



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, 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, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 11, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): Madam Speaker, I would like to make a correction for the House today. I would like to table the 1996-97 Manitoba Liquor Commission Annual Report, which has been previously distributed. Though members have the correct report, earlier this week it was the '95-96 Manitoba Liquor Commission Annual Report that was mistakenly tabled.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the annual reports for the Manitoba Health Research Council and the Health Information Services of Manitoba Corporation.

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table annual reports which have been previously distributed for 1996-97: the Annual Report for the Department of Government Services and Emergency Expenditures; also the four special operating agencies: Fleet Vehicles Agency, Materials Distribution Agency, Land Management Services Agency and the Mail Management Agency.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Five-Year Report on the Status of Wildlife.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 200—The Interpretation Amendment Act

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), that leave be given to introduce Bill 200, The Interpretation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi d'interprétation), and that the same be now received and read for a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Speaker, just a very few comments regarding our introduction of the bill. As you know, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, when it was released in August of 1991, recommended that The Interpretation Act of Manitoba be amended to provide that all legislation be interpreted subject to aboriginal and treaty rights.

This act deals with the general principles of statutory interpretation. Express recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights with this law would assist in ensuring that all Manitoba legislation is interpreted properly in light of these constitutionally protected rights. Given that several Manitoba statutes currently infringe on rights recognized by past Supreme Court decisions, action on The Interpretation Act is warranted. Without going into details, I will simply note that the current Wildlife Act, The Wild Rice Act, the provincial parks act and The Crown Lands Act, to name a few, all should undergo such a review.

I look forward to debating this bill. Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us this afternoon vingt-quatre étudiants de la douzième année du Collège Jeanne Sauvé sous la direction de Monsieur Bernard DesAutels.

[Translation]

twenty-four Grade 12 students from Collège Jeanne Sauvé under the direction of Mr. Bernard DesAutels.

[English]

This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay).

Also in the public gallery we have twenty-nine Grade 9 students from Pierre Radisson Collegiate under the direction of Mrs. Marj Beddall and Mrs. Lesley Sisco. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flood Compensation Displaced Residents

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, victims of the flood in the Red River Valley were very disappointed when this government and this Premier (Mr. Filmon) refused to apologize for his statements about people that lived on a flood-prone area. People are also quite concerned that over hundreds of families are still living outside of their homes in the Red River Valley, and when you compare that to the 1950s, all families were returned to their homes or alternative homes by Christmas.

I would like to ask the government: how can they justify building a Brunkild dike within four days and still have hundreds of families living outside of their homes before Christmas?

* (1335)

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, I do not think there is any question about the devastation of the flood that went through the Red River Valley this spring, and I think the Leader of the Opposition certainly raises an issue that we are concerned about as well. But I would only remind him that in terms of floodproofing, for example, in the 1979 flood event—which was one of the most recent high-water events—the flood protection program did not even begin until the year after the flood had occurred. In fact, I believe that the facts will bear out that we are between a half and three-quarters of the way there in terms of floodproofing and helping the residents of the valley recover.

For those who are not yet in their homes, they certainly have our greatest sympathy and concern, but

we want to work with them to make sure that as they make their decisions on where they wish to rebuild or under what circumstances they want to return to their previous yard sites, that we have in fact helped them in the maximum way and also prepared them for flood protection for the future.

Flood Compensation Rental Subsidy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, this government issues the words but does not follow it up with the deeds.

We are aware of some of the people who have lost their homes being cut off their rental allowances from the EMO department on December 24. We are further aware of some families that have been told by one department of government, the Department of Environment, that their home cannot be lived in and then been told by the EMO department that they must in fact reside back in their previous home prior to the flooding.

I would like to know how many people are being cut off in December, right up to December 24, by this government. How many families who have lost their homes have not been relocated and are being cut off by this heartless government in terms of their allowances here in Manitoba?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, our government has been working with the local municipalities in terms of identifying people who require temporary accommodation and are listening and abiding by their concerns with regard to temporary accommodations and, in most of the cases, if not all of the cases, are accommodating those people in those temporary accommodations that they choose.

We do have a number who are prepared to spend some time in transition between temporary accommodation and moving back into their homes, so these people have made that choice, but in all cases we have been working with the local authorities in being able to accommodate people who are in temporary accommodation.

* (1340)

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, that was not the question.

**Department of Natural Resources
Water Resources Branch—Staffing**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I have a further question to this government. Many people who have lost their homes and other victims of the flood have been quite concerned about the Department of Natural Resources' own measures in terms of cutbacks in their own Department of Natural Resources. The residents of Ste. Agathe have presented a brief to the commission that speaks to the fact that only one-quarter of the staff are left in the Department of Natural Resources Water Resources branch, from that of 1979. The City of Winnipeg, in their presentation, further amplifies what we have been saying in this House about cutbacks to the monitoring staff in the Department of Natural Resources and calls on the government to reinstate those resources here in the province.

Given the fact that some people will be paying between \$80,000 and \$90,000 to floodproof their homes in the future, they are calling on this government to reinstate the Water Resources staff in this year's budget, which the government is debating now, prior to the Water Commission reporting in June of 1988. Will this government now reinstate the staff that the people in the Red River Valley depend on for the monitoring of our waters and forecasts here in Manitoba?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Well, Madam Speaker, it is quite legitimate to ask whether or not the department will be maintaining adequate forecasting capabilities, and that is one of the things that the Leader of the Opposition was referring to, but I think he also knows full well that we have been attempting to require the federal government to continue with their support of the water monitoring system in this province, and what I have said on the record several times, including in this House, that no matter what happens with the negotiations, we will be maintaining the ability to monitor and forecast within the valley primarily but in other locations across the province.

Secondly, the member, probably unintentionally, indicated that we would not be hearing from the Water Commission until June. The fact is we have asked them for an earlier interim report so that if they have recommendations to give us that we can act on immediately and put into place quickly, that we receive that advice and we will then act on it appropriately.

**Blood Supply
Compensation—Hepatitis C**

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, as the Minister of Health knows, victims of hepatitis C, acquired through tainted blood or blood products, have and continue to suffer the results of an irresponsible blood supply system. If the current situation prevails, many of these individuals may die before compensation becomes a reality. I want to ask the Minister of Health today to tell this House if his government will offer compensation to the victims of hepatitis C acquired through tainted blood.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the member for Osborne raises a very important issue, one of which the provincial ministers of Health entertained some discussion at our meeting in Fredericton, a matter of which I intend to have some discussion with my western colleagues when we meet shortly.

Madam Speaker, let us not forget that the prime responsibility for the delivery and care of the product rests of course with the provider of the product, that having been the Red Cross, and also very importantly with the regulator of the whole system, which is the national government. I think that is why we have seen the federal Minister of Health talking about, in fact, a compensation system, because there is a recognition of responsibility by those who regulate and operate the system.

We as provinces, in essence, have very much been the purchaser of that particular product. The discussion or the answer that I share with the member today is one I very much had in my discussions with representatives of the Hemophilia Society in Manitoba. I think there is a recognition that the prime responsibility rests with those governments, and it is a matter of ensuring that

compensation, if it is going to come, is paid by those governments and those operators.

Ms. McGifford: Surely we have responsibility for purchased services. I want to ask the minister if he will support the work of the Canadian Hemophilia Society by endorsing the compensation resolution which the Quebec Legislature has passed unanimously and by committing to take this resolution to the January meeting of Health ministers.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, let me say that I have had a number of discussions with representatives of the Hemophilia Society, Hemophilia Manitoba. We have shared information in terms of our different ways we face this issue, because I recognize very fully that the people who have contracted hepatitis C are looking for compensation. I do not for one moment doubt or in any way take away from that request.

The fundamental issue, and I would think members opposite would appreciate this, is where does the responsibility lie, and with the people with whom the responsibility lies so should flow the compensation. If the member is asking for Manitoba to move unilaterally, and I do not hear her saying that today, but if she is asking us to move unilaterally and provide a compensation system, that would simply take away from those who have that prime responsibility, the regulator, the national government, and those who provided the product.

So I think we share the same goal, but it is important to appreciate how we get there, because if we are paying compensation for which we do not have a responsibility, that takes dollars away from other areas that require them.

Ms. McGifford: I want to ask the minister: would he please support the resolution which only asks him to agree to negotiate with his federal counterpart? Will he please at least agree to do this?

* (1345)

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the resolution in itself is really not the important issue here. The issue is how do we get, if we in fact are going to get there, to a

compensation package. Members opposite must appreciate, particularly the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) who sat in cabinet for many years, that when you are negotiating with a national government who has had a tendency to pull the provinces into particular issues and offload their responsibility for their actions, how one handles those negotiations to ensure that the provincial interests are met becomes very, very important.

I say to the honourable member with great sincerity that I am meeting very shortly with my counterparts from across western Canada. These are some of the issues we will be discussing, and the strategy that we develop to see the federal government live up to their responsibilities I think is very important to the success of this. It would be inappropriate for me to support today or see such a resolution come forward outside of our process as strategy develops.

We appreciate the sincerity of the gesture, but I think the issue requires somewhat of a different approach to bring it to a successful conclusion for Manitobans and for hemophiliac sufferers from hepatitis C.

Gurpreem Dhaliwal Sentence Appeal

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Yesterday I listened to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) object to questions I have been raising in this House regarding the murder of Carol Marlene Hastings and also the lenient sentence given to her killer, Mr. Dhaliwal, in the court that was heard in Thompson.

The minister, Madam Speaker, accused our members on this side of the House of calling victims' services and the RCMP racist. That could be further from the truth, and he went on to say that even the Oxford House Council indicated that they were not supporting my attempt to appeal the sentence. Chief James Mason of the Oxford House Council is in the gallery this afternoon, and my questions are directed to the Minister of Justice.

Since the family of the late Carol Hastings has stated in that letter that they are not comfortable and receptive to the lenient sentence handed down by the court, will the minister now appeal the sentence?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): On December 4, 1997, a member of the RCMP contacted both Thomas and Ethel Okimow in respect of this particular situation, and they advised the constable that people were putting words in their mouths. I note that both the father and mother of the deceased in this case do not speak, write or understand English, and yet the member sends a letter here in the House without any explanation in very detailed English as to a purported position. I think it is important, given that the RCMP have told me that they are not supportive of an appeal, as to where this letter came from. I am not suggesting that the member in any way wrote the letter; I am suggesting that the information that I am receiving is not consistent with what I am receiving here.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Beauchesne Citation 417 is very clear, Madam Speaker, that "Answers should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Once again this minister is following a tactic that is absolutely reprehensible. He was asked about the appeal. Yesterday he accused the member for Rupertsland and other members of accusing the RCMP and victims' services of being racist. That was never made. We cannot even use the word "racist" in this House because of a ruling that was made some time ago. Now he is questioning the statement made by the family. The member for Rupertsland is a Cree, he speaks Cree, he has spoken to the family. This minister has not done that. He should not criticize the member or the family.

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

Mr. Toews: On the same point of order, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) in the Question Period where I specifically indicated that members opposite were calling members of the RCMP and the Crown's office racist, and in fact he did. Indeed, the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) also joined in those comments, accusing public servants of being racist, and I indicated that at that time.

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

* (1350)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on the same point of order, I have listened carefully to both honourable members, the member for Rupertsland and the honourable Minister of Justice, and as we have heard many, many times in this House from the Chair in ruling on points of order like the one we have before us today, it seems clear to me that what we have is a difference here, a dispute over the facts surrounding this matter, and I do not believe there is a point of order and suggest you might want to consider it in that light.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I thank all honourable members for their advice, and I will take the matter under advisement so that I can review the text of Hansard very, very carefully.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a new point of order, Madam Speaker, and that is based on the comments that the minister just made on the guise of responding to the point of order.

Madam Speaker, I have before me the Hansard and the questions put forward by the member for Rupertsland from December 2, from December 3 and from December 4. One of those days the minister was in the House—on two of those days. I refer the minister to those. Not once did the member for Rupertsland even mention the RCMP or victims' services, let alone this unacceptable accusation from the minister, and for him now after—and I realize we cannot reference the absence of members from the House, but he has not been in Question Period for close to a week other than yesterday—to make accusations, unfounded accusations against other members is unacceptable. This Minister of Justice should do the responsible thing, should respond to the questions and not engage in those kinds of personal attacks. No one criticized the RCMP or victims' services. The real questions were directed at this minister and the sentence, and that is something we deserve an answer to.

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

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, on the renewed point of order, I suggest with respect that the matters raised by the honourable member for Thompson really relate to pretty well the same matter that was the subject of the last point of order and indeed the subject of the questions and the answer. We can debate whether the minister was being responsive to the question as it was put, and indeed I would suggest that he was not out of line in that regard, but that is not what the point of order is about.

The point of order is about the repeated references made by the honourable member for Thompson to Hansard and comments made in this House. You have, Your Honour, already said that you would review this matter, and perhaps the review on the previous point of order probably applies to the second point of order as well, and if that is the case, that is fine. But I suggest that it is appropriate that you review the matter and return to the House with some comments and perhaps a ruling.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable members for their advice, and once again, I indeed will take the point of order under advisement. I will review the context of the advice received from all members. I would, however, at this time remind all members speaking to points of order to be specifically relevant to the point of order and not on debate or responses that were or were not given.

* * *

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

* (1355)

Mr. Robinson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What the minister is saying then, that victims are wrong and the sentence is right.

Will the minister appeal the sentence?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, as I indicated in my prior answers on this particular question, this was a

very difficult case. The Okimow family—indeed 22 members of the Oxford House First Nation met with the Crown attorney to discuss this particular case. They discussed the reasons why a charge of manslaughter was appropriate; they discussed the reasons in respect of the range of sentencing. The Crown attorney said the court was entitled to know the feelings of the victim's family in this particular case, and the Crown attorney spent an hour and a half explaining to the court—through sentences from the victims—as to why the court should consider the victims' feelings in this matter, and the court, I assume, took that into consideration in entering into its sentence. The Okimows have indicated to the police that they are satisfied with the process, that they were consulted appropriately and I stand by those comments.

