



Third Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
CONNERY, Edward	Portage la Prairie	PC
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	PC
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	PC
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	PC
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	NDP
DOER, Gary	Concordia	NDP
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	Liberal
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	NDP
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	NDP
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	NDP
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Liberal
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	NDP
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	NDP
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Liberal
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	NDP
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	PC
PLOHMAN, John	Dauphin	NDP
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	NDP
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, February 18, 1992

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

* (1335)

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Dwain Ste. Marie, Carol Koslowski, Tracey Rush and others requesting the government to show its strong commitment to dealing with child abuse by considering restoring the Fight Back Against Child Abuse campaign.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Shonnon Armstrong, Jacqueline Dyke, Susan Rogers and others requesting the government to show its strong commitment to dealing with child abuse by considering restoring the Fight Back Against Child Abuse campaign.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Rhoda Carevic, John Foley, Joelle Foster and others requesting the government to show its strong commitment to dealing with child abuse by considering restoring the Fight Back Against Child Abuse campaign.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition, and it conforms to the privileges and practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned, The Pas Health Complex Incorporated, humbly sheweth:

THAT your petitioner seeks to amend The Pas Health Complex Incorporation Act by striking out the word "ten" in paragraph 1, line 4 thereof and substituting therefore the word "thirteen."

WHEREFORE your petitioner humbly prays that the Legislature of the Province of Manitoba may be pleased to pass an act for the purpose above mentioned.

And as in duty bound your petitioner will ever pray.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): I have a ministerial statement and I have copies.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to advise the House of my government's initiatives with regard to Churchill, its port and the rail line that serves it.

I have had increasing concern for the future of Churchill. This concern has been fueled by the review being conducted by the federal government which is expected to lead to a decision on the rail line and the port.

We have been actively pursuing commitments to increase traffic through Churchill as well as to upgrade rail and port facilities. This has involved meetings with federal ministers, the Canadian Wheat Board and Canadian National officials.

I have also sought the support of my western counterparts for the port. In addition, last fall I took the Honourable Shirley Martin, Minister of State for Transport, to Churchill. This provided her an opportunity to meet with the people of Churchill and to view the facilities. She came away with a much better understanding of both issues and the potential of Churchill.

The Premier signed an agreement with Russia last fall, which included the potential of activity for Churchill. The recent 25 million tonne grain sale to Russia is also encouraging.

We are aggressively pursuing maximum utilization of Churchill for this movement, which will run through 1996. Churchill's proximity to northern Europe export markets is another definite advantage which this government will pursue.

The potential development of the Churchill Rocket Range will demand access to rail service. This facility has the potential to provide 200 permanent jobs to the North. These three initiatives hold promise for the future of Churchill.

In order to ensure preservation of these opportunities, I met with the Honourable Jean Corbeil, federal Minister of Transport and the

Honourable Shirley Martin, Minister of State for Transport yesterday in Ottawa. They assured me no decision will be made until the completion of their review and that the port would operate in 1992.

Although I am confident that grain will move through Churchill this year, every effort must be taken to secure the long-term future of Churchill and northern rail service. Northern development, access to grain markets and the very future of Churchill itself hang in the balance.

I urge members of this House to give their full support to these vital initiatives.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, we were somewhat encouraged that the minister would take the opportunity to travel to Ottawa to speak with his federal counterparts on the decision of Churchill. Unfortunately, once again we see the minister has come back with no long-term commitment for the Port of Churchill or the people of northern Manitoba.

We are very discouraged, Mr. Speaker, by what we see in this document here today and that the minister has received no assurances and commitment from his federal counterparts. There are a lot of initiatives that we wish to see take place in the province, in the North of Manitoba, that hang in the balance because no decision has been made for the port facilities. Until that decision is made, the future of northern Manitoba hangs in the balance.

It is unfortunate that the minister has not received that commitment from the federal minister, and I believe that once again that task falls into the hands of the other parties in Manitoba who will be travelling to Ottawa this coming Friday to try and persuade the federal government to change their decision to close Churchill and to make sure that it remains open well into the future for the people of northern Manitoba and for the rest of the residents of Manitoba.

* (1340)

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I want to respond to the minister's comment first by noting an excerpt from his statement that they have been actively pursuing commitments to increase traffic. I remember that statement being made very shortly after first coming to this House a number of years ago when this government first came into power. We really have not seen much progress since then, unfortunately.

I acknowledge that not all of that can be laid at the feet of this minister, but surely it is time for the people

of northern Manitoba and Churchill, in particular, to be given some long-term commitment for the ongoing viability and, indeed, the increased use of that port.

It is a fact which I think is lost on many people in this country, certainly not on Manitobans, but many people in this country, that this province has a seagoing port. It is the only prairie province to have that port. That should be a jewel for the Prairies, Mr. Speaker, not just for Manitoba.

It is high time that eastern Canadians recognize the importance and the possibilities for that port. I do not believe that it is understood. I appreciate the minister's efforts to put that forward. It is time, however, I think, to put some meat on the bones of the many fine words and the rhetoric that is often thrown around this Chamber and no doubt the House of Commons in Ottawa about Churchill. It is time to come through with some commitment for the long-term viability of that port.

I also want to acknowledge the meeting which is going to take place on Friday in Ottawa. The member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) will be at that meeting and we hope that meeting will produce some commitment for the people of northern Manitoba.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House with copies—[interjection] I have not been in Ontario today.

Mr. Speaker, last April 4 I had the pleasure of standing in this House to announce the official opening of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, a world-class health research institute.

In the past year, we have become even more acutely aware of the cost of health care and of the necessity to seek answers which will enable us to provide quality care and universal access without, as I said last year, bankrupting the system. This is true not only in Manitoba but across the country.

It is essential that as health care planners we make sound policy and funding decisions. I believe the centre is providing us with the data we require to effect strategic management decisions. We will make the right decisions for the right reasons. We will be able to determine the value of what we obtain for the patient.

Mr. Speaker, members will recall, the centre is a partnership between the University of Manitoba and

Manitoba Health with funding of \$3.5 million over three years provided through the Health Services Development Fund.

One of the first projects of the centre known as the Manitoba Population Health Data Base, which is being jointly developed by the centre, Statistics Canada and the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research will help us link service delivery with health outcomes. This will mean focusing on health care rather than illness cure.

Doctor Leslie Roos has completed a study on the outcomes of surgical care in Manitoba compared with New England, which has an international reputation in surgery. He found Manitoba's survival rates and outcomes compare favourably with those of New England and, in fact, that Manitoba is able to provide superior care and treatment in surgery for less than half the cost of the New England's surgery.

I take pleasure today in tabling a document entitled "Manitoba Health Care Studies and Their Policy Implications", and I believe a copy of the study has been made available to each of my opposition critics.

Over the past 15 years, the Manitoba researchers have used the administrative data routinely gathered by the Manitoba Health Services Commission to study various health care issues. At the request of Manitoba Health, the centre has summarized the results of the research and has made specific recommendations to government based on the findings of the investigators.

The study says that, quote: Strategies proposed to deal with the issues are based on the principle that professional and scientific approaches are preferable to administrative or punitive measures.

Population-based research helps ensure that the results can be provided to policymakers and planners with confidence that the descriptions accurately reflect conditions in the province of Manitoba. The studies provide us with some revealing, and at times comforting, information. For instance, a comparison between the mortality rates for acute heart attacks in Manitoba's rural hospitals, none of which had intensive care units, and urban hospitals, all of which had such units, suggest that there is no statistically significant differences between them.

* (1345)

The Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, Manitoba Health and the College of

Physicians and Surgeons are developing a process to make efficient use of the information from the studies. Each issue identified will be given a priority. Its impact will be determined, an action plan developed and a target date for implementation will be set.

For instance, the issue of geriatric assessment and treatment may be of medium priority. Manitoba has geriatricians in most of its regions, and it is assumed that geriatricians can reduce hospital or personal care home use by high-risk seniors. If this is correct, the impact may be a lessened service to man for an aging population. The team which would launch a pilot project could involve the centre, one hospital, the Urban Hospital Council and the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

The study found that improving the physical and mental status of our elderly citizens will help increase the number of elderly people who age successfully and reduce health care use. In other words, successful aging is lifestyle related, not related to physician visits. The study suggests that the Manitoba data can be used to advantage to estimate the incidents and prevalence of diabetes and Alzheimer's diseases in Manitoba. Since Alzheimer's and other dementias have a major effect on both health and personal care home use as well as on formal home care services and family caregivers, investigations such as the projected Canada-wide study which will seek to identify risk factors are a welcome first step in developing preventative and improved management measures.

As I said at the opening of the centre last year, we have a unique and substantial opportunity in Manitoba to take the lead nationally and, indeed, internationally in the development of sound research-based health policy development. This is not only a remarkable opportunity for economic growth in the province, but provides a significant opportunity for better health services for all Manitobans.

I am pleased to have in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker, the director of the centre, Dr. Noralou Roos; the director of the Manitoba Research Data Bank, Dr. Leslie Roos; the author of the Manitoba studies report, which my critics have been given, Evelyn Shapiro; and the centre's administrator, Carolyn Kryschuk. They will be available to members of the media and members of this House in Room 254 at 3 p.m. this afternoon to provide further information on the report I have tabled today.

Thank you.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, we begin on this side of the House by thanking the minister for releasing this information and providing us with an update of what is considered to be a most outstanding centre here in Canada and internationally, that of the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation. We appreciate this update. We have been anxiously awaiting progress reports and news coming out of this centre and will study this material very carefully.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we want to commend key individuals behind this centre who are with us in the gallery today, Dr. Noralou Roos, Dr. Leslie Roos, Evelyn Shapiro and Carolyn Kryschuk. We commend the work that they are doing. We believe that it would be most important for the future of our health care system to have substantive research in terms of health outcomes and evaluation.

The real question though, Mr. Speaker, today is what is the record of this government in terms of our health care system. The real question for us today is when will the studies end. This is fine. We need this understanding. We need this data. We need this compilation of experts and expertise here in the province, but we have at the same time in this province a minister who has in place dozens of studies under the Health Advisory Network which are accumulating on his desk, which are gathering dust, and we are awaiting action in some very critical areas that the Advisory Network is studying.

* (1350)

Let me give you one example, Mr. Speaker. Last spring, around the same time that the minister announced the mandate for this Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, we asked the minister where is the report and the plan of action for the Health Advisory Network on the critical situation facing home care in the province of Manitoba, a program that is vital for services to senior citizens and for reforming our health care system. He said at that time he was waiting for the final report. We then asked him, when he had received the final report, where the action plan was. He said, Mr. Speaker, he has not had time to read the report.

More recently he has said he is waiting for translation of that document. Day after day after day this minister stalls behind piles of studies. Let me mention further the 44 studies of the Urban Hospital

Council for which there is no evaluation mechanism being applied—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable member that the ministerial statement, as brought forward by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), dealt specifically with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation. I would ask the honourable member to keep her remarks relevant to the said ministerial statement.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, I addressed the home care issue and the lack of action in this area because it is precisely mentioned in the minister's statement and is part of this whole evaluation process.

I mention the evaluation mechanisms in place for the recommendations coming out of his closed-door, elite, male network, making such decisions as selling services to Americans, closing the emergency ward at Misericordia Hospital, closing 22 beds at the Misericordia Hospital, laying off over 30 nurses, LPNs, at the Brandon General Hospital resulting in the closure of 24 beds at the Brandon General—Dauphin General Hospital, a system which has created chaos, uncertainty, fears and worries on the part of citizens of Manitoba about their most treasured, prized service and program, that of health care and medicare.

Mr. Speaker, we have yet to see from this minister any sense of a vision, any sense that he is evaluating decisions being made, either by his Urban Hospital Council or by his bureaucrats or even closer by his own colleagues.

