half because the American people are seeing the benefits of the Canadian system, and they are trying to copy what we are doing here in Canada by calling on Canadian doctors, probably the best educated physicians in the world, to come and work in the United States and become primary

care providers there. This has created quite a lot of pressure on Canadian jurisdictions. I am acknowledging that. All I am asking is every move that we make to try to address it, the honourable member does not want to support it. Where is he coming from? Does he really care about the things he is asking about or does he have some other agenda, Madam Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, my final supplementary to the minister: Does the minister who has done more to aid the recruitment of Canadian doctors to the U.S. than any other minister in provincial history—will he today commit to the promise he made in May, to the promise he made when the regional boards were set up, to the promise he made in 1995 to do something about the rural doctor depletion and announce immediately today a program for remuneration, a program for some form of incentives, a program for locum support and a program of peer support as a first step towards dealing with rural depletion of doctors?

Mr. McCrae: Over the years, and the last three or four years is certainly no exception, governments in Manitoba have come out with numerous programs to address different physician recruitment problems that have arisen, and we are no different. We have this two-year conditional register that is helping us. It is not the panacea, but it has certainly gone some distance to helping us. We have return-of-service arrangements. We have special circumstances that are requiring special responses. All of those things have happened and are happening, Madam Speaker.

No one maneuver or no one initiative seems to be the panacea here that solves all the problems. The honourable member's question implies that, but he lives in another world somewhere. He has got to recognize that in all the Canadian jurisdictions, American recruiters are on the move. Ask any doctor how many times in the last year their mailbox has been stuffed full of invitations to come here, there or somewhere else in the United States and collect all kinds of money and get all kinds of benefits and all of that, but the honourable member does not pay much attention when the doctors return to Manitoba and help us out in that regard too.

So I ask the honourable member to stay tuned, watch for the initiatives and support them when they do come forward.

* (1350)

Physician Resources Northern Manitoba

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, last February, medical doctors, Banks and Rudman from The Pas, wrote a joint public letter denouncing the shortage of medical officers at The Pas stating that the hospital's specialty and outpatient emergency departments may have to shut down or severely curtail the services they offer. Since then, of course, the Health minister, while authorizing hundreds of thousands of dollars in self-serving public relations propaganda, has at the same time ordered cutbacks in all northern hospitals.

This week, I received a letter from the Health department's spin doctors that was signed by the minister. "Spin doctor" is a phrase I learned from the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) yesterday.

My question to the Minister of Health is, who should northern Manitobans believe, Doctors Banks and Rudman or the spin doctors from the minister's office?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): In spite of the way the question was put, I know it is grounded in a genuine desire to seek solutions to problems in the health care system in Manitoba in general and in The Pas area in particular. The issue is similar to the one raised by the Health critic for the New Democratic Party, and the answers are the same. We do seek partnership. We do seek support from even honourable members opposite because we often respect their opinion when it comes to issues in Manitoba.

So we are making moves that we expect will improve the situation for physician recruitment and retention in Manitoba in those areas that it is harder to recruit to and retain physicians at. But all we do is we work with communities to apply the various programs that we have available to us in a time of increased recruitment on the part of American authorities. All we ask from honourable members opposite is support for those approaches and support for those initiatives.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, I only have one more question to ask the Minister of Health and that is: How is it that he is so confident about the standard of health

care that is being given in northern Manitoba when nurses and doctors who actually work in the field every day do not agree with him, and that there are already cases well documented? I believe, as a matter of fact, one case is on its way to the court system of patients already suffering badly.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member knows that this is a time of transition and change, and doctors and nurses and other people employed in the system do look with some anxiety on the changes that are happening. We understand that. The honourable member represents that here in this House, and I respect that.

In The Pas specifically, the staffing guidelines application had a particular impact in The Pas, and we know that. That is why we used the staffing guidelines implementation in the way that we did to make that as least painful as we could possibly do and still treat other communities in Manitoba on a basis that would be fair with The Pas, Flin Flon, Thompson and those northern communities.

I recognize that change is difficult for some people to accept, and when change happens, there is a tendency on the part of some people to strike out and to object on some other basis other than that being patient care which is the bottom line, and in the health—oh, excuse me, Madam Speaker.

Lottery Employees Labour Dispute Mediation

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Labour. If you talk to some of the striking workers that are walking the picket lines with respect to the casinos, there is a sense that this is a government that does not care what is actually happening in that area. In fact, there is a great deal of disappointment in the sense the government is not prepared to take some form of immediate action in terms of attempting to be able to resolve this problem.

My question for the Minister of Labour: Can he indicate to this House that today, this afternoon, he is prepared to appoint a mediator in an attempt to resolve this labour dispute?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): I have sent the correspondence from the Lotteries Corporation to Mr.

Olfert. Mr. Olfert, at approximately noon today, wrote back a letter to me. It is a relatively brief letter. I am prepared to table both of these letters in the House. It indicates to me that there is a substantive difference not only on issues but, in fact, what the issues are. Clearly on the basis of the material that I have before me, there is no basis on which to appoint a mediator.

The department has always been willing to have a conciliator there, and I think I can only repeat the words of Mr. Desjarlais, the Steelworker president up in Thompson, who said these types of issues must be brought back to the bargaining table. There must be collective bargaining. Third party intervention simply does not work where the parties are this far apart.

* (1355)

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I beg to differ with the Minister of Labour. I would ask that the Minister of Labour reconsider the position that this government is taking and take a look in terms of what is happening with the workers, that it is indeed in the best interest of all Manitobans to see this labour dispute resolved and to ask if not the Minister of Labour but the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to take some sort of action so that the workers will have some reason to be optimistic that this issue is going to in fact be resolved.

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I have not said that I would not appoint a mediator. All I simply said is, I see no basis upon which to appoint a mediator.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, the Lotteries board itself is a government appointed—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Inkster was recognized for a final supplementary question. Would you please pose your question?

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Labour acknowledge that the Manitoba Lotteries board is in fact a board that is appointed by this particular government and that maybe what this government should be doing is taking a more proactive approach to resolving this labour dispute as opposed to taking a philosophical approach bent on some hard-right attitude in dealing with labour?

Mr. Toews: If it is a philosophical approach to say that workers have the right to strike and to express their disapproval with their employer, then I am prepared to say I support the right to strike. I have heard members opposite say that the right to strike should in fact be enshrined in our Constitution. I went to the Supreme Court of Canada as a lawyer for this government, defending the right to strike and that party, the New Democratic Party, said that should be enshrined. Now not only the New Democrats but the Liberals want me to interfere.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, that the way you achieve collective agreements is much like the administrative unit of the Lotteries Commission that has now ratified a collective agreement through bargaining within the government framework. We are not unreasonable. We have set a framework; we want to establish a collective agreement in that. As the Minister of Labour, I have to look, is this an appropriate time to intervene by third party, and I say it is not.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: On a point of order, the Minister of Labour had indicated that he would be prepared to table both documents.

An Honourable Member: He did.

Mr. Lamoureux: I understand that he has tabled both documents. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: That is correct. The honourable minister did table the documents.

Lottery Employees Labour Dispute Mediation

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, the public wants a government that treats its people in a fair, even-handed and impartial manner. The public also wants a Department of Labour to use all of the tools at its disposal to quickly settle any strikes or lockouts that occur within the province of Manitoba.

I want to ask the Minister of Labour, who was supposed to be the government's representative in settling these disputes in a fair and even-handed manner, why this

minister whose self-imposed time limit has now expired and since his government has appointed mediators in the University of Manitoba strike, the nursing home strike, the Boeing strike and the sugar workers strike, will he appoint a mediator today to settle the dispute involving the casino workers and the Lotteries Corporation in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): I can appreciate that the members opposite do not believe that workers have a right to strike and to express their disapproval with an employer. I defend the workers' right to strike and I, as members opposite do when they are on the other side of the House, hesitate to get involved directly into labour disputes. Labour disputes are best settled between the parties. Where there is an opportunity for conciliation, I will appoint a conciliator. Where there is an opportunity for mediation to succeed, I will appoint a mediator. This is not the time. Nothing on the basis of the paper that Mr. Olfert or the letter that Mr. Olfert has presented to me indicates that. Mr. Olfert clearly indicates there are numerous outstanding issues in his letter. He agrees with the Lotteries Corporation's position in that respect.

* (1400)

Mr. Reid: The minister appears to have accepted the word of the Lotteries Corporation management people in this respect.

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Labour, for the sake of fairness and impartiality, can this minister indicate to Manitobans how at one moment he can be the decision maker responsible for the Civil Service Commission which negotiates on behalf of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation and then switches hats and becomes the decision maker as the Minister of Labour responsible for applying The Labour Relations Act and determining whether or not to invoke mediation in a dispute that is involved in the province of Manitoba?

How can this minister wear two hats and expect to be treated—said that he is being impartial in these matters. How can he explain that?

Mr. Toews: I trust, Madam Speaker, that I will do it in the same even-handed manner that NDP ministers whom I served under did it.

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

Mr. Reid: Then, Madam Speaker, for the sake of fairness for the people of Manitoba and for the casino workers in this province, will this minister remove the perceived conflict of positions that he has and now appoint an independent third party to act as a mediator to resolve the casino workers strike in this province so people can get back to work and people can get on with their lives?

Mr. Toews: If the member for Transcona wants to talk about fairness, we can do that. But simply put, how can I look at all the other civil servants, those civil servants who took a minus two or a zero and who accepted the agreement much like the Lotteries Commission people did in this recent—[interjection]

The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) might have a question to ask me, I do not know, but perhaps she could wait until I finish with this answer. If the member for Wellington has a point of order, maybe she can stand up and say it.

If this is in fact what other civil servants, public servants, who work as hard, if not harder than the casino workers, how can I justify that 10 percent is an acceptable raise? When we settled last year, 3 percent for casino workers, the member for Transcona said it was a double standard and now—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Reid: On a point of order, the minister, I believe, is attempting to mislead Manitobans and this House, Madam Speaker. This is a very serious matter. The minister is attempting to mislead Manitobans and members of this House by saying that I supported the 3 percent. Let me tell you, a direct quote from the article that appeared: NDP Labour critic, Daryl Reid, said the settlement seems reasonable considering the rate of inflation, but it does seem to set a double standard. That was the statement.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Labour on the same point of order.

Mr. Toews: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, he has not quoted from the article directly. What it says, and there are other comments, but he says: NDP Labour critic, Daryl Reid, said the settlement seems reasonable considering the rate of inflation, but it does set a double standard.

There is a sense the government did not want to kill the goose that laid the golden egg, and I want to tender that here in this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Transcona and subsequently spoken to by the honourable Minister of Labour, there was no point of order. It was clearly a dispute over the facts.

Rail Line Abandonment Meeting—Federal Minister

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

After over two and a half months since neither the Back On Track Coalition nor anyone else in northern Manitoba has been able to get a meeting with the federal Minister of Transport over the Sheridan line or the other lines threatened with abandonment, has this minister been able to schedule a meeting with him over this issue?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, we have had a number of meetings involving CN, involving companies from the North, involving citizens of the North as we all push to find a solution to ensure the tracks are kept open in northern Manitoba for all the users.

I can confirm to the member that a meeting between myself and the federal minister, David Anderson, has been set up when we are having the ministers' meeting in about two weeks time.

Mr. Jennissen: I thank the minister for that answer. Further to that, is the minister prepared at this meeting to lead an all-party delegation, including the Back On Track Coalition, directly to the minister at this meeting?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, I think the member can recall being part of a meeting in this building about 10 days ago where we had the interested individuals from the North meet with the CN officials, and significant discussion took place at that time. I think the member recognized that was a positive thing to do.

In terms of meeting with the minister, this is at the federal-provincial ministers' meeting, and I will be expressing to him the views that we talked about at that particular meeting here in this Legislature and the meeting we subsequently had as cabinet with the CN officials where we got some commitments that give us some confidence there is a solution down the road.

RCMP—Sergeant Jennings Conflict of Interest

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

It has come to light that Sergeant Gerry Jennings, the spokesperson for the RCMP in Manitoba, the person who interprets serious matters in this province, whether it is crime statistics, the Headingley riot, the Waterhen standoff, the Pukatawagan blockade, for example, matters often involving government policy, is an active campaigner, indeed was and until his partisanship became known, the president of the Springfield Conservatives. So Manitobans must now wonder how he can be neutral when there is pressure on him to both defend and protect Conservative policy and speak for the RCMP.

My question for the minister is: Would the minister tell Manitobans, when did she first become aware of Sergeant Jennings's apparent conflict, and what actions did she take to preserve the appearance of impartiality of the RCMP?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I understand that Sergeant Jennings has since resigned that position and that he has dealt with this as an internal matter with his employer. I gather that there has been extensive consultation within the RCMP around this matter, and Sergeant Jennings has resigned that position. So I believe that the matter is now closed.

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

* (1410)

Mr. Mackintosh: I will try another question, Madam Speaker.

Would the minister, whom we know does not understand the importance of police independence when she summoned police Chief Henry to a Conservative election announcement last April, would she as the chief law enforcement officer for the Province of Manitoba immediately communicate with the RCMP to help ensure the reassignment of Sergeant Jennings so that this very serious appearance of bias is dealt with?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, as has been spoken about across the floor, it is very clear that civil servants do have rights, the same rights as other people to be active and to be interested and participate in political parties. Now, the member for St. Johns has often tried to take a position, often against the police, often a position in contrast to the police and their ability to do their job.

It is our government's position, my position as the Attorney General, that we continue to have confidence in the RCMP, in the RCMP's ability to deal with their staffing matters, and I believe they have dealt with this matter.

Education System Student Transportation

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, on September 3, parents from south Transcona made a presentation to the Education Finance Advisory Committee urging them to make changes to the school bus funding policy to consider the availability of transit, and I am pleased the Department of Education is following up on this advice.

I want to ask the Minister of Education, since these policy changes will not affect this year and areas like south Transcona have been told that they may lose their transit bus this February, I want to ask the minister if this year she will reinstate the designation of rural for south Transcona so they will receive the \$345 per student and the division will be able to afford busing those students.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for her expression of appreciation that we are looking at the problem of what to do when City Council makes certain decisions about busing that school boards do not wish to backfill upon, but I would indicate that in 1992-93, which is only three years ago, funding for urban students was \$150 per transportable student in kindergarten to Grade 3. Today it is \$195 per transportable student from kindergarten to Grade 6, so we have considerably expanded both the amount of money and the grades which are covered in the last three years.