Chief James Mason—Oxford House Meeting Request

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): While Chief James Mason, who is the leader of this community and also represents the interests of the Okimow family, is in the gallery today, will the minister agree to meet with Chief Mason of Oxford House and listen to the concerns that he has over this matter?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss. As the member for Rupertsland—

An Honourable Member: It was to answer. Answer.

Mr. Toews: To answer this then, to be more specific—from the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). To answer.

As the member for Rupertsland knows, it would be inappropriate for me to meet on a specific prosecution of a particular case, but I will in fact—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

The honourable Minister of Justice, to complete his response.

Mr. Toews: Thank you. I will make senior officials in my department available for the chief to discuss this very important issue.

Headingley Correctional Institution Safety Concerns

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. It was one year ago this week that the Honourable Ted Hughes reported that responsibility for the Headingley riot rested squarely with this government. Is the minister aware of safety concerns at Headingley today? Eighteen months after the riot, recommendation after recommendation from the Hughes report is ignored; the Scurfield committee which was to resolve matters has broken down; unilateral staff cuts and maximum security inmates under minimum security are endangering safety; that it is worse now under this minister?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member for St. Johns is not accurate in respect of that, those allegations. There are a number of projects that have been completed, and many of them are well underway and they are all on schedule.

I want to specifically thank Mr. Scurfield who has played a very important role in bringing the union and management together to ensure that the concerns that had been raised by Justice Hughes are in fact addressed. I met as early as this morning with representatives of—senior officials of my department to ensure that the upgrading of the Headingley Correctional Institution is on course and indeed, Madam Speaker, it is.

Mr. Mackintosh: Is the minister now saying to this House and to Manitobans that he is unaware of the issues that I just raised? Is he ignoring them, just like his predecessor, particularly when Mr. Scurfield writes in October, and I quote: I am deeply concerned about the ability of the Headingley Correctional institute to function in a safe and healthy manner.

He is concerned about staff problems. Is this minister closing his ears, closing his eyes just like the one before him?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, of course I am concerned about safety at Headingley jail. I am concerned about staffing levels, and I am concerned, as Mr. Justice Hughes indicated, that we turn the page and move to better relations between the union and

management in that particular facility, and part of that involves a government commitment to upgrade the facilities and improve relations.

Riot Costs

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Will the minister, who should know that the Scurfield committee has not even met for four months, tell Manitobans that aside from the loss of reputation of the justice system from the riot, what is now the cost to Manitoba taxpayers of the riot, including not just repairs but workers comp, medical costs, justice system costs, including a wrongly released inmate and murderer Donald Rouire, the loss of Mr. Futch? Is not the department's \$4-million figure just part of the price of this government's lax attitude to public safety?

* (1400)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I can emphatically say that no, there is not a lax attitude towards public safety. We are deeply concerned about public safety. This government continues to be deeply concerned about public safety. If there are specific concerns that the member has that the committee should address, I know that my very capable assistant deputy minister, Mr. Greg Graceffo, is more than willing to meet with the member and indeed refer any of those concerns to the Scurfield committee.

Flood Compensation Displaced Residents

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, this being likely the last day of the sitting for this year and the story of the year being the flood of the century here in Manitoba, approximately 28,000-plus Manitobans were displaced out of their homes as a result of the flood, and I am wondering if the minister responsible for EMO can give us an idea as to how many of those individuals would still be displaced today out of their principal residence.

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Responding to the question, at the beginning of this month we have just under 200 families that are in a temporary accommodation. We

expect that number to drop by some 67 or 68 by the end of December. Should weather conditions continue to co-operate, we can in fact see a decline in those numbers, perhaps even in January and February, providing the weather is with us. But we are committed, Madam Speaker, to anybody that does need temporary accommodation, and we have had assurances from Emergency Preparedness Canada that they will continue to cost-share those costs with us right through until the spring of 1998, at which time any individuals requiring temporary accommodation after that, we will revisit the program and make a decision at that time.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, is the government looking at any sort of additional compensation for those individuals that have in fact still no place to call their home, to get them over with respect to the holiday season?

Mr. Pitura: Madam Speaker, with regard to the temporary accommodation—and I might share this with the honourable member—this government is making an allowance of \$800 per month to those people who are in a house or an apartment. For those people who are in mobile homes, \$1,800 a month is allowed plus the extra allowances in terms of hooking up the services. For anybody that has been in a recreational trailer—and I think that there might be a small number that are still there owing to the fact that they hope to be back into their homes this month—there is an allowance of up to \$2,000 a month for those units plus all the allowances, and that would include the hookup and disconnect of utilities.

Flooding Sandbag Availability

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I had an individual that had indicated to me that during the flood crisis the City of Winnipeg had offered some 35,000-plus sandbags, but the Department of Government Services had declined their use—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member for Inkster have a question?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker. The question is: can the minister in fact confirm that that offer was there, and the department did turn it down?

Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I am not sure if the member is referring to postflood or preflood offering of the sandbags, but my understanding is that, as far as the Emergency Management Organization is concerned, when offers were made of a supply of sand and sandbags, those offers were in turn related and forwarded to the various emergency management organizations throughout the valley in local municipalities, and it was their decision as to whether they wanted those materials or not. If they took them, we would have ensured that they had them in place.

Airplane Crash—Little Grand Rapids Emergency Response Review

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertsland): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Highways and Transportation. Residents of Little Grand Rapids, of course, and the staff of the airport there, the nursing staff included, and especially the leaders of the community, including Councillors Enil Keeper and Councillor Nelson Keeper, did a fine job and also the local RCMP all deserve praise for their heroic efforts in the rescue of the victims of the air crash.

I would like to ask the minister this afternoon if he has had an opportunity to review the decisions of the search and rescue of the armed forces not to contract local helicopters when the Griffon helicopters were stuck overnight at Saskatoon.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I would also like to add my words of thanks to the people in the community for their immediate response, the efforts of the RCMP, emergency preparedness people of Transport Canada, and also extend sympathies and our thoughts with the people who were on the plane and their families who were affected.

It was certainly a serious, serious accident which will be investigated by the Transportation Board of Canada as to what were the events that led up to it. There has been a lot of comment in the papers, a lot of observations, and the transport board will sort those out.

With regard to the specifics that the member mentioned about response, who responded and whether

they responded fast enough will also be part of the review that will be done, and we will await that independent review before anything else is said.

Airports—Northern Manitoba Safety Concerns

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupertstland): Madam Speaker, I understand that a couple of weeks ago, the band officials from Little Grand Rapids discussed the problems that they were having at that current airstrip with the department.

I would like to ask the minister whether he is prepared now to make such negotiations a priority, not only for Little Grand Rapids but indeed other northern Manitoba communities—Gods River, Poplar River, Berens River and, of course, the new airstrip that is being proposed at Wasagomach. Again, Madam Speaker, if you would allow me, also a timetable in putting a GPS or other landing equipment at these smaller airports in this province.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, I am sure the member is aware, we have 22 airports in northern Manitoba which carry a tremendous amount of traffic. Little Grand Rapids itself has 4,400 air movements per year. That is the landings and takeoffs of airplanes. That works out to 12 a day. The airports are very busy. We certainly are in negotiation with individuals interested in the different airports across that part of Manitoba.

The member mentioned Wasagomach, which we currently have a cost-shared agreement with the federal government for an airport involvement there of up to \$16 million, and there have been negotiations with Little Grand Rapids to look at different alternatives. I believe there were four alternatives on the table for discussion, and they will continue to be analyzed in consultation with the different interested parties.

CFB Shilo Support Services—Privatization

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

I have obtained a copy of some recent official documentation indicating that CFB Shilo has been placed on the so-called initial list with six other bases for the first phase of the alternative service delivery process which will determine whether support services will be privatized in order to save money. As such, 260 regular and 100 casual jobs may be at risk since it is not clear whether the existing employees can bid for the contracts or whether they will be given jobs by private employers.

So I would ask the minister, Madam Speaker, whether he has been informed that Shilo is on this initial list for early review and that well over 300 jobs could be at risk.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for that question. I personally have not been informed. I am not sure whether the department is aware of this or not, but I will be checking with them.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I thank the minister for the answer, Madam Speaker, and I ask him: would the minister undertake to monitor the situation closely and do everything possible to ensure that CFB Shilo is treated fairly in this process, and that every effort be made to minimize potential layoffs at the base, given the negative economic impact it would have in the Westman area and indeed the whole province of Manitoba?

* (1410)

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, the short answer would be yes. The longer answer is that I think it was demonstrated a few years ago, when there was some concern about Shilo, as to the leadership shown by my colleague from Brandon West, the opposition member from Brandon East and the surrounding elected officials, of how deeply we as a government and the region feels in relationship to the maintenance and maximization of Shilo. The government, through the Department of Natural Resources, continued to long-term lease the facilities for the German training people to come, which is a tremendous economic activity. So the answer, as I said, is yes, and there has been in the past considerable amount of work done on a co-operative basis.

Of course, being the Christmas season, Madam Speaker, I would like to wish all members a merry Christmas and the best in the new year.

**TeleSend Gateway Inc.
Funding**

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Deputy Premier.

I would like to ask the Deputy Premier about his \$200,000 grant to TeleSend Gateway Inc., but first I would like to table some documents showing John Ishmael's involvement in TeleSend Gateway Inc. and documents which raised questions as to whether the money was misdirected and was used for improper purposes.

I would like the minister to clarify government policy. This government appears to have a policy of handing out money under the Canada-Manitoba Communications Agreement without doing proper credit checks, without checking the track record and business experience of the applicants, without proper accounting of whether the money gets misdirected to other companies owned by the principals or used as a personal slush fund. In fact, some of the grants appear to be used as slush funds for politically connected people.

Can the minister tell this House: what are the criteria for obtaining grants under this program?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): First of all, Madam Speaker, I do not accept any of the preamble from the member, which is totally inaccurate, which it has been all the way through the piece.

On this particular program, TeleSend, there was a business plan prepared by Deloitte and Touche prior to the advancement or getting involved in this program, and Mr. Ishmael was not a part of it. In fact, it was backed and proposed by a company known as AT&T, which were proponents of it, which were fully supportive.

As far as the bills that he is referring to that may have come from Mr. Ishmael—were not paid for by the department.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, my supplementary question to the same minister is this: can the minister confirm that Mr. Jim Mickelson and Gary Albo of his department were advised of TeleSend Gateway Inc.'s problems on February 20, 1995, and that the minister released the final \$90,000 grant money during the 1995 provincial election because of concerns that exposure of this boondoggle during the election could hurt the government's chances of re-election? Can he confirm this information?

Mr. Downey: No, Madam Speaker, I cannot confirm and will not confirm that the money had anything to do with the election. The only basis for which the money was released was after a review, an accurate review of the expenditures incurred by the agreement which were within the agreement, after they were vetted through appropriate people and paid bills of small companies that if they had not received that money would have been in extreme difficulties. The monies that were paid were within the agreement and appropriately monitored by the department and by the legal system within our government.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, my final supplementary to the same minister is this. The minister had time to peruse the supplementary TeleSend Gateway Inc. credit card applications for John Ishmael and the numerous personal charges of each of the three Ishmael family members—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member have a question?

Mr. Maloway: I do, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the minister: will he now admit that the grant program was totally out of control because of misappropriation of monies?

Mr. Downey: No, I will not, Madam Speaker.

**Royal Winnipeg Ballet
Ministers' Attendance—London**

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I suppose it is jet-setting and living the life of the rich and famous which kept government members from meeting with flood victims in southern Manitoba but

not apparently from attending the Royal Winnipeg Ballet in London, England.

I would like to ask the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship to tell the House exactly how many and which ministers, government caucus members and senior staff members travelled to London and attended the ballet at taxpayers' expense.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased that our Royal Winnipeg Ballet was able to have an extensive tour throughout not only London and Scotland but also many other parts of Europe, and they were, in fact, very, very well received. Their tour was quite extensive, and so I am sorry I am unable to tell the member exactly who attended and on what time. I will, however, say that I will—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, to complete her response.

* (1420)

Mrs. Vodrey: I am pleased to tell the member that, while I was away on government business, business involving immigration matters, on behalf of encouraging immigrants to Manitoba, business relating to culture and heritage, I also was able to attend the ballet. However, I am also very pleased, of interest to members since the trip to Europe was arranged to—the member for Point Douglas might be very interested—some of the work on immigration did, in fact, receive front-page coverage on a Canada News. I am very pleased to table it, Madam Speaker and members opposite. In tabling it, it says, “Immigrants urged to consider Manitoba now.”

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Beuchesne 417 is very clear, and I will read it again: “Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.” The question was asked: how many Tory MLAs attended the ballet in London? The

minister said she was there. I would appreciate if she would answer the rest of the question, indicate how many Tory MLAs were at the ballet in London, a very straightforward question.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, because of the good work of the honourable member for Thompson, myself and others, we do not have Friday mornings anymore, and so it seems that some of us feel that we need to celebrate Friday mornings on Thursday afternoons. However, the honourable member for Thompson is right when he points out Citation 417 of Beuchesne which says you are not supposed to provoke debate, but there are other sections in there that refer to the fact that a member asking a question has no right under parliamentary custom, tradition or anything else to insist on the nature, quality, length, and all the rest of it, of a minister's answer. I know that it is upsetting for opposition members, asking a question with the intent of embarrassing the government, to get an answer back that simply informs the House and the public of some of the very fine results which flow from the good work of members on this side of the House. That is frustrating; I admit that, but it is certainly not the subject of a point of order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind all ministers, however, that the Beuchesne citation is very specific, and they should respond to the question asked.

Ministers' Attendance

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I was going to ask the minister about the costs. I suppose she will not know the answer about that or about government policy. I would like to ask the minister—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I believe the honourable member has asked her question. Would the honourable member please repose her question now.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Madam Speaker, I did use the conditional.

I would like to ask the minister if she could tell me how many passionate-for-dance Tories attend the ballet in Winnipeg.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I do not think anyone on this side of the House would, in any way, not want to say that they went to the ballet. There are many members who have indicated—and in fact we are very proud of our Royal Winnipeg Ballet. As usual, we hear from the other side of the House something negative towards one of the most important ambassadors for Manitoba, actually in the world; they have travelled extensively. In Manitoba, we are very proud of them.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Before proceeding to Members' Statements, I wonder if there would be leave to return to tabling for one moment while the honourable Minister of Agriculture tables a report or two.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave of the House to permit the honourable Minister of Agriculture to table his report? [agreed]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I would like to table the Annual Reports of the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board and the 43rd Annual Progress Review of the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at the University of Manitoba. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHST Program

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, during the holiday season we are often reminded of the Dickens Christmas classic "Scrooge."