We are asking the minister today to take very seriously the themes, the ideas behind this whole Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation and to truthfully and honestly evaluate decisions he is making today that will have tremendous impact on patients and health care professionals and communities throughout the province of Manitoba.

We are all worried in the province of Manitoba. There is no denying that this government does not deny the serious impact of federal cutbacks in health care. What is required is a vision for health care reform not an agenda of health care cutbacks being disguised as health care reform. So, Mr. Speaker, we ask this government to turn its mind to that kind of an agenda.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, last year when the announcement was made, we

made it very clear at that time that in the history of a lifetime of any Minister of Health, there are only a few things people will remember them for. We said that there were two major initiatives. One was this centre, the second was the mental health reform. That was true in 1990 and is true today again. Mr. Speaker, it is very positive.

* (1355)

I think the issue here is not the one bed cut here or the one closing of a ward there, the issue is how we are going to preserve the system which is costing us \$1.8 billion for 1.3 million people. I think if the political parties are going to do anything good, and as a member of the Legislative Assembly, we are going to do anything better for the province, the policies which are going to be developed by this group which have very renown people and one of the best in this country and as we said at that time, this is the only centre I guess in North America which will not only provide direction to us here, but also to the rest of the country and most likely to the other part of the western world.

Mr. Speaker, that is why the issues which are going to be part of this group and a part of the other health reforms, it is going to be very important for us to be very logical and only be critical when things are done wrong, but not to be negative when we are sitting on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, the basic thing that we have to achieve here is to preserve the five basic principles of the Canada Health Act and that is comprehensiveness, affordability and publicly administer the medicare system. I think this policy and some of the policies taken by the government will help us to lead into that direction. Now we will ask the government to do one thing more which at times is lacking and that is a proper consultation process.

The consultation process—[interjection] Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) is interrupting because he has nothing else positive to say. It seems like the positive impact for the sake of the taxpayer is not going to solve the NDP party. We want them to know that this is an important step. Let us be positive and that is what I was carrying on. It seems like interruptions will continue and that is a part of their nature.

Mr. Speaker, I was saying that the consultation process must involve all the health care providers and above all, the consumers of Manitoba, the

taxpayers. We will ask the minister to consult on each and every step when the reforms are being made and specifically when this centre is going to study some of the issues. One issue which is extremely important is the protection of the confidentiality of the patient's record must be kept in mind because sometimes that can be a problem and studies are being conducted. No doubt, the data which the Health Services Commission has, that is the property of the government of Manitoba, but the patient has the right.

I will end up saying, Mr. Speaker, that we are very pleased. We will continue to monitor what is happening, but we will definitely say that we are moving in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable Minister of Government Services, I note in the minister's statement where he says he is pleased to have in the gallery today certain individuals. I would also like to join in welcoming our guests here today, but I would like to point out to all honourable members that, by practices of this House, it is the Speaker who recognizes the presence of certain visitors.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of tabling the Annual Report of the Seniors Directorate, 1990-91.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table Volume 3, Summary Financial Statements, Public Accounts, 1990-91, and also the Annual Report, Department of Finance, 1990-91.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 25—The University of Manitoba Amendment Act

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I move, seconded by the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), that Bill 25, The University of Manitoba Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Université du Manitoba) be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

* (1400)

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I would like just to take a minute to recommend this bill to the House. It simply seeks to extend a right to the students of the University of Manitoba that was extended to students in the community colleges in the last session, mainly that they can elect and appoint their own representative to the Board of Governors of the University of Manitoba. Now that we have made that right available to students in other provincial educational institutions, I am certain that the House will see fit to support this amendment.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 29—The Municipal Council Conflict of Interest Amendment Act

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), that Bill 29, The Municipal Council Conflict of Interest Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les conflits d'intérêts au sein des conseils municipaux, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, this bill will prevent municipal and city councillors from exploiting their positions for personal gain after they have finished their tenure as elected officials. We are all well aware of the public decline in confidence generally of elected officials and the increase in cynicism in our society regarding elected officials. There are concrete measures that can address that loss of confidence.

Indeed we have the post-election conflict-of-interest guidelines in place both provincially and federally. This bill simply extends that approach which has already been taken at other levels of government and establishes a cooling-off period in which councillors cannot serve a private organization by participating in matters which he or she also participated in as a councillor.

Mr. Speaker, it is high time, surely, that this same protection for the public from post-election conflict of interest was extended to City Hall in addition to the other two levels of government. I recommend this legislation for speedy passage for all members.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 27—The Business Practices Amendment Act

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), that Bill 27, The Business Practices Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les pratiques commerciales, be introduced and the same be now received and read for the first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, this bill will advance consumer protection as well as protect employees. The new Business Act was a step forward, but it needs crucial improvement such as the ones in this bill. It will protect employees from persecution when they unknowingly commit an unfair business practice or are directed to do so by the employer. It will also tighten that discretion. It would tighten the power of the director of the Consumers' Bureau to refuse to mediate or investigate complaints so that all the complaints will be investigated.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 33—The Vacations With Pay Amendment Act

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I move, seconded by the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), that Bill 33, The Vacations With Pay Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le congé payé, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lamoureux: This bill seeks to extend a reasonable and equitable level of paid vacation time to all employees in Manitoba and, in particular, to bring some equity to the position of many part-time employees. The bill will require four weeks of paid vacation for any employee with 15 years service with a firm. In addition, it will extend all paid vacation entitlements enjoyed by full-time workers to part-time workers on a pro rata basis.

We believe that the worker who enjoys reasonable vacation benefits will, in the long run, be a more fulfilled and more productive worker, and we also believe that this applies equally to both unionized and nonunionized employees.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I would seek leave for the House in order to move, seconded by the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), that the sponsorship of Bill 26, The Constitutional Referendum Act; Loi sur le référendum constitutionnel, currently standing in the name of Mr. Carr, be transferred to Mrs. Carstairs.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Inkster have leave to move that the sponsorship of Bill 26 be moved from Mr. Carr and transferred to the honourable Leader of the second opposition party? Does the honourable member have leave? Leave. It is agreed.

Bill 26—The Constitutional Referendum Act

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), that Bill 26, The Constitutional Referendum Act; Loi sur le référendum constitutionnel, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. We had leave granted to the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) to move that sponsorship of Bill 26 be moved from one member to another.

Now the question before the House is, it has been moved by the honourable member for Inkster, seconded by the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), that sponsorship of Bill 26, The Constitutional Referendum Act; Loi sur le référendum constitutionnel, currently standing in the name of Mr. Carr be transferred to Mrs. Carstairs. Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Now it has been moved by the honourable Leader of the second opposition party (Mrs. Carstairs), seconded by the honourable member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), that Bill 26, The Constitutional Referendum Act; Loi sur le référendum constitutionnel, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, it is time to return constitutional making decisions to the people of this province and this country. The Liberal Party of Manitoba would far more like to receive the initiative of a federal government which would allow every

single Canadian whether they lived in a province or a territory to be given the opportunity of saying yes or no to any constitutional amendment that is proposed to the Constitution Act of Canada. The Canada Act at present requires only the approval of Legislatures and the Parliament of Canada. We believe that is inequitable. We believe that the Constitution belongs to the people. This is just a first small step in that process. However, if we do not do it at a provincial level, I do not believe that it will ever happen under the present government at the federal level.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today His Excellency, Sir Brian Fall, the High Commissioner of Great Britain to Canada. Accompanying His Excellency is Mr. Douglas Scrafton, the head of the Political and Information Section of the British High Commission.

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

* (1410)

Also with us the afternoon in the Speaker's Gallery, we have Elliana Allon and her family. Elliana Allon is a Grade 5 student at Greenway School in Winnipeg and is a student at the Winnipeg Art Gallery. She is the Manitoba artist whose work represents Manitoba in the 1992 calendar, The Energy of our Resources: The Power of our Ideas.

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

Seated in the public gallery this afternoon from the Miami Elementary School, we have forty Grades 5 and 6 students. They are under the direction of Mr. Bill McKetiak. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Government Ministers Hiring Authority

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions in this House

last December, members of the government insisted that the hiring authority for the provincial government was delegated to departments.

The Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission (Mr. Praznik) on December 11 and other dates in this House repeatedly said the hiring authority is delegated to the departments, not to ministers.

My question is to the Deputy Premier. What is the policy of the government and the position of the government of the day? Is it delegated to the departments or is the hiring authority delegated to cabinet ministers?

Hon. James Downey (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that it only took one day of a response to the economic issues which were raised under a special debate by the members opposite to be dropped off of their agenda to try to find something else that the people may find favour with him and his party.

I think the member is well aware of what the policies are within this government as it relates to hiring. There is never any doubt as far as this government is concerned as to the openness with which we carry out the process. There is never any question, and there is no change in policies which have been carried on in the past number of years.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the government, the clerk of cabinet, obviously under the direction of cabinet, under the direction of the Premier, insisted that the Civil Service Commission, the alleged Civil Service independent commission, be asked to monitor and show diligence of the staffing authority with the former Minister of Education, the now Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach).

How can the government say in this House that the hiring authority is indeed attached to departments when in fact it is the Premier and cabinet asking for the monitoring to go with the individual minister over another department? If the government is truly serious about this issue, it would be open and release the study and investigation that took place in the Department of Education so all the staff in the Department of Education will be cleared and we will know clearly that the circumstances were in fact tied to the minister, not the department.

I ask the government: Will they release that study so we know clearly that it was the minister, not the

department, who was responsible for the loss of the delegated hiring authority?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I think it should be made clear that the confidence that this government has in the members of cabinet and their work that has been carried out, that there is nothing that is being kept from the public as far as the activities of this government are concerned. The report which he refers to is the Civil Service property and not within the ministerial purview.

I think this has been handled openly and honestly, and I say that genuinely, on behalf of my colleagues. All colleagues in cabinet carry out their responsibilities with honour and integrity.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we have the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission (Mr. Praznik) standing up in this House day after day after day and saying that it is not the minister who is responsible for the loss of the hiring authority, it is the department, so everyone in the department is slammed by the minister. Then we have the cabinet directing and quoting: Given the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of the hiring authority, that we ask that due diligence be followed and for the monitoring of the minister in the other department.

Will the government and the Deputy Premier please tell us: Is it the department or the minister? Clearly, the cabinet is saying it is the minister.

Will the Deputy Premier agree today to release the report on the loss of the delegating hiring authority of the minister so all the public will know where the responsibility lies with the loss of the hiring authority, clearly with the minister, as the memo directs, not with the department, as the minister of the Civil Service Commission said time after time in this Chamber?

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I will compare the hiring practices and the activities of this cabinet any day with the past practices of the former New Democratic Party. We will do a comparison any day with the activities of this government compared to the government which he sat with.

Small School Rural Workshops Cancellation

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education and Training.

If this government is truly serious about dealing with cross-border shopping, why has the Department of Education and Training cancelled the small school rural workshops and been sending teachers to a workshop in North Dakota, United States?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for his question. I will look into that matter, and I will bring the information back to the House.

Mr. Chomlak: I will table a letter from the minister's department that indicates workshops are being handled in the States.

If they are serious about cross-border shopping, will they stop this cross-border education shopping and will they immediately cancel the workshop in the States and reinstate the workshops in rural Manitoba?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, we in Education are also committed to the economy of Manitoba.

I have responded to the honourable member, I will bring back the information when I receive it.

Mr. Chomlak: I have a supplementary to the same minister.

Will this minister consult with the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) to see what impact the moving of this program from Canada to the United States will have on the rural economy?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, as a minister, I am in contact with my colleagues regularly. I will be discussing the matter as necessary. I will bring the answer back to the House.

Youth Unemployment Rate Government Initiatives

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): We have heard daily of the increasing rates of unemployment, of the number of people on social assistance, of those who are unable to find gainful employment. Nowhere are those statistics more alarming than in the ages between 15 and 24. In the past year, that has seen an increase of nearly 4 percent. It is now at 16.8 percent. For young men, it is 21.9 percent. It is the only statistic in which we are above the national average.