The member talks about a cut, as did the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) before. What she is talking about is a \$5 reduction we made this year as an adjustment to the \$200 we had raised it up from the year before. So, in effect, since 1993, we have had a \$45 increase in the last three years per urban transportable student and extended it three more grades.

The school division will have to decide if it needs to bus the students in this year's budget. If the school division decides to transport the students, we will provide the grant.

Ms. Cerilli: Given that the minister did not answer the question, I want to ask her now: This year there is a problem. There are going to be students who do not have adequate transit service. While her department is looking at the policy changes, will she not designate those that have lost their rural designation as "rural" so they can have busing and will she let the school divisions know that there will be a policy change coming for next year so that those school divisions can fill buses that are often empty with students that need bus service?

Mrs. McIntosh: School divisions have the right, the authority and the autonomy to make that decision right now, today. Transcona-Springfield can make its decision, considering the needs of its pupils as it best

determines. Madam Speaker, I reiterate again, because it is important to note, given the questions that have been going on all week, that since 1993, three years ago, Transcona-Springfield and every other division in a city setting gets \$45 more per eligible pupil than it did in '93 and it is extended to three more grades than it used to be extended to, so it is a considerable increase over the last three years, both in money and in the age of the pupils to be transported. Notwithstanding the minor adjustment this year, the overall impact is a \$45 increase, and the member needs to note that, and so I think do the school divisions.

Canadian Wheat Board Government Position

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, yesterday the Premier said that he supports the recommendations of the marketing board. He said, we support the report, that is our position. We all know that supporting all of the recommendations will weaken the single-desk function of the Wheat Board which is really the heart of the Wheat Board.

In light of the fact that in a recent survey only 3 percent of the farmers said they want to see the Wheat Board eliminated, will this government now see the light and recognize what farmers are saying and they want single-desk selling, so will they oppose those recommendations which will weaken the single-desk selling concept of the Wheat Board?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, yesterday, of course, the member and her Leader asked similar questions about the Wheat Board, and in a preamble to that questioning the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) stated that he had been out consulting with farmers all summer, and we find out from an Angus Reid survey that is in today's paper that he spoke to 8 percent of those farmers when he was out there, those ones who are in favour of no change to the Wheat Board, which is a nonsensical position.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, as is verified today by the Angus Reid survey, 92 percent of the farmers in the

prairie provinces believe that there ought to be change to the Canadian Wheat Board. I put forward our rationale yesterday for reasonable change, for sensible change, for change that would be in the best interests of the farmers of Manitoba and the economy of Manitoba, thousands of jobs and substantial millions in investments involved in value-added processing that we ought to have because of the changes that are necessary to the Wheat Board. That is what we stand for, that is what we believe and that is what 92 percent of the farm producers believe. I think the member opposite ought to go back to the future where she wants to be, put her head back in the sand and look at that narrow vision that is presented by the Farmers' Union who call her tune.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Government Fiscal Policy

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise in the House today and it is a pleasure because I would like to take a few moments to share with my fellow members the compilation of the favourable reviews of our province's fiscal performance by some prominent financial organizations.

This is what the CIBC had to say about this government's fiscal performance, and I quote: In general, Manitoba has been one of the most fiscally responsible provinces since the early 1990s and now has the strongest balanced budget legislation in the country.

The Investment Dealers Association of Canada has said that this province was one of the first to rein in spending, focusing on controlling public wage costs, streamlining government operations and increasing efficiencies in the delivery of public services. Also, that this province's nine-year freeze on major tax increases is the longest running in any Canadian province.

Moody's Investors Service in New York City has said that this government's sustained efforts to control spending has led to significant improvements in this province's financial position. Moody's has stated that

several factors provide comfort that the province can maintain positive financial performance, strict balanced budget legislation, provisions for continued accumulation of contingency reserves and the use of prudent economic assumptions. Manitoba's debt burden is moderate by provincial standards and should gradually improve with enhanced budgetary performance and planned debt retirement.

Further, Madam Speaker, Moody's has said that Manitoba's diverse economic base continues to expand, supported by strong business investment, particularly in the manufacturing sector. I am proud to be a part of a government that has put this province on the right path to fiscal responsibility. Manitoba is a great place to live, to work and to raise a family. Thank you.

* (1420)

OCN Blizzard Hockey Team

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to relate to you and others in this Chamber a success story which I am very proud of because it is happening right in my home territory, the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in The Pas. The success story is about the Opaskwayak Cree Nation Blizzard, a Junior A hockey team owned and operated by OCN, which joined the Manitoba Junior Hockey League this year.

The OCN Blizzard has really fired up the whole community in The Pas. The whole community is involved with the hockey team. I was there for their home opener last weekend, and judging from all the enthusiasm and dedication, I just know that the Blizzard will be a success. They won their first two games.

An Honourable Member: Against who?

Mr. Lathlin: Well, I was not going to say which team they beat, because I did not want to offend anybody who might be from Dauphin.

In closing, I would like to offer my congratulations to the chief and council, the administration and all the members of OCN for their dedication and determination in developing our members and territory. This is another one of many successes that OCN has achieved over the past several years. Thank you.

Canadian Wheat Board

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, members opposite have repeatedly found occasions and attempted to portray myself and indeed this government as the enemy of the Canadian Wheat Board as advocates of its demise and destruction. This is without doubt one of the most ridiculous notions to come from the members opposite. I support debate and discussion, a concept they seem to find foreign. Change is a fact of life, and we can either do as members opposite suggest and dig in our heels and fight every step of the way, or we can meet it head-on and change things to meet the needs of farmers today.

I have always been a strong, strong supporter of the board and I want to make that very clear. I think and in fact I know they have done a tremendous job for farmers since its inception. However, despite the role the Wheat Board has played in the past, times have changed. There is no doubt about that. The marketplace of today is vastly different than the marketplace was in 1935 or 1942 when they in fact gained their single-desk selling authority. I say leave the Wheat Board, but we must bend to the wishes of farmers and make changes to the board. We must give them the same freedom that is afforded to all Canadians. The Wheat Board has a role to play, a very aggressive and significant role, but we must put in place now new rules.

The blue ribbon panel established by the federal Minister of Agriculture has made recommendations that are mostly acceptable and should be implemented, with the exception of the unlicensed variety provision. I would like to point out to members opposite an article in today's Free Press that states an Agriculture Canada poll of prairie farmers show 92 percent support changes to the way the Canadian Wheat Board operates—92 percent. Are members opposite going to ignore their demands? Are they going to shackle our families' ability to provide for their families and their ability to distribute high-quality foods that we depend on in Canada and the world today? The debate and the discussion of the role of the Wheat Board will ensure that it continues to play a vital role. I have stood in this House before, and my remarks are on record that it is time that we as farmers and legislators in this building had better start addressing the real issue. [interjection] I am sorry, but I would like to finish this, Madam Speaker, if they would allow.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member have leave to quickly complete his remarks?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Penner: Thank you.

I have stood in this House before, and my remarks are on record that it is time that we as farmers and legislators in this building had better start addressing the real issue that will face us and, in a realistic manner, start negotiations and discussions on how best we serve farmers and set aside institutions that we have had and draft new agreements for new institutions that will serve the farmers today and under new changes and new rules and new criteria that we are faced to deal with in establishing a framework for development of value-added industry in Manitoba based on the utilization of renewable resources. Madam Speaker, it is time the members opposite looked forward and stopped living in the past. We need to look to the future instead. Thank you.

Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise this afternoon to congratulate the—

An Honourable Member: The government.

Mr. Gaudry: No, not the government; heaven forbid.

—Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre's fund-raising dinner last night. There were several members from the Legislature, from the government side and from the official opposition, and, again, you could see the volunteers that have been involved to do such things and many local artists had given paintings for an auction to be done last night and—

An Honourable Member: Did you buy one?

Mr. Gaudry: Yes, I did buy the last one. I would have liked to have bought a few more, but my wife was sitting beside me and she said, don't you dare.

I think I would like to congratulate and commend the work that was done on behalf of the fundraising for the Ukrainian Cultural and Educational Centre and for the people that attended last night. I think it shows what we can do in a community where there are different ethnic groups and cultural—

An Honourable Member: Even Frenchmen to Ukrainian—

Mr. Gaudry: Yes, even French people attend Ukrainian fundraising like my colleague says here. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Rail Line Abandonment

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, on July 2 of this year, CN used the Canada Transportation Act created by the federal Liberal government over a year ago to abandon a number of key rail lines in Manitoba.

Since July 2, CN announced that the Flin Flon line is also up for sale. The bayline is in jeopardy. All of this despite studies and reports by Liberal M.P.s which stress the importance of VIA Rail to northern Manitoba and despite Mr. Axworthy's assurance of support for the bayline and the Port of Churchill.

The abandonment of just one line, the Sheridan line would have serious consequences. It would cripple the lives of workers and their families and devastate the economy of northwest Manitoba. Leaf Rapids would lose 530 jobs because the Ruttan mine is only viable if concentrate can be shipped by rail to the smelter in Flin Flon.

The Flin Flon smelter needs the Ruttan ore to operate at capacity. Lynn Lake would be negatively affected as well as the outlying northern communities. Pukatawagan's 2,000 people would be landlocked without the railroad. Food prices would double. The 10,000 passengers that use the line annually would have to find other modes of transportation. Repap's timber expansion needs the Sheridan line. Tourism and mineral exploration need the Sheridan line. The provincial and federal treasuries need the line to the tune of \$64 million annually.

Northern Manitoba with decent transportation links is capable of explosive economic growth in hydro, in

mining, in forestry and tourism. For all of these reasons New Democrats urge our provincial Minister of Transportation (Mr. Findlay) to tell his federal counterpart at the next meeting two weeks from now that the future of northern Manitoba is at stake. Both ministers should listen seriously to the Back On Track Coalition.

I exhort our minister to ask his cabinet colleagues and the Premier to put pressure on the 12 Manitoba Liberal M.P.s who are silent on this issue. It is time to awaken the dozing dozen. There is still time.

An Honourable Member: Dozy dozen.

Mr. Jennissen: I said dozing, not dozy, although a case could be made either way. There is still time to prevent a potential catastrophe to the people and the economy of northern Manitoba.

* (1430)

Committee Changes

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Gimli with committee changes?

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Yes, Madam Speaker.

I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) that the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) for the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gillshammer); the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) for the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson); and the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you please call Bills 53, 34, 10, 49 and 67.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 53—The Nelson House First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik),

Bill 53, The Nelson House First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act (Loi sur l'accord de mise en oeuvre de la première nation de Nelson House relatif à la convention sur la submersion de terres du Nord manitobain), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

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

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to make a few remarks on Bill 53, The Nelson House First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act. As members may know, this ceremony took place recognizing this particular bill that we are discussing last winter, and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) whose constituency the Nelson First Nation community falls under and I were there along with the Minister of Northern Affairs to take part and also listen to the proceedings of the ceremony that occurred.

As we all know, the agreement occurred in 1977. It resulted from the Northern Flood Agreement as we know it today with the Manitoba government, Manitoba Hydro and with the First Nations that were originally involved in the Northern Flood Agreement. Split Lake, York Landing, Cross Lake, Norway House and Nelson House were all bands that were signatories to the Northern Flood Agreement. The Nelson House community, of course, many people will realize, is located about 100 kilometres west of the City of Thompson in northern Manitoba, situated on Highway 391.

Highway 391, of course, is something that we have raised over and over again in this house and also out there while we have been talking to the people of northern Manitoba. We have continued to stress the importance of upgrading the roads in northern Manitoba, and I believe that Chief Jerry Primrose of the Nelson House community has been instrumental in working with the nonaboriginal communities of northern Manitoba in trying to receive some attention from this government and also from Manitobans in general about the extreme serious decaying of the roads in northern Manitoba, particularly Highway 391 where Nelson House is situated on.

We, along with the community of Nelson House, have been stressing that simply what the Nelson House First

Nation wants is its fair share of the province's highways and transportation budget. The Nelson House community, of course, is a thriving community. It is one of the communities that has long been acknowledged by the Cree Nation in northern Manitoba as being located on the Nelson River along with the other communities of Cross Lake and Norway House, and together with the communities that are situated along the Nelson River, have been regarded by the Cree Nation as the people of the high-rock or the High Rock Cree people.

Certainly this community has a strong history with respect to the Cree oral history of northern Manitoba. That is not to say that today in 1996 that the community is without its socioeconomic problems. As a matter of fact, the community has been dealing extensively with trying to address the many socioeconomic problems, and it is no different than many of the other First Nations communities in northern Manitoba. It has been trying to deal with the problems of the past, the residential school experience and many of the negative things that First Nations people have had to address in their own communities. Certainly this community has been doing that.

In partnership with the other levels of government, it has been able to create a healing centre in that community that employs community members to deal with the outstanding problems that First Nations people are experiencing in that community and also in northern communities. So we do have a healing centre there which promotes the aboriginal aspect of the aboriginal way of life with the traditional healing ceremonies in addressing many of the problems that are faced by aboriginal people in today's society, and incorporating these with the modern methods of treating people who have these psychological problems, if I could use that one example, is being employed by the people of this community. So we are very proud of what the community is doing, and certainly the leadership in that community has been very active in promoting that element of growth for the Nelson House community.

As I was saying, we were in the Nelson House community this past winter, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and I, along with the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik), to witness the signing. Unfortunately, the federal government representatives were not there for the signing. However, the agreement

was of course signed by the federal government a few days after the official signing in the community.

It was indeed a time that we had an opportunity to meet with the members of the community where the elders came out and again talked about the history of the community, talked about life prior to the flooding of the Nelson River and told us about a way of life that was lost to the flooding where trapping, fishing and hunting was the way of life and the way of life that was enjoyed by the people of that community.

Today, we, of course, are living under different circumstances; nevertheless, the traditional way of life of hunting, fishing and trapping still continues. There are strong indications that the traditional way of life—and certainly that knowledge being passed on from the elders to the young people is truly evident with the teachings of the elders in the community to the young people, that they should have a respect and a knowledge of the traditional way of life in order for us to retain as aboriginal people some knowledge of who we are as members of the Cree Nation.