It is the story of a man who took a great deal away while returning little. It appears that in the spirit of that tale, the federal Liberal government has enacted its own version of Scrooge with the announcement that it is planning to restore a small portion of the federal transfer cuts that it had planned to take away from our province at the expense of health and social spending.

Even with this week's announcement by the federal government that it would establish a \$12.5-billion floor for total cash entitlement to the provinces under the CHST program, our province, Manitobans will receive \$228 million less next year than we did two years ago. Perhaps the Prime Minister or the Finance minister for the federal Liberal government was paid a visit by the ghost of election's future which motivated the announcement we heard yesterday, or perhaps the knowledge that they have balanced their books on the backs of Manitobans was affecting their ability to have a peaceful holiday season. Regardless of the season, Manitobans are not fooled by the federal Liberal attempts to play Santa Claus for just one day after having played the role of Scrooge for several years.

The Dickens tale was one which finished with optimism and prosperity. This holiday season, through the combined efforts of our government and Manitobans, our province also has a tremendous reason for optimism. Despite the Grinch-like actions of our federal counterparts, we have a partnership to make Manitoba a province of opportunity and growth, and that is a story we can all take heart in. Thank you.

Emergency Services—Grandview

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I rise today on a member's statement on behalf of the citizens of the community of Grandview, who are right now in a struggle to maintain the quality of health care that they have become used to over the last number of years.

Madam Speaker, 440 people have signed a petition that has been circulated for just about a week now in the town of Grandview. It is a petition to the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), asking the minister to show some leadership and protect their 24-hour emergency care and to protect their ambulance service that serves so well the people in the community of Grandview.

Grandview is a farming community. It has about 2,000 people in the area, and it is located halfway between Dauphin and Roblin. The community of Grandview and the R.M. of Grandview have people who live another 20 to 35 minutes outside of Grandview. So, as you can see, anyone who gets hurt in a farming community, in an industry that is very much a dangerous industry, that is agriculture, would now, if they did not have ambulance service in Grandview and 24-hour emergency care, be transported, in addition to the 30 minutes to either Dauphin or Roblin, another 25 or 30 minutes. The people in Grandview want this minister to know that is just unacceptable, that is too long a time, and that everyone knows, who has any knowledge at all about health care, that the sooner you can get to treat an injury or a sickness, the more chance you have of helping that person and helping that person recover.

So I would like to table the petition right now of over 200 names who have signed this petition in Grandview. Later on in the session, I will be presenting the petitions of the other remaining names, for a total of around 440 at this time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1430)

Licensed Practical Nurses

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Madam Speaker, health care is an essential service to which our government devotes the largest portion of its expenditures. I would like to draw the attention of members of the House to a very positive development in Manitoba's health care sector.

Recently, the Ministers of Health (Mr. Praznik) and Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) announced that the Assiniboine Community College in Brandon will expand and enhance its practical nursing program. By expanding the licenced practical nursing program, our government is putting even more trained professionals into Manitoba health care facilities. The province has provided \$217,000 to ensure a high quality of training, with an emphasis on community-based health care.

The program at the Assiniboine Community College's newly renovated facilities has also been extended by three months. The annual capacity of the practical

nursing program will increase to 90 students from 60 by doubling the enrollment at Assiniboine Community College. The college is also said to operate a program accommodating 30 students at the Misericordia Hospital in Winnipeg beginning April of 1998.

Licensed practical nurses are an extremely important component in the delivery of health care in Manitoba. Personal care homes and rural health care facilities, in particular, will benefit immeasurably from the increased contributions made by LPNs.

I applaud my colleagues on this side of the House and our government as a whole for the high priority we assign to health care services and the training provided to health care professionals across our province. We are committed to providing the most efficient and advanced health care system anywhere. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. In fairness to all members attempting to make members' statements, I wonder if I might ask for the co-operation of all members having private meetings to do so in the loge or outside the Chamber. It is very difficult to hear the members, and I know they want the respect that they are deserved.

Mine Employee Deaths

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I rise on behalf of the families of mine workers who have been killed on the job. In 1992, 26 miners were killed in an underground coal mine explosion at Stellarton, Nova Scotia, Westray coal mine. Last week, after five and one-half years of waiting for these families, Justice Richard released his findings in a report containing 74 recommendations. Justice Richard named people responsible for the disaster, indicating that a clear hierarchy of responsibility lies with mine management and government.

One quote from Justice Richard states: It is a story of incompetence, of mismanagement, of bureaucratic bungling, of deceit, of ruthlessness, of cover-up, of apathy, of expediency and of cynical indifference.

Justice Richard states that unacceptable performances of the mine safety inspector regulators must surely have

destroyed the confidence that the people had in the inspectorate. Justice Richard recommended that Ottawa and the provinces should study accountability of corporate bosses for wrongful or negligent acts of a corporation with an eye to legislating it. I could not agree more.

The Filmon government has a history of letting companies and their owners injure and kill their employees and escape prosecution, and examples that I have demonstrated here in this Legislative Assembly, where companies have closed the doors of their operations only to start up business within weeks under a new name without any responsibility of the owner-managers for their negligence, and I have raised those cases in this Legislature. Dozens of miners have been killed in Manitoba with little or no reaction or action to stop the death march. No education programs, no prosecution, no interest by this government.

The time has come to say that we as a people take workplace safety very seriously and apply the principle to action with more than just 18 inspectors to check 42,000 workplaces in Manitoba, and with the real meaningful powers to be put into the hands of the inspectors to prevent accidents before they happen. Forty-two thousand yearly accident claims must be changed. Twenty-seven thousand Manitoba fatalities last year, including 13 mine deaths since 1990, must not be allowed to go unanswered for the sake of the dead and their families.

An Honourable Member: How many last year?

Mr. Reid: Twenty-seven.

Betty Francis Learning Resource Centre

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, yesterday Cecil Rhodes School and the community of Weston honoured one of their own. The library at Cecil Rhodes School was renamed the Betty Francis Learning Resource Centre in recognition of her 65 years of service to the community. Betty Francis was born in England on December 26, 1909, and moved to Weston when she was two years old. She spent her first eight years of school at Cecil Rhodes and then graduated from Daniel McIntyre Collegiate. Betty was a student teacher at Cecil Rhodes and spent the first 25

years of her teaching career in rural Manitoba. In 1957, she returned to Cecil Rhodes School where she taught for the next 11 years. Upon her retirement from the paid teaching force in 1968, she began her career as a volunteer at Cecil Rhodes. In all, Betty Francis has worked with children for 65 years, 43 of those at Cecil Rhodes School. At age 88, Betty continues to work several times a week at Cecil Rhodes.

I know all members of the Legislature will join with me, the community at Cecil Rhodes School and the residents of Weston in congratulating Betty Francis on a lifetime spent passing on her love of learning. Generations of students, teachers, parents and the community have been the recipients of Betty Francis's hard work, unselfish commitment and love. We are all the richer for her life.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Contaminated Blood Supply

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I rise today on a matter of urgent public importance. Currently, many people living with hepatitis C are living in crisis, a crisis created by illness, monetary deprivation, personal loss and frustration. Today I rise specifically to address the plight of those people infected through contaminated blood or blood products. The shameful legacy of an infected blood supply and its tragic results have been dramatically documented by the Krever inquiry. Who can forget the Krever inquiry and the constant contrast between poignant testimony and slick attempts to evade responsibility?

Justice Krever's recommendations include a recommendation of immediate compensation to all those affected through the blood supply, and here I quote from Justice Krever: in my opinion, a system that knows these consequences of viral transmission will occur and that brings them about has at the very least a moral obligation to give some thought to the question of appropriate relief for those affected by the inevitable results.

Madam Speaker, resolving the issue of hepatitis C's viral transmission is an urgent public matter. Moral obligation is the key phrase in Justice Krever's quoted

remarks. You know that this House will adjourn today. You probably do not know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) has hitherto refused all overtures to debate private members' Resolution 67 on the Order Paper referred to as Compensation Plan for Victims of Tainted Blood. A slight misnomer since the resolution merely urges our government to consider working with the federal government on a plan.

Again, today, the Minister of Health refused to support victims or even entertain our mild resolution. Clearly there is no other time than now for us to begin fulfilling our duty, what Justice Krever has named our moral obligation. The right time, indeed the only time is now.

I turn now to the matter of urgency. Why is it urgent that we debate the question of a compensation strategy for primary and secondary victims of hepatitis C? The Krever inquiry itself is a study in the dangers of procrastination. The inquiry shows delay after delay after delay. In order to save money, all Canadians, and we all have the right to health care, were put at risk, for blood transfusion and contamination was and is a possibility for each of us.

Those infected with hepatitis C are now paying the price of this heartlessness and tightfistedness. People are losing their livelihoods, their homes. Families are suffering because breadwinners are too ill to work, indeed some are dying, some are dead. Further delay may mean that many more victims will die before a compensation package has been determined. The deaths of persons living with AIDS before compensation, a situation impelled no doubt by caution, remains a national and provincial disgrace.

Let us act now and so avoid repeating this egregious wrong. Decency and compassion must prevail. Urgency is necessary because of a forthcoming meeting of Health ministers—because of a forthcoming meeting. In January, the federal Minister of Health and his provincial and territorial counterparts will meet in Saskatchewan. Federal Minister Allan Rock and Saskatchewan Health Minister Clay Serby, co-chairs of the ministers of Health meetings, have said that compensation for victims of hepatitis C acquired through contamination will be on the agenda.

Mr. Rock has clearly signalled his belief that compensation, as well as compassion, is a joint federal-provincial responsibility which must be shared. Knowing more than any of us that compensation is urgent and knowing that the January meeting is a window of opportunity, the Canadian Hemophilia Society is endeavouring to have good-will resolutions related to compensation unanimously endorsed by provincial governments and so ensure that at the January meeting this urgent matter will be resolved.

Quebec has passed a good-will resolution supporting the principle of compensation; Manitoba has not. The need for a compensation strategy is urgent. The time line is narrow. It is urgent that we debate this matter today.

* (1440)

People acquiring hepatitis C through tainted blood and blood products have been betrayed by the blood system and continue to be betrayed by the immorality of inaction. These individuals have been victimized and revictimized. Our House is in session. We have time left to shoulder our moral responsibilities and not again turn our backs on Manitobans. We have the opportunity to make the point that we value all our citizens, value them equally, the sick as well as the healthy. Urgency in this matter is fourfold: (1) to adopt a procompensation position for the January meeting of the ministers of Health and, through this, perhaps to influence other provinces, that is, to assume leadership and become a model; (2) to alleviate the impoverishment of victims through—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask that the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) move her motion now. The procedure has not been absolutely followed. I recognize the honourable member to move her motion, and then each member, including the mover of the motion and one member from each party, is allowed five minutes to present their case of urgency, but I did not want to interrupt the honourable member for Osborne.

The five minutes has expired, but I would ask for the co-operation of the honourable member for Osborne in putting her motion on the record now, please.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I ask that our Legislature not disgrace itself and fail her people. With this end in sight, I move that under Rule 31 the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the need for a compensation strategy for primary and secondary victims of tainted blood, especially those suffering with hepatitis C.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable government House leader, I would remind all members that under our subrule 31.(2) the mover of the motion has already utilized her five minutes, and one member from the other parties may use not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately. As cited in Beauchesne Citation 390, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate not of the subject matter of the motion.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I am, having been through this process a number of times, aware about those matters to which we are to direct our comments in this five-minute period. Now I do not recall if you said that you received the appropriate notice, but assuming that you did, the issue then becomes the issue of the urgency of debate. Certainly there is a matter of urgency of action and all of those matters, but the rule in this case talks about urgency of debate.

We all recognize the very, very serious nature of this matter that has arisen in Canada. Speaking not only as House leader but as a former Health minister and I know, from talking to my colleague the present Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), the extremely serious nature of the matter the honourable member for Osborne raises. My honourable colleague and his counterparts from across the country and the territories at the federal level are indeed working towards appropriate resolution of all blood issues in Canada.

Shortly before I left office in the Department of Health, ministers of Health had attended a federal-provincial territorial meeting, and in anticipation of the final Krever report, made plans for establishing a national blood strategy. Something needs to be done to ensure that the tragic events of the past are never repeated, so that there is no question of the weight that

the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and his counterparts feel on their shoulders as they address this issue which has been so very troublesome for so many Canadians and their families.

Madam Speaker, if you look on page 7 of your Order Paper, you will see item No. 67 standing in the name of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), Compensation Plan for Victims of Tainted Blood. As we looked to how we would deal with proceedings in this particular sitting or session of the House, the opposition House leader and I discussed many things as we do in the ordinary course of our work.

One of the things we could have discussed would have been to bring forward item No. 67 this morning. That would have been one option. I think one of the things you have to look at is that there may or may not be other opportunities for debate. The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and his colleagues could have brought that forward, because as honourable members know we have been working very co-operatively this session, so co-operatively that we can make adjustments as we go and as we have done.

So, really and truly, Madam Speaker, the urgency is to ensure that our Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) tends to the business at hand here. I have every confidence in this Minister of Health. He has demonstrated his commitment over and over, and he has demonstrated his competency to deal with important national, provincial or any other kind of issue you can imagine extremely well. So no debate this afternoon will make any difference with respect to the urgency of the matter. Nothing in debate would make any difference in terms of the way federal-provincial-territorial ministers are going to approach the subject. They deal with it on an extremely serious basis, and for that reason I do not believe that the honourable member's motion, however well-intentioned—and I certainly do not question that—is appropriate this afternoon.

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, I would like to join in the debate to urge this Assembly that we set aside the business in order to discuss this issue, and I would like to outline the reasons and some of the faulty reasoning, I believe, with all due respect, made by the government House leader in this regard.