Can the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism tell the House today what specific initiatives he has coming from his department with respect to the training of these young men and women who cannot

find employment opportunities in present-day Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, firstly, unless my information is incorrect, I would like to correct the honourable member. While nobody is satisfied with the youth unemployment rate in Manitoba or indeed throughout Canada, Manitoba's youth unemployment rate is the third lowest in Canada. While it is still a number that is totally unacceptable in terms of comparing ourselves, as was done by the honourable member, my information is quite different, showing that we are the third lowest.

The most important thing that we can do as a government, in terms of long-term job opportunities for young people here in Manitoba, is to create the kind of competitive environment for businesses to be able to thrive and compete so that those young people can get long-term quality jobs here in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we had the opportunity to discuss the economy at length yesterday. The only thing I am not pleased with is the lack of constructive suggestions that came from across the way.

* (1420)

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, I would be prepared to table labour force statistics January of 1992, which I am sure the minister has a copy of, which shows that the Canadian average is 21.1 for men between the ages of 15 and 24, and for us it is 21.9, which means we are above the national average.

Will the minister now tell this House what initiatives there are in his department to put these young men and young women to work in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I guess we have agreed to disagree on statistics. Mine show a report dated February 7, which is more recent, that while Manitoba's is 16.8, the national average is 18.1, and Manitoba is below the national average and the third lowest.

Mr. Speaker, that so much is not the point. The point is: What are we as a government doing and what are governments across Canada doing? Clearly, I think, when you see some of the initiatives and some of the training opportunities that our Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) referred to yesterday that will be coming as part of our budget

announcement in conjunction with the Department of Education and Training, you will see what we are doing on the training front.

I have already suggested that we do not support the kinds of suggestions that are coming from across the way of the short-term make-work projects that do not provide the opportunities for young people in this province to pursue opportunities that are here today and here tomorrow. We will continue to work on that for the long-term benefit of the youth of Manitoba.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, thousands of Manitobans continue to leave. In a study in which this minister was directly affiliated, it was clearly shown that the majority of those who leave are between the ages of 19 and 35 and are among the best educated. The minister refuses to give us information as to what plans they have. Are we to assume that they have no plans?

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated, in terms of the youth, there are two fundamental points in terms of the kinds of training opportunities that have been provided to date and the kind of training initiatives that you will see being announced as part of our budget process, as well as the kinds of training initiatives that we brought in last year through our Workforce 2000 program.

The other is also the kinds of long-term opportunities that have to be created. Governments do not create those. Manitobans and businesses create those opportunities, and the way you do that is to create a competitive environment and a level playing field.

I believe that Manitobans can compete, given that opportunity. We are working to provide that opportunity. It would be nice, Mr. Speaker, to have opposition members recognize that for a change.

Port of Churchill Grain Shipments

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, the ministerial statement the minister released gives no new assurances to northern Manitobans and leaves in doubt any proposed provincial government initiatives and the economic future of northern Manitobans.

Will the Minister of Highways and Transportation share with the House today, and concerned Manitobans, the anticipated volumes of grain to be shipped through Churchill this coming shipping

season, or will it continue to be starved by low volumes as it has in the past?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, let me first of all indicate to the member that the way it looked for a while, there would be no activity in Churchill, period, so I think the fact that we have a year's reprieve in the making—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker, there are three initiatives out there that basically, I think, will affect decisions for Churchill in the future, basically the 25 million tonne grain sale to Russia. Russia has indicated an interest in that. We will be pursuing that interest.

The member has asked me for specific numbers. I do not have them at this time, but I can assure him that we will be making contact along with his colleagues in the federal government who are meeting with the ministers, I believe on Friday, who will be pursuing the same thing, the aspect of trying to see whether the Russians are prepared to take grain through Churchill. If that is the case, out of that 5 million tonnes a year, we should be able to get a fair share through Churchill, hopefully.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, a lot of doubtful statements by those comments.

Federal Commitment

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Given that the recent transportation talks—

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Mr. Reid: Many Saskatchewan and Manitoba producers have been calling for increases—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Reid: My question for the minister is: Did the minister receive any long-term commitments from the federal Conservative government that the Churchill port will not be closed but instead will be expanded?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, since the day that I took the responsibility of this office and this department here, I have been pushing for a long-term commitment. We have not gotten a long-term commitment. We are still striving for that, and I hope that some of the elements that are involved right now ultimately will help retain the future of Churchill.

Manitoba Representation

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary to the same minister is: Can the minister explain to the House why he travelled to Ottawa by himself and did not take part in the group that was travelling from this province to make representation on behalf of the Port of Churchill, and why did the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) not accompany the Minister of Highways and Transportation—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to answer that question because, since December, I have been trying to arrange a meeting with both the federal ministers. Ultimately, we finally had a date that suited my department as well as the two ministers. This arrangement with Mr. Murphy and the ministers was arrived at much later. I indicated my support for the efforts that they are putting into the thing and indicated, because I had my meeting yesterday, that I would not be participating Friday but will have representation there.

Residential Tenancies Amendment Act Proclamation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, there has been a striking and disturbing parallel between The Business Practices Act and The Residential Tenancies Act.

Both were initiated by NDP governments. Both were introduced as legislation by the Conservative governments and killed at the committee stage. Both were reintroduced, and both were watered down and passed on December 14, 1990. Both experienced serious and lengthy delays in being proclaimed.

Can the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs tell the House and thousands of renters who are anticipating increased protection under The Residential Tenancies Act: When will the act finally be proclaimed?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there were indeed similarities between those two acts in that they were never introduced into the House by the previous administration but were introduced by this

administration. We, in three years, have passed them; they had six years and did not.

Having said and acknowledged the similarity, I would like to say that our target date for proclamation is late spring, early summer 1992. That has always been our target date for proclamation. That has been the target date that I have had since I took over this division some four or five months ago, and we hope that we will be proclaiming it late spring, early summer 1992, on schedule, as planned.

Mr. Martindale: Regrettably, the date keeps changing as they change cabinet ministers responsible for the legislation. I would like to know from the minister who is lobbying the minister. What special interest groups are you meeting with? Is that why it is taking so long to draft the regulations?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I am meeting with anybody and everybody who asks to meet with me on The Residential Tenancies Act. That includes tenant groups, landlord groups, individual tenants, individual landlords. If they wish to meet with me they are most welcome to meet with me. I look into their concerns and their questions very thoroughly indeed.

In terms of the second part of the question, what are we doing, as the member knows this is a mammoth act and it requires a virtual restructuring of a major portion of the whole branch. You cannot move into a house before the house is built. To proclaim the act before we have put in the court functions that we now will have to be putting in place, searching for the Commissioner, drafting the regulations, developing a procedures manual, training the staff, doing a number of things that we are doing and have been doing for many months require time. I do not wish to move into a house when the foundation and walls are built but it has yet no roof.

* (1430)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us if she is making any progress on any of these items, since we keep hearing the same answers over and over from three successive ministers, but what progress is the minister making in any of these areas she outlined, so the act will be proclaimed as soon as possible?

Mrs. McIntosh: Yes, indeed, we are making progress on all of those items. Regulations are now

in the final form for drafting. Job descriptions have now been developed for the Commissioner. They will soon be advertised. We have even now gotten to the point where we are ordering chairs for the courtroom we will be setting up for the court function.

Things are in way. There still remains a great deal of consulting to be done as we finally get to the last legs of this stretch, but we are making progress.

Urban Hospital Council Misericordia Hospital Review

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The Misericordia is the only community hospital with a community-based family doctor in central Winnipeg, a very densely populated part of the city. We also note because of the Misericordia's catchment area it has a high concentration of elderly, the poor and the mentally ill. It has more ambulance admission to the emergency department than any other community hospital in Winnipeg.

My question is to the Minister of Health. His deputy minister is the chairperson of the Urban Hospital Council, which is proposing to cut the emergency hours during nighttime. Can the minister tell us why this hospital is a target for the Urban Hospital Council? Can he table the final report on which they are making the recommendations?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, no, I cannot. The Urban Hospital Council met last week, Thursday I believe it was. The issue of the Urban Hospital Council decision around whether to recommend the proposed closure was not made at that meeting. I expect it will be made at the next meeting.

I would fully expect that with any recommendation coming from the Urban Hospital Council, the information, the background data that my honourable friend has alluded to in his answer will have been given full consideration, not only by the Urban Hospital Council but by the expert team that investigated the issue of emergency department hours of operation.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, can the minister guarantee that the risk-free transfer of patients from Misericordia Hospital to the other hospital will be required because, as a result of this Urban Hospital Council's meeting, and the deputy minister was present at the meeting—the minister has the full

statistics—can he finally tell us how he is going to guarantee that transfer?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, naturally I am unable to respond to that question as I stand before the House today because, bear in mind, as I indicated in my first answer, the Urban Hospital Council has not yet made a decision as to whether they will recommend that closure of emergency for the hours mentioned at Misericordia. I expect that they will make a decision as to whether to advance that recommendation to government, to the Ministry of Health at their next meeting. I cannot prejudge their decision.

However, I will tell my honourable friend that in accepting any decision as proposed around the closure of emergency at Misericordia, those answers and those questions will be responded to. Otherwise, we would be unable, with assurance of patient safety and patient care and consideration foremost in our minds, to be able to accede to any such decision which may be made.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House who will pay for the very expensive transfer of patients back and forth between Misericordia and other hospitals because of patients own family doctors who are only working out of Misericordia Hospital?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, as my honourable friend well knows, ambulance costs, depending on the circumstance, are either part of the hospital's budget or else are borne by the patient. It depends on the circumstance under which they are used and will be very much—how would I phrase it?—a patient individual, in terms of whether it qualifies under the program of transfer, which the hospitals pick up, or whether it is an original transportation which is the responsibility of the patient.

Civil Servants Senior Salary Levels

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): We are in tough times, Mr. Speaker, but this government has a strange sense of priorities. Today we see news that Manitoba has a pay raise, that they are the third lowest in the country, and yet this government has increased salaries to MLCC executives and has increased the salary scale for deputy ministers by as much as 20 percent.

My question is to the minister responsible for the Civil Service. How can he justify the increase in the

salary scale, which presumably the government will be using at some particular point in time, at a time when its own employees have been legislated to zero, have received only inflation increases in the latest contract, and Manitobans are third last in terms of pay increases in this country?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly obvious whenever you discuss the PACE salaries with employees and you compare senior employees with general rank-and-file people, obviously there is a great hue and cry about the salary levels of senior employees. I do not think any minister or any government has ever been able to avoid that debate.

However, Mr. Speaker, I would tell the honourable member that in increasing the pay scales for deputy ministers and ADMs, the current holders of those positions were moved in at their current salary levels plus 3 percent. They receive the same benefits as all MGEA members in this fiscal year, plus I would tell you that the rank-and-file MGEA members also have the ability to have merit increases, some as high as 2 percent. I still believe there are about 40 percent of our employees who are not at the top of the pay scale.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, as a supplementary question, how can this minister attempt to justify these increases in the salary scale if he does not intend to use it? Is he going to increase those salaries over the next period of time to senior civil servants by as much as 20 percent?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member for Thompson is aware, as with all increases in pay scales, whether they be rank-and-file MGEA members, whether they be assistant deputy ministers or deputy ministers, the ability to increase the pay scale occurs on the anniversary date of employment, I believe, and is at the discretion of the manager, and it is based on merit.

I would also point out to members opposite that in the recent MGEA agreement, there were some 830 positions that received special increases in their salaries, some as high as 16 percent. They negotiated part of that agreement to deal with the host of inequities that occurred as a result of pay equity in other particular areas.

I should tell him as well that in the last year, the MGEA requested and was granted 500 positions

being reclassified where salaries went up as well. In comparing those two results, those go on regularly, and the review of positions and classifications occur on a regular basis. Deputy ministers and ADMs should not be precluded from the same rules as MGEA members.