* (1440)

We are extremely proud of the tireless effort by Chief Primrose and his council members on the active work that they have done. We understand that a similar bill is now before the House of Commons and perhaps will receive Royal Assent in the near future. Certainly on our part we will be supporting this bill when the time is appropriate for us, when it goes to committee, and we will look forward to the comments by the Nelson House First Nation and perhaps other people that may be interested in this particular bill.

I certainly will be supportive of this bill, and I am sure I speak for the party that I sit with with respect to this because to do so would not acknowledge the efforts that have been put forth by not only the current-day leadership at Nelson House but certainly the leadership of years gone by.

Much effort has been put into implementing the act that we are now debating in this House. Certainly we will look forward to further comments by other aboriginal people in this province and perhaps from the community of Nelson House.

We simply want to reiterate our congratulations to the hard work that has been extended by Chief Primrose and the council and the elders of that community in their perseverance and their patience, particularly with respect to finally realizing a little bit of the losses that have been experienced by the citizens of Nelson House and certainly other communities that were affected by the Northern Flood Agreement and of the alteration of life caused by the agreement from 1977.

I wanted to make a few brief comments on this. Certainly in the days ahead I will put further comments on the record with respect to how First Nations feel about this bill and particularly their relationship now with other governments, the provincial government and of course the national federal government.

I do thank you for allowing me the opportunity to put a few remarks on record with respect to Bill 53.

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

Bill 34—The Contaminated Sites Remediation and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), Bill 34, The Contaminated Sites Remediation and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant l'assainissement des lieux contaminés et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

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

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on Bill 34, which is a significant piece of legislation, The Contaminated Sites Remediation and Consequential Amendments Act. It is the result of a discussion paper and consultation with the community, and I know that there is much interest in the various impacts that this legislation is going to have.

I guess I am going to in my comments make a number of references to how this is going to affect the site in my constituency that I have been working on for about six

years, which is the Domtar site, which even in the government's own State of the Environment Report is referenced a number of times as being a site in the city that is well known.

But I want to begin by saying that there are numerous sites. I would say there are between 600 and 1,000 that have been registered as contaminated sites. I know that the Department of Environment in relation to this bill has been undertaking a project to identify and map the contaminated sites in Manitoba. I think that is a very important exercise, and I would hope that that information would be made available to us and to the public.

It is important then that we recognize that it is difficult to argue with the principles of this legislation. The legislation seeks to set out a process for identifying and classifying contaminated sites. It attempts to set out a procedure for determining and appropriating a responsibility for contaminated sites and then for laying out a process to follow for the responsible parties to remediate contaminated sites. It gets into a lot of very detailed considerations because of all of the legal issues that can arise when we are dealing with real estate law and the sale of lands, that could have been contaminated or in the future could be found to be contaminated. Part of what I understand this legislation is going to try and deal with is what we term orphan sites and those sites that perhaps are no longer owned by the parties that do the contaminating. It deals with other situations such as when a municipality, or the public, ends up buying lands that are contaminated perhaps through a tax sale. So there are all sorts of different scenarios that the bill has attempted to consider, and I think that is important.

I think what I would like to do is raise some of the concerns that I have with the bill. That begins with even its beginning principles of sustainable development. It makes reference, as many of the Tory government materials do, to economic sustainability and to try and suggest that that is what sustainable development means. In the principles in the bill, they make reference to prevent and mitigate adverse environmental and economic impacts. That raises all sorts of questions. It is interesting because, from my experience, one of the difficulties in the Department of Environment when they are dealing with issues of contaminated sites is they so far do not have to consider issues of value of the property.

So I am not sure how this fits in with the department's mandate. I know that the government is also contemplating a sustainable development act, and that may also have some implications for this type of legislation.

One of the other things that I was concerned about is in the areas of cost that can be prescribed in regulation to be paid by the polluter, and in this legislation they are following the principle, they are trying to apply the principle of polluter pay. But I would raise the whole issue of the cost of interveners in a public review on the rehabilitation of a contaminated site is not one of the things that is included in the area that there could be regulations for providing consideration of the costs.

One of the things I think is important in all of these deliberations about contaminated sites is that we continued as much as possible to try and include the public. I know that there are provisions here for having public hearings—I am going to get into more of that later—but I was concerned that when they are talking about the costs that could be included in the order for remediation, that they did not include the costs for having funding for interveners in the whole review of the remediation plan of a contaminated site or the public hearings.

One of the other things that was in the definitions that I was concerned about is the definition of remediation. The definition that is used in the bill for remediation includes management which can be risk management and not necessarily cleaning up of the soil but to merely reduce the chance of exposure from the public or indeed animals to the contamination, the chemicals or whatever it might be. I think that that is a problem with the definition of remediation.

(Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

In my way of thinking, remediation should mean cleaning it up, and there should be a distinction made in the legislation between what is sometimes used in dealing with contaminated sites, which is risk management, which is different than rehabilitating and cleaning up the site, which means getting rid of the contamination out of the environment. This is an issue in the Domtar site in my constituency where there is a difference between having the soil removed and then having a process used to bioremediate it, which would actually clean the soil, which then would mean the soil could be used again as

fill, but in the case of risk management, it is just going to be capped and left on the site. In my way of thinking, those are two very different things, and that should have been defined in the legislation as under remediation. I am concerned that they have not done that in this legislation.

* (1450)

There are a number of references that the legislation is going to apply to contaminated sites that occurred before it came into force, and this only makes sense. I know that in the past there has been some concern of retroactive-type of legislation, but I think, when you are dealing with legislation like this and contaminated sites, that has to apply, that this will be the law of the land even for contamination that occurred prior to this act coming into force and being passed here, and I think that that is a good thing.

One of the other areas that I want to raise that is of concern is how this legislation is going to interplay, if you will, with The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act as well as The Environment Act. There is a reference in the legislation to The Dangerous Goods Handling and Transportation Act which seems to imply that this legislation is going to have some authority over that act, and I think that that requires some clarification.

One of the other areas that is a big concern has to do with this whole idea of the polluter pays. The way that The Environmental Act process and the mediation process works here, where the Department of Environment in the government acts as a responder or reacts to the company or the individuals that have caused the damage to the environment, those parties are the ones that have to do the investigation of the contaminated site. They have to hire the consultants and the engineers. They may even hire public relations people. They hire people that are there to even represent the community, which seems kind of odd, so a company that has done contamination is the one that is in effect almost the judge and jury of the whole process for remediating the site, because they are the ones that put together the proposal for how the site is going to be remediated. They hire all the people who do that, and then it is up to the department and the government to bring together individuals that could respond.

What we have to make sure is that we are going to have the expertise and the staff in our government Department of Environment to be able to deal with these contaminated sites. We have to make sure that this government does not erode that capacity to such a point that we are left unable to respond to the technical information that is being put forward, that is necessary to rehabilitate these sites. It is interesting when you think of the cost of rehabilitating some of these sites and how the Department of Environment, as empowered in this legislation, can take over a rehabilitation plan, and they will say that, oh, if they do not do it by this such and such a date or if they do not do what we think they should be doing, we are going to take it over. We are going to take over the cleanup and send the company the bill.

But in a lot of cases these cleanups will cost way more than the \$13 million or so that the department has for its entire budget. So I think that we can see why the department—and I guess this is the way that environment legislation is written of another jurisdiction as well, but it does set up a dynamic that we have to be careful of when the polluter and the party causing the contamination are the ones who are responsible for hiring the engineers and the consultants and the people who are going to put together the proposals for the cleanup and even have a large part and say in reviewing those proposals, that we make sure that we are going to have the resources there to be the watchdog and to make sure the public interest is protected.

In our concern for making the polluter pay, that we do not end up just having them get away with the least expensive method of rehabilitating a contaminated site, that is a concern of what could happen. We know that a company is going to be cost-driven, they are going to look at the cheapest way and not necessarily the most environmentally sound or safest way to rehabilitate a site. That is a big concern with this type of legislation, that the government is going to be able to assess and ensure that they are going to be doing what is in the best interest of the future use of the environment and not just looking shortsightedly at risk management and risk abatement.

One of the concerns that I had is in this whole area of the designation of the contaminated site. I noticed that when I was reviewing the discussion document that was prepared on the legislation in the designation of the contaminated site that—and I am going to read this

verbatim from the bill here—it says: If the director determines, having regard to any current, permitted or foreseeable use of a site, that the site is contaminated at a level which poses or may pose a threat to human health or safety or to the environment, the director shall by written order designate the site as contaminated.

I notice from the discussion paper that there was consideration for putting in the wording that would have considered the future health and safety, and that was taken out. So I am wondering if that is not a weakening of this legislation and if we should not be forward-looking when we are dealing with contaminated sites.

In defining a contaminated site we should not just be considering how it is going to affect people now, but we should look to the future; we should look to the health and safety of future citizens and the community. I would think that that reference to the future should be included as a consideration when designating a contaminated site. So I would see that as an important difference between what was going on with the considerations in the discussion document and what happened in the actual wording of this legislation.

One of the other areas that is very important to talk about is in section 3, Persons Responsible for Remediation, and this is where we, I think, have to be very careful. The bill tries to deal with different scenarios of ensuring that the polluter pays, but sometimes I wonder if what they are looking for is to just be able to find someone who is going to have to pay, and that is an important consideration.

I do not have it with me, but I know I have an article in another file in my constituency office that deals with a court case where Domtar and an insurance company were in conflict over if the insurance company should have to pay part of the cleanup, even though Domtar was no longer using that as an insurer. In that case—I do not remember the specifics or the date right now; I do not have the article in front of me—the insurance company was found to be responsible and was required to pay. Those are the kinds of provisions that we want to have in the legislation to ensure that there is going to be the power, if you will, for the legislation to reach in and to deal with those kinds of situations.

* (1500)

It makes reference quite frequently to due diligence, and that is always something that was difficult to show. As I said earlier, it makes reference to the municipality becoming the owner of a contaminated site because of a tax sale, and in that situation I am assuming that a company, even though they may not be paying their taxes, would have to still be held responsible for recovering the cost of decontaminating or rehabilitating a contaminated site.

One of the other things that I thought was positive was that the bill also considers, when they are trying to determine if a party is partially responsible, that they will look at parties that derive a benefit from the activities of a company that contaminated the environment at that site, even though they may not have caused the contamination. I think, again, this is good. If there is a company that is perhaps benefiting from the chemicals that are being manufactured in a site, and if that site is, in turn, contaminating the environment, those people that benefited from those chemicals that were contaminating the environment could also be held responsible. That is sort of how I am understanding this, and I am going to get more clarification on that, but that is the sense of—maybe not if they are benefiting from the chemicals per se, but if they were benefiting from the success of the company, that is more what I think is meant here. It is not so much the products of the company, but if financially parties may not have been owners of that company when they were contaminating the soil or the site, if they benefited from the company, then they can also be held responsible. I think that that is positive.

I think that there are also a few other things in terms of the whole area of consultation in terms of the remediation plan. This is an area again where we have to look at what is happening with other legislation the government is bringing in. They are also dealing with Bill 19, which, as we know, is letting companies off the hook in a sense because they are not going to have to have a public hearing when they are siting a dangerous goods or a hazardous waste disposal facility. On page 22 of the bill, there is a reference that the minister can make recommendations that the commission hold a public hearing regarding a remediation plan. It is interesting that that is in there, and I will have to see if there is any relationship between that and Bill 19, because if there are going to be public hearings for a rehabilitation of a contaminated site, I would think that there should also be public hearings for siting hazardous waste disposal facilities.

This is where comes the whole question of the relationship between The Dangerous Goods and Handling Act, this legislation and The Environment Act. This is also affecting my constituency right now in the Domtar contaminated site because we are wondering if Bill 19 is going to apply there and if they are going to be able to use that bill to have the minister's discretion say they do not need to have a public hearing on that particular mediation even though it is a contaminated site and under this bill the minister may recommend to hold public hearings. But in that case, of course, it relates to the type of remediation and creating this hazardous waste disposal facility and if that is going to allow them to use Bill 19 because of the nature of that particular containment cell.

There is addressing the whole issue of emergency, which, again, I think is important because I know that these procedures for rehabilitating a contaminated site can take quite a long time between when the investigation is done and when a remediation plan is developed and when it is reviewed, and then finally it can be implemented. That can take quite a bit of time, so there is a recognition that the director may undertake remediation in an emergency. I am wondering here if that means that they will tighten up the dates and require certain time lines for the remediation order or if in this case they would actually take over the rehabilitation or the remediation.

As I said earlier, the department likes to wave this around and say, well, if they do not get on with this and clean up this site, we are going to take over the cleanup. But, as I said earlier, the department does not necessarily have the financing to do that because, in a lot of cases, the contaminated site cleanup would cost more than their entire budget for the entire Department of Environment. So they would have to finance it in another way, and I wonder if this government would ever be prepared to do that. As we have seen, that may make them have to violate their balanced budget act.

One of the other issues that I wanted to raise was related to the requirement for a remediation of a contaminated site to be considered under The Environment Act and have to be licensed. This again was an issue in Transcona when the process they were going to use for rehabilitating the Domtar site in their last proposal and attempt required a facility that was going to have a lot of

emissions. There was going to be a stack that would have pollutants emitted into the air in some quantities, and that had to undergo an environmental impact assessment as if it was an industry. I think that is important.

Often we hear the rehabilitation of a contaminated site can often be a risk and pose a greater risk than when the contamination is buried in the ground. So I think that this provision causes me some concern. It says that the licensing requirements of The Environment Act with respect to the developments do not necessarily apply to the remediation of a contaminated site carried out in accordance of this act. That means that there does not necessarily have to be, in my way of thinking, the same kind of licensing. Now, that also leads to the issue of discretion, and a number of people have said to me that this bill does give the minister a lot of discretion. That is something that seems to be a trend with this government.

Then the other area that is also very important in the bill is the apportionment of responsibility for remediation, and this is the section that is going to try and deal with a number of scenarios where there could be a number of parties who share responsibility for the contamination and how they are going to decide. It also raises issues or have to try to deal with issues like if I sold a gas station to my friend from Osborne and that gas station had contaminated the soil when I owned it, and then when she owned the gas station that contamination was found in the soil. How are they going to determine when that contamination occurred? Those are the kind of issues that I think are going to be very difficult to deal with and get bogged down in court. The bill tries to, I think, deal with some of those kind of situations so that there could be a sharing of responsibility in terms of having to pay for the rehabilitation of the site.