Madam Speaker, the Minister of Health is going to a Health ministers' meeting, we learned, in January in order to discuss the matters relating to this issue. The National Assembly of Quebec recently passed a unanimous resolution of the Quebec Assembly with respect to dealing with the compensation issue and gave direction to their Minister of Health with respect to negotiating a compensation package for victims of hepatitis C infection.

Madam Speaker, our minister, within a month, is going to negotiate as well, and we have not been allowed an opportunity to express to this minister our Assembly's concurrence or nonconcurrence with respect to this very significant matter. In addition, the federal government whom the province is negotiating with is clearly looking to directions from other provinces as to where the other provinces are sitting with respect to the compensation issue, and we are going to this meeting without a voice, without allowing the Assembly and this Chamber to speak to this resolution.

With respect to the House leader's comments whether or not members opposite could have raised resolutions, there are a multitude of resolutions on the Order Paper. Some are a very, very high priority; others are not. We are adjourning this afternoon, Madam Speaker. We have no opportunity to debate this resolution since it is No. 60 or No. 61 on the Order Paper.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, what is required in this resolution is a unanimous passage of this resolution from members opposite in order to allow the minister to go with a voice from this Assembly, and it is clear that members opposite do not want to pass this resolution.

* (1450)

That is the issue that needs to be debated. Now, members indicate the negative. If that is the case, then let us debate the resolution, but the minister needs direction, the minister needs a voice from this Legislature, and he needs the advice of this Legislature.

A grievance is not helpful in this regard, Madam Speaker, because you have ruled in the past with respect to grievances. A grievance would only be our

viewpoint in this regard. What is needed is a resolution from this Chamber to allow the minister to go and negotiate with the federal government. You know, this resolution in itself is not committing the provincial government to any course of action other—I might add, and that is the curious aspect of this—than a negotiation with the federal government with respect to compensation.

Surely, the minister would like direction from this Chamber rather than going without any opportunity, without any debate on this very serious issue, going to a meeting of ministers and not having the voice of the Assembly of Manitoba as does the minister from the Assembly of Quebec. So, Madam Speaker, the minister's arguments about whether or not there are other opportunities to debate this resolution are not relevant. We do not have any opportunity on this occasion, with the House adjourning this afternoon, to debate this matter. The minister is leaving within a month. The Assembly will not be sitting before the minister departs. The minister will be negotiating on behalf of Manitobans, and he does not know what Manitobans wish him to negotiate on their behalf.

What more clear case would be evident for an urgent matter. I do not even have to deal with the question of the significance to Manitobans because that has been very adequately dealt with and confirmed by the government House leader of the significance of this matter.

So I urge you to accept an opportunity to allow the people of Manitoba to direct the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), to provide the Minister of Health with advice with respect to negotiations that he is entering into in January on our behalf. On our behalf, I urge you to allow this debate to go forward so the Minister of Health can negotiate on behalf of all Manitobans and on behalf of the victims of hepatitis C. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) has indeed met the notice requirement for this matter. According to Manitoba practice and Beauséne, a Speaker's role when a matter of urgent public importance is put forward is to determine whether the matter is so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not

given immediate attention and to judge whether the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough, and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

While the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) certainly brings forward an important matter, in my judgment the public interest will not be harmed if the debate of this matter does not take place today. The member's private member's Resolution 67 will provide an opportunity for the House to debate a compensation strategy for victims of tainted blood. The member may also discuss the issue during the Budget Debate when this House reconvenes.

House Business

Mr. McCrae: I have a couple of housekeeping matters prior to getting to government orders. The first is that I believe if you canvass the House you would find that for the remainder of the afternoon everybody is agreeing that there is not going to be a requirement for a quorum in this House because, as you know, Madam Speaker, the Legislative Assembly Management Commission will be meeting and members will be busy, and we can still conduct the business of the House without the need of a quorum. That is my understanding unless there is—

An Honourable Member: During the LAMC.

Mr. McCrae: During the LAMC meeting only. Clear enough, I agree. Is that agreed?

Madam Speaker: Is there unanimous consent of the House to ignore the regular required quorum while the LAMC meeting is meeting and up to the duration of that meeting for this afternoon? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: On another matter, Madam Speaker, yesterday, if yesterday was December 9—

An Honourable Member: No, the 10th.

Mr. McCrae: Then, on Wednesday, the House leader for the official opposition and I, on behalf of our caucuses, made an agreement which I would like to table in the House. I have made the members of the independent Liberal caucus aware, and it is agreed that the Legislature will not sit during the week of March 30, 1998, to April 3, 1998, that being the school spring break. Also agreed that in order to accomplish this

consideration, passage and Royal Assent of the Interim Supply Bill will be completed prior to the close of business on March 26, 1998. What this essentially says is that we will not sit during the spring break, and that Interim Supply will have been completed prior to that time, and I think that may come as some help for some honourable members who might have plans with their families at that time. I am tabling this document now.

Madam Speaker: The document has been received for information purposes.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Government Motions

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings),

THAT, in the case of all bills referred to committees of this House during the present session and proceeding to enactment, Legislative Counsel be given the authority to take the following steps at any point before publication of the acts:

(a) change all section numbers and internal references necessary to give effect to amendments to bills adopted by this House and its committees; and

(b) without in any way altering the intended legal meaning make minor changes to bills to correct obvious errors like spelling, numbering, cross-referencing and capitalization errors and to correct punctuation and formatting that is not consistent with Manitoba style.

THAT the Legislative Counsel be required to mark all changes made pursuant to this authority in red ink in the affected blue bills as soon as possible after the end of the session.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that Mr. Gerry McAlpine, member for the Electoral Division of Sturgeon Creek, be appointed Deputy Chairperson of the Committees of the Whole House.

Motion agreed to.

* (1500)

House Business

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, on a matter of House business, I believe there is agreement that immediately after the next motion is moved and dealt with that we would move to consideration of government bills in the order listed on the Order Paper, and that at four o'clock the House would move to private members' hour. Thus, when five o'clock arrives, it will really be six o'clock and at that time we would adjourn.

This is an opportunity, I guess, for me to say Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to everyone, and I hope that we all return to this place some time early in the new year refreshed, and that we have a peaceful time in the meantime.

Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that when the House adjourns today it shall stand adjourned until a time fixed by Madam Speaker upon the request of the government.

Motion agreed to.

Madam Speaker: For information purposes and clarification for routine this afternoon, there will be now one hour, from three to four, approximately one hour of debate on second readings. At four o'clock private members' hour will commence, and be one hour in duration, which should bring us to five o'clock. At five o'clock the House will consider it six o'clock and adjourn for the holiday season. [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: Although I did suggest we move in the order the bills appear on the Order Paper, would you be so kind to call Bill 13 initially or as the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) might direct during the course of the hour. What about Bill 17? Are we going to do that one?

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**Bill 13—The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act**

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), Bill 13, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide à l'achat de médicaments sur ordonnance), standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

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

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): The Pharmacare program in the province of Manitoba was of course introduced under the Schreyer government and has made it possible for now more than 20 years of families and seniors to be able to afford the drugs that they need to maintain or to restore their health.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I think we need, in putting in context these changes which of course need consultation with the pharmaceutical association, with patient groups and with others before they are considered for passage by this House, but in the process I think we need to reflect on Mr. Justice Hall's royal commissions to realize just both how far we have come in the area of Pharmacare and what a great distance we have yet to go.

Mr. Acting Speaker, Mr. Justice Emmett Hall in his royal commission report which was received—the commission was struck in 1957, and the report was received in 1960. Mr. Justice Hall indicated that the most important overall concept of providing publicly funded health care across Canada was to put in place a seamless kind of system. By that the justice and his many advisors, many of whom still are and certainly those who are not still active in the field, were the leading people in health care planning in Canada from Dr. Hastings to Claude Castonguay to the Castonguay-Nepveu commission to the Miller task force here, to people like Bob Evans and many others who took a great—

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. I do not mean to interrupt the honourable member for Crescentwood, and it is nice to see members from across the way talking and smiling and doing their thing, it is nice to see that kind of thing happen. However, while another person has the floor,

I would ask that all honourable members try to do the responsible thing and allow that person to speak.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Hall put in place recommendations for what has been called a seamless system. For example, he foresaw the need to cover not simply direct medical care in the form of doctors' services and the services of hospitals, but he foresaw the need to include dentistry, pharmaceutical costs, mental health costs, home care costs.

Indeed, members who have not read the summary of the Hall Royal Commission would really be interested to see the tremendous foresight that was shown in compiling that report because the compilers, who represented, I think, all traditions of political thought in this country from all sides of the spectrum, understood that it does not make sense to cover only part of what people need. I would like to explain why that is the case, not just in terms of simple justice which I think is obvious, but in terms of the distortions that introduces into any kind of human service. Take, for example, the case of a senior who is on a very limited budget and requires a particular medication, whether it is a diuretic or a heart medication or some other form of long-term medication, the absence of taking that medication, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think we all know what happens. The senior gets very sick, may die, but certainly gets sick and needs to go to hospital, needs a great deal of medical attention in order to simply regain the state of health that would have been maintained in the first place if that senior were able to take the drug that was needed.

So Mr. Hall and health economists by the dozens since have pointed out to governments that it is really penny-wise and pound-foolish not to provide a full and continuous spectrum of services. If you are going to insure anything 100 percent, you pretty much have to insure everything that is medically necessary because the failure to do so means that people, in the absence of their ability to get the service they need here, wind up in a much more expensive situation over here. That, of course, is the reason why the Schreyer government introduced home care, why it was maintained under the Lyon government, and why it has been—although badly damaged in times under this current government, it still is maintained and it is maintained at a level, if I may say, that is higher than some other provinces in Canada,

and that is a good thing. It was much higher than other provinces in Canada under the Pawley and Schreyer governments. Unfortunately, it slipped somewhat.

It is still a very good service, and we are very pleased that the minister has backed down from his ill-advised attempts to privatize all of home care in Winnipeg and all of the nursing services. I think that was a wise move on the government's part, whether they planned to do it or not or whether he invented it on his feet, nevertheless the climb down was welcomed by home care recipients and by those who have known that that is a cost-effective as well as a humane way of meeting the needs of sick people.

The same is true in regard to Pharmacare, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Mr. Acting Speaker, I beg your pardon. There have been many studies, some of them which might seem self-serving by the pharmaceutical associations of Canada, but all of them which I think have a great deal of useful truth in them and that is that in the past 25 to 30 years, advances in drugs have made it possible for people to remain in their homes or in communities and to maintain a level of wellness which was previously unobtainable without the use of those drugs. This government and every government in Canada and, I think, all opposition parties have welcomed and urged the development of a Canadian drug industry that undertakes extensive research and development and is located in provinces across Canada.

Unfortunately, the central body of that research is done in Montreal where the centre of the drug industry in Canada is, but Manitoba has a small and growing pharmaceutical industry. I believe that the industry really began to take off under the HIDI initiative, which was started again under the Pawley government and has been maintained and built on by this government, wisely, the initiative to focus on the health pharmaceutical sector. So we have new companies in Manitoba that have sprung up, more recently, the merger of two companies here which was well remarked on and whose senior staff I have had the opportunity to meet with, who I think are providing both very good research and very good products as well as very good employment opportunities for a growing number of Manitobans.

* (1510)

So it is in everyone's interest that sound research and sound development in use of pharmaceuticals takes place, because it is so clear now that if we did not have psychotropic drugs for example we would not be able to have many people with debilitating mental illnesses able to share a normal life in the community with their families and with their friends. If we did not have drugs to lower blood pressure on a safe and consistent basis over many years, we would have far more people dying prematurely of stroke. We would have far more people unable to work because of chronic high blood pressure. So no one I think debates the efficacy, the appropriateness of working to develop an ever larger array of useful pharmaceuticals. But what this government unfortunately has done is to go in the opposite direction, and they have gone against the best advice of Justice Hall and all those who followed him, from Doug Angus, Pran Manga, Bob Evans; people who are here in this province—John Horne, David Fish, Anna-Lee Yassi—and any number of Canadian health economists who have said it is not good economic policy to only ensure some services or only ensure some drugs.

So the changes that are proposed in this act allow in general terms more discretion to take more things away from the public sector, to remove the responsibility of the minister, and to give it to some faceless committee, so that the accountability of what is listed and what is not is no longer before elected officials.

Let us review, Mr. Acting Speaker, what this government did when it gutted the Pharmacare program. While it is true that for a small number of Manitobans the 100 percent coverage has been a benefit, it is equally and, in fact, considerably more true that for the 100,000 Manitobans who used to receive significant Pharmacare benefits but now receive virtually none that the program effectively has become a welfare program for low income people or for very sick people.

Now that goes against the fundamental principles of wellness and prevention, which this government likes to talk about but does not like to act on. When you make it difficult for moderate income or lower middle income people to take the drugs, to access the drugs that they need to maintain health, you are simply playing with a time bomb.

I have had far too many constituents who have said to me, my drug bills are now in the \$1,500 to \$2,000 a year, and when you combine that in some cases with the fact that in some of those homes, as the minister probably knows, one of the spouses is in a nursing home, with the increase in nursing home fees, the increase in Pharmacare fees and the dropping availability of home care support services—not the intense nursing services, but the support services—seniors are being very, very seriously squeezed by the decisions of this government.

Any one of the decisions by itself was problematic. When you take any senior who has worked hard all their life and has a modest income and suddenly they have to find another \$1,200 to \$1,500 for drugs where previously they were paying \$300 or \$400, that is a serious impact. When you cascade on top of that, the other things that are happening to seniors and which are made more possible under this bill, were it to receive passage, then you see that what we are doing is putting in place the conditions not only that make it difficult for seniors and others who have chronic and major drug costs, we are putting in place the conditions to cost ourselves more than we ought to spend.

The minister, by failing to meet the basic Pharmacare needs of all Manitobans, is putting at risk the ability to control the costs of the health care system for all Manitobans, because it is a documented fact that when people do not take the drugs they need they wind up sicker, longer, and in many cases they wind up in hospital inappropriately.