Manitoba Liquor Control Commission Senior Salary Levels

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, is either to the same minister or the minister responsible directly for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

Will this government now withdraw the major increases that took place to senior executives in that department and bring those increases in line with everybody else in this province and what every other civil servant, every other employee in the Liquor Commission is faced with, which is barely inflation increases, if that.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister charged with the administration of The Liquor Control Act): Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the last statement made by the honourable member opposite when he said that no other member of the Manitoba Liquor Commission received a similar treatment. That is not an accurate statement.

As the member knows, I was asked to do a review and did a review of the four management people and the 14 union people over at the MLCC, who received wage increases as a result of having their jobs changed, their job descriptions changed. That included the managers. One senior management position was cut, a net savings of \$50,000, and an increase of between 5 percent and 8.4 percent for the senior people.

For the unionized people, who also had their salaries adjusted in a similar fashion because of reorganization, the union people saw raises ranging from 5 percent to 11.7 percent. They were accorded the same treatment as a result.

I just wish to correct the information, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that all the facts were put on the table accurately.

Health Care System Home Care Program

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) today took great delight in tabling a report by the Manitoba Centre for

Health Policy and Evaluation. I would like to refer the Minister of Health to a recommendation in this report, a series of strong recommendations about our continuing care Home Care Program, refer to him a recommendation that states: It is, therefore, recommended that Manitoba Health recognize the importance of continuing care services as a substitute for personal care home admission and adjust its budget in line with the decrease in the ratio of personal care home beds to the number of older elderly.

That is just one of a number of recommendations that are identical to the kinds of recommendations the minister received in the Advisory Network report on home care over a year ago.

I would like to ask the minister, when will we see a plan of action to deal with the understaffing, the underresourcing of home care services and ensure that elderly are able to stay in their homes in their communities?

* (1440)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am glad that my honourable friend has raised that issue, because that is exactly why, for instance, we increased the budget for home care last year by over \$5 million. In addition to that, I believe that there was provision for even greater spending this year in the Special Warrant that met more service demands in the home care division.

We have been taking action, and now that my honourable friend wants to deal with individual recommendations, maybe she might refer herself to recommendations II.4.1 or II.6.2, which deal with fundamental issues in health care, instead of cherry picking the ones that she thinks meet with her narrowed vision of health care reform, because every issue that my honourable friend wants to bring up is an issue that existed when we came into government with no resolution and are now being proactively worked on by this government in co-operation with professionals throughout the health care system to give us good advice on how to better manage \$1.8 billion of spending for the betterment of health care delivery to Manitobans.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: The needs of seniors and home care services are not cherry picking, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the minister: How does his last statement and the recommendations of these numbers of reports jive with the fact that in the last

few days dozens of senior citizens in the Dauphin and Swan River areas have been cut off or cut back in terms of their home care services, intimidated and told that they are hoarding their money and giving it to their children? How does he justify cutbacks in those areas with these reports and his statements?

Mr. Orchard: I do not because they are not. Mr. Speaker, how can you talk? Only a New Democrat could take a \$5-million increase in the budget, about \$2-million more in Special Warrant and call it a cutback. Goodness, gracious.

Now, my honourable friend wants to talk about cutbacks. I hope that she has the constitutional fortitude, as we get into Estimates, to discuss the relative policy development in Manitoba, an action plan in Manitoba, compared to other jurisdictions which must, I know, be near and dear to her heart, like Ontario for instance.

My honourable friends from the New Democrats in Manitoba do not want to discuss those issues. The answer is clear. We have increased the budget to home care as fast as any other budget line in the Ministry of Health. Why? To meet the very demands that have been identified by the Health Advisory Network, identified by a compilation of reports that I have tabled today.

Mr. Speaker, we do it for one purpose in mind: to care for senior citizens when they need care in their home.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: With his own departmental statements, how, Mr. Speaker, does that kind of lying, that rhetoric jibe with his own departmental briefing material, which clearly indicates that there is a serious problem of understaffing in the Home Care Program, which is putting all kinds of pressures on institutional health care services? When is this minister going to start to deal with the recommendations of his department, his centre for policy evaluation—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The question has been put.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, we started to deal with those issues on May 9 of 1988 when this government was elected to replace the incompetence of Howard Pawley and the NDP. We have been dealing with those issues from a very, very deliberate strategy. That strategy that my honourable friend from time to time wants to flip-flop her position on involves consultation with wide a group of Manitobans—professional, consumers,

health care workers, administrators, doctors, nurses—to give us good direction and policy development.

Mr. Speaker, we reinforce that consultation process with analysis by probably the finest group of researchers in health care policy development in North America, if not the world. That is why the Manitoba health care system is poised better than any other provincial system in Canada to deal with the changing circumstances of health care delivery in Manitoba and in Canada.

Stony Mountain Environmental Concerns

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, in October of last year it was determined for the first time that the underground water for the residents of Stony Mountain, just north of Winnipeg, had been seriously contaminated by the chemical trichloroethylene, which is a very dangerous carcinogen. That underground aquifer feeds into many rural municipalities just north of Winnipeg and, quite understandably, the residents are very, very concerned. I acknowledge some of the early efforts of this government that have taken place, but a critical issue needs to be resolved.

Mr. Speaker, the standard this government is using is 50 parts per billion as the action level. The Environmental Protection Agency in the United States says 5 parts per billion; the World Health Organization says 30 parts per billion. On what basis is this government at this point taking the standard of 50 parts per billion, which is significantly higher than these other reputable organizations?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the very serious question. I think that the commitment that I gave the residents of that area and the discussion that we had between myself and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is that we are using the Canadian standards. We also recognize that there is work being done on the world scene that in fact may recommend today a higher standard even than Canada is at. That does not in any way diminish the concern of the residents of the area or the concern that we have for that contamination.

We want to continue to work to make sure that we are on top of any potential hazards to the people in the community. We have set up a task force to be able to respond quickly and efficiently to all of the

concerns that are raised, and that includes making sure that we provide a safe alternate source of drinking water on very short notice.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit today to do the prudent thing for public health in the area and, in the interim, while acceptable limits are being fully researched, as he indicates they are being done, will he choose the lowest standard set by these organizations and set the limit at five parts per billion, which has been set by the Environmental Protection Agency in the United States?

That is the only prudent course at this point. I ask the minister to commit today to take it.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I think that it would be somewhat unwise for me or the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and this government to arbitrarily deal with that type of a standard without making sure that could be fully enforced and backed up with the facts. What we have given is an undertaking to make sure that we apprise ourselves and keep fully abreast of any developments in this area, but that is entirely apart from the concern of the residents and the concern that we have regarding that aquifer.

In dealing with the standard, we are prepared to examine all of the information that surrounds that standard, knowing full well, as I believe the member opposite knows, that there are second thoughts about some of the levels that are being set in this area. We want to make sure that we deal with that issue while at the same time we are dealing with the more particular issue of how we deal with the pure water supply for the people of that area.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, finally, for the same minister: Can the minister tell the House then what consultation his government has had with the Environmental Protection Agency or the World Health Organization in determining and trying to find out how they reached their standards, which again I emphasize are significantly lower than ours in Manitoba—in fact, in the case of the United States, one-tenth of the standard that we have set here?

Again, I ask the minister, in the cause of prudence and the safety of these people, to take the lowest standard in the interim, surely until we have gotten a definitive answer on what it should be.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, right from Day One the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) has been spending a considerable amount of time making sure that all of the departments of this government are co-ordinated and working in exactly the area of

concern that the member raises. He is asking for assurance that we are keeping ourselves abreast of that information. I can assure you that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has some very talented and qualified people who are advising us on what is the proper standard for drinking water quality in this province.

I also think that one of the things that is bearing very heavily on this issue today is that we are concentrating on dealing with the very quick and urgent need to deal with the concerns that are being raised. The commitment that we have given is that we are quite prepared to look in the longer term at what the recommendations might be.

I think it is counterproductive today to get into that discussion when we know full well that there is another body of opinion out there that is saying the standard could be considerably higher than what we are dealing with. That clouds the issue, and I do not think the member intended to do that. We want to deal with the two concerns and deal with them in the way that is in the best interest of the people involved.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

* (1450)

Nonpolitical Statements

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may have leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable minister have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? Leave? It is agreed.

Mr. Downey: I am pleased to have Elliana Allona as my guest today. Elliana is one of 12 students from across Canada whose art work is included in the 1992 calendar, "The Energy of our Resources: The Power of our Ideas." Energy, Mines and Resources Canada prepared the calendar in consultation with the provinces and Territories. Each of you will be given a copy of the calendar.

I will draw your attention to the month of August and Elliana's work. She has done an outstanding job of demonstrating her view that the environment is vulnerable and that careful development and energy conservation are important. The essence of sustainable development is there for all of us to see. In the foreground, families together, people relaxing and playing in the fresh air; in the background, the threat of pollution looms.

It is a proud moment as we pay tribute to a very young, talented lady. Her work, and that of the other 11 young Canadians, will be on display across Canada. They are sending each of us an important message about how they feel about our energy resources and how the way in which we use them affects our environment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Leader of the second opposition party have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? Leave? It is agreed.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): According to a poet, it's not the winning, it's how you play the game, that is really important.

Well, I think Manitobans have seen first-hand, at the Olympics this week, of a young Manitoban who has truly showed us it is how you play the game that is particularly significant.

Jacqueline Petr and her partner in ice dancing, Mark Janoschak, have in fact competed under quite extraordinary circumstances. Jacqueline, as a result of a fall, has a seven centimetre gap in her leg which required 22 stitches. Having had that on one day, she was on her feet two days later and skating three days later, and has competed three times since then. She and her partner came 12th in the world competition in ice dancing. I think if they had been skating in full health, they would have done much better.

That is not the essence of my tribute to Jacquie today. The essence of my tribute to Jacquie is that she is exemplary of what a young Canadian should aspire to be: someone with not only talent, but someone who has practised long and hard, and when the chips were down, pulled herself up and performed to the very best of her ability.

I know that all members in this House would like to not only congratulate Jacquie, but indeed her parents for having provided the support for her skating career. We wish her not only success in the Worlds but in future years, when I am sure she will end up actually being on the winning side and not just playing the game as she did so well this week. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, before we call Bills 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 20 and 38, in that order, I propose that

you call the Order for Return under the name of the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

ORDER FOR RETURN NO. 2

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux)

THAT an Order of the House do issue for the return of the following information:

- (a) the number of applications received under the Vision Fund program since its inception; the number of proposals accepted; the number of proposals rejected; and the number of proposals still under consideration;
- (b) a list of all agreements reached and monetary payments made, and to whom, by the government under the Vision Fund since the programs's inception;
- (c) the criteria for acceptance and rejection of applications and a statistical breakdown of the reasons for rejection.

Motion presented.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I have discussed this Order for Return with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), and certainly the government has no difficulty in attempting to provide the information sought by the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

The Vision Fund is one that has been in place now for a little over a year. It was one of the government's first initiatives to try to bring forward Venture Capital funds, and indeed I hope that the information is ultimately provided to the member. It will show that it was a thrust that is working and one that should continue to be supported by all members of this House.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, if I understood the minister correctly, he said that the government accepts the Order for Return and will supply the information. I simply have one question, and I direct it to perhaps yourself.

I have put on the Order Paper on several occasions orders for return that have been accepted by the government. I have not received any information. I had an Order for Return last session on the Minister of Education asking for some information on the education of the deaf which was

accepted by the government. I received nothing. I have a list of them. I think if the government is sincere in attempting to provide information, then it should follow up on the statements which it makes in the House.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I was going to rise to my feet and ask you to bring the member to order. I believe his representation now is out of keeping with the rules, but it is the government's timetable that determines the expeditiousness of replying to the Order for Return. In conversation with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), he indicates to me that he will make some effort to try and do this in an expeditious manner.