It also makes some provisions for cost recovery, and this is a very important issue. I know the whole idea, as in the situation with Transcona and the Domtar site, where they are proposing to cap and put in a containment cell the soil that is contaminated there, there are all sorts of issues of having letters of credit or bonds that would for years and years to come ensure that the parties, the company that contaminated that soil is going to be there, and the cost can be recovered if there is ever problem in the future. So this is the section that I want to give very serious consideration to ensuring that there are going to

be the tools and the power there to ensure that the costs are going to be able to be recovered. We know that a lot of these issues are going to be cost driven.

A few of the things that I am concerned about, also with the legislation, is when are we going to see these definitions of contaminated site. The only definition that I see here is if it is going to be a distinction between a simple or a complex contaminated site, and that deals with if it is simple it is sort of one party, and it is clear who owns the land and it is more straightforward. If it is going to be designated as a complex, it is going to have all of these shared responsibilities and shared parties that are going to be responsible for costs.

* (1510)

I see that I have almost used up all of my time. I guess I wanted to make some mention of the economic benefit that could be derived from having strong contaminated sites and environmental legislation. I have with me a study that was just finished this July on the economic impacts and the benefits of the site remediation in Transcona, and it says that there was a benefit of—where did I see this—well, anyway, there was spent over \$2 million. The study goes into the number of jobs that were created and the economic benefit of just that one site cleanup. So we must keep in mind that if we have strong legislation, and the government with some teeth to enforce it, that contaminated sites could result in economic development by having them cleaned up. That is something that I think is important to consider.

I think that is about all that I have time for today. I look forward to the committee hearings on this when we can deal with some of the questions that I have raised, and I think that I will have more questions for the minister at that time. There are a number of specific details that I did not get a chance to mention today, and I look forward to raising those issues with the minister at another time. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise to say a few words about Bill 34, The Contaminated Sites Remediation and Consequential Amendments Act.

While I am on the floor, I would like to take this occasion to welcome the Pages to this session of the

Legislature. I look forward to them. We have already seen them working here, and they are doing a very wonderful job. Again, I hope this is a wonderful experience for them, as with the Interns. Although our party does not have the benefit of any Interns, we hope their experience will be a good one, so I want to make a comment to that.

I just have a few brief words to say about this bill. This bill attempts to provide a comprehensive process for dealing with all aspects of contaminated sites in Manitoba. Specifically, it outlines the process and powers for identifying a site, granting authority to inspect a site, the assessment of a site, designating responsibility for remediation with cleaning up or containing a potential health hazard, and imposing fines and other penalties associated with the cost of cleaning up the site.

In general, this is a good piece of legislation, but there are problems. The costs associated with cleaning up contaminated land are astronomical. Too often the owner of contaminated land will evade responsibility for cleanup or abandon the site altogether. This legislation is needed to give the Department of Environment some teeth.

This bill gives the Department of Environment authority to impose fines, dictate responsibility, and regain money spent on cleanup of contaminated sites. For individuals, fines range from \$50,000 for a first offence to \$100,000 for a second offence and imprisonment for a term of not more than one year. For corporations, fines for a first offence range from \$500,000 and a million dollars for a second offence.

Where this act is not so clear is in defining who is responsible for the cleanup. In this act, it states that an owner, occupier, manager, creditor or director of a corporation or persons acting as employee or officer can be held responsible, but it also dictates who is not responsible. In this act it states that so long as a corporation or individual exercises due diligence with respect to site and its contaminants, they possibly could not be held responsible. That looks like a hole big enough to drive a contaminated truck through. In essence, the Department of Environment and the minister is given very large leeway in which to judge someone responsible. There is great potential for abuse here.

In general we support this bill. We look forward to it going to committee where some amendments could be made to tighten up as to who can be held responsible for this legislation and give it even more teeth.

Thank you very much, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Bill 10—The Pharmaceutical Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), Bill 10, The Pharmaceutical Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pharmacies).

Is there leave that this bill may remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett)? [agreed]

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Mr. Acting Speaker, Bill 10, The Pharmaceutical Amendment Act is a very short document. In fact, there are only three sections to it, but it raises a very significant concern about where the Legislature and where government in Manitoba is heading. It raises the fundamental question about the input of the public in decision making, the input of legislators and indeed the input of cabinet ministers in coming to decisions.

The bill does a very simple thing. It transfers the responsibility for pharmaceutical regulation from cabinet, that is, the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, to solely the minister. Now, certainly, ministers of government have great powers under the different statutes of the province and so does the cabinet. The ministers and the cabinet have more powers today, Mr. Acting Speaker, than they had even a few short years ago. There has been a devolution of power from the Legislature to cabinet through increasing the ability of government to regulate more and more rather than a Legislature legislate. And now there seems to be the second generation of this movement, that is a movement from even executive or cabinet decision making to ministerial discretion.

When cabinet has to approve an Order-in-Council, there is a check and balance internally even within the confines of the ideology and the experiences of people sitting in that cabinet room. But there are differing views that can be offered—several heads are better than one—but by moving the ministerial fiat, there is a danger that the differing views that can be offered by other cabinet ministers is done away with and there is a danger with that. Another unfortunate fallout from this move to greater ministerial power is that there will not be the publication of regulation. We look at what the regulations—once within the ambit of cabinet and soon to be within the ambit of the minister—are, and they include establishing a formulary that designates products as interchangeable with one or more other products, prescribes the maximum costs chargeable for interchangeable products and the information respecting the pharmaceutical products. These are important matters to individuals in Manitoba, and allowing the minister solely to make those decisions is not the right direction.

Now, I began by talking about how this bill represented a trend. Parliament, the word “parliament,” is derived from the words “to speak.” It is in this institution, our Parliament here in Manitoba, this Legislature, that differing views are brought forward and where in Manitoba we have had a strong tradition of debate. It is here in this Chamber where ideas from the opposition are countered and rebutted by the ideas of the government side.

It is a time for informing ourselves, bearing in mind that most of the legislation that passes through this Chamber is not controversial. I think the public would be amazed to learn, to know that perhaps as much as 80, maybe 90 percent of the bills that we consider are passed unanimously. There is room, despite the partisanship, particularly in this province, the polarization, for the sharing of ideas, for conciliatory efforts to be made, for improvements to be made in the public interest to legislation, and by the exchange of information in the Parliament and in the Legislature the public can be informed of the differing views—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. I am having a bit of a hard time to hear the honourable member for St. Johns doing his presentation. Those people who are carrying on conversations in their seats,

would they please move to the loge or out in the hall. Thank you very much.

Mr. Mackintosh: In fact, this occurrence that you are speaking to right now on the government side speaks to the theme of my speech, and it is this: We have had 18 bills called this week as the Legislature resumed, there have been 29 speeches made on those bills, and of those 29 speeches, not one was by a member of the government benches. Not one was by a backbencher, not one by a cabinet minister.

What does that say to Manitobans? It says that this government is turning its back on the process, on the opportunities that this Legislature offers to Manitobans.

You know, if they think that no one is listening, they should think again. One of the reasons why the government has shut down, well, first of all, the first reason that comes to mind is their arrogance. Do they believe that the legislative agenda, the bills that they have brought forward have merits that are self-evident? Is that the level of their arrogance? And the member for River Heights said, absolutely.

They do not have to convince anyone. Is that what they are saying, or is it an arrogance that stems from their simple belief that once they got a majority in April of 1994, once they had the numbers, nothing else mattered? Is the majority all that matters to this government? Is public opinion of no interest to them anymore now that the election is over?

That I believe represents a contempt not just for this Legislature, for the members, for the people of Manitoba for whom this institution is designed. It is a contempt for the individuals interested in the particular pieces of legislation and the groups that are interested.

Another possible reason why the government has shut down may be that they are afraid of embarrassing comments from their caucus. I mean, we have seen enough embarrassing comments from that side of the House. We can start with the Premier (Mr. Filmon) when he in the spring was talking about, describing and characterizing individuals on this side as, what was it, former communists or former Marxists, pseudo-communists, something like that.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Those kinds of comments, even from the Premier, are such a discredit to this institution and to politicians. It is hard enough being a politician without silly comments, embarrassing comments, embarrasses everyone, but it mostly embarrasses the government. Is that what they are afraid of? They want to put the big thumb particularly on their back bench.

I want to talk about the back bench. I do not know how the back bench on this side deals with this. The backbenchers over there must now have come to the realization that their only role in this Legislature is to meet for a vote. Are they just here to prop up the executive?

Point of Order

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to rise on a point of order. I think it is important to note that there are certain bills that we debate periodically in this House, and from time to time the relevance of the bill is extremely important. We could not agree with you more that there should be a maintenance of some clear direction of the comments that are made by members rising in this House in relevance to a given bill. I appreciate the indulgence of the Speaker in this occasion when we have sat here for almost ten minutes, I believe, and not heard one word in relevance to Bill 10.

I think The Pharmaceutical Act or the amendment to The Pharmaceutical Act is of extreme importance, and I would suspect that the opposition member when he rises would, in fact, want to refer to the act even in his opening remarks, yet I fail to hear that, so I ask your indulgence. We appreciate the patience that you have had in allowing him to ramble on about the inefficiencies of this House. I think it is a condemnation of you and your position, Madam Speaker, and therefore I ask you to rule on it.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Emerson, I would remind the honourable member for St. Johns that indeed one of our rules is explicitly in reading debate of bills to be relevant to the bill.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, it was great, though, to hear a backbencher finally speak in this House after all, but I think what he said proved that not only do they not speak but they do not listen.

I made it very clear. I dealt with the details of the bill, and I talked about how this bill is part of that movement to not only executive dominance but ministerial dominance. That is what this bill is about. That is the principle of this bill, and that is what I am speaking to.

* (1530)

But, Madam Speaker, this is the back bench that we see over yonder that has been silenced. They have been rendered ineffective. You know, I notice the comments of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), and I do not purport to characterize him as a parliamentarian after I heard his comments today in Question Period from his seat, but he did, as a long-time member of this Chamber, offer some observations about what was going wrong with this institution. He said—this is in the Canadian Parliamentary Review from the summer of 1996: Like many members, I have had to come to terms with the question of how much an elected member can lead and how much he has to follow the party line. He said, 30 years ago there was probably more opportunities for individual members to act and speak independently.

You know, it was not 30 years ago; it was last session, Madam Speaker. He went on to say in answer to the question, can you suggest any reforms needed in the Legislature, he responded, I think we are losing opportunities to engage in debate, and I blame this on the influence of television, which encourages us to speak in 30-second bites. He said, regarding the Estimates process, and laments, there used to be a very wide-ranging debate with members on both sides questioning the minister on how his department had spent funds. Now we tend to see opposition critics with special responsibility carry the burden, and it turns into a dialogue which excludes most other members.

Here is a member of this government recognizing how unfortunate it is that this Legislature and individual members have become silenced and no longer perform the role that this place was designed for, that the public requires. What other possible reasons, Madam Speaker, why this government has shut down all debate? I think

it follows from what the Minister of Agriculture said in his interview. This is a government that lives for the TV clip. Its sole purpose is not public engagement but public relations. [interjection]

I heard the government House leader speak from his seat. Madam Speaker, it is important that Manitobans know that not only has the government refused to debate any bill, but it is our information from the government House leader that they do not intend to debate a single bill this session. The back bench is simply going to defer to those written remarks of the ministers when they introduced the bill for second reading last spring. They will not offer their views, their comments. They will not rebut the views of this side. Do you know why? Because here is another reason perhaps why the government has shut down debate. It is because they cannot defend the legislative program that is before this House. They cannot defend it morally, and they cannot defend it intellectually. They cannot defend it intellectually, I suggest, because they have not read the bills. They do not understand the implications for Manitoba society, the long-term implications of such legislation as the privatization of MTS, the regional health authority legislation, the labour legislation before this House. They are in the dark. Then they are spun a line by the ministers, and they are told to just accept it. Do not question it. Do not rise to debate, they must be told. This is an unfortunate move.

If the government believes that all there is to this institution is Question Period and an issue of the day, what becomes of those issues that transcend the daily papers and television stations, those issues that are set out in legislation that may be on the books for many, many years? This is a contempt for the public that we are witnessing, Madam Speaker. They are sitting mute. They are turning their backs on the process and on the public. They have abandoned their role in responsible government.

The government lives and breathes for Question Period, and otherwise they will sit in here only to be chastised from time to time for speaking among themselves and refusing to listen to the views not of MLAs alone, but the constituents that those MLAs represent, the views and the experiences of life that are brought into this Chamber. It is a disrespect for the diversity of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would refer all honourable members to Rule 35, which states that speeches shall be directly relevant to the question under consideration. What is currently under consideration is second reading of Bill 10, The Pharmaceutical Amendment Act. Now, I have been very patient and I have listened very diligently. I have looked at the bill, as well as the minister's opening comments regarding the amendments to the bill. I am having great difficulty understanding the relevance of the honourable member for St. Johns' comments, and I would appreciate it if he would comply with the rule.

Mr. Mackintosh: Madam Speaker, I assure you that my remarks are geared to the principle of this bill which is the movement away from the sharing of responsibility from even cabinet decision making to ministerial fiat. That is what this bill is about. That is the principle of this legislation, and what is happening overall? This bill is just part of a movement where this government has abandoned the respect for legislators and the public of Manitoba for those interested in bills and are moving towards just a government by ministers.

With those comments, Madam Speaker, I look forward to hearing the remarks of members from the government side. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Bill 49—The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, Bill 49, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant les offices régionaux de la santé et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

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

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I am pleased today to rise and join in the debate on Bill 49. The Health critic the honourable member for Kildonan

(Mr. Chomiak) has already outlined our intentions and our thinking in regard to this bill, nonetheless I want to add some personal comments to the record.

I want to begin today by bringing to the minister's attention some of the remarks I have heard during my recent canvassing in Osborne. Some of my constituents are very keen on The Regional Health Authority Act and are actually very confused about the bill, and I want to report some of their comments. As I said, people are puzzled.