No one, I think, over here would argue that all drugs and all prescriptions are properly used, that there is no abuse in that area. Of course, there is, but for the most part people use their drugs the way they are supposed to be used. I am too often told by seniors: I have to choose between adequate food and my Pharmacare bills. I do not have the flexibility anymore with my wife in a nursing home, my home running down or my apartment running down, my food bills, my travel bills to help look after my wife in hospital. I am talking about someone like Mr. Wirth, for example, whose case I raised here in the House last week, who is paying \$22,000 a year out of his income for his nursing home care, which is not in a nursing home, it is in Victoria Hospital, plus his own drug bills, plus the costs of

maintaining his home which was previously a family home. He just does not have the ability anymore to stay in his own home, because of the cascading effect of the charges that have come about because of the changes that this government is making.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when you add on top of that what is going to happen to every senior in this province, because of the federal government's cuts to the seniors benefit, and I hope the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) knows the impact of that change, because there has been a great deal of misinformation put out by the federal government in regard to the change in the seniors benefit. Seniors have been told—and I am sure that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) has probably received this information, that his benefits, such as are not taxed back, will continue unchanged by the seniors benefit when it comes into place. I believe all seniors have received that information from the federal government, but what the federal government has not told seniors is that you lose your pension income deduction and you lose your age deduction when the seniors benefit comes in, and that is for all seniors, not just ones who are going to be 65. It is for everybody.

Now, the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) is a lawyer, and he has done lots of these calculations in his head. What does it cost a couple who suddenly lose approximately \$8,000 in deductions? What is the tax impact? Three thousand plus in an age deduction and a thousand each for pension income deductions. The seniors benefit has an impact on modest-income seniors of \$2,200 per year per couple, \$1,200 for a single person of a modest income, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The problem that we have going in regard to all of our senior services is that a few years ago the pundits and the theorists began to say, listen, seniors are pretty well looked after. We have cut the poverty rate way down. It is really the working poor who are the problem now. Everyone looked at it and said, well, that is probably—you know, there is some truth there. So everybody rushed to cut seniors benefits, each level of government cascading cut on cut, and no one has sat down and said, what is the whole impact here of the changes that we have made over the last four or five years?

I want to underline to the minister, although the issue of the federal benefit is not specific to this act, that seniors are looking at very, very serious consequences, and the near retired are looking at even more serious consequences because the new seniors benefit, which is not taxable, that is true, but the tax-back rate on the new seniors benefit for people who have an income of only an additional amount equal to the seniors benefit—that is, the seniors benefit for a single person will be \$11,000-and-something; for the next \$11,000 of income the tax-back rate is 76 percent because the seniors benefit is clawed back for everyone at 50 cents on the dollar, and, in addition, people pay income tax.

So I think the minister needs to take very seriously what is happening to many seniors and needs to address with his colleagues federally the impacts of all of the cuts and changes on a typical senior household. This has been done by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, by the Canadian Council on Social Development, and those data are available to the minister should he wish to take a look at them, and I would urge him to do so before he meets with his colleague.

There is a particularly good study by the Canadian Association of Retired Persons which was done by a Mr. Kelm that I think the minister would find very useful. Mr. Kelm is a retired actuary in Toronto and might even not be a member of the NDP, I am not sure about that, but I would commend that study to the minister.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the changes that are being looked at here unfortunately do not take into account the needs of people with multiple sclerosis in regard to their ability to receive Betaseron and Copaxone. We know that these are very expensive drugs, but there are also very substantial benefits for a proportion of that population. We would have wished that the minister would have taken an early opportunity to announce that this coverage would be extended to those who could benefit from those drugs.

* (1520)

On the other hand, Mr. Acting Speaker, the bill does do a very important thing, and I commend the government for this, and that is to follow through on the

promise to make it possible for midwives to write prescriptions. That, of course, is also an important initiative which, while it took far too long to achieve and while we are still some significant time from having midwives actually out there in the field in any numbers, it is nevertheless important that the government has followed through on the promise to make it possible for midwives to write prescriptions.

I want to draw the House's attention, however, to the fact that we have been talking about this particular change for more than a decade. The government took a great deal of time, and in fact sat on the midwifery report for well over a year before making it public and taking a stand on it. So the action of making it possible to prescribe drugs is welcome; the timing is abysmally slow.

In concluding my remarks on the whole issue of these changes and on this bill, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to return to what I think were the most unfortunate changes that were made in the Pharmacare program. When very significant deductibles were imposed of 2 percent and 3 percent of income prior to any payment and to then allow 100 percent payment is a principle that I think if the minister went to any of the social policy people in the field, right-wing, left-wing, centre-wing, it would not make any difference, all of them would say to the minister that it is bad-program design to have 100 percent coverage after zero coverage in one step. One more dollar, and it is 100 percent covered; one less dollar, and you get zero. That is a bad program because it encourages abuse and it discourages responsibility.

If the government cannot afford to provide free needed prescription drugs, then the notion of a scale deductible would be a sound policy. From a program point of view, it is sound policy because there is then no incentive to behave other than to use the drugs properly because you are paying the same proportion of the cost up to some reasonable level. Other provinces have an upper limit beyond which they do provide total coverage, but it is a sliding process.

There are many texts written on how to design an income support program. I have never ever seen one that suggests that it is a good design principle to go from no coverage to 100 percent coverage, with no graduation in the process at all. It simply is bad-program design. So when the minister made these

changes, he not only disenfranchised over 100,000 Manitobans from receiving benefits under a program that was very important to them, he also put in place a program that was very badly designed and led to tremendous distortion in the first year. The minister will remember all of the people who reached their threshold and then went out and filled prescriptions because they were then at their threshold and they could prebuy for the next year or the next period of time at the government's expense. That, of course, is the behaviour you would predict from a program that is that badly designed.

So I would wish that at some point in this next year or so, next few months, perhaps the minister will come back to this House with a better-designed program, with a program that recognizes the other fundamental principle, and that is that it makes no sense to not provide needed prescription drugs for all who need them and to not overcharge them and not make it difficult for them, because in the absence of taking those drugs, we are shooting ourselves in the foot, Mr. Acting Speaker. We are shooting ourselves in the foot, and then, of course, we need to go to a hospital anyway. We are shooting ourselves in the foot because we are encouraging people to get sick by discouraging them from taking the drugs they need because they cannot afford them.

The third thing I would ask the minister to pay particular heed to is the cascading effect of the charges that he has put in place, particularly for seniors, because I would wager that in the next year or so, we are going to see a great number of seniors in deep, deep economic distress because of the changes of the federal government cascading on changes that they have faced from provincial, particularly health care, but also things like the \$75-tax credit change. They all add up to a very big burden, and I do not think the government has taken the time to add them up and recognize the scale of that burden, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this bill.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments on Bill 13, The Prescription Drugs Cost Assistance Amendment Act. This is an issue that is important to my constituency. I

know I have had the opportunity to talk with many people in my community not only those who have called me specifically with health-related issues, but people who I encounter throughout the community. In fact, I have done a survey some time back about the government's change to the Pharmacare program when it occurred on April 1, 1996, and the effects that it was having on the people in my particular constituency.

People living in Transcona or elsewhere in the province of Manitoba have for some time recognized the value of the Pharmacare program and its importance to the families, my family being one of those who would utilize the Pharmacare program and at that time, prior to the 1996 changes, recognized that there was quite a substantial saving to the families as a result of the Pharmacare program. It indeed helped many families—mine included—and low-income families who fall above the government's threshold that they have established and that it was a benefit to the families.

But the government chose in 1996 to change the particular Pharmacare program. In fact, we saw it as a tax increase on those families in the province here, and we put together a number of examples to try and illustrate quite clearly what the impact was going to be on a family. An average working family, where there were married with two dependent children, with an income in the range of some \$47,000 annual income, that the current annual deduction at that time was \$237, that was the deductible that those families would have to pay. Well, under the changes that the government brought forward on the Pharmacare program in 1996, of course, that same family, its deductible would rise from \$237 to \$1,155 before any of their drug costs would be covered under the Pharmacare program. I think that that government moved in the wrong direction of that and particularly in light of the fact that you now have and you brag quite openly about this surplus and you have had successive budget surpluses, as you have indicated. In fact, I think the number last budget total count was \$577 million and now you continue to gouge the families of Manitoba through your Pharmacare surtax or tax—if we can call it that—by the changes that you made in April of '96.

To give you another example, because that first one I gave you where the deductible rose from \$237 up to \$1,155, a 387 percent increase for that family. The cost

of living for that family, even if they did get a raise, for that average family would have been in the range of 2 or 3 percent. That would be, no doubt, the maximum that they would have received by wage increases for that family if they got anything in that particular time. Another example, a family of four living at the poverty line, total annual income for the whole family, both partners working and perhaps even some of the older children working, would have been \$31,000 and if you do the calculation for that family, the annual deduction would have been \$237. Under the new system that the government has brought in under the Pharmacare program, \$662 is the deductible for that family, 179 percent increase for a family at the poverty line. I do not know how you can justify that. I do not understand the logic that you used.

A senior, a single senior living in the province of Manitoba whose current annual deduction before April of '96 was \$134. Some might consider it an onus; if you are a senior on a fixed income, no doubt \$134 would be. Considering the seniors I have talked to in my community, some of them are living below the poverty line and have their budget stretched to the limit just to try and make ends meet. Well, their annual deductible went from \$134 for this one particular woman in my constituency who is a widow, and under the new system she would be paying \$465, a jump from \$134 to \$465, a 246 percent increase for this widow. I am not sure how you can justify that.

* (1530)

There are many examples that I can give, but two-thirds of Manitobans are now cut off the Pharmacare program. I am not sure how you can justify that. This is a preventative measure. It costs substantially more to put people in hospital and treat them than it does to give them the necessary prescription drugs to prevent them from having to enter the hospitals. So it is a preventative program, and yet you have moved away from preventative programs and now people have to enter hospitals. This is a tax on Manitobans; let us be clear about it.

We think back to the changes this government has made in the health care system since they have been in office, and of course we can look back to the fiasco when they hired Connie Curran to come into this

province at \$4 million U.S. tax free to make, what? What kind of recommendations? How has it changed the health care system? Was this a wise investment of Manitoba taxpayer dollars?

Now we have rethermalized food coming into the province of Manitoba under this government's plan. It is going to cost us nearly 400 jobs in the province of Manitoba, some of them your own producers living in your own communities. That is the impact is going to be, and I am worried about these people and the jobs they have. I want to have quality food products for the people that are in our hospital facilities and in our personal care homes, but if you are bringing in rethermalized food—and I have seen that food. My honourable colleague the member for Concordia brought examples to this House where you could not tell the difference—member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), pardon me, where he brought examples to this House where he showed quite clearly that you could not even tell the difference whether this was porridge, gravy or mashed potatoes.

Now I do not know about you, but I would not eat that type of food unless I was being spoon-fed it. If I were in a hospital bed, I suppose, that would be the only way you could get it into my mouth, but I would not eat it if I were any conscious person looking at that. It was not appetizing in the least. I took a look at the toast. Any one of you know, just take a look in your own fridge at home. Put a piece of toast in there and take it out a couple of days later. What is the condition of the food when you thaw it out, the toast? You are going to have a soggy piece of bread; in fact, you might not even be able to tell that it is bread, and yet you are going to feed that to the sick and the vulnerable in our hospitals. I think it is the wrong move.

I think we should be using Manitoba-grown products to support the produce people here in the province of Manitoba. We should have the value-added industry to produce those products here in the province of Manitoba. We should be giving quality food to the people that are in our hospitals, not the kind of garbage that you are now having under experiments at the Riverview and other centres here in the city. We think you are on the wrong track on this, and I am sure the public will demonstrate that clearly to you as time progresses—[interjection]

Yes, and I am reminded here by my colleague the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) about the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), and he must be embarrassed, at least he was here on the day when it was pointed out to him. He said with great fanfare that he was going to bring in a sample of this food from the Riverview Health Centre for his Tory caucus cabinet meeting, or caucus meeting that he was having this week, only to find out that he had brought in a special chef from Nestle to prepare this food and a full-course turkey dinner, a full-course turkey dinner, no doubt to feed the turkeys that were going to eat it.

An Honourable Member: What did the patients have that day?

Mr. Reid: But the patients that day had rethermalized food, macaroni and peas.

Now I do not know how the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) and his colleagues can sit here in this Chamber and say that it is fair for his caucus colleagues to have what he called a meal that was prepared at the Riverview Health Centre come into this Chamber, when we know full well that that meal was not the same meal that was prepared for the patients of that particular health care facility. So, while you had turkey, dressing, gravy and all the trimmings, the patients of Riverview Health care had Kraft dinner, no doubt, and peas. Now, you call that fair for those patients that are in that facility?

I have a family member that just came out of there. I was in there looking at the conditions, beautiful facility, but the food that they were being served is not appropriate for them.

I do not know how this aids in their recovery to feed them—[interjection] Yes, I have had family members recently in the hospital, and I have looked at the quality of food, and I have looked at the overworked conditions of the nursing staff in there. I have had calls from people in my constituency who have family members in the hospital today who tell me—in fact, one particular case, the constituent's father was a doctor now retired, and there was not even appropriate health care staff to look after him in the hospital. Now my constituent asked me: does the government think that this is quality health care to have a person that is in the

health care condition that her particular father is in and not have adequate health care staff available? In fact, my constituent tells me that the nursing staff of the hospital have been instructed to tell the families of the patients: we cannot help you; go out and hire additional staff to come into the hospital to look after your family members.

That is what my constituents are telling me that they are being told if they are worried about the health care and the staffing additions in the hospitals. I am talking about last week being told this—I am not talking months back—last week. So maybe the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) can afford, through his family income, to hire additional staff to come into the hospital to look after his family member or his loved one. Other families in our province cannot afford that. It is an onerous financial burden that you are placing upon the families and upon the people that are in hospitals at the most vulnerable point of their lives.

I want to talk a bit about the other health care issues, because it does deal in some way with Pharmacare. I know the Minister of Health has been asked this question, and I am not sure if I will have another opportunity to ask him this question, but there is a problem at the Health Sciences Centre under the mental health system in that particular facility. Now, I know I have written to the minister and my Leader has written to the minister on Dr. Seshia, and I am not going to get involved in the management decisions that are taking place in that particular facility, but what concerns me about that particular health care facility, knowing of people that have utilized that facility, and it is my understanding in talking to others in the community that deal daily with situations such as this, is that there is not a certified person in charge of that particular mental health facility.