As far as the former request, that is not what is being discussed; indeed that is not the essence of the motion so moved by the member.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. It appears, the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), that the government House leader has accepted your Order for Return, and I do not believe it is appropriate at this time for the honourable member to ask the Chair to intervene in this matter.

The government House leader (Mr. Manness) has accepted your orders for return previously. I guess the honourable member will simply have to wait until such information does come to the honourable member. This one has been moved, that is—[interjection]

Point of Order

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, the government has exhibited its contempt for this House when it passes a motion of this sort. I would ask the government House leader (Mr. Manness) when he is going to comply with orders he has accepted. That is what I do not understand.

* (1500)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. As has been indicated to the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), these orders for return have been accepted. Therefore, it will be up to the government House leader (Mr. Manness) or the minister responsible to have the information conveyed to the honourable member. Now that is agreed?

Mr. Manness: Is this a debatable motion?

Mr. Speaker: No, there is no motion. I have simply indicated to the honourable member for Osborne

(Mr. Alcock) that he will have to wait until such time as that information is conveyed to him.

Mr. Manness: At that time it is debatable?

Mr. Speaker: Unless the honourable member wants to have it transferred to—it could appear in the Order Paper under Private Members' Business, if the honourable member so wishes.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I am just trying to determine—[interjection] He moved a motion and I am trying to determine whether or not that motion is a debatable matter.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable government House leader, there will be a question for the House. It is not debatable at this time. If the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) wishes to have it transferred over to Private Members' Business, at that point it is debatable.

Mr. Alcock: On this occasion, one more time, I will accept the undertaking of the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to see that that information is delivered to the House. [interjection] I have been asked by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) if I wish to withdraw the comments about the government being contemptuous of orders of this House, and the answer is no. That is a fact.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): In view of the honourable member's comments, I think it would be appropriate for us to review this matter very carefully, so therefore I would move that the debate be adjourned.

Mr. Speaker: There is no debate to be adjourned. There is simply a point of order raised.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now the question for the House is, it has been moved by the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), seconded by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that an Order of the House to issue for the return of the following information:

- (a) the number of applications received under Vision Fund Program since its inception, the number of proposals accepted, the numbers of proposals rejected; and the number of proposals still under consideration;

- (b) a list of all agreements reached and monetary payments made, and to whom, by the government, under the Vision Fund since the program's inception;

- (c) the criteria for acceptance and rejection of applications and a statistical breakdown of the reasons for rejection.

Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Now we will do bills.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would move two motions of House Business. They are leading into the changes of sponsors of Executive Council's sponsor of two bills, namely Bills 10 and 20.

Bill 10—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that sponsorship of Bill 10, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, currently standing in the name of the honourable Mr. Neufeld, be transferred to the honourable Mr. Downey.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 20—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that sponsorship of Bill 20, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, currently standing in the name of the honourable Mr. Downey, be transferred to the honourable Mr. Derkach.

Motion agreed to.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 7—The Real Property Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), that Bill 7, The Real Property

Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, The Real Property Act amendments contained in Bill 7 are intended to update or confirm certain procedures in the handling of land titles and facilitate registration. Among other things we are proposing changes in the procedures for bringing land under The Real Property Act to facilitate the vacating of prior claims, interests or reservations. The amendments would enable the strict registrars to vacate without notice where it is clear that an interest has been extinguished or expired or where a mineral lease specifies an expiry date that has passed.

Existing practice, respecting attachment of notarial and certified copies of documents as evidence to instruments presented for registration, will be brought unto The Real Property Act. This will facilitate registration in such matters as grants of probate.

At present, Mr. Speaker, an agent may execute instruments registering a judgment or lien in Land Titles offices. Another amendment will allow the same agent to also discharge a judgment or lien. We are proposing to allow service of notice of requests to lapse caveats, judgments and liens by registered mail to the addressed for service set out in the instrument. This will reduce costs to the registered owner since at present personal service is required. Another amendment would allow district registrars to vacate caveats without notice where it is clear from the record that the interest claimed in a caveat has expired or been extinguished.

As honourable members will see, Mr. Speaker, in several clauses the Latin phrase "lis pendens" is changed to "pending litigation order" to bring the act in line with wording in The Court of Queen's Bench Act and rules. Honourable members will recall vividly that changes were made to The Court of Queen's Bench Act and rules followed therefrom. Words, Latin phrases, such as "lis pendens," are being changed. There has been quite an updating of procedures in the Court of Queen's Bench, and as time passes certain administrative changes are required in Land Titles Office as well dealing with real property matters.

* (1510)

While we are discussing matters related to the Land Titles Office, I can tell honourable members that since 1988, when this government took office, there have been some pretty significant improvements in the operations at the Land Titles Office. The honourable Minister of Family Services, also the honourable member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), has taken quite an interest in the Winnipeg Land Titles Office operations and, repeatedly, has asked how things are going at the Land Titles Office. I have tried to give periodic reports.

You will recall, Mr. Speaker, the scandalous situation that was left to us by the previous government whereby people were waiting as many as 43 days to have their titles registered in the Land Titles Office in Winnipeg, and that was just very clearly unacceptable, unacceptable to all Manitobans, except members of the New Democratic Party who, at that time, happened to be the government of the day.

It did not take very long after the 1988 election and the election of a new government which showed concern for property owners, buyers and sellers in Manitoba, specifically in Winnipeg, to do something about the scandalous situation that the New Democrats had allowed to develop at the Winnipeg Land Titles Office.

The latest figures I have are from November of 1991, which is a few months ago now. Certainly, unlike the 43 days people had to wait under the New Democratic Party administration for registration of title at the Winnipeg Land Titles Office, in November of 1991 for verification of transfers, the number of days it was taking was seven and for mortgages nine. Well, that is a far cry from the 43 days that people were having to wait back in the bad old days of the New Democratic Party administration in this province.

Mr. Speaker, in an attempt to make some of the improvements, not only in the Land Titles Office, but in other public institutions in this province, the new government came into office and really applied some resources toward the alleviation of some of these problems which had become major sources of irritation for people in the lending business, people buying and selling real estate in our province. All it took was the will to make a change. The previous government clearly had lost the will to do anything constructive in the province of Manitoba and were replaced.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

Now we see, after yesterday's debate, that those left over from those Neanderthal hordes who were once in government in this province and those who have joined them for whatever reason, I swear I could never even guess, let alone know about, they have not changed as yesterday's debate demonstrates clearly. Not one area of new think were we able to detect in any of the speeches that were made yesterday by members of the New Democratic Party. It is a shame. We have young members opposite, young members like the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) or the honourable Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), but they are stuck in that hide-bound old think that we get from the likes of the honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) or the honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman).

It is a crying shame that people in Manitoba are not being represented better in these changing times, Madam Deputy Speaker. When we talked about changing times, there are changes going on at the Land Titles offices across this province, not only in rural Manitoba, but also in the city of Winnipeg, changes that governments have to notice are happening. Governments have to be able to keep up with the traffic. Sure, there have been times since 1988 when traffic at the Land Titles Office has been reduced. Perhaps recessions help in that respect. The kind of help we do not need, thank you very much, but at other times traffic is up. The same was true in the NDP years.

It is a crying shame, and it is a terrible statement about services delivered in the days of the New Democratic Party in Manitoba that things got so bad. It was not that they were not told or it was not brought to their attention. I remember Gerry Mercier when he was the critic for Her Majesty's loyal opposition, as it then was, bringing to the attention of the minister in those days, Roland Penner. Six years that man was Attorney General responsible for land titles in this province, six years, and he allowed that kind of a situation to develop and to carry on.

I think it is shameful that any minister cannot get more support amongst his colleagues to do something about that. Now I do not say that Mr. Penner did not have the wish to improve the situation, but his colleagues clearly said to him, oh, never mind, the people of Winnipeg who are buying and selling real estate really do not matter—

Point of Order

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister responsible for The Real Property Amendment Act is clearly not being relevant to anything that is in this act. We are having some sort of historical revisionism going on. We understand that the government has no particular agenda and would be embarrassed if the Legislature were to adjourn early because they have no agenda, but filling up time with this kind of revisionist history is neither very interesting nor very funny.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable member for Flin Flon does not have a point of order.

Mr. McCrae: In an attempt to be kind to the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), Madam Deputy Speaker, obviously I will accept your ruling on the matter, but I will also take some advice from the honourable member's comments.

Of course, I do not want to be revisionist or rewrite history, but I think as a backdrop to Bill 7 that we have before us, which deals with real property, it is important to put it into the context of the situation in which we find ourselves. In that context, there is a bit of history here that needs to be told, and needs to be retold, and told again and again.

It is interesting that only when issues that are raised on this side of the House are sensitive to honourable members opposite do they rise to their feet to talk about something being irrelevant. Be that as it may, I do not intend to go on. A lot of people though tend to forget that when significant improvements are made in institutions of government, those improvements get made and then they are promptly forgotten about.

Well, I do not want honourable members opposite to forget. I do not want them to forget that improvements can be made. It is not impossible. All you need is the will. The government on this side, the Progressive Conservative government elected in May of 1988, has shown the will to do something about these chronic problems that were allowed to develop under the New Democratic Party before. With those brief comments, I will conclude on Bill 7 and ask the honourable members for their support.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Yes, I move, seconded by the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 8—The Garnishment Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of the Environment (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 8, The Garnishment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la saisie-arrêt, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Deputy Speaker, the amendments to The Garnishment Amendment Act are needed in order to clarify and improve the law respecting garnishment orders served on employers. The suggested changes will overrule a Court of Queen's Bench judgment of October 1989, which has adversely affected the way that the government, as well as other Manitoba employers, must handle garnishment orders affecting their employees.

Under the present act, a garnishing order affects all wages due or payable. The court interpreted this wording as meaning that an employer who has already sent a postdated cheque to the employee is still obliged to pay under the garnishing order with respect to wages earned for each day the employee works after the order is received.

As I am sure honourable members will appreciate, this interpretation places a severe strain on the ability of the Department of Finance to administer The Garnishment Act for government employees.

The amendments we are proposing will state that a garnishing order affects all wages due and payable after the order takes effect. An order will take effect on the Monday after the day it is served on the employer.

The amendments will clarify and simplify the rules for employers who are served with garnishing orders without adversely affecting the persons who benefit from those orders. The Garnishment Act will then better reflect the way most people are paid: weekly or biweekly, and often by postdated cheque.

It will therefore benefit the garnishment process as a whole in Manitoba.

The amendments will cover all Manitoba employers including the government.

As a closing point of information, the amendments are consistent with garnishment legislation in other provinces.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with these brief comments, I would commend this bill to the attention and to the support of all honourable members in this Chamber.

* (1520)

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 10—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), that Bill 10, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Hydro-Manitoba, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Downey: Madam Deputy Speaker, in the introduction of this bill, I want to say that I am pleased to carry on the initiative that my colleague the former Minister of Energy and Mines had presented to this House in introducing Bill 10.

Mr. Harold Neufeld (Rossmere): A good bill it was.

Mr. Downey: As he is indicating from his seat, a good bill it was. It still is. I would hope that all members would see fit to not only support me in the further carriage of this bill, but the introductory of it of my colleague, the former Minister of Energy and Mines.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to introduce for second reading Bill 10 amending Section 30 (1) of The Manitoba Hydro Act. This amendment gives Manitoba Hydro the flexibility it needs to get the best deal possible on available lending rates. This means the people of Manitoba get the best deal possible. Increasing the limit on the

Crown corporation's temporary borrowing authority from \$150 million to \$500 million will give Manitoba Hydro more flexibility to deal with its financing requirements.