Of course, our ordinary citizens do not necessarily know the number of one bill from another, and certainly it is not really necessary that they should do so, but my constituents. I think like many Manitobans, almost to a person, tell me that health care in Manitoba has gone to hell in a handbasket. [interjection] I apologize if the use of the word "hell" is offensive to the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner). I know that his sensibilities are very delicate here.

Here are some of the things that my constituents say. They say that they are extremely concerned about changes in St. Boniface Hospital. They say you should not go there without an advocate, that the staff in this hospital are run off their feet and that they are unable to provide needed services. Second, there are also rumours that in various hospitals money is being saved by ignoring the cleaning, by ignoring the dirt. Of course, this is one way of absorbing cutbacks, but it is very demoralizing to conscientious staff, and it is not an ideal situation for ailing or healing patients.

I have heard complaints from health care workers of their being overworked, especially true of nurses. Clearly, there are some serious labour issues in the health care profession. I have heard from a whole range of people who are disappointed and angry about the closure of Misericordia Hospital as an acute care hospital. People tell me that they cannot make head nor tail of the general direction of health care in this province—regional health boards now, a super health board in Winnipeg tomorrow, again Misericordia closing.

* (1540)

People want to know, why does the government talk about community-based care and keeping people in the community, and then not provide the necessary supports, and, why, in light of the waiting lists, is this government

planning to close another 600 beds in Winnipeg? Why is the government privatizing health care left, right and centre? Most of all, Madam Speaker, why does the minister, who does not seem to be able to manage his way out of a paper bag, not simply resign and make room for somebody who could provide stewardship and guidance during this crisis in our health care?

A summary of the feeling in Osborne—[interjection] Well, as for my response, I respect my constituents, and I congratulate them on their perceptivity and assure them that their conclusions are absolutely correct, that the bewilderment they feel is a precise measure, Madam Speaker, of the government's lack of planning and including here, of course, The Regional Health Act. What is important to this government, and my constituents certainly recognize what is important to this government, is not really the health of Manitobans, not the democratization of health in Manitoba but always, of course, forever cutting the budget and putting money in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) puts it as, the economy is steamrolling ahead.

I wish to note, Madam Speaker, as others have, and I am sure others will, that the outline for health reorganization and for regionalization in the province of Manitoba suggests that we are veering towards the adoption of a New Zealand model, which means, of course, large regions and emphasis on purchase contracts. We note that the New Zealand model functions largely on business principles; that is, purchase of contracts, boards of directors, CEOs and competition. In New Zealand, health care is passed from a service into a business which is not the kind of health care system my constituents or indeed constituents throughout Manitoba want in our province.

Of course, we are not surprised to find the New Zealand signature on our made-in-Manitoba legislation. We know that health care officials from Manitoba have been to New Zealand to analyze and study. Of course, we know that Sir Roger Douglas, that epitome of efficiency and business before everything, has been here. He was on a rubber chicken dinner circuit here last year, Sir Roger Douglas.

So what we will end up here in Manitoba with is the New Zealand model, moving toward a free enterprise

system which reflects the Tory political ideology. Hovering in the background perhaps is another figure of enlightenment, and I think here of Ralph Klein. People in this Chamber might remember a couple of weeks ago when Ralph Klein turned teacher in order to inform Albertans that most of their health care problems were their own fault anyway, so why should they not ante up and pay for their medical bills. But I am digressing and let me return to the topic.

I want to make reference here to the Women's Health Clinic. The Women's Health Clinic, by the way, is a group which takes a different line than Ralph Klein. They think, for example, and I quote here, that economic circumstances and social conditions are major determinants of a person's health. In the spring 1996 newsletter from the Women's Health Clinic they voiced enthusiasm for regionalization, and here I quote: Health care reform and regionalization can be seen as presenting both opportunities and threats to women's health concerns and issues in Manitoba. Only by understanding the opportunities and threats can we come together to create services we need for ourselves and for our communities.

This article then goes on to outline the particular concerns of the women and the women in the Women's Health Clinic, and the minister I know has read this article because he told me so in Estimates. Now, the minister might have read the article, but as with so many other health groups in Manitoba, he does not seem to have honoured their words or heard, because here are a few issues that the Women's Health Clinic article raised: (1) We are especially concerned about the lack of female participation on the proposed new regional health boards. (2) Services such as abortion, weight preoccupation, reproductive health care for teens or midwifery, despite these issues being controversial or essential. (3) If the regional health boards are to fulfill their responsibilities and vision, education and training on women's health issues must be implemented. This could be done by each regional health board being required to create a women's advisory committee with a female board member chairing this committee, indeed, if there are any female board members.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am not a spokesperson for the Women's Health Clinic, and undoubtedly they will be making a presentation to committee. I have only

mentioned a few of their concerns, but I want to point out that their concerns are more honoured in the breach than in the observance. That is to say, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has paid no attention to these concerns that I raised in Estimates and that these women raised apparently in a private meeting with the minister.

Before moving on, I want to take the opportunity to register again with this minister my personal disappointment in his appointments of regional chairs. His refusal to include even a single woman among the appointees, as I have said before, seems to me to demonstrate no respect for the health needs of women and utter contempt for any notion of gender parity or simple fairness. It is simply wrong. It is simply contemptible, and I trust that Manitoba women will take him to task at the committee hearings. Well, so much for women's health care, for those women health care providers who first greeted regionalization as an opportunity to democratize health care and to put their very important health needs on the table.

I want to move on and say a few words about Manitoba Health Organizations. I know, again, that the Manitoba Health Organizations can speak for themselves, and I think we all know that they have already prepared an extremely thorough, articulate presentation for the standing committee on Bill 49. I know that this paper that they have prepared suggests dozens of changes and amendments which would, of course, revamp the bill and bring it in line with the real intentions of regionalized health, which, of course, are grassroots decision making, democratization of the process, public input, better health care, but, as Bill 49 stands, the Manitoba Health Organizations—and, of course, this organization includes nonprofit, nongovernment associations, I believe 160 hospitals, long-term care facilities and other health agencies. It is a very, very respectable organization. The Manitoba Health Organizations believes the minister has seized decision-making and power-making decisions for himself, that there is no intention to democratize and decentralize health.

* (1550)

Furthermore, the Manitoba Health Organizations' presentation suggests that, because the minister holds all the real power and all the authority, the current politicization of health care will only continue. Further-

more, the Manitoba Health Organizations, like most Manitobans, are concerned about charging fees for unnamed services. It appears that the bill will deinsure certain additional services. Eye tests are gone today. Can ears, nose and throat be far behind? What about tonsils, gall bladders, appendix, do we really need those operations? Should we have to pay for them? After all, it is probably our fault if we get sick, as Ralph Klein has told us.

Bill 49 promises more bureaucracy and fewer insured services and this minister, who is paying his Tory cronies for board services, will undoubtedly prate about the need to be economical, and that will boil down to cutting wages for home care workers—

An Honourable Member: Tory cronies?

Ms. McGifford: Well, I was talking about Tory cronies and how they are going to get paid for sitting on boards and how the minister will then complain about there not being enough money, and so his answer will be to cut wages for home care workers, to attempt to privatize, to get nurses to work a little harder so that he can lay a few more off. In other words, to get nurses to betray their colleagues, that sort of thing.

I want to mention some of my caucus's criticism of this bill. Here I am going to be brief because I know that many of my colleagues wish to join in the debate and provide their personal and their community perspectives, but here are some of them.

First of all, whatever happened to the principles of the Canada Health Act—universality, comprehensive coverage, portability, accessibility, public administration? Are they in or are they out the door? Because there is no statement whatsoever in Bill 49 about the principles of medicare and this is very frightening, Madam Speaker.

Second, what about the minister's promise in this House that there would be some form of democratization or election of members to the board? Instead, we have 10 good old Tory boys heading boards which, as our Health critic says, read like a Tory who's who. There is no assurance in this act of elections to board positions, and there is not a word about the need for boards to be reflective of community population. I, of course, have

already mentioned the minister's contempt for women's perspectives regarding health, but there are several other perspectives that will not necessarily be represented and probably will not among the members that he chooses.

Thirdly, I want to mention the sweeping dictatorial powers which the minister has designed for himself. These permeate every aspect of the bill, from giving the minister the right to define core services and to appoint board members to giving the minister the right to veto the yearly plans presented by the board. In other words, in this act the minister calls the shots.

Madam Speaker, as our side of the House has said time and time again, this government's regional health authority bill is a smokescreen and a ruse. The real agenda is to cut funding dramatically by tens of millions and cut funding in rural Manitoba by tens of millions. The responsibility will be passed on to the regional health boards. It will be the regional health boards who will have to close personal care homes, disband hospitals, cut services, institute fee for service and so on.

Meanwhile, the real perpetrators, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and his cabinet cohorts, will escape all the political heat. They will put money in their Fiscal Stabilization Fund and go on vacation, perhaps to South America, free as birds and bold as brass. Ordinary Manitobans, Madam Speaker, will struggle to pay for health care as they now struggle to pay for Pharmacare, as they now struggle to pay for their own eye care.

In closing, I want to make a couple of points. The labour relations sections of Bill 49 are quite simply beyond the pale, and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has addressed this issue. The Minister of Health's complete contempt for workers was well documented during the home care strike, and it has been well documented by his rather odious cat calls in this house. We know he has outworn his welcome as the Minister of Health. Clearly, it is time for him to be replaced.

Think of the irony, Madam Speaker, as this legislation makes clear, the Minister of Health and his cabinet colleagues have absolutely no respect for workers. As they seem to see things, the most contemptible thing a citizen can do in Manitoba is have a job. I suppose that is not quite true. Worse still, in Manitoba these days, is

having a job and earning a decent, livable wage on it. In Manitoba it seems to be a great sin to be a working person, and, of course, this government has been characterized by its attack on the working people. Meanwhile, as Tories set different factions of the community against other factions, they jet about the globe, wives in tow, like corporate executives.

Madam Speaker, we have arrived at a sorry state of affairs, and it is time for change. So let us try for social justice one step at a time, and the most obvious present step is to scrap this very odious and irresponsible piece of legislation.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be able to make some comments today with respect to Bill 49, a bill, as my colleague just mentioned in her debate—that this bill has a sense of absolute and total uncertainty as to what is really going to happen to our health care system throughout this province and, of course, throughout rural Manitoba, where we know that right now in many areas in rural Manitoba there are many, many concerns when it comes to the health care system and the health care service of this province.

Within the areas of northern and rural Manitoba, we have just seen a good example in our local media that emergency services are being cut back at one of the larger rural hospitals just outside of Winnipeg, in Stonewall. We see emergency rooms having to be closed and emergency services being closed on weekends in small communities such as Arborg, Ashern, Eriksdale and others across northern and rural Manitoba.

This bill, Madam Speaker, does not provide any sense or assurance that our health care service is going to be and have the type of service that all Manitobans need within this province.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing some difficulty hearing the honourable member for Interlake.

An Honourable Member: Do not worry, Madam Speaker, you are not missing much.

Mr. Clif Evans: Well, if the deputy minister perhaps might have taken me along with his wife to South America, what I might have to say may be of more interest to him than what he feels I am saying now.

There are many issues with Bill 49 that we are all going to be dealing with throughout the province. In my area alone, Madam Speaker, I would like to relate some of the issues and concerns that are there in the constituency of Interlake and the northern and rural areas that people have brought to my attention in the past couple of years.

I get back to the doctors. Bill 49 does not provide a provision that allows for remuneration for doctors and physicians outside of Winnipeg. We have a fear about that; we fear that because, as I have said about the closing of emergency room services in rural areas, the doctors are a vital, vital part of our system and our health care service throughout this province. We are losing doctors. Is Bill 49 going to be able to provide the necessary resource, the necessary availability of doctors and the necessary ideals that would provide the basis for doctors to come to rural Manitoba, and Manitoba itself, instead of leaving?

* (1600)

This bill does not provide, this bill gives the authority to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and the government of the day. What it is providing is the opportunity for regional boards in our system to be able to take the hit from the communities and the people in the province as this government and health minister continue to offload and reduce spending on our health care services in this province, Madam Speaker. We have seen that already in the past four or five years, the cuts to our health services have, and I again go back to the doctors, the cuts and the inability of this government to provide the necessary incentive for doctors to stay in this province and/or to go to rural Manitoba to provide their services. This government instead has laid back, sat back and accused others of being responsible for doctors leaving and/or not being able to go out to rural Manitoba.

Doctors are vital. Right now we are short many, many doctors in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba. In my communities alone we could use four to six more doctors to properly service and provide the necessary service that is required and needed in the constituency of Interlake for the people of the Interlake and the people of rural Manitoba.

Incidents have occurred for the past few years that in some cases have devastated and have been devastating to

the needs of the people when service was required in emergency cases and the doctors were not available, not there, Madam Speaker, burnt out and having to not be able to provide the service. The cry to this government, the cry to this minister, has been to do something about getting doctors to stay in rural Manitoba, to come to rural Manitoba. This minister has not responded. This government has not responded.

There are many, many issues that we have pointed out, Madam Speaker, that my colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), our Health critic, has pointed out in his news release of September 9, that relate to rural areas. I would like to go over some of them with respect to rural areas that will affect rural Manitobans when Bill 49 comes into play.

What we are seeing with Bill 49 is the tremendous potential of the increase of user fees. This government over the past few years has attempted and has tried its best to implement user fees on people in rural and northern Manitoba to get the service that they should have, the service that they need, the service that should be provided would have to be paid for. Madam Speaker, we all know that our health care system and our health care services are so vital to not only people of this province, people in rural Manitoba, but people across Canada. This government, with Bill 49 and the regional health board services that they are going to be allowing them to provide, is going to put Manitobans at risk at a greater level than we have seen and will see for many years.

Madam Speaker, getting back to some of the situations in rural Manitoba. What and how will regional boards, with the funding that they may be provided for the different services that are going to be required in rural Manitoba—and I refer to home care. We have just gone through a strike created by this government, I feel, and what I have heard and what I continue to hear is that especially in rural Manitoba, especially—and I say that because being a rural member, of course, I am closer to the rural communities than my urban colleagues are, and I do not necessarily always hear what their issues and concerns are—the concern was tremendous, tremendous amount of concern about the lack of co-operation and the lack of incentive that this government provided or did not provide for the people who needed home care in all the areas of this province. There were people and families that were helping each other out.