I have waited now for some weeks for the minister to respond to my letter, and I hope he will shortly so that I can apprise my constituents of what is happening in that particular health care facility, because I want to make sure that the people who are going into that facility receive the care from people that are skilled and trained in those areas so that they do not have to guess on whether or not the doctor that is providing the treatment has the necessary certification and is qualified to instruct or perform any medical procedures or to prescribe any drugs.

For the benefit of my constituents, I am asking the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to respond to those needs. That is why I sent a letter to the minister asking him for some advice in this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. I have asked all honourable members in the Assembly to respect those that are speaking so that they are not interrupted. I would also ask those that are speaking to address their remarks to the Chair and to try to keep their remarks pertinent to the bill in question. Thank you.

Mr. Reid: Through you to the members opposite, as I would normally do, but I neglected to do it at the beginning of my comments—through you to the members opposite, I ask you to take a look at what is happening in the Health Sciences Centre, the mental health facility, because there are problems there, and there are serious problems. I do not want to see anybody put at a disadvantage or not receive the appropriate health care services that they require, particularly in these situations.

I also want to, when talking about this Bill 13, and I am aware that Bill 13 has some five sections in it, four of them more specifically designated to reform the particular act or to amend the particular act, but I am worried about the future of the Concordia Hospital.

I believe, Mr. Acting Speaker, the government House leader has a few comments, and I will yield the floor to him with the understanding that I can resume my comments.

* (1540)

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I thank the honourable member for Transcona for the accommodation. This is by way of House business and not meant to take away from his time.

Earlier today I tabled a letter of understanding between myself and the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) respecting the spring break and respecting the Interim Supply bill. At the time it might have been good if we had asked that that become an order of the House by way of unanimous agreement,

so that is what I am asking for now, that the letter tabled earlier be agreed to unanimously.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

* * *

Mr. Reid: To resume my comments about the Pharmacare program and Bill 13, but I want to talk a bit about Concordia Hospital because I have received correspondence from constituents, people I talked to in my community about the future of this particular facility, and I know the government has made some changes to its structure of the delivery of health care services in the city of Winnipeg and, in fact, throughout the province of Manitoba, when we have now gone in the city here to the Winnipeg health care authority, I believe is the appropriate term to use.

My worry here is, and I am going to put this on the record although I hope it does not come to pass, that the government may be intending to use this particular body to change the structure of the Concordia Hospital facility from one currently of acute-care, 24-hour basis to one of a geriatrics facility. Now, if this is the government's intention and plan to use this particular body to make those changes, I can assure the minister there is going to be a large hue and cry from the community, and you will be hearing from me on this because I think this would be a wrong step because this particular hospital not only serves the northeast section of the city of Winnipeg but also serves the outlying areas of Springfield, Birds Hill, Anola, Oakbank. So it is an important hospital facility, acute-care facility, for all of these communities, and we think it would be the wrong direction for the new body, the Winnipeg regional hospital authority, or the government in its instructions to this body to make those changes to that particular hospital.

In Bill 13, Mr. Acting Speaker, I am concerned because this government has levied a tax upon the people of Manitoba, those who had used the Pharmacare program, increases anywhere from 100 percent to 250 percent on their prescription drug costs. In fact, I have had occasion in the past to correspond with the ministers of Health for people who have had drugs that were delisted, and their doctors were

prescribing these to them, to these patients, only to find out that they did not have access to these drugs unless they wanted to pay for them out of their own pockets.

I am worried about the section in the bill under Section 2, and I hope that the minister is not intent on this because it would definitely be in the wrong direction. It appears to be that the government is intent on having a payment of fees, as it says, to be met by different manufacturers of drugs. My worry here with respect to this particular bill is that this could be the door opening to allow the drug companies of North America, perhaps around the world, to pay a fee to the government of Manitoba to have their drug listed as the drug of choice on the preferred list that the government has. If that is the case, I think we are doing a disservice to the people of this province in that there are no doubt suitable alternatives through the generic drug manufacturing industry that would be equally as appropriate for them to be prescribed as it would be for the government to have a preferred drug list, as the drug companies are trying to corner the markets.

Now, we know this government is in favour of the 20-year prescription protection for the drug companies, and we know it was your government that had some say in what happened and that you never voiced any concerns contrary, raising the price of prescription drugs in the province of Manitoba, but I am worried that you are moving now to allow these particular name-brand drug manufacturing companies to have their product corner the market by having it put on the preferred list.

Well, if that is what you are going to do, I think it would be the wrong move, and I only raise this because I am not clear on what your intent is. We have not had a chance; we have not had—[interjection] Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, perhaps the minister, who did not provide us with a spreadsheet to explain these changes, would have helped us to understand what that means to have a payment of fees. Who is going to pay those fees and for what purpose are those fees being paid? So I am not quite clear on what the minister's intent is with respect to the payment of fees.

In the other section of the bill, the minister is making some changes, and what we are also worried about with this is that because we know that this government receives a certain amount of financial contributions

from the particular drug companies, that is another reason why we are worried that you are going to put these products on the preferred list.

In addition, the government is going to make some changes with respect to who would be allowed to prescribe drugs, likely no doubt from a specific list. Previously the government had listed the dentists and the pharmacists as two professional groups that would be allowed to prescribe drugs, and the government is now adding midwives no doubt in light of the government's legislation which we had before us in this Chamber last session. If there are needs in situations where there are midwives that are involved and there is no doctor available in that situation and we need to have certain drugs done, and the people that are administering or prescribing these drugs are trained and are aware of the conditions of the patient, then it may be appropriate for them to undertake to issue or prescribe these drugs. I am not an expert in these areas. I hope that the minister through his department will take the necessary precautions to make sure the people that are being given these new powers will exercise them in the most appropriate fashion, and that they will indeed be given the training to allow them to make the appropriate decision on when and where to make those decisions.

I am also aware through my colleague, but more importantly, through my own family member who happens to have multiple sclerosis. I know my colleague the member for the Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) has raised this with the minister here in the House dealing with the listing of Betaseron and I think the alternate is Copaxone, if I recall correctly, to have that particular drug listed so that the people suffering with multiple sclerosis can lead a normal life because it is my understanding that these particular drugs can make a significant change to the medical condition for people suffering with MS. I ask the minister to with all haste undertake the necessary due diligence in looking at these particular drugs to make sure that the appropriate tests are done but in as quickly as possible a fashion to make sure that the patients can utilize these drugs if they are going to alleviate the pain and suffering that they have and to improve their quality of life.

In the bill itself, Bill 13, the minister is now going to delegate some of his responsibility, in fact shift the responsibilities to the particular committee that the

minister has, in setting up or determining which drugs are or are not on the list the government has of the insured drugs. Now, of course, the minister I guess in this case does not want to make those decisions any longer so he is going to shift the decision-making responsibility on to this particular body. I am not sure if that is the appropriate course of action to take to let another body. I take it that there must be some fair amount of expertise on that particular body, but we are not quite clear on whether or not that should be appropriate for the government to make those changes.

* (1550)

There may be other areas that the government is proposing. I wish the minister would have tabled a particular spreadsheet to explain in more detail his intent with respect to these changes on Bill 13, the Pharmacare program. But I do know that overall his Pharmacare program has disadvantaged a great many of Manitobans; in fact, two-thirds of Manitobans are now paying this increased tax as a result of your changes to the Pharmacare program. These changes, I hope, will not further disadvantage Manitobans, including the people that live in my community of Transcona, and we will be watching very closely the comments of the minister with respect to this bill and his comments in committee when we have an opportunity to question him further with respect to his intent on Bill 13 and the changes he is proposing here today.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, with those few comments I will turn the floor over to my other colleagues who may also wish to add their comments with respect to Bill 13, but we will be watching the minister's comments on Bill 13 when it does go to committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the bill.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Acting Speaker, I, too, am glad to have the opportunity early on to put some comments on this particular bill on the record, because it is one that affects my constituents, many of whom are seniors and some of whom live in very serious and straitened circumstances.

Indeed, I was yesterday at the west Broadway neighbourhood centre where we were having a Christmas dinner. I sat down with a group of seniors, and I would say within two or three minutes, the one

issue that was raised with me was the cost of drugs. People started talking to me about the way in which their drug costs had been altered, about the increase in taxation that they saw that the government had brought. Being straightforward-speaking people, they were very clear that what the government had done was to impose a tax upon them and yet at the same time try to maintain that it was not a tax increase. Nobody is fooled by the kind of platitudes which the government has uttered on different and many occasions about its so-called record in not increasing taxes. No senior in west Broadway, I think, respects that position.

The government has increased taxes. It has increased it in many new and unusual ways, but it does not have the guts, it does not have the straightforwardness, it does not have, I would say, the directness to recognize and to admit and to confirm that these are indeed tax increases, and they are, of course, tax increases on many of those who are in the most difficult circumstances.

Pharmacare, Mr. Acting Speaker, is something which has extended the life, it has extended the well-being, it has extended the wellness of all of our constituents. I think there is no doubt about that, and it is part of the extension of medicare that has come to characterize Canada. I well remember when we first came to Canada in the end of the '50s, early 1960s. We came from a country which had medicare, and we came to a country which did not have medicare. I well remember the fears of my family, my parents, that we were—I think my mother's phrase was, putting our heads into a noose—coming to a country where there was not that kind of security that we had left. There were many other reasons for coming to Canada, and Canada has been a very wonderful and generous country to other immigrants, not only to myself, to my own family. But one of the most exciting things about living in Canada in the 1960s was the way in which medicare was expanded and the way in which in many ways that social democratic philosophy, in fact, became a Canadian philosophy.

I was much struck when we had the last round of hearings on the Constitution during the Charlottetown Accord. So many people came to speak to that meeting and talked about the value of medicare and the value of

social programs and the importance of maintaining a strong federal government for the purpose of maintaining and enhancing those kinds of social programs. There were some times I know when people expressed even reservations about that because they said, well, is Canada nothing more than a series of social programs? But, Mr. Acting Speaker, it was clear that to people, being Canadian had come to mean the maintenance of those national social programs which distributed the chances in life a little more equally and which certainly distributed them on an equal basis across Canada.

I remember the doctors' strike in Saskatchewan. I remember hospitalization coming into the province of Quebec where I lived, and those were indeed very exciting times, and they seemed to be an inevitability of expansion of that kind of redistribution of life's opportunities. It made Canada seem a very generous, as it is, a very generous country and one which was recognized that it had wealth and that wealth could be distributed equally amongst all its citizens.

The Schreyer government in the 1960s, end of the '60s and the 1970s, in Manitoba expanded that to include the beginnings of home care and the beginnings of a Pharmacare system, and that was expanded, of course, under the Pawley government as well, because clearly if you are interested in maintaining a strong national and provincial health care system, you must look at Pharmacare as part of that. This was in a period, in fact, when the use of drugs was not nearly so extensive as it is now or indeed that the prices were not so dramatically high.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, it was a recognition of the importance of drugs in the whole system of prevention and medical treatment of the sick of this country, and I well remember it being brought to my attention. I was canvassing—this was in 1971 I think it was—in Carleton East in Ontario, sitting down with a senior, and I was relatively young and did not have a great deal of life experience. She sat down with me at her kitchen table, she poured out all her drugs on the table and she listed for me the cost of those drugs. She then went through her budget, and she showed me the meals that she was going to have to miss to pay for those drugs. That was before Pharmacare in Ontario.

Now, gradually across Canada the example of both the Saskatchewan and the Manitoba governments has been imitated by others. I would say until the early 1980s that people felt that there was the opportunity to share the wealth of this country through medicare, through hospitalization, through pharmacare and home care with all our fellow citizens, but we began with the Mulroney government a different kind of ethos for Canada. It was the swashbuckling, swaggering '80s, the politics of the '80s that saw only individual heroes, which wanted to take away the collective and the social democratic ethos and framework from Canada, and they began to do that.

They looked at pharmacare as one element of this, and they began the process of much greater protection for the drug companies, much greater emphasis on the producer rather than the consumer, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think this continued with the beginnings of the cutbacks to provincial governments of health payments which continued with the Chretien government. I think if there is one thing we share with members of the government side, it is a tremendous dismay and a shock that the Liberal government which brought in many of the elements of hospitalization which had a Liberal face at one time has now begun, in fact perhaps even completed, the dismantling of a national health care system with national health care standards, with an equality for all across Canada, and Mr. Martin as well as Mr. Chretien seem to see no shame in this. Yet they want at the same time to talk about national unity, they want to talk about national programs, and they are dismayed when people I think see them as the destroyers of that national unity that had been there in the '60s and '70s and an allegiance to a growing sense of Canada as a country of generosity and of distribution of wealth.

So what we are seeing as the provincial government in Manitoba has continued with a similar kind of policy is the introduction of user fees in so many elements of society. Canada is becoming not the social democratic society as was created in the '70s or the '60s in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, but it is becoming a society where you must have the money—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) will

have 32 minutes remaining; and, as previously agreed, the matter will also remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar).

It is now time for Private Members' Business.

* (1600)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Res. 3—Senate

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), that

“WHEREAS the Canadian Senate is both anti-democratic and of no real benefit to taxpayers; and

“WHEREAS the Senate defends the interests of the parties that appoint the senators not the regions that it was supposed to represent; and

“WHEREAS the Senate costs over \$55 million annually much of it for clearly partisan activities of the appointed members; and

“WHEREAS for decades Canadians have called for changes or the abolishment of the Senate; and

“WHEREAS appointments to the Senate by both the Conservative and Liberal party have long been made on the basis of a record of being either loyal party fundraisers or past party provincial leaders; and

“WHEREAS senators do not even have to show up in Ottawa to be paid and one Ontario Liberal Senator a past leader of the Ontario Liberals has shown up twice in the last two years and did not show up between October 1990 and January 1994 but collected his full salary; and

“WHEREAS even Liberal Cabinet Ministers such as Lloyd Axworthy have noted that in a democracy having an appointed body to legislate is not appropriate and the Senate should be abolished.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba go on record as recommending that the Senate be abolished.”

Motion presented.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Acting Speaker, it is surprising to me that in 1997 we should still be debating the issue of the Senate after all these years of a useless body such as that. It is surprising to me that a useless body such as that should still be operating in its current mode.