The amendment, Madam Deputy Speaker, enhances the corporation's capacity to take advantage of short-term financing in the United States to bridge U.S. debt payments and export revenue flows. Utilizing low-cost, short-term financing instead of long-term, fixed-rate financing could save Manitoba Hydro millions of dollars. Bill 10 gives Manitoba Hydro the tools it needs to manage cash resources more effectively.

I recommend and would hope for support of all members of this Legislative Assembly to help the Manitoba Hydro work in a better way on behalf of the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): I have a question for clarification for the minister—[interjection] with leave. I am not sure that I require leave. Questions for clarification are allowed after second reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker, my question to the minister is: Does anything in this act change the requirements that are part of Manitoba Hydro's obligation to go before the PUB with respect to capital construction decisions? Does this give them any additional authority in terms of proceeding with the construction of roads or ancillary projects with respect to Conawapa, for example?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The honourable Minister of Energy and Mines to respond to the honourable member for Flin Flon's question and clarify the—

Mr. Downey: If I understand correctly, Madam Deputy Speaker, no it does not restrict them or change anything as it relates to going before the Public Utility Board. It is more flexibility within their operating capital that is available to them.

Mr. Storie: Just for clarification then, the minister is giving assurance that this does not allow Manitoba Hydro to begin a project in anticipation of some additional approvals from the PUB or from the Environmental Review process, that it would not allow Manitoba Hydro to do that.

Mr. Downey: The answer is no, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 11—The Bee-Keepers Repeal Act

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), that Bill 11, The Bee-Keepers Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur les apiculteurs, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce Bill 11, The Bee-Keepers Repeal Act.

The intent of the bill is to permit the Manitoba beekeeping industry to amalgamate their resources and be represented by one organization. I would like to give the House a little background as to how this decision was arrived at by the industry and the Department of Agriculture.

Over the past several years discussions have taken place between the Manitoba Beekeepers Association, the honey marketing board and the Manitoba Department of Agriculture staff as to whether or not it is necessary to have two organizations representing the same group of producers.

At the December 11 and 12, 1989, annual meeting of the Manitoba Beekeepers Association a motion was passed to establish a joint committee to review and make recommendations on how the industry might fund its various activities. The committee was comprised of seven members with three representatives from the association, meaning the Manitoba Beekeepers Association, three representatives from the honey marketing board and a representative from the Manitoba honey co-operative.

At the joint general meeting of the Manitoba Beekeepers Association and the Manitoba honey marketing board held on March 14, 1990, the committee presented its report and the following motion was passed:

That the Manitoba beekeepers support in principle the restructuring of the Manitoba Beekeepers Association and the honey marketing board into one organization.

The committee continued its deliberations on restructuring throughout the year. The board considered the committee's recommendations and

agreed on November 20, 1990, to increase the board's membership from eight directors to 12 directors. The restructuring discussions culminated on August 12, 1991, at a meeting of the Manitoba Beekeepers Association with the passage of the following motion:

That because it is the intention of the Manitoba Beekeepers Association to operate under the legislation of the Manitoba honey marketing board regulations that the Manitoba Beekeepers Association support the repeal of The Bee-Keepers Act.

More recently at the December 5, 1991, annual meeting of the Manitoba Beekeepers Association a motion reaffirming its previous decision to repeal The Bee-Keepers Act was passed and read as follows:

Whereas the Manitoba Beekeepers Association and the Manitoba honey marketing board have agreed to amalgamate under the honey marketing board regulation,

Be it resolved that the government of Manitoba be encouraged to take the necessary steps to allow this amalgamation to take place as soon as possible.

* (1530)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to bring this bill forward to repeal The Bee-Keepers Act. It is a request of the industry. The industry has gone through a lot of discussion to arrive at this position. Really, if you look at other commodities that are represented by marketing boards, you look at hogs, or dairy, or turkey, or chicken, or broiler, or eggs, they have one organization, the marketing board that represents the entire industry.

The beekeepers in this province have decided to take the same decision that they would have one organization representing them, and a said preference to repeal The Bee-Keepers Act, to operate under the Manitoba honey board marketing regulations, and to use the name The Manitoba Beekeepers Association under that act. So the beekeepers have gone through considerable discussion. It must have been a very democratic process to arrive at their decision. It is an example of the Department of Agriculture and this government working co-operatively with the industry to arrive at a decision that is good for all.

I think that it is imperative that government, when asked to repeal legislation that is redundant, that

they do it. That is why, Madam Deputy Speaker, I recommend this legislation to the House for consideration and quick, speedy passage so that the desires of the industry can be met with the repeal of The Bee-Keepers Act. Thank you very much.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): I would like to ask the minister a couple of questions for clarification if I may, Madam Deputy Speaker. [interjection] If it is by leave, Madam Deputy Speaker has not been requiring leave today as a precedent. My question is—

An Honourable Member: It is a tradition, by the way. Actually it never used to be by leave.

Mr. Plohman : Madam Deputy Speaker, I take it that I should carry on. I wanted to ask the minister if he can provide any clarification with regard to who initiated this review. I did not catch that if he provided information at the beginning. I know that there was a group that reviewed this from the industry, and department, and various sectors, interests involved. I just asked who initiated it, whether there is any loss in service provided to beekeepers of any sort, whether it be the commercial operators or hobbyists, for example; if he is aware of that, and if there is any money saved in this amalgamation, who is saving the money.

Mr. Findlay: The member's first question was in regard to who initiated. It was really initiated by the bee industry themselves, who made a decision that they did not want to be represented by two associations speaking on the same issues. If you look at the other commodities under marketing boards, they have done that already. There is only the marketing board representing the entire industry. So the beekeepers themselves decided to do this, and the makeup of the committee, as I told them earlier, were three representatives from the beekeepers association, three representatives from the honey marketing board, and a representative from the Manitoba honey co-operative, along with members of my department who went through the process, arriving at the conclusion that they brought to me for action now.

The appropriate resolutions were passed. The member also asked if there is loss of service. No, I am not aware that there is any loss of service. The marketing board has the authority with the regulations to do all the things that they have done in the past and will do the same things that the voluntary association was doing. I do not see that

there is a loss of anything. There is probably some saving of money by the producers in terms of less administrative costs, because there is no duplication of the two groups representing the beekeepers.

So I think there is strength in going with one organization, probably saving some cost for them. I am not aware if there are any savings for government or not, but if there are, they are relatively minimal. It is a matter of streamlining their actions. It is a matter of streamlining our legislation so we do not have duplicate legislation in place.

Mr. Plohma: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 12—The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger), that Bill 12, The Animal Husbandry Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élevage, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Findlay: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 12, The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act, and it is to do with Part 7 of The Animal Husbandry Act to deal with artificial insemination of animals. The purpose for having to do these amendments is because back in April of 1991 we sold the Semen Centre to Western Breeders. Therefore, there is no longer any need for this many sections of this part of the act pertaining to the Semen Centre AI technicians and subsidies thereof.

These amendments will bring the actual act up to 1992 standards relative to the activities that have to be conducted under this act since we sold the Semen Centre. The Semen Centre was sold after considerable input from the private industry, from the producers, the users of the semen service.

Way back when the Semen Centre was first formed, some roughly 20 years ago, there was need for that service because there was no artificial insemination service properly available in the province of Manitoba. Over the course of time several private suppliers of semen got into the

business. I think it is fair to say there are four to five available in the province of Manitoba. Farmers then started to use the private sector more and more and it got to the point where the Semen Centre was doing around about 50 percent of the business in the province of Manitoba. Really, what they were doing was buying semen from the private sector who were already here selling, and we were acting as a distribution centre.

Producers came forward and said, you know, we wonder if we should be spending government money to duplicate a service that is already here. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, as a government we responded. We consulted with the industry, particularly the dairy and beef producers relative to what is the future need of the Semen Centre, and a little over a year ago we arrived at the decision to sell the centre. We offered it, called for proposal calls from interested parties and we sold it to the highest bidder. I would have to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the closing of the centre has been relatively well accepted by all sectors of the livestock industry in the province of Manitoba.

The provisions of the act pertaining to the semen centre are now redundant. The ones that we need to deal with today in this bill is the payment of subsidies to AI technicians who act as agents for the centre. Since the centre is no longer there, they obviously cannot act as agents for it. We have the role of the centre as a parent unit for technicians registered with the joint dairy breeds committee. Certainly, other proposed amendments delete various provisions pertaining to requirements that are no longer relevant or that have not been enforced for some time. Some of these are the establishment of AI advisory boards and I will talk on each of these a little bit more later on.

Secondly, the requiring of technicians to reside in designated areas for which they are licensed; and thirdly, requiring semen and embryo production in distribution centres, technicians and practitioners to provide the director with records of inventory, transactions, inseminations and transfers. Obviously, the implications of not proceeding with this bill would leave certain sections of this act quite redundant and unenforceable. Some of the things I am going to talk about already were not being acted on because they were not deemed to be necessary over a period of time, so we are doing a fair bit of housekeeping in this bill to bring The Animal

Husbandry Act up to appropriate standards for 1992.

Just a few explanations on some of the areas of the act that we are making changes: In Section 90 we are amending it by striking out three words. The three words are "reside in and," because in the definition of the technicians' commitment—and the reason we are removing these words is because in remote areas of the province it is very difficult for technicians to reside in all areas because there is not enough business. By removing those words, it just actually allows to happen what is technically happening anyway. In remote areas technicians do not reside and the people who want to have the service have to have a technician from some other area a little further away.

* (1540)

Section 95, subsection 6, is repealed because it refers to AI technicians acting as sales agents for the semen centre. Obviously, with no longer a semen centre, that no longer exists. In Section 95, subsection 6, we are amending it by striking out reference to the semen centre at the end of the subsection.

In subsection 9, it is amended by striking out the reference to the need for AI technicians to reside in the designated areas for reasons I have already explained. Sections 97, 98 and 99 are being completely repealed. Section 97 is being repealed because it deals primarily with matters pertaining to the semen centre, including such matters as payment of subsidies to technicians acting as agents and, obviously, with the centre not there, they can no longer act as agents of the centre. It deals with AI technicians dealing directly with joint breeds committee and not with the semen centre and the payment of subsidies as it was discontinued a little less than a year ago.

The provisions in subsection 1 of Section 97 are now provided by federal legislation and the regulations pertaining to the licensing of AI technicians, semen and embryo production units. Sections 98 and 99 are repealed because they referred to an advisory, an appeal board which has not existed for many years and for which there appears to be no justification or likelihood of its reinstatement. In other words, those activities are deemed to be redundant by the industry and by government for many years. For example, the revisions call for such a board to include technicians

elected by the Manitoba AI Association, and this association has not existed for the last 10 years.

Section 100 is repealed and submitted. The submission that is made is in the bill itself, Section 100, dealing with records. The part that we are going to add to the bill is, immediately after performing artificial insemination or an embryo transfer, every technician and every practitioner shall prepare a record of the artificial insemination or embryo transfer containing the information required by the regulations and leave a copy of record with the owner. Requiring that technicians do this or anybody who is involved in artificial insemination, it allows an opportunity to facilitate the tracking of the use of artificial semen in cases of diseased semen. It is required that that be the case, and it is dealt with in federal legislation.

Section 102 deals with the penalties for violation of Part VII of The Animal Husbandry Act and the fines for summary conviction. We are amending the fines to go from a minimum of \$200 to a minimum of \$500 and the maximum from \$2,000 to \$5,000, raising the minimum and maximum fines on summary conviction.

Section 103 is amended by repealing clauses that pertain to the Manitoba Semen Distribution Centre, namely clauses (a), (h) and (i). The advisory board has referred to this in Section 98.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what we are doing is responding to changes that have occurred in the industry over time, particularly with regard to the decrease in business that occurred at the semen centre and the desire of the industry that they purchase their semen directly from the private sector. Since we have sold the semen centre, there is no longer any justification for an Animal Husbandry Act that refers to the semen centre and actions of technicians. We are bringing The Animal Husbandry Act up to date so that we have an act that is now current with the actions that we have to enforce in the industry. Thank you very much.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to address a few remarks to the bill that was just introduced by my colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay). In doing so, it is also a little bit of a fundamental philosophy lesson that I wish to engage in with my own colleagues and indeed those of the members opposite.