That is a service in rural Manitoba where there are many, many seniors, many people, who need home care, who would like to be at home and have it provided. Now, even now, the home care workers are being told that they cannot do this and they cannot do that, because they do not want to pay for it. If you want it, you are going to need to pay me a user fee so that I can do the work that I should be doing for you as a public servant in the home care system to be able to provide the needy with the necessary needs and services that are so vitally important to them.

Pharmacare—another issue, Madam Speaker. Just last week I heard from a retired gentleman from the Civil Service Commission, who said that the new implementation of Pharmacare and its new regulations are going to cost his family, a retired worker, close to \$2,000 before Pharmacare will be able to kick in for him. Up to \$2,000, a retired civil servant, wife not working, barely existing on the income that they have, yet with the combined pensions, et cetera, it will take almost \$2,000 of spending prior to being able to get the necessary medication and needs that they both have. That is two. We are not sure of all and how it is affecting. I know it will affect everyone across the area.

Madam Speaker, some of the points again that my colleague the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak)—he has made a hundred points. Not only has he put out a hundred concerns about how Bill 49 will affect our province and the people of our province, but also the Manitoba Health Organizations. They have put out pages of concerns that they have about regional health boards and how this government and this minister are going to administer these new regional health boards and how the new regional health boards are going to administer themselves. How are they going to administer themselves when it comes to funding?

What we may see here is the alienation of health services within the different regions. You are going to see one area fighting with another area to have the essential services that those communities or those areas need: the hospitals, the doctors, home care, personal care. Madam Speaker, this bill potentially could destroy health services in many, many rural areas and communities, may take away the closeness of a health service that we need for our elderly, that we need for our young people and for our children.

One of the issues of this government, when they were proposing the regional health boards, was the fact that after they had announced the members of the board—of course, we all know most of the members of the board, through the different regional health authorities, are tied in somehow to that little blue vehicle that runs around in a circle with one paddle, Madam Speaker. Now, how can we appreciate the fact that these people—and as I mentioned the fact that yes, perhaps these people are very good, perhaps they are very good, but how come they are strictly, mostly Conservative?

There are good people out in all the regional areas that I am sure can do as good of a job. They may be of Liberal stripe; they may be of New Democratic stripe. So, Madam Speaker, we have to live with that. We have to take that into account. I must say that some of the people within my regional health board that have been nominated and appointed, I know personally. I have, on that side of it, no problem. I do have a problem that now Bill 49 states, terms of office of indefinite duration are not appropriate. This is what the MHO said. What it should be, or their proposal, is that the maximum length of office of the first boards need to be specified, example, three years, as does a date by which the introduction of new elected appointed boards must be started, preferably staggered.

* (1610)

The whole point of the issue is that all of a sudden now the minister decides, when he brought this massive scheme out, that we were going to appoint and then set it up so that these board members would be duly elected by their communities. What do we see? That is not going to be true, Madam Speaker. That will not be true. They will continue to either sit on the board as the minister may so wish, but if they want to leave the board, then the minister will decide what other Conservative person may be the best to do the job for that region.

Well, we are concerned. I am concerned. Yes, we want good people on that board, but primarily we want the availability of our health system to those that need it, to the areas that require it, to the hospitals that need funding, to the hospitals such as Ashern that not only service the community of Ashern and Moosehorn but also service the communities north as far as Dauphin River. They also service five First Nation communities between

Eriksdale and Dauphin River and as far as Grand Rapids. The Ashern community hospital services these people. What they need there is the availability to be able to provide the services. They need the resources. They need the funding. They need someone to be able to provide them with a lead role in taking the opportunity and having the opportunity to service. What have we now in Ashern? Two doctors from four. That has devastated the community as it has in the Arborg area.

Madam Speaker, another aspect of the health care service in our communities—I want to point out the fact that, how will regional boards be able to make good decisions on what specific services should be provided in certain communities? I give you a good example of a personal care home. The community of Riverton did a study, had a study prepared, worked very hard, came to this government in good faith, said, we would like a personal care home. We would like to tie in a personal care home in with our seniors home. That began in 1989. We are looking at 1996, and there is nothing. There is no communication. Well, we are all going to leave it up to the decision of the regional boards.

I remember the then Minister of Health, Mr. Orchard, when I brought it to his attention in the House about the fact that we could use a personal care home in the Interlake area, Riverton and Fisher Branch, the then Minister of Health, Mr. Orchard, said, well, you do not need it, there are not enough people there, when, in fact, it was proven that there are people there that need a personal care home. He blamed it on the fact at that time that the Howard Pawley government built everything in Selkirk, and there was more than enough opportunity to do that. Well, we find now through studies that that is not necessarily the truth. Those studies have been provided to the government of the day. How are the regional boards going to respond to those needs?

The other fact of the matter is, Madam Speaker, that not only when I stay with the personal care homes, not only the community of Riverton that worked very hard to be able to provide personal care home service to their communities, so did the community of Fisher Branch. So did the community of Fisher Branch work very, very hard, put its proposals through, talked to the government of the day. What happened? What happened prior to general election '95? What happened? Now, I relate this because I say, how will our regional boards be able to

deal with these important issues of our local communities? And prior to, not long before the dead date line of election '95, government went all the way with a silver spade in their hand and went to Fisher Branch and cut the ground for a personal care home—cut the ground. Would somebody perhaps want to know, is there a personal care home there?

An Honourable Member: Is there a personal care home there?

Mr. Clif Evans: No, because it seemed that the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) decided that what he promised for capital expenditures prior to the '95 election was going to decide now he is going to take it out and leave it up to the regional boards when he forms them, et cetera.

So, Madam Speaker, I am disappointed. I am disappointed in this whole concept of this Bill 49. I am disappointed at the fact that Bill 49 requires these regional health boards to do certain things under a certain mandate, still report to the minister but yet the minister does not have to respond or report to them as to what he is going to do and how he is going to treat the health services in the regions.

The minister is not going to be accountable for anything. He is offloading. This government is offloading. There is more to Bill 49 than we can imagine right now, and we have to work to making sure that this government does not destroy the health services in rural Manitoba, in urban Manitoba and northern Manitoba. I am afraid, we are on this side of the House afraid. We have pointed out with a hundred reasons, a hundred issues.

MHO has pointed out with pages of concerns that this act and this bill and the ideology of the Conservative government is not the way to go and that the only way to go is to go to the grassroots, stay with the grassroots people and be able to have them work out what is necessary, what are the needs, what are the services that should be provided for rural Manitobans and all Manitobans. That is not happening with this government, and it will continue not to happen with this government.

I can tell you that Bill 49 and all the other cuts to your Pharmacare, to your home care, the doctor situation,

those issues and the services that this government has cut back over the years and will continue to cut on will stay in the minds of Manitobans from now until the next election. I can guarantee you, that will stay. People do not believe that the balanced budget scheme that this government has so behind closed doors introduced prior to the last election. People do not believe anymore that when you start taking away the essential services of health and education a balanced budget is not necessarily the priority. The priorities are people, their health care, their education.

Bill 49 is a sham, Madam Speaker, in its content and many of its aspects and what it is allegedly supposed to do for the people of Manitoba. It is a sham. That is what many people have told me that have had the opportunity to read through the bill and through the act and the things that have been going on. People are concerned. People are worried, very worried, that this proposed system under the guise of this minister and this government are not going to work, and we fear the fact that the future for health care for this province will not work for our people. Thank you.

* (1620)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I am pleased to rise today to make a few comments on Bill 49, The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act. A few minutes ago the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) indicated from his seat that he knew what this bill would do, what the ultimate end of this bill was. What I wanted to take some time to explain today as to what I think, what we think, on this side of the House will be the final result of this bill once it is fully implemented over a period of time.

Madam Speaker, this bill is a carbon copy of the New Zealand's health care situation at this time. The government of Manitoba sent people over to New Zealand in the last year to study the system that has been put in place in New Zealand over this last time and, fundamentally, the system in New Zealand is really nothing more than privatized health care. It is health care for profit. In New Zealand hospitals are competing with one another for procedures. In fact, the central health boards will tender out certain types of procedures and certain types of operations and get quotes from different hospitals, and whichever hospital provides the lowest

quote, that particular hospital will get the contract to provide that type of procedure.

In fact, Madam Speaker, it is possible that in New Zealand they may have sales on procedures where certain hospitals will be giving discounts on heart replacements or discounts on hip replacements in the bidding wars that are going on at this time among the hospitals and for the procedures that are being tendered.

Madam Speaker, what this system will do to Manitoba will remake the health care system, in fact, overnight. The government is talking about a system, or trying to implement a system of regional boards, and it is talking about getting representation from the local communities. In actual fact, the real reason behind this system is it is basically an administrative system. It is an administrative system to solve two purposes: one, to deflect responsibility for what flows from this new system to local people and away from the government; and, No. 2, it is designed to gut the entire health care system the way we see it right now.

All the levels of administration we have today at Manitoba Health Services Commission and at the hospital level will eventually be eliminated, and there will be huge cuts to the health care system in Manitoba as a result of this streamlined system that they are bringing in. One only has to look at the structure of the boards to see that they are not elected boards but they are going to be appointed boards. The boards will be appointed by the Tories, and the boards will include Tory hacks who will do what they are told by the people who run the government, not dissimilar in the least from what has happened with the business of putting the public insurance corporation rate reviews under the PUB and getting the government to buy the argument that somehow now you had a nonbiased method of arriving at the rates, when, in fact, we all know that the PUB is composed of Tories. The PUB is Tory appointed, includes a former candidate, Jenny Hillard, for the Tory party. In fact, its role is to simply rubber-stamp what the political mandarins have wished and what they have dictated all along.

I wanted also to point out, Madam Speaker, that the balanced budget legislation that we passed last year in this House in effect will be fuelling this move, because in its new requirements to balance the budget and pay down

the debt, the government has to increase its revenue flow each successive year. It is going to be harder to do that with corresponding cuts from the federal, currently Liberal, government. So what we are going to see in an effort to balance the budget in successive years will be a liquidation or a sell-off of government-owned properties, such as the Manitoba Telephone System. We are seeing the first installment right now, where I believe \$300 million—I think that is the figure that comes to mind; I may be off on that—but that amount of money will accrue to the Finance department next year, and that will get them by another year to satisfy their balanced budget legislation. But that will only do one year. Next year, they will have to privatize the hydro system. The year after, it will have to be the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation. After that, it will have to be something else.

So the health care system is part and parcel of this staged program that the government is running, and they are trying to sell it to the public as piecemeal. They are trying to sell it to the public as a piecemeal approach, that we have a budgetary problem in health care right now, and we are going to do x, y and z to take care of our immediate problem. We have another problem in another area and we are going to do another series of exercises to solve the problem there.

But what, in fact, is happening is that there is a central plan here. There is a central plan that is governed by the balanced budget legislation but is also governed by the international free trade agreements which are locked into place and which in effect are forcing governments to adopt the lowest common denominator in a whole range of areas from labour law to health care and other areas.

So what we have to do is to demonstrate to the people of Manitoba that that is what the government's real intention is with regard to the implementation of this bill, that we are looking at drastic job losses. We are looking at user fees of huge dimensions and, in fact, we are looking at, particularly the rural areas will see a literal devastation of the rural health care. That is where I think the government's Achilles heel is on this particular bill in this process.

What this bill envisions is a drastic rationalization of the rural health care system, and its effects will show up very soon, because let us not forget that this bill is, in fact, designed to take effect April 1 of 1997, so only a

very few months from now this bill is to take effect and the cuts will start. Over the short run, I would think the government might be successful in convincing people that, in fact, it is the health boards, the Tory-appointed health boards, which are responsible for the cuts and not the government themselves. But, if the dislocation is too massive and too immediate, then it will be the government itself that will take the body blows for what it is doing under this Bill 49.

We here on this side of the House have suggested that, in fact, that will be the Achilles heel of this bill, and, in fact, the government will try to slow-track this bill—at least the implementation of the bill—to get themselves beyond the next election in the next three years. If they are successful at that point in getting beyond the next election in the three-year period, then we would see a continued acceleration of the process, which, once again, will see us basically developing a free trade sector in health care, and that is something—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Elmwood will have 20 minutes remaining.

The hour being 4:30 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

* (1630)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). Bill 200 (The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 201—The Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), Bill 201 (The Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act; Loi sur le jour

de solidarité à l'égard des autochtones), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Madam Speaker: Bill 202, The Home Care Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant la protection des soins à domicile et apportant des modifications corrélatives), are we dealing with that? No. Okay. Bill 203, The Public Assets Protection Act (Loi sur la protection des biens publics), no. Bill 205, The Dutch Elm Disease Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la thylose parasitaire de l'orme), no.

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 300—The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College Incorporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: Bill 300, The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College Incorporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Collège biblique Catherine Booth de l'Armée du Salut).

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe), that Bill 300, The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Collège biblique Catherine Booth de l'Armée du Salut, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Laurendeau: Madam Speaker, this is a house-cleaning matter. We were petitioned by the Catherine Booth Bible College for a simple name change to bring into account the William and Catherine Booth College. The petition was brought forward to the House by the college in spring, and we are praying for an early passage. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—Apprenticeship Training

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), that

WHEREAS many European countries have an established tradition of promoting apprenticeship training in key industries to further economic growth; and

WHEREAS some school divisions in Manitoba currently have well-developed apprenticeship programs but others lack the resources needed to promote and develop such programs; and

WHEREAS current training programs have not been successful in several specific industries in the province such as the transportation and garment industry.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly urge the First Minister to consider the formation of a formal working group designed to promote the expansion and development of apprenticeship programs in Manitoba at all levels of the education system geared toward developing the skilled and experienced workers needed for a strong economy.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, right from the beginning, one of the first things I should do is acknowledge my colleague from St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) is celebrating, I understand, his forty-fifth birthday, somewhere around there. This is his second career, and I understand he will have many, many more years as being an MLA—constituents, of course, willing. [interjection] We thank the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) for thoughts for the member for St. Boniface.