Now over the years we have had a collection of various Tory and Liberal political types suggest changes to the Senate, and there have been suggestions over the years that we go to an elected Senate, and there have been other suggestions that have been made about reform of the Senate. Fundamentally, Mr. Acting Speaker, people in the NDP over the years, since the days of Stanley Knowles, have long taken a more direct approach to the problem that we see with the Senate, and we realize that you cannot reform this type of body. We have called consistently and loudly over the years for the abolishment of the Senate. Mr. Acting Speaker, the sooner that is done, I think, the better off the whole country will be.

In fact, people such as Lloyd Axworthy, during the recent election, took a position in favour of abolishing the Senate, which was surprising in a way because Lloyd Axworthy is a loyal member of the current federal Liberal cabinet. So, when people such as Axworthy start taking that position, then there may be some hope that within our lifetime here in the Chamber that this body may in fact be abolished.

Unfortunately, we have too many other people who have an interest, a direct interest in seeing that the Senate remains as it is. We only have to look at our current Liberal Party in Manitoba and the history of that Liberal Party to see why that is so. One of the major attractions of people who have over the years—and the list since I have been around of Liberal Party leaders is so long I can hardly remember them all. They rarely stay around for any length of time. But what they know is that upon their ascension to the helm as Liberal leader, that good times may not be with them as leaders of the Liberal Party. They may not enjoy political wealth while they are leaders of the Liberal Party, but they know that good times are just around the corner, because they know that ultimately they will be an appointment to the Senate or some other plum will come their way.

We only have to look at the previous Leader of the Liberal Party here in Manitoba, one Sharon Carstairs, who got her reward and is happily, happily sitting in the Senate keeping in the family tradition. I believe her father was a senator and she is following in the tradition of her father. At her age, the new senator from Manitoba, who is now living in Ottawa, stands to be a senator, unelected, for 20, 25 years because I think she is in the 50-, 55-year range and she can sit there unelected until she is 75 years old. As a matter of fact, Mrs. Carstairs, recently in a November 6 news article in the Free Press, evidently states that Canadians get great value in the Senate.

Now, you know, I talked to a lot of my constituents and, quite frankly, Mr. Acting Speaker, I do not think very many of them could name any of the Manitoba senators that are currently sitting. For example, Senator Carstairs may, in fact, be known to some people, but Duncan Jessiman would not be known by my constituents; Janis Johnson; Gildas Molgat—once again, Gildas Molgat is another sainted Liberal Party Leader, one of the many; Mira Spivak and Terry Stratton. So my constituents or the constituents of Transcona or anywhere else, the Deputy Premier's (Mr. Downey) constituents, I do not think very many of them could name one or two of the Manitoba senators.

On the other hand, Mr. Acting Speaker, when it comes to the members of Parliament, I think that their constituents could name a few more of the members of Parliament. I think a number of constituents would know, my constituents would know, the name of Reg Alcock, for example. The constituents of the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) may know the name of Reg Alcock, Lloyd Axworthy, Bill Blaikie, Ron Duhamel, John Harvard. There are a number of federal M.P.s who are elected, who would be known by the constituents.

My point is that the M.P.s are elected by the people; they are accountable to the people; they have to take positions; they deal with constituents; they solve constituents problems. The senators, on the other hand, are appointed people, most of them unknown to the public, unaccountable to the public, have nothing much to do with the public as a matter of fact, and are sent to Ottawa for a lifetime appointment. That is absolutely unfair that we would have this privilege, this elitism at

its best, in the Canadian parliamentary system. I mean this is the type of body, this is the type of arrangement that makes people upset about the way the country functions.

I mean, I think, people can understand. They may not like federal members of Parliament pensions and federal members of Parliament perks. They may not like the MLAs' perks and salaries, but when it comes to the senators, that is a different matter. They have absolutely nobody to complain to. They cannot unelect. If they are unhappy with the performance of an MLA or an M.P., they have the option of voting them out at the next election, but you do not have that option, Mr. Acting Speaker, with Terry Stratton or Sharon Carstairs or Duncan Jessiman. They are there, regardless of what they do or do not do until age 75.

* (1610)

Now, I do not want to suggest for a moment that all of the senators just simply collect their pay and do nothing. Some of them are quite active. Some of these honourable members are bagmen and bagwomen for their political parties. They toiled in those trenches, in those corporate boardrooms, picking up those \$10,000 cheques on behalf of their parties, and at a certain point in their existence, if they were effective at doing what they were doing, they got appointed to the Senate, and now for a paltry \$65,000 or so and a few dozen trips across the country, their lives are a little easier now when they go picking up those cheques because they get paid for doing it. So it is amazing.

I mean, Mr. Acting Speaker, I always thought that the bagmen work for the parties and should actually be reimbursed or paid by the parties, but here we have them on the public payroll. Here we have the public treasury, the Canadian public paying for Liberal and Tory bagmen to go out and raise money for their parties, all at the expense of the public. That is another type of senator that we see in the Senate that the public are not happy about.

So we have senators who are residing in Mexico who have not shown up for years. We have that group of senators who feel they do not even have to show up and, in fact, I believe that particular fellow feels that the Senate should be reformed. I would like to know what ideas he has for reform. Then we have our political

hacks and bagmen in the Senate. Then we have another Liberal senator here, February 12, 1997, in the Winnipeg Sun, who was praising Hitler, so that will give you some idea of how up to date some of these senators are on the issues. Some of these senators are so far behind in history and ideas that one wonders what is going there.

There is a constant battle between the Liberals and the Tories to see who can have the most senators and who can stack the senators. Mulroney, when he got elected, I mean, all of a sudden his tune changed. As he got close to the majority of senators, he started to like the Senate a lot more. Now what you find, as the Liberals have taken over the Senate, now you find the Tory enthusiasm for the Senate has kind of diminished a little bit and, on that basis, I am hoping today that the Tory members opposite might see it within themselves to take a different attitude here on abolishing the Senate since most of them will never see it or will never have a chance to be in it because, the way things are going here, the Liberals may be in power here for many, many terms.

So what you will see—the member, the Attorney General talks about the Manitoba Senate, and that is true. There used to be a Senate in Manitoba in the beginning. Anyway, what I wanted to say is that the enthusiasm for the Senate is in direct proportion to how close the other two parties are in government. If they are in government they are in favour of the Senate and if they are not in government then they want to see some reforms. They want to see Triple-E Senates and that is why I am hoping today that the Conservatives are quite a long ways from seeing another heyday in the Senate, so maybe they will be changing their minds on Senate reform.

Our attitude on the Senate, we have always said that when the groups were out pushing the Triple-E Senate that we were in favour of the Triple-A Senate, and that was Abolish, Abolish, and Abolish. With the history of the Senate and what little it has accomplished over the years I am hoping that there will be a consensus opinion in the public in the not too distant future to in fact abolish the Senate if we can simply pry the process away from people who have a vested interest in keeping the process the way it is, and once again we are talking

about the political elites, the Liberal political elites who run Ottawa.

Now, we have another group of senators. We have lobbyists. We have an example here of a senator who was—well, we have Mr. Berntson. He has been charged in the Saskatchewan scandal. He has been quite active.

We have another case of a senator who was paid \$5,000 a month for advice for seven years. That was involving Mr. José Perez who many of us know had pretty heavy involvements in Ottawa and was quite connected to senators and people in power and thought nothing of using whatever influence he could to get contracts and other governments' enterprises. So, Mr. Acting Speaker, what you have is these senators not only enjoying all the perks that this job provides, but they are not content with that. They go out and have a little job on the side here as a \$5,000-a-month adviser, basically a lobbyist for their causes and for different companies.

So this is a very, very bad development, I guess. We have had to live with it for quite a number of years. The current senator, because of the situation involving Senator Thompson, I believe it is, who is domiciled at the present time in Mexico and shows no interest in coming back to even make a good show. I mean, Senator Thompson really does not care what people think about him. He thinks that it is time to reform the Senate—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on this resolution brought forward by the member for Elmwood. I have read his resolution and have listened to him put his words on the record, and I do see some things in his resolution that I think I and probably many Manitobans and probably all Canadians can agree with.

I think though I would like to start out just by putting a couple of things on the record. In his presentation, he mentioned that the members opposite have always believed in the Triple-A, which was Abolish, Abolish, Abolish. Yet the record will show that the members opposite in an all-party Constitutional Task Force in 1991, which was signed by the honourable member for

The Pas and the honourable member for Wolseley, that recommended while the current state of the Senate should be dissolved, they also brought forward the suggestion that it should be a newly elected Senate. I think that before we put on the record that one side of the House has been standing in favour of one resolution or another, that that should be put on the record.

* (1620)

That constitutional task force took place in 1991 and there was a lot of discussion around the Senate. I think, again, as his resolution has stated and I think quite clearly that if you do canvass the people of Manitoba, you will find that there is probably a consensus out there that the current Senate as it exists today should be re-evaluated, many would say probably dissolved, but many would also suggest that if it can be presented in a different form that is workable, and I refer back as he did to the Triple-E in the sense that it makes it equal and effective and elected. I think that is something that we should all consider.

I do not claim to be a constitutional expert, and I would suggest there is probably not many in here who could. I look at my colleagues and I think everyone has a different opinion on the proposal that is put forward, but I think we have to give some consideration to what would happen if we were to move on the resolution put forward today as it was put forward, and that would be strictly to abolish the Senate. I think there is a place for that second chamber. I firmly believe that, if done right and presented to the people of Canada in a proper method, they would support a Senate. They would support that sober second thought that we constantly hear about, but I think we have to give this Senate a role in which they can play, where we do take the politics out of it in the sense of political patronage. I do not think anyone on this side of the House would argue that over time and as time has progressed, it has become more and more of a political tool as opposed to the purpose that it was originally set up to serve. I think that we have to consider that when we are discussing this resolution and when we are debating it.

I think that when the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) talks about the cost of the Senate, I agree \$55 million does seem extravagant. I think when we read today in the papers and throughout

the last several months about the concerns that people are expressing on the Senate, I do not think you would get any argument from this side that if a person is put in a position of representation, whether he be elected or whether he be appointed, he is there to represent. I have no problem saying to the member that anyone who does not attend meetings on a regular basis and does not serve the role that he was chosen to do should be reprimanded and perhaps should be removed from that position, the idea being that if we are going to have a Senate of any kind that is functional, it has to be responsible. Whether or not you are elected, to me, would enhance the responsibility side of it.

I think the question of the Senate and its reform is indeed, you know, a concern that all Manitobans share. It is a concern that we read about in central Canada and it is always, I find, easy to base our decisions based on the negative stories that we read. I think that if we peruse history, we can find that there have been times and cases where the Senate has been a valuable tool in the protection of democracy. I do not know because of the poor examples that have been cited in the previous short while that we would want to—just with one stroke of the pen—make a decision to eliminate a body of people that were put into a position to help make representation and help make better decisions for the people of Canada, whether we should just eliminate that all without thought as to what should come or what may come next.

I have a concern that if we abolish the Senate, then we will have a very different political system in Canada in the sense where you have a strong majority in the federal government, regional concerns may be overlooked. It is certainly going to be easier to do if you have a strong majority. I think that I, as a Manitoban and Manitoba being one of the smaller populations of people in the country of Canada, would maybe be a loser in some of the concerns that we have that are affected by decisions that are made by politicians who, I think, we all agree right now, make decisions based in central Canada. Some of the policies that come forward that impact western Canada without consideration given to those impacts on western Canada would be lost. I think that is the value that the Senate can offer.

I think that it has a way of addressing some of the concerns. I think if we were to have a Senate that came

out and spoke to the communities of the populations of the provinces of Canada that they might come back with better policy making, better government decisions. But I think to just abolish it without having an alternative or something that we could put in its place to serve the needs that are sometimes overlooked by huge majority governments would be a mistake. I think that definitely, as the member has stated in his resolution, Canadians have called for changes, and I think he points out quite clearly in his resolution, in one of his WHEREASes where it reads: WHEREAS for decades Canadians have called for changes or the abolishment.

I think if we canvassed the people of Canada, perhaps they would not necessarily agree to the abolishment without some other form of accountability put back into the system. I think we have to be very, very considerate and very concerned about just eliminating that body as we would like to do or as what has been suggested we do today, and I read into it—obviously I think there is maybe a touch of resentment that the opposition member brings forward in his resolution by naming strictly the senators appointed by Conservative and Liberal parties and I think to the appointment of Mr. Stan Waters in the province of Alberta who was a Reform member, stood for Reform and through the process in Alberta was identified by that province, by the people, by the majority of the people of that province to represent their interests in the Senate, and at that time the government of the day took that advice.

I think something that we should consider is maybe if we were to agree to the abolishment of the Senate, that we would want to have a system that we could present as a better system to the provinces and to the country to make it work and, again, I would suggest to represent the regions of Canada that because of their population are sometimes overlooked when large majority governments are making decisions based, in particular, on majorities based out of central Canada.

Again, I would like to, I guess, refer back to it, and I do not know, Mr. Acting Speaker, if there are any NDP members sitting in the Senate. I presume it is a concern that he has, and I would say by having an elected Senate, an equal Senate and an effective Senate, the members opposite would have the ability to at least bring forward that candidate and present that candidate for all of the people of Manitoba. Saskatchewan, with

its strong provincial representation of New Democrats, may at that point have an opportunity to bring forward a candidate who would have a far better chance of getting into a Senate and representing the province or the region that he is from in a Senate than he would today. I think we have to consider those options when we are considering this resolution that has been put forward today as we see it.

I certainly concur with him. I think anybody who has been appointed or elected to a job has an obligation to serve in that position, and I think that the ones who are not doing that right now should be identified, and there should be a process to remove those people from the process, and at the same time maybe we can offer an idea of how we can bring forward the elected people to start the process that is necessary to give the representation that I think we both agree is necessary in a functional Canada. I think the idea of just getting rid of something because we are unhappy with it today or with the way that it functions is probably premature, and it should be thought out further in the sense of what—usually when you are taking something away, you have to come up with a better alternative to make it work.