In the introduction of this bill, believe it or not, it is an opportunity, and I think it is an opportunity that should be taken, that demonstrates a fundamental difference between us and them. When I say us and them, I mean the good guys or the bad guys, or the Conservatives and the Socialists. I say that with all sincerity.

It was my privilege to have assumed the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture shortly after the program of artificial insemination was made available to the cattle producers of Manitoba by my predecessor, at that time, a very popular Minister of Agriculture of the earlier Roblin years, the late George Hutton, who for many years—Madam Deputy Speaker, many of the things that we still hold as icons in terms of the Agriculture Department, The Natural Products Marketing Act, that I know my colleague from Portage has a high regard for, the Manitoba Crop Insurance Program, the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, all of these things were brought in by that progressive Minister of Agriculture, a Conservative Minister of Agriculture, by the name of George Hutton, then the member for Rockwood-Iberville, who I had the privilege of succeeding in '66.

Why did the government of that day decide it was important to use hard-earned taxpayers' money to teach farmers how to artificially inseminate their cattle? Well, it is very simple. Because we accepted the then proven fact that in doing so we could substantially increase the upgrading of our cattle, our dairy cattle specifically, but also our beef cattle. It was extension education, if you like, that the Minister of Agriculture at that time had no trouble in convincing his colleagues, the Roblin government, that we should use some of Manitoba's hard-earned taxpayers' dollars to teach Manitoba farmers.

It had to be done because after all it took some convincing that somebody coming onto the farm with a little plastic tube and inserting that in that delicate part of the anatomy of the female bovine species and blowing it, would produce a healthy baby calf nine months later on. More importantly, even a better calf than that big, virile bull that also used to walk around the pasture.

So this extension work had to be carried out and was carried out by none other than one Harry Enns who succeeded the late George Hutton to the Ministry of Agriculture, and we established a network, a whole system that covered the whole province as the minister related to. We had

technicians, we had advisory boards established throughout the rural agricultural parts of Manitoba. That was a major program of the Department of Agriculture.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I began this little discussion on the bill by saying that I wanted to point out the difference between us, those who believe in progressive intervention on the part of government to help improve our economy, help improve individually our enterprises, whether we are in business in the city or in the country, and do not hesitate in doing so with the use of taxpayers' money, but our socialist friends would have never done what we are doing today, because in the intervening 25 years, every cattle farmer, every progressive dairy farmer knows the value of artificial insemination, knows that he can improve his livelihood, his production on his farm, improve the quality of his cattle by the use of this particular management tool, artificial insemination.

It does not need the support of taxpayers anymore to do that. As a matter of fact, why should I be taking money away that should be spent on education or to help out my colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), to make a few more dollars for the cattle producers? So we are doing what is a sensible thing. We are now withdrawing from that program. We are not doing it in a disruptive way as the minister made very plain in his introduction of the bill. This is a self-evolving thing.

The fact that artificial insemination became such an accepted management tool within the cattle industry bred to the provision of all kinds of private and other sources of semen, and very often on a competitive basis, so that it was not necessary for the government to be involved anymore. But, you see, my friends opposite would never do that. My friends opposite would make the case it has to be government that pays the technician to blow the semen into the cow. It does not. What is important is that the cow get impregnated with a higher quality calf, and it does not matter whether it is private or whether it is government. That is a fundamental difference between us, because you would be in bed with the MGEA bosses, with Mr. Olfert or someone like that. Oh, no, we cannot lay off any technicians or something like that. Somehow a cow impregnated by a nongovernment employee will have three heads or something else between his legs.

We Conservatives know better. We approach these matters sensibly. So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I take some offense at the lightheartedness with which some of my colleagues are accepting these remarks. Nonetheless, for me it is a reaffirmation of the faith that I have in being a Conservative. It shows a very prudent order of business. We as a Conservative administration do not fear to use government intervention, government tax money to introduce and to educate and to bring something forward.

When it has done the job, when we have convinced those targeted areas, in this case cattle producers, that this is a worthwhile management tool, then we can sensibly withdraw from that. Quite frankly, we ought to. I know the honourable member for Rossmere (Mr. Neufeld) would say we ought to be able then to reduce the demand on taxation by that amount because that money is no longer needed for that. We are trying to do that except that we have other calls on this money all the time that make that difficult.

* (1550)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that you of all members of the House, representing that constituency that kind of borders on that urban-agro area, that you will understand the importance of this little anatomy lesson that I have given in political philosophy having to do with artificial insemination and how big Bessie does get comforted and satisfied in different ways in this technological age, and that it is now no longer important that it be done by a government agent or private. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 14—The Highways and Transportation Department Amendment Act

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) that Bill 14, The Highways and Transportation Department Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Voirie et du Transport, be now read

a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to bring this bill forward. It is not of a major magnitude. I also have Bill 15 coming forward and I have made the spread sheets available on this one to my critics, and basically indicate the purpose of the bill.

The Highways Traffic Amendment Act which is Bill 15 and will be coming forward in a day or so, which is always the one where we have all the other amendments, this deals with the Highways and Transportation Department and is called, as I indicated, The Highways and Transportation Department Amendment Act.

There are four small components to this act, and the spread sheets give clarification as to what we are trying to accomplish with it. Basically, the first section is to increase from \$5,000 to \$25,000 the threshold of requiring authorization by Order-in-Council for the minister to dispose of surplus property.

This brings it in line with The Public Works Act which presently allows Manitoba Government Services to lease or dispose of property up to \$25,000 in value without prior authorization by Order-in-Council. Basically, what we are doing here is bringing it into line with the other department, which is Government Services.

The second portion of it is to allow the minister to lease lands that we have purchased the right-of-way for public road or public works, and it would basically allow the minister to lease this property out for productive use until they are required. I want to give an example: the Selkirk corridor where we have acquired right-of-way in many cases. The circumstance at the present time is that after we have acquired the right-of-way, we then have to take and close the road, go through a process of doing it and then we can lease it out. Then, by the time we actually need the property for the construction of the road, we have to take and revert that again.

What this basically will do, the amendment will allow us to take and lease property out to the landowners who had it before, whom we have acquired it from, either by purchase or by whatever process we use to get land. We can lease it back to them without having to go through various hoops. It is basically making it a little bit more feasible and

faster to do it and creates less problems. It would only be where we have the right-of-way. I use the example again of the Selkirk corridor where for the future we are buying certain properties as they come up and the land now belongs to us. Rightfully, under the act, we cannot take and turn that land over for lease or use unless we go through the other process again. I hope that clarifies it so that members understand.

The third and fourth parts of this act are minuscule really. The third part allows us to allow for the removal of abandoned vehicles from provincial roads. This has been a longstanding error in the legislation which is being corrected with this amendment.

An Honourable Member: Is there anything in there about licence plates?

Mr. Driedger: No, not yet. But in the case of removal of abandoned vehicles, the legislative error in there is because we have provincial trunk highways and we have provincial roads, and this one portion of it is not covered under this where we can remove abandoned vehicles that are on the road which we have to remove for safety reasons or whatever other reasons. It is recommended that we correct this longstanding error in the legislation and that it would include provincial trunk highways which is a PTH system.

The fourth minor change in there is changing from imperial to metric measurements to be consistent with similar changes being proposed to The Highway Protection Act where we change from the imperial system to the metric system, and this comes into play where we set up snow fences 300 feet from the right-of-way. It now is changed to metric and makes minor changes in there. Basically, these four items are the only ones that are being addressed in there.

An Honourable Member: How are we going to know where to put the fence now?

Mr. Driedger: We now have a different measuring stick. Instead of using the foot and the yardstick, we use the metric tape. It seems to work. What happens though is that we have a variation of about four feet in this sometimes, you know, by changing from imperial to metric. [interjection]

The member is asking a question here, Madam Deputy Speaker, and with your indulgence I will try and see whether I can give an example: 295 feet works out to 90 metres, and 38 metres is 124.6 feet,

15 metres is 49 feet. These are the three. I have them here specifically—the question was asked—because it relates to the distances that we do certain things on the roads with snow fences and signs, et cetera. That basically deals with the four minor changes under this act.

If there are further questions, I would certainly be prepared to deal with them. I want to indicate again that this is not The Highway Traffic Amendment Act which basically is pretty substantive and covers a whole bunch of other things under The Highway Traffic Act. This is The Highway Traffic and Transportation Amendment Act. There is a difference, and I do not have that many acts, so thank you for your indulgence.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): I believe with leave I might ask a question of the minister on this particular bill?

* (1600)

An Honourable Member: You do not need leave.

Mr. Reid: You do not need leave. The minister talked about the opportunity or the change in the legislation that would allow the department to lease out lands that the department or the government would own but are not in current use. I was wondering if the Minister could explain for my benefit the process that the department has to undertake to lease these lands out and how they arrive at some arrangement with the interested parties that wish to lease.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Deputy Speaker, I wonder if I could ask a question in return for clarification? Is the member asking what the process is of when we lease the property? I am not quite sure what the process is. I will take and get that information to the member in terms of the process that we would be using when we lease it out.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I would like to put a question to my colleague because of a concern that I have with respect to the fourth point that he has raised today in relation to the bill before us, that being Bill 14, The Highways and Transportation Department Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Voirie et du Transport.

My concern goes back many years. Honourable members will know that from painful experience the move to the metric system has probably touched each and every one of us who have been around

long enough to have worked in the other system. I was an employee with the House of Commons back during those days when the most bitter debates were taking place in the House of Commons respecting the conversion to the European system of measurement here on this continent.

Of course, there were discussions about how changes were or were not happening in the United States of America but must in our country. Well, I suppose you too, Madam Deputy Speaker, are old enough to remember some of that debate, but it is questionable. I do not pretend to know the answer to that particular part of it.

The honourable minister has touched on the issue of the distance from the right-of-way on a provincial trunk highway or a provincial road, I am not sure which it was, the distance that one might place a snow fence, if I understand. He was using that either as an example or something that is actually in this proposed piece of legislation.

My concern, after listening to all of the debates and not being sure myself whether I have been misled along the way by federal Liberal politicians of the day who were attempting to change our country in such a drastic way and leaving us in such a mess as a result—I am not sure if when we move to a different system of measurement if the snow fences to which the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) makes reference will or will not be the same distance from the road as they are now as we move to a different system of measurement.

Similarly to that assurance which I seek, I also would want to know if I heard him correctly when he said that we are moving from a system of using feet to a system of using metres, and in this context, if the honourable minister can tell us how many feet there are in a metre.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am surprised that you actually allowed that length of time to him before a question could be posed. I want to indicate the three areas where we are asking for a change in here are basically where we are changing from the imperial to the metric system.

In the case of snow fences, it always used to be within 300 feet we had the authority to move in and erect the snow fences. By changing it to 90 metres, it will be 295 feet, so there is a slight 5-foot reduction basically. There is a change in that.

The other area is where an erection of structures that within so and so many feet you can or cannot erect a structure. In this case, it is now 38 metres and it is 124.6 feet. It used to be 125 feet.

In the case of planting, we have regulations which say that you cannot plant within 15 metres of the right-of-way, and that works out to 49 feet where it used to be 50 feet before.

That should address the concerns in terms of the differences.

Mr. Reid: Madam Deputy Speaker, I will allow the floor to be passed to the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) if it is for the purposes of a question.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Deputy Speaker, I have a question with regard to this bill, if the minister would not mind answering it for me, because it does affect some of my constituents who have had property or buildings erected near some of our highways, especially Highway 83 which runs through my constituency.