Madam Speaker, apprenticeship training is something that is very important to the Liberal Party, to the Liberal caucus. The idea of not only apprenticeship, all sorts of many different forms of training that can be instituted, both within our public school system and outside of the public school system, is something that does need to be addressed, especially when we take a look at the economy

today. You know, today we have many jobs that are out there from within the different industries that are available. There are jobs that are available, but for a number of different or an assortment of different reasons we are not necessarily meeting the requirements in terms of some of the training programs to fill in on some of those jobs.

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

I have always believed, from a party's perspective, that, when we take a look in particular at S1 to S4 in our public education, what we do need to do is to incorporate more job-related experiences for our young people. That is something that is absolutely critically important, today more so than ever before, in the sense that people need to be able to feel as if they are contributing in a very productive way to society.

There are many students that are within our public educational system that would do that much better, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if, in fact, they were provided the opportunity to participate in work-related educational programs. In fact, we will find that some school divisions already do have apprenticeship-modelled programs. I look, in particular, to a school division like Seven Oaks where the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) as a former trustee was at least involved in some ways in ensuring that there were going to be programs for our young people that go beyond just that of academic performance.

What we want to be able to do is provide skill sets that will also allow individuals that might not necessarily be going to a Red River College or to a university the opportunity to gain first-hand experience so that when they do graduate high school, they are entering directly, or at least they have a better opportunity, to enter directly into the workforce, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Programs of that nature are important, not only in terms of at the end of the day the student will get a job, but it also provides an additional incentive for many students to remain in school. So what you might see, for example, is half the day is spent in the classroom and the other half day gathering some sort of work experience. That does occur today. I do not want to attempt to mislead because everyone in this Chamber, I am sure, is fully aware

that to a certain degree there are programs that are there today, but those programs vary considerably to such a degree that there is a need, in particular, for the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and other ministries, ministries that have serious impact, such as a youth directorate, on young people, on getting a more universal program, or at least providing the resources, so that some of the smaller school divisions might have a resource bank in which they could tap into that they can gain some of the insights of what other school divisions have done and have been very successful at doing. In other words, they do not have to reinvent the wheel. In fact, I would ultimately argue that the Department of Education is in a better position to ensure that we have a better quality work-related type training programs being administered virtually throughout the province of Manitoba in many different categories.

The public school system is one area. Another area that I could talk about is with respect to post-secondary forms of training. You know, I worked with a number of government ministers and members of Parliament from Ottawa to try to assist in resolving the issue with respect to the garment industry, where we had a great number of jobs that were not being filled. It was unfortunate in the sense that there are so many Manitobans that are unemployed that would welcome the opportunity to take some of these jobs, and it is trying to get those individual Manitobans to develop the skill sets that are required in order to fill some of those jobs.

* (1640)

The garment industry is one which has always been, to a certain degree, an area where there has been a demand for employees because it is not as easy as one might think at a glance in terms of sitting down at a sewing machine. There is a great deal of experience and training that is required in order to fill these jobs, and they are not necessarily low-wage earning type of jobs. You can make a relatively decent living, especially if you get into some of the technicians in terms of how much they could be garnering in any given year.

But, all in all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does contribute to the province's GNP if we are filling the jobs that are there today. When we do not fill those jobs, we are taking away from the potential of Manitoba's economy. For that reason, we have to become better focused on

finding the areas within the province of Manitoba where those jobs are in providing a workforce or at least assisting in providing workforce that is going to be able to meet those job requirements. There is obviously a very strong role, and many would ultimately argue that our primary role should be in some areas with the private sector in developing and training and so forth, but there is no doubt that there is a need for co-operation between the government and the industry.

The "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED" talks about the formation of a formal working group designed to promote the expansion and development of apprenticeship programs in the province of Manitoba. I think the message that we are trying to get across is that there is a lot of work that needs to be done. The gathering of individuals who will be able to sit down in a working group and address the specific issues of all sorts of training for not only young people but individuals who are maybe forced to retire because of layoffs at the age of 45 or whatever age it might be, that there is a need for us today to look as much as possible at what can be done to ensure that new skill sets are being taught and that there are other opportunities for people.

There are so many things that government can be doing, and we would like to see the government playing a more strong role in the development of skill sets for our workforce, ultimately believing that if the government is prepared to invest in Manitobans in this way, the long-term benefits will more than compensate any short-term costs, because these individuals are then allowed to become that much more productive in our society, thereby increasing the overall GNP of the province of Manitoba, which increases the lifestyle for all Manitobans.

That is why we brought forward the resolution today. It is just to allow for some formal debate on this particular issue and possibly hear some of the ideas. It is an area in which we have spent a considerable amount of time within our caucus and within our party trying to come up with ideas, and we trust and hope that all political parties will vest resources in terms of thoughts. In the government's case where they are in government, they have the opportunity to actually invoke change, and we would highly recommend to the government that they spend more time and efforts in the whole area of apprenticeship training and in particular giving special focus or special attention to our high schools in trying to

provide programs that will, in fact, allow for people, in particular young people, to be able to go through school and get a job at the end of the day or at least be able to have the opportunity to gain some experience while they are going through high school, something which is definitely very, very valuable, as many high school students will tell you. When they go to search for a job they will say that, well, the employer is asking for experience, and how can you have experience if you have not had the opportunity in order to gain that experience?

There are a lot of wonderful opportunities, especially in our high schools, to bring in some bold, new initiatives, and we would ask that the government be much more aggressive on doing just that, not necessarily relying on individual school divisions to be able to come up with programs, because some school divisions are in a much better position in order to be able to develop programs. So there is a very strong role for the Ministry of Education. What we ask is that the government acknowledge that role and take actions to provide the type of programs that I have referred to.

With those few words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for letting me speak.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I listened with great interest to the member for Inkster's (Mr. Lamoureux) speech, and with my eyes wide open in stunned surprise.

That a member of a Liberal Party anywhere in Canada would have the audacity to stand in the House and even say the word "apprenticeship" at this stage in the Government of Canada's decision making is beyond belief, it is absolutely beyond belief.

I can understand that the Liberal Party here in Manitoba is trying to show that they are not the same as their federal counterparts by trying to indicate some concern in apprenticeship, but when the member for Inkster says he urges this government to be much more aggressive where apprenticeship training is concerned, all I can say is, where have you been and what have you been listening to?

The federal government, the Liberal federal government of which the members here are associated very closely, brought in a new Employment Insurance Act. He may

have heard of it; it is called Bill C-12. It came into effect July 1 of this year. What did that act do? That act stated clearly and unequivocally that the federal government will withdraw completely from training purchases between Canada and Manitoba over the next three years. The elimination of federal training purchases will directly impact and dramatically impact in the most possible extreme negative way in Manitoba because Manitoba's apprenticeship program is entirely, or was entirely, funded by the federal government for the in-school portion of training, and the federal withdrawal, then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will completely eliminate whatever we were doing as a government in Manitoba for apprenticeship programming.

I mean, the gall that it takes to be a member of that party, which has wiped out 100 percent of the funding for apprenticeship programming, to stand in the House and then say that we should be more aggressive, let me tell you, we have been aggressive in trying to persuade the federal government to bring back the \$220 million it has chopped in transfer payments, the OLE funding it has chopped from French language education, the apprenticeship training it has chopped for people who wish to pursue a trade for a livelihood. I would ask him and his members here in Manitoba to join us in showing some aggression anywhere with their federal cousins to ask to restore some of the historical funding that has made education at certain levels in Manitoba possible.

In order to offset—the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is now apologizing for the federal government. The member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), and it is his birthday, so I will do this, monsieur, bonne année, but the member for St. Boniface has worked to help us to restore OLE funding. I credit him with that. I know the member for Inkster is terribly ashamed of what the federal government has done here and wants to disassociate himself as much as he can from their decision making.

But we are looking at a task force model to cope with this change. We have no choice. We have to because, in order to offset the federal withdrawal of support for apprenticeship and in order to ensure the long-term financial stability of a provincial apprenticeship programming, a new model involving a generation of new revenue sources will be required. It is not just a desired thing; it is absolutely required.

* (1650)

Such a model, in our belief, and here we do agree with the member, will have to feature industry, labour and apprenticeship investment in the cost of apprenticeship training. We will need up to \$4 million annually just in order to maintain the current level of in-school apprenticeship instruction, and we do have many initiatives going on in that regard. I will touch on them in a moment.

These take place primarily through community colleges, but not just through community colleges. The magnitude of the problem the Liberals have left us with is, to say the least, significant.

Any future model to sustain and enhance the responsiveness of the apprenticeship program will impact directly upon employers and apprentices, specifically the expectation of increased financial contributions.

A consultative process is essential to achieve consensus and support among industry clients and other relevant stakeholders regarding the future of apprenticeship programming in Manitoba. We are in the process of preparing for such a consultation process at this time. We expect that through this consultation process with industry, labour, apprenticeships and educational institutions, we will all collaborate on the development of an action strategy to ensure a strong apprenticeship program, despite the federal government in Manitoba, to serve the needs of the provincial economy into the 21st Century.

The member has no need to applaud the benefits of apprenticeship to this minister or this government, or to speak as if the worth of the trades, and the technicians, and those who are employed in those, to speak as if we do not understand their importance when so many of us come from families that have many, many tradespeople and understand exactly what is entailed and the significance of what is entailed.

We have set up more than 30 trade advisory committees which are responsible for national and provincial occupational analysis, course content guides, competency checklists and regulatory content. Being responsive to industry needs, apprenticeship has been a mainstay, and we do wish the federal government would recognize this,

that it has been a mainstay in providing a competent and skilled workforce for employers, not just provincially, but also interprovincially. New trades and technologies keep emerging as the world changes. Those too have to be developed, and people wanting to participate in those areas of career employment need the training.

The apprenticeship training model combines extended periods of on-the-job practical training with periods of theoretical and technical instruction in the classroom. That program in Manitoba is driven by industry through its representation on the provincial Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board, which we call, for short, the Apprenticeship Board.

We also have the Skills Training Advisory Committee report, which is called Partners in Skills Development, which recognizes the value of the apprenticeship training model. The report made several recommendations aimed at revitalizing the provincial response to ensure its continued relevance to the Manitoba business community, including curriculum quality, portability of credentials, recruitment of new apprentices and trades updating to respond to technological change because the trades are changing with the implementation of new technologies, and updating is required as new inventions for accomplishing certain tasks come into the workforce.

The framework for economic growth called Policy Directions for Manitoba also referenced the key role, which is strategic skills training, including apprenticeship, but not limited to apprenticeship, can play within the government's 10-point economic policy agenda. The document noted the need for improved apprenticeship training within the context of greater participation from business, from labour and other stakeholders. The report on the university of education, what we normally call the Roblin report, the report of the University Education Review Commission, which was released two years ago, stressed the importance of enhanced linkages again between education, organized labour and business sectors, linkages which would lead to regular consultation between and amongst stakeholders on curriculum design, content and delivery.

In response to these challenges, many significant changes have been made in the recent years, and let me just give you a few statistics as an indication of what has been happening and what the results are of what has been happening. The total number of registered apprentices

has increased to 2,710, and that is at the end of '96, which was up 17 percent from the year before. We have registrations of 2,935 projected for this year that we are entering now. New apprenticeship regulations have increased to 741 in '95-96, which was a 25 percent increase since '93-94, and 800 new registrations are projected for '96-97, this current year. Three new trades were designated in '95-96; four more are under consideration in '96-97. So you can see the growth and the interest in apprenticeships and the need for, because growth and interest usually are stimulated by the need for.

A senior year apprenticeship option, which was introduced in '95-96, provides linkages with the secondary school system and employers as well in allowing students to earn complementary and supplementary credits towards apprenticeship certification. Updating of program content has been completed in eight trades and is nearing completion in another 16 trades. We have an articulation and accreditation policy being introduced which will allow senior year technology education programs—it is in the high schools—and community college pre-employment programs to apply for recognition and accreditation of trades-related courses.

We also have the Aboriginal Apprenticeship Training Initiative which has been developed and implemented to provide greater relevance of an access to apprenticeship training for northern and aboriginal Manitobans. That is off to a really good start. In '96 and '97 the Apprenticeship Program was consolidated with Workforce 2000 in order to realize administrative efficiencies, eliminate duplication between the programs and focus the available resources of each program to support future workplace skills training needs.

Trade advisory committees have been expanded and they include a very broad representation, broader than they did before, and the department is currently actively pursuing new appointments to the Apprenticeship Board to best position the government to address the challenges ahead, new challenges which include a complete withdrawal of support from the federal government. So the challenges will be bigger and more interesting than before and, therefore, more hard work here in Manitoba, more aggression will be required.

I trust when we approach the federal government that we can indicate that their Liberal cousins here requested

that we be more aggressive in our attack and our approach in terms of trying to get more support or to get support back, to get back the \$4 million for this, the \$220 million for that, the hundreds of thousands for OLE and French Immersion and all of the other things that have been lost to us by cuts to education by the federal government to the provinces.

I hope the official opposition members will hear this too, because I think the official opposition members, particularly the critic for Education from the NDP who is reading and not listening to me right now—I hope she will read Hansard tomorrow to find out what I am saying—because I think the opposition critic has a responsibility in areas like this to be aware that decisions made here in Manitoba are severely impacted by what is done in Ottawa and by the cuts in funding that we receive. When they mount up into hundreds of millions of dollars it does pose us with some difficulties. So while the official opposition critic chooses not to listen to me now, perhaps she will read her Hansard and take note of the funding dilemmas we have and also take note of the fact that we have not passed those on to the magnitude with which they have been given.

* (1700)

We have in past years provided level tests to new apprentices to determine the level or year of in-school training that could be granted upon registration based on previous trade experience.

I see you are signalling I am going to run out of time. I have a number of other items here I wanted to talk about in terms of the things that we are doing already in Manitoba on our own initiative because of our own interest in expanding and enhancing apprenticeship and trades qualifications and standards.

We have done many things on our own initiative in spite of and not because of the federal cuts. With the federal cuts, of course, we will have added impetus to not only continue with our own initiatives as we did two years ago when we put \$2.5 million into community colleges for new courses and the feds immediately pulled \$2.5 million out. We have those problems to contend with, but we will pursue our new initiatives and attempt to address the great gap that is being left by federal actions in the area of apprenticeship.

I see my time is up. I ask the support of all members in the House for our initiatives.