* (1630)

I think that is what we should be doing in this House today, and I think that is more what we should be discussing. I think if we look at some of the laws that have been passed in Canada in recent times, had we had strong regional Senate representation, we may have had a better law or a better policy when the day was done than we have today and perhaps something that we could live with and understand a little bit better. I do not want to get into any specific policies or legislation that has been brought forward, but I think there is always some legislation out there that we as a province probably agree to not like or we dislike it right from the get go, and I think that we should be prepared through an elected Senate to have those representations brought at the highest level.

I would like to—and as I read the document that the all-party agreement signed in 1991, I think it is a very good map for us all to be following. I think we should perhaps forward this to other Canadians and other jurisdictions for consideration, because they do talk

about some of the positive things that would and could happen should we abolish the Senate as it now exists. They talk about, in their comments in the paper that they put forward they said the people of Manitoba suggested, as it was now structured, it was viewed as offensive, wasteful and even dysfunctional. I do not think anybody in this particular House could disagree with that. I think that, again, when you put up an argument against something, I think you have to be prepared to put up something else, a solution to that particular problem. If we could abolish all of our problems without having a resolve to it I am not sure where we would end up as far as a government.

The new second chamber might do what the existing Senate has failed to accomplish, and I think specifically a new second chamber could respond to the desire of Manitobans to see a more equitable balancing of national and regional concerns, and I think if they were elected they would have that responsibility to the province. They would be elected by the people, and that to me seems to be the whole statement of government, being accountable to the people that elect you. I think if the Senate was presented to the people that way, then I would suggest to you that it could be a working model for all provinces and all of Canada to consider.

I would like to just thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker, for the time that I have had today to put these comments on the record, and I look forward to more comments.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I certainly found the comments of my colleague very, very enlightening. I noted that he referred to the all-party Constitutional Task Force that this province had in 1991, and that task force, of course, looked at a number of government institutions or Canadian institutions. I noted, of course, as my colleague did, that this was an all-party task force wherein a Mr. Jim Carr, who was then the MLA in Crescentwood, signed this document, the MLA for Brandon West, the MLA for Wolseley, the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, the MLA for The Pas, and the MLA for St. Vital all signed this document.

I think one of the important things we have to remember about this document, whether it went

anywhere or not is not so much the issue. The issue is that this reflected the wishes of the people of Manitoba, and that is something we have to bear in mind when we make decisions in the public interest or chart new directions for our country. So while that particular Senate or the Senate as it currently exists—it was advocated that that be dissolved—it certainly did indicate that a new, elected Senate should be created.

I think the desire for reform comes out of many of the abuses that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has cited in this House. There is no question that the lack of accountability of the Senate, the lack of any true, elected representatives in the Senate tends towards abuse, and I think that those are issues that need to be addressed in the Senate if the Senate is going to continue.

Now, Manitobans, as the Meech Lake Task Force concluded here in the province of Manitoba, favoured an elected, equal and more effective Senate, and, you know, the Unity Task Force that is going to be hearing from Manitobans again may raise this issue, that is, in terms of representations being made to it. I do not want to prejudge what the people of Manitoba will be telling us, whether they still favour an elected, equal and more effective Senate or whether, in fact, Manitobans wish to see an abolition of the Senate as has been proposed by the MLA for Elmwood.

I recognize that the arguments that the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) has put forward are very, very compelling arguments. Many of the things that have been said certainly need to be addressed. Whether they need to be addressed by the abolition is quite another thing.

One of the presenters in the 1991 task force stated that the Senate in its present form is a disgrace. It is a national and it is becoming an international embarrassment. The cheapest, quickest and safest way to get rid of it is outright abolition and that is the recommendation that I would urge that this task force make to the government.

So this was one presenter's view, and I think the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is expressing, I think, a similar point of view.

Others though, the majority, indicated that a new second chamber might do what the existing Senate has failed to accomplish, and that is to fulfill the desire of Manitobans to see a more equitable balancing of national and regional concerns. As one presenter suggested to that particular task force, the Senate does not service the needs of Canada for a House where the full range of our regional problems and the effect of national policies on these problems can be discussed with independence and authority.

I would hark back to some of the comments made by the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), how does one provide that authority, and I say one of the ways to ensure that authority when regional voices are speaking is that the authority comes from an elected voice.

The task force, as indicated, recommended that the existing Senate be dissolved and that this new second chamber be created to replace the existing chamber. What the task force recommended as a first principle is that the new second chamber should act as a voice to speak for provincial, territorial and regional concerns, and it should be capable of reviewing the decisions made by the House of Commons. That same regional role also has been recognized in the report of the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada chaired by Senator Beaudoin and Dorothy Dobbie, as she was then a Manitoba M.P. The hearings took place in 1991 as well, and I believe the report was issued in early 1992.

* (1640)

One of the points that they make in that report, as well, is that regional representation is an important function of the Senate, and so provincial and territorial governments may well find a new voice in the Senate by the capacity to have them appoint senators. The idea that regional concerns be brought forward through some form of elected process is one that certainly found favour in this particular report, and, again, that was emphasized in our task force report in 1991.

The second principle that our task force recommended back in 1991 is that members of the chamber should be elected. When we speak of authority, I think in many, many situations authority is

granted, in our democracy, from the people, and the most effective way to ensure that authority is truly voicing the concerns of the people is that there be some form of an election.

As much as all of us here in this House support the idea that all Canadians are equal, whether they are of whatever background they come from, whatever sex they are, whatever part of the country they come from, they are all equal. One of the concerns, however, that has been raised recently in respect of our Charter of Rights is not that people should not be equal and that we should not protect them but the idea that these rights are determined by nonelected judges. That is a growing concern in this country. I hear it often from my constituents when they express a particular opinion in saying: well, why can the law not be changed to do this? Sometimes, sadly, the answer is that the courts will not allow us to do that. What we find is that courts are beginning to make policy decisions that we have traditionally reserved for our parliamentarians.

In fact, what we have seen is courts in fact making laws when they create exemptions to our laws and indeed add things to our laws. It is a constitutional doctrine now that has been accepted regularly by our courts: adding words to laws that were never there or subtracting words from laws. So they in fact are amending laws, and these are the concerns that my constituents expressed to me. I am not saying that the courts should not have a role in there. What I am saying is that there is a concern that the authority of the courts is not based on a perceived base from the people's voice. So those are issues that I have seen now people raise in respect of the courts.

Certainly we have seen it over and over again in respect of the Senate. The Senate is unelected. The Senate is unresponsive. The Senate does not properly represent the views of people across Canada. It may be not the fault of the senators there but the form of government that we now have in the Senate.

So I find that whenever one has an institution, whether it is the courts or whether it is the Senate, where the representatives and the officials on that body are not elected, there is an alienation from the people that must be addressed. I say that in respect of the

courts, because that was a big question in our recent Justice ministers' conference, how to make the courts more understandable to the people. How do we make the justice system more responsive to the needs of people? That is a great concern in this country.

In the same way, I say we have to look at the issue of the Senate. How then do we make the Senate more responsive to the needs of people because, whether we look at the House of Commons, the Legislatures, the Senate, or the courts, these are all institutions that were created to serve the needs of the people, and they all express themselves in different ways.

So getting back specifically then to the Senate, the issue of regional voice needs to be addressed. The issue of election needs to be addressed, and in this context the distribution of seats is certainly an important, important issue.

The report that I referred to earlier, the report of the Special Joint Committee on a Renewed Canada, talked about not only the need for reform of the Senate but the roles and functions of a reformed Senate. It talked about an electoral system for a reformed Senate, whether the Senate should be elected by proportional representation, what the size of these constituencies should be, the timing and electoral terms.

So all of these issues I look forward to hearing from Manitobans, if they still have the desire that we have a Senate and if it should be effective and if it should be elected. Let us hear from Manitobans. Let us see if they have changed their mind from 1991 before we make any rash decisions here today in terms of calling for the abolition of this institution. If there are alternatives that would better serve the people of Canada, let us explore those alternatives before we throw away that institution, and while many Canadians have just cause to have concern in view of recent events in the Senate, we do, in fact, I think, owe a duty to our constituents to listen very closely to their points of view before we adopt this type of resolution,

I know that one of my other colleagues would like to speak on this issue. I do not know whether members across the way do, but these are very important matters, and I would certainly want to hear from them.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Gladstone): Mr. Acting Speaker, as much as I have had this great opportunity listening back and forth to this wonderful debate about our Triple-E Senate, I am going to kind of use a back-door approach, and I am going to try and get this on the record very quickly before I get shut down because it meant so much to me today, and I understand that we are getting close to shutting her down for our Christmas break.

But there is one thing that I really felt was so dear and close and wonderful and a little warm to my heart that I thought I would just try, if I could, with a little bit of indulgence from the Chair—and I see already that the table officers are getting awful jittery and they are kind of wondering what is going to happen.

I thank honourable members, those that I had an opportunity to consult with on this issue—but an organization which provides invaluable service to our province, and I am not referring to the Senate, I wish I were, one which also has great historical significance to Manitoba and to Canada as a whole. It is, of course, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the North West Mounted Police as they were first known to our province. On the 125th anniversary of the origin of the RCMP, they will look back and honour the proudest moment in their illustrious past.

I am sure all members in this House know I am referring to the great march. The great march took place in 1873 when the newly formed North West Mounted Police embarked on their very first mission. The North West Mounted Police, known to all today as the RCMP, forged 900 miles over the course of three months across wild prairie frontier, braving tornados, quicksand, tainted drinking water and more. The young Mounties had little training and few supplies, yet they persevered against insurmountable odds through hard work, gaining the trust of the plains tribes and brought justice and order to the west.

* (1650)

The great march west was a defining event in Manitoba and Canadian history. It opened the west to future generations of settlers, established strong relations with native tribes and proved to American

hunters and the whiskey traders that Canada could and would defend its borders.

As this moment was integral to the evolution of Canada in opening the west and in establishing law and order, it is imperative that it be remembered and celebrated. The most respected and famous police force in the world, the RCMP, continue to be held in high esteem across this nation. As such, the RCMP will re-enact the entire great march west, mile by mile along ditches, highway road allowances and gravel roads beginning July 1, 1999. The summer march will head out on horseback from Emerson supported by wagon trains of supplies through Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to Fort Edmonton.

The winter march will begin at The Forks with teams of dog sleds travelling through Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to Calgary where Fort Whoop-Up was located. In my opinion, this is a momentous undertaking which deserves recognition and support by all members of this House.

Prior to my sitting down, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank members on both sides of the House for all your support, your friendship, and indeed I want to wish everybody a very, very Merry Christmas. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): I am sure that all members of the House thank the honourable member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan) for those very nice words. I would suggest to him that perhaps the Members' Statements might have been a more appropriate area to bring this up.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is of course always a pleasure to listen to our colleagues in this House, and it is always a pleasure to listen to the debates in the House as they occur, and especially the resolutions, I think, form a very prominent part of the debating process in this House. I think having private members' hours and being able to discuss Private Members' Business in this House is certainly part of the democratic process that a Legislative Assembly and a parliamentary system was put in place for.

I took some real interest in the resolution that the opposition member Mr. Maloway brought to this House in Senate reform. Having been quite involved in the

Ottawa scene for many years, many people across this nation have of course talked about the effectiveness of the Senate, or, in fact, some people have criticized the performance of the Senate. But I think in large part that has been brought on by members that have either not attended or the Senate wielding the kind of parliamentary powers that they have been directed to wield by their maybe so-called political masters from time to time. I think it is unfortunate that a Senate—although I am a strong supporter of a Senate and the British parliamentary system—I think it is unfortunate that people allow themselves to be directed after they have been appointed to a Senate.

Therefore, Mr. Acting Speaker, I concur with my colleagues, the colleague from Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rocan) and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), who have just finished speaking to this issue and what they have said. I concur that we should not just abolish a part of our tradition—a tradition in the debates of pieces of legislation and/or issues that come before the House—and remember there are times when Parliament has in fact referred issues to the Senate for what we call a second sober assessment of a given piece of legislation and/or even at times, other business. I think it is important that we recognize the need for that or that the legislation recognizes the need for that second debate or that the Canadian Parliament in fact requires that there be another thought process given to this.

I was interested in reading some of the presentations that were brought before the commission that our government put forward a few years ago, chaired by Wally Fox-Decent, and some of the comments that were made by individuals, individuals I believe that have done a significant amount of studying as to the effectiveness and the reason for the Senate in our parliamentary system. If you really want to just take away, as this resolution suggests, just take and chop the Senate out of our parliamentary system, we might well look at—and I know that the honourable members opposite sometimes criticize the American political system—but if you will truly look at what sort of a system we might in fact have without the Senate in Ottawa, we might come very close to a presidential system that the United States uses and other countries use. I am certainly not prepared at this time to come that close to a dictatorial type of a parliamentary system.

I think that the Senate process that we have in place today in Ottawa guards against that. Although they do not have the authority to actually stop a piece of legislation or stop parliament from doing what they need to do, they do have the ability on very critical matters to delay the process long enough for the general public to voice their opinions on many of these issues and in fact bring political pressure to bear on the parliament. Parliament has demonstrated its sensitivity to that on many occasions, and therefore I believe there is a true value in this.

I truly believe that if we would appoint or elect on a more regional basis a Senate that would be truly representative of the nation as a whole, we would in fact have a much better process in place. I am a strong believer that the Senate members should be elected, and they should be elected and answerable to their respective constituents, and their final responsibility should, of course, be to the parliament, and the issues brought before the House should then be dealt with on a more nonpartisan basis than it is today. I think if that truly were done we would satisfy what the honourable member is suggesting in his resolution before he makes the final statement in the resolution.

He indicates clearly that he is worried about the cost, the \$55-million cost of the clearly partisan activities of the Senate. He is also opposed to the antidemocratic process that is there now, and I concur with that. I think we could put in place a much more effective—from an economic standpoint as well as a responsible standpoint if we truly elected senators in this country.

Therefore, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would ask all members that they would stand and voice their concern about this resolution, and maybe we could consider at the end of the day an amendment that we could put before this House on this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Order, please. When this matter comes before the House again, the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) will have eight minutes remaining.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish each and every person in this Assembly, our staff, the pages, a very Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

The hour being 5 p.m., as previously agreed, this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until a time fixed by Madam Speaker upon the request of the government. Thank you.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 11, 1997

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