Some of the people who have been erecting such things as grain storage bins, and even houses and buildings, have gone to the Department of Highways and have questioned the distance that this particular structure should be from the road. It seems that there has been some confusion as to whether the distance is measured from the right-of-way or whether the distance is measured from the centre of the road. In some cases there has been confusion, and in one particular instance that I know of we never did get an answer, so the individual just moved the structure far enough away to be safe.

I am wondering whether this bill will clarify whether or not the measurement is taken from the centre of the road or whether it is taken from the edge of the right-of-way, whether it is Highway 83 or any other highway of the province.

Mr. Driedger: Madam Deputy Speaker, the member raises a very valid question, and I concede that there probably is some confusion on that.

It is my understanding that it is from the edge of the right-of-way that we own, but I will just make sure. I will get a clarification on that. I do not believe it is from the centre of the road, but the question is one that I certainly will get an answer to.

Mr. Reid: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 20—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ducharme), that Bill 20, The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Deputy Speaker, the amendments to The Municipal Assessment Act are being introduced primarily to simplify and/or to clarify certain provisions within the act.

* (1610)

It has been, I guess, two years now that we have lived with the new assessment act and during that period of time there is some experience with the new act and therefore there is also some experience with regard to some changes that perhaps need to be made, changes that are of basically a housekeeping nature. However, there is perhaps one substantive change that we need to look at and we would hope that we will have the support of members opposite to ensure that the citizens of Manitoba who have to live with the act are going to find it much more easy to deal with the whole issue of assessment, because assessment is not something that is very easy to understand by most of our Manitobans, because it is complex and because it does require a fair amount of explanation and understanding to get down to the real important parts of the assessment act.

As an example, Madam Deputy Speaker, a number of the proposed changes are intended to simplify the administration associated with Municipal Boards' appeals. In terms of clarification, the amendments to this act will improve sections by removing redundancies that have the potential to cause some confusion among Manitobans. At the same time, I want to assure members that these changes will not in any way alter the application of the present act.

We are also proposing, and this is the substantive part of the bill I believe, to delay the reassessment of properties by one year. Under the present act, property reassessment is to take place for 1993. This amendment moves that assessment to the 1994 tax year. I have to say that I have heard that there has been some confusion as to when the next reassessment would be implemented. As a matter of fact, we have heard some comments from some of the opposition critics that would lead us to believe that we are moving the reassessment for other reasons than administrative.

Let me assure members of this House and Manitobans that the proposed legislation directs that the reassessment of property be completed by the end of 1993 for the 1994 tax year. That is no different really than the implementation was before. This amendment to delay the reassessment is a very important part of the province's long-term portioning strategy that was adopted and announced by my predecessor in mid-September of last year.

By delaying the reassessment for one more year, the government is able to reach the portion targets for a number of classes before the next reassessment. I think this is important because, in order to reach the target portions for Residential 1 and Commercial properties, it will allow those people who own those types of properties to actually understand the reassessment act much more clearly.

We should also point out that these classes make up about two-thirds of all of the ratepayers in Manitoba. So it is a fairly large portion of this province's population. In this way, by doing this, we are able to enhance the understanding among these ratepayers as to why their tax bills are changing, which was one of the original objectives of the whole assessment reform initiative, and that was for a better understanding of the entire process of reassessment.

This delay will also allow the changes associated with the July 1992 implementation of the new education finance formula to stabilize before changing the assessment base across the province. As members are aware, assessment is a fundamental element in the education-tax system. Let me say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that because I had the opportunity to introduce the education funding formula that we are going to be living under in the next education year, taxpayers and those who

have to work with the funding formula, have to have a fairly good understanding of how that formula impacts upon them as taxpayers.

If we were to do reassessment in the midst of all of this, I think there would be considerable confusion and misunderstanding among taxpayers in this province. So it is important that we were able to stage, first reassessment and then, of course, the education funding formula and now the reassessment so that people would have time to digest, so that people would have time to get a firm understanding of each of these very important and very complex issues.

There has also been some discussion in the press and elsewhere, suggesting that Bill 20 will move to restrict appeal rights, particularly for farmers. I would like to again assure members that Bill 20 does not propose to alter the circumstances under which farmers can appeal their assessments. The amendments we are proposing are in keeping with the department's ongoing commitment to the improvement of the assessment system.

There was also a court challenge, as a matter of fact, to the Court of Appeal, regarding an issue within the present act and I have to say that the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the act so that indeed the act was upheld. However, because of a term within the act that there was some debate about, whether or not the meaning was very clear, we have decided to also clarify the act in that respect as well.

I guess when we go through the amendments that we are proposing there may be a whole series of questions that would arise as a result of the amendments that we are proposing. One of the questions, of course, would be: Why are we delaying the next reassessment from 1993 to 1994? I have explained this a little bit, but I would like to elaborate on it.

The province announced its intention to introduce legislation in this session to delay this next reassessment for one year. This decision is again a very important part of our strategy in terms of adjusting portions and I need to repeat that. It was noted that such a delay would help facilitate implementation of portioning changes. By delaying the reassessment for one more year, the government is able to reach the portion targets for these important classes that I spoke about, classes which make up about two-thirds of the population of

this province. In this way, I believe, that we can sincerely eliminate a lot of the confusion in a large portion of the ratepayers of Manitoba.

The other reason, of course, is the whole education funding formula and I have talked about that. I think when you combine these two reasons, you can understand that it is probably more practical to move the reassessment by one year. After that point in time we are going to be reassessing properties on a regular basis. Indeed, it is a great improvement from what we had before.

When you see that reassessment in this province was so out of whack, so outdated and so far behind that there had to be some improvements to it, we moved in stages to try and ensure that ratepayers and taxpayers, first of all would be treated as fairly as possible, and secondly so that they would have a good understanding of what reassessment was like. We tried to simplify it so that all of us would have a better understanding of what the new assessment was.

I have to congratulate the former minister who did such an excellent job in terms of leading us through the entire process of reassessment.

One of the issues that we are very conscious of and, of course, one that has come to our attention is: Does this delay in reassessment hurt farmers because it continues to use the 1985 levels of value for another year? It is a valid question. There is no denying that, but I have to say that the use of portioning that was introduced neutralizes the choice of a reference year. It does not matter what the reference year is, we have introduced portioning to sort of override the use of that particular reference here.

Portioning actually protects the farm community, regardless of the assessment levels, because it controls their share of taxes province wide. Farmers pay only 27 percent of their assessment based on the 1985 market values. Had we been able to use more current market values, the portion of course would have had to have been higher. Therefore, the answer to the question as to whether or not it hurts farmers, I would say, no it does not, because we had introduced the portioning to sort of work to the advantage of the farm community.

* (1620)

The other question that has been raised just recently is, and I noted that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) had raised it just a couple of

days ago: Does Bill 20 change farmers' rights to appeal. Again, I would have to say that, in Bill 20, we do not change the farmers' right to appeal. Recently, Mr. Mercury appealed a municipal board decision to the Court of Appeal, relating to the assessment of farm property in the R.M. of Macdonald. He argued unsuccessfully, I might add, that Section 17 (1) meant that the value of this property should be based on its value in 1990.

Section 17 (1) directs assessments be done at value in relation to the reference here. Bill 20 proposed to remove the underlined words in relation to the reference here which become redundant when the definition of value was added at the committee stage. The court based its conclusions on the current wording of the act and ruled in favour of the act itself and not in favour of Mr. Mercury's arguments. Madam Deputy Speaker, I would say that Bill 20 does not restrict the right of farmers to appeal.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I must also say that, in times between reassessment years or in years between reassessments, an assessment roll may be amended under sections 13 and 14 for reasons of an error or omission or destruction or damage to the property or a change in the physical characteristics of the property or of a property in close proximity which alters the value of that or land which, perhaps because of subdivision, is reclassified, those things we can look at under Sections 13 and 14.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when you talk about reassessment and looking at the market value, we look at it in reference years. We have to do that because those are the basic fundamental characteristics of reassessment. You cannot do it any other way.

I would say that we are introducing these amendments to this bill to make sure that the bill is clear, to make sure that we do the housekeeping things that will bring the bill up to a current standard so that there is no confusion out there, and to allow us some time to get an understanding. First of all, portioning, so that it can be phased in properly, and then to allow for education to the education funding formula to work. Then we will start the reassessment process on a regular basis, after the 1994 year.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, with those comments, I would certainly hope that members on both sides of this House will see that there is value

to doing it this way for the benefit of Manitobans, and I am certainly prepared to meet with my critics to discuss this issue further so that they can perhaps get greater clarification and understanding of the bill. On that basis, I fully commend this bill to the House and to the committee.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to rise today to compliment my honourable colleague on action taken in the introduction of the amendment today. I want to start off by saying that I recognize, having been the minister in charge of the assessment legislation, how difficult a task assessment and assessment reform has been. As well, I want to indicate as I have previously done in these Chambers, my appreciation and our government's appreciation for both opposition party's co-operation during the assessment reform legislation period.

The official opposition certainly knows how difficult the decision was to, first of all, agree to moving ahead with legislation such as this. I believe that they had almost 10 years where they could have introduced legislation that would have reformed our assessment process.

The Weir Commission, of course, was appointed some 12 years ago and spent a tremendous amount of time consulting with Manitobans, not only rural Manitobans, but all of Manitobans, as to what kind of a process should be used to correctly determine the values of property, and to allow assessment to in fact happen on a more regular basis than what the case was.

Weir came back with some fairly specific recommendations: No. 1, market values should be the consideration that would determine the amount that would be used as a portion of taxation for the purposes of municipal as well as education tax application.

Weir also indicated clearly the disproportionate amounts that various municipalities were paying in taxation now under the old system.

When you consider that some of the municipalities, in fact, had not been assessed for some 15, even more than that, years, and some municipalities were at current values, the disproportionate amounts of tax paid prior to the freeze that was established under the previous administration certainly allowed for a large amount of discrepancies, especially in the education tax application. Therefore, it was important that we

proceeded with the implementation and the introduction of legislation, knowing full well that the time lines we were imposing upon the department were very, very restrictive.

We also recognized the importance of bringing up to date the equipment that was being used; in other words, the computer process that was being used by the department, or should be used by the department to keep assessment data current. Under the old system it was virtually all done manually. All the data was recorded on long sheets, so-called long sheets, and recorded and processed.

The whole initiative of ensuring that assessed values pertaining to the old formula that had been established years ago, taking into consideration soil classifications, the productivity of the soil, drainages, and all those kinds of things, would have a large impact on the values applied for assessment purposes.

Market value, or the current market value, really had no bearing on the amounts of values applied for assessment purposes, and therefore became irrelevant really in the application of school and municipal taxation.

When the work commission considered all these things and came forward with some recommendation, it was assumed that it would be within a matter of a couple of years that new legislation would be introduced in the House, and that by early in the 1980s we would have a new assessment process.

Politicians being what politicians are, it became evident that the people at that time in government were rather hesitant to move forward with legislation on assessment because they assumed it would have a tremendous political impact on their future viability to remain in government. Well, it was our government's intention and commitment that we made prior to the 1988 election, that if and when we were elected we would in fact proceed with the introduction of assessment legislation.

We spent almost two years, and the now Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) in charge of assessment was part of the committee that spent many, many hours devising the final piece of legislation. Due credit goes to that committee and the many hours that the various ministers spent drafting, or helping to draft, the final assessment reform legislation.

* (1630)

The new legislation, of course, designates one authority in the province which is relatively new. Previously, under the previous act—or acts I should say—under The City of Winnipeg Act, the City of Winnipeg had its own assessment authority and also had its responsibilities for assessment entirely. The other part of the province was, of course, under the authority of the provincial assessor.

I have often made the comparisons of what really did happen and how values were established and whether there was equity between one and the two as into what happened in my part of the country under the 4-H program. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) is certainly aware of how 4-H programs go and are assessed and are judged on the value and merit of what in fact is part of a project.

We had, in our part of the province, sugar