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too find it curious that the Liberals are introducing a resolution on apprenticeship when it is the federal Liberals, by our accounts, that have cut \$9.5 million just in this year just to Manitoba in apprenticeship. I wonder if the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is going to photocopy this resolution and send it off to Ottawa so that the caucus, cabinet there may understand that there is something called apprenticeship that is valuable, but when we have a federal government that will no longer be funding any apprenticeship programs here in Manitoba, when they are no longer funding adult basic education or co-operative education or workplace training, you have to wonder what the member for Inkster is up to with this kind of resolution.

Before talking about some of the other cuts to apprenticeship and similar programs in Manitoba, I want to speak to some issues specifically in this resolution. First of all, the reference to European countries is interesting, because, as I understand it, the format or the type of apprenticeship program in Europe has much more of a responsibility and involvement investment from industry that would be something that Canada could develop, but in Manitoba and in Canada, the federal Liberal government is offloading its responsibilities for apprenticeship without making sure that anybody is picking it up, either the provinces or the private sector industry.

The other thing about the resolution is it seems, in its reference to high schools and school division, to be trying to stay away from the community colleges and the post-secondary type of apprenticeship, or the after high school type of apprenticeship programs. It also seems to be confusing apprenticeship with work education programs. I do not think there are very many high schools that have apprenticeship as I would define it, which would mean that there would be a workplace component to qualify for certification in a specific trade or occupation, that there would be some onus to be hired as an apprentice to a specific company or trade or industry.

So I think that there is some confusion that is put forward or demonstrated in the resolution. The other thing is that having a working group to deal with

apprenticeship, if the member is suggesting that this should be occurring, as he has referenced in the resolution at the high school level, and he referenced this in his remarks, there are some school divisions that are doing that. I know that at the provincial level there had been some responsibility for that type of co-ordination through the consultant with guidance and that person has been eliminated in the Department of Education. So I do not know if there is someone else there now who is dealing with the work education component at the high school level, but that certainly is important, that there would be some leadership from the Department of Education.

I know that there are a lot of school divisions that I know of in my area—I have been involved with some of the initiatives with River East School Division specifically, where they are looking at trying to develop policy to co-ordinate work education and job placement, co-op ed kind of programs at the division level so that all the schools are not sending students or hoping to send students to the same businesses, so that there are clear procedures for the reporting and the evaluation of the trainees and the students and that there are clear roles for the supervisors. I mean, we do not want to see these types of programs simply become cheap labour and a way for employers for a short period of time to have someone that either they do not have to pay or have to pay very little. So I think those are the kinds of issues that have to be dealt as well by government involvement.

The other issue that has to be dealt with is that there needs to be some assurance that once students are placed there, they are indeed going to be retained as an employee of the company or the business, the institution that has hired them.

With that said, I think it is important to recognize—and I unfortunately cannot quote where I got this statistic, but I was just reading in some material I have that 42 percent of those unemployed in our province have university degrees. That is quite a statistic. We know that less than 20 percent of those graduating from high school go on to college and university, and it is even a smaller number than that who graduate from post-secondary education.

I would suggest that these are some of the people that would be involved in these types of apprenticeship programs. There is a real need for apprenticeship programs, but when we see that the federal government

has dropped some \$12 million in support for community colleges in Manitoba in the last decade, when provincial funding has dropped approximately \$8 million in the last four years for community colleges and some 250 positions have been eliminated in the last four years from Manitoba's three community colleges, you have to realize, and I know from meeting with community colleges, they are very concerned about the future of apprenticeship training in the province.

The provincial government has announced a few new initiatives, but those are often not implemented. I notice the minister made reference to some policy recommendations from their economic proposal from years back, but I do not know that those are all implemented. I think the approach they seem to be emphasizing more than apprenticeship is workfare, which seems to be their flagship for their training section of government. There is \$5.3 million that has been added. Again, a lot of that money is just redirected from social allowance. It is not really new money that is being invested at all.

The other approach, and this is interesting, when I referenced earlier the European model, they would not have programs, I do not think, like workfare, and that again has been an approach that this government has taken. I do not think that is necessarily the kind of model that you would want to see in an apprenticeship program. That has been shown to be a failure in this province.

In 1995-96, the federal government cut \$7 million from the Human Resources Development department in Manitoba. One of the programs, as a result of these cuts, is called Success Skills, a job training program for immigrant men and women, and it faced a reduction that made them, forced them to reduce their enrollment from 45 to 24. They had 300 people applying for all those spots.

In Plan Manitoba, the platform document, Workforce 2000 was touted as having trained or retrained 100,000 Manitobans. The only problem is, we cannot find any record of what they were trained in, and we know that there have been serious concerns about the type of handouts to certain industries for training in jobs like golf course, restaurant staff and those kinds of things. I mean, it is safe to say that those businesses should have been providing for those employees on their own.

The Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board of Manitoba sent a letter to the minister saying that they heard the department is undertaking major revisions to the administration and delivery of the apprenticeship training without their involvement of the Apprenticeship and Trades Qualifications Board. I think that, even though the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has quite rightly been very critical of the federal government, there are some concerns with what is happening at the provincial level, as well.

* (1710)

Last year, the Conservatives had a small increase for some post-secondary institutions, but the university saw a 15.4 cut in capital funding, and support to community colleges did not have enough money invested to cover the cuts from the federal government. The federal government withdrew \$27 million, and the provincial government had, I think, \$2.6 million to try and deal with the effects of that \$27 million cut.

From the last session, Bill 32 is offloading responsibility for taxes onto post-secondary institutions, and \$13 million for the U of M and \$2 million for the U of W and \$2 million for Red River. So all of these cuts are having a huge effect on the availability of training and work placement and work access opportunities for Manitobans. The Conservative government, I am not sure if when they make these cuts it is simply because they are programs that were initiated by the NDP, but when you look at the way they have cut student social allowance, they cut New Careers, when they have cut Access and BUNTEP programs, when they have cut the bursary programs, all of these cuts accumulated have had a huge impact on the opportunity for students who are less able and less advantaged to access post-secondary education so they can better their quality of life and their ability to support themselves.

It seems because they were proven so successful that the Conservatives must cut them simply because it is some ideological reason and perhaps because they do not want to see these successful programs that were initiated by the NDP continue. They did show I think that government can be involved in a number of those programs with developing a partnership with industry to have different kinds of apprenticeship-type programs where young people and many others—a lot of these programs targeted

aboriginal people and new Canadians—that they would have some assistance in having training and have that link to the workforce. That link to the workforce is a tremendous benefit whether it is at the high school level, at the college level or beyond, to have that link and be able to apply academic training or college technological and trades training in a worksite has a tremendous advantage.

I know that when I was in university there was a pilot program that was launched by the then Conservative federal government, and it was launched only in Manitoba and it was tried in, I believe, Quebec. It was a work study program at the University of Manitoba, and it ensured that people had a chance to have jobs on campus that were directly related to their training. It was a tremendous opportunity. Similarly the government in Manitoba had a program with CareerStart, where the young people employed in that program would work in nonprofit organizations, and I want to vouch for the very high quality of experience that can be gained from having a work placement in a nonprofit organization. But this government chose to eliminate that and force nonprofit organizations to have to fund the salary at a rate that is impossible for them and has eliminated that as part of CareerStart.

So I think that, although I am surprised that the Liberals would bring forward such a resolution on apprenticeship when their federal colleagues have gutted apprenticeship across the country, I would have to say that the provincial government also has a long way to go in developing the potential in apprenticeship in Manitoba and developing the kind of apprenticeship that we need in the economy and education in Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Chair, I rise today in support of our honourable Minister of Education's (Mrs. McIntosh) position which was so eloquently explained and set forth in this Chamber a few moments ago, but I must express my sense of total umbrage. I am scandalized if my honourable colleague from Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) thinks he can come into this Chamber and, with his mellifluous rhetoric, confuse and confound the intellect that abounds in this Chamber on this side of the House. [interjection] That is right.

An Honourable Member: Are they maundering over there yet?

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, you never know.

We are at a crisis proportion here, crisis situation at the hands of these heartless Liberals of whom my honourable colleague is a—

An Honourable Member: Except the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry).

Mr. Radcliffe: Except the member for St. Boniface, of course, and félicitations, Monsieur, cette journée, but when we look at the record—and I would suggest that this motion, or this resolution, is presented today to try and baffle us with the real reality with which we are valiantly, this government is valiantly, coping—[interjection] Yes, valiantly coping with his federal cousins in Ottawa. I am told, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the federal government has cut in this past year, this last year alone \$2.5 million.

An Honourable Member: What? How much?

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$2.5 million. That bears repetition. They have removed, they have gutted, \$2.5 million from our apprenticeship programs. Historically, this has been an area of federal responsibility, and I would join a cause, however reluctantly, with the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) in—

An Honourable Member: Please do not go that far.

Mr. Radcliffe: Well, that is true. I do, but I must acknowledge credit where credit is due when she says the importance of apprenticeship—and politics does make strange bedfellows. Nonetheless, I must conjoin with the honourable member for Radisson in—

An Honourable Member: There is one thing about credit; the NDP know all about credit.

Mr. Radcliffe: Yes, they do, they know about credit. Now, I take issue with the woeful tales that the honourable member for Radisson brings forth about all the programs that she alleges were cancelled by this government when, in fact, what one must do is point to the real record.

The facts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are that this government, the Filmon government, the Progressive Con-

servative government in Manitoba, spends 18 percent of a \$5-billion budget on education. That is a commitment. That is a real commitment to the future of our young people in this province. We are acknowledging that we have gone from 17 percent of a \$4-billion budget to 18 percent of a \$5-billion budget in the last several years. [interjection] I hear a little persiflage from the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), but, nonetheless, they cannot overlook the record.

In fact, one would almost say that my honourable colleague—we have an expression from the constituency where I come from, and it is known as chutzpah. He has chutzpah. Well, I am told, and I have it on good authority from one of my learned friends, that chutzpah is, that would be compared to the man who has murdered his mother and father and then throws himself upon the court and asks for leniency because he is an orphan.

* (1720)

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: It is very, very rare that I will stand up on my feet on a point of order on something of this nature. I really, really have to convey that I do love my mom and dad very much, and I would not even contemplate doing something as tragic as that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member did not have a point of order. It is clearly a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was not making any aspersions to the filial bonds that my honourable colleague may have to his antecedents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask those who are holding their discussions in the sidebars to please do so in the loge. I am having a hard enough time understanding the member for River Heights already.

The honourable member for River Heights, to continue.

Mr. Radcliffe: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate your attempts at gaining control of the undercurrents that are sort of running through this Chamber, but I am sure that

it echoes the astonishment of my honourable colleagues on this side of the House of the temerity of the member for Inkster for advancing such a resolution that he has today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the issues that I must reveal to this House today is that our government has made aggressive steps, aggressive, forthright, vigorous steps at partnering education with private industry. We have gone out and we have assessed the real needs of the industry today, and the education that is being dispensed in our community colleges is reciprocating those needs.

But I must relate a personal experience that I observed, I experienced one night sitting here in committee when there were several schoolteachers, I believe from Transcona, who were making a presentation in committee on our balanced budget legislation, and a finer piece of legislation one could not find, I must add. [interjection]

Ah, now I respond to the query from the honourable Minister of Northern Affairs when he makes a very intelligent and perceptive inquiry, the whole issue of partnering private industry and education which we on this side of the House see as a most logical and sequential progress of evolution in the world. These two young women came before this committee, and they were well dressed. They were well spoken. They were well educated, and they had thought out their position very clearly, and I was astounded at the sentiments that they expressed before us at that committee that night.

They said that it was an aberration and it went to the foundation of their beings that one would ever suggest that one would partner private industry and education. Do you know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Because the profit motive would infiltrate into the school system. I was astounded, and if I had ever questioned the decision I made to leave my private practice and enter public life it was reconfirmed at that moment that I wanted to ensure that that attitude hit the wall and went no further. These are the people of whom I thought, my goodness, they are disseminating education to our young people. However, with people at the helm like our honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), I know that these pernicious attitudes will be overcome.

An Honourable Member: Mike, there are a lot of good teachers out there.

Mr. Radcliffe: There are a plethora of good teachers out there, and I have had the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to go out to our schools and meet with our wonderful teachers, the people who are toiling ceaselessly day after day in the classroom with our children, and they do this not for the money they receive, but because of their commitment and devotion. [interjection] They are truly professional.

But I want to return to our text here, because I have diverged a bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am told that we currently send 2,500 apprentices to the community colleges on an annual basis in Manitoba. Now this is a record of which any administration could well be proud.

I hear a tone of derision and the contempt and this guffaw coming from the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Truly, we have programs like the senior years apprenticeship option. We have programs like that trade advisory committee all directed at lifting and creating a higher focus for the apprenticeship programs in our province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In fact, we in the Filmon government have, for the last many, many years, been consultative to the people of Manitoba. We have listened carefully to the voice of the people of Manitoba, and, in fact, that is the reason, I would humbly suggest, why we are back on this side of the House for a third session, a third term.

One of the issues that was presented to the government of Manitoba was spoken through the words of that venerable former leader of this House, the Roblin commission. The Roblin commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to point out stated that the community colleges should acquire a greater emphasis in our educational system. Truly responsive to this lead, our honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has ensured that there has been increased funding to our community colleges.

An Honourable Member: Good show. That is the way to spend our money.

Mr. Radcliffe: Absolutely. We know right now that in the face of diminishing revenue, harder times, increased demands on our money, the Ministry of Education is spending more dollars than ever before on post-secondary education in this province.

Now, comparing that to the presence, the attitude, the consideration of my honourable colleague's federal cousins in Ottawa, do you know what I can inform this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The Liberals in Ottawa have cut 35 per cent—35 per cent of the transfer payments allocated to health, social services, and education. I am scandalized by this performance, truly scandalized by this performance.

We must laud them for the fact that they are vainly trying to get their fiscal house in order, but they have only reduced all the rest of the issues of government 2.8 per cent. Now is this truly a sensitive, caring federal government? Our honourable colleague over here asks us

to then stand up and support his resolution in the face of these sorts of policies? Uh.

I want to point again to the Roblin commission report, which made a number of recommendations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) will have one minute and 30 seconds remaining.

The hour now being 5:30 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 p.m. Thank you. Have a good weekend.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 19, 1996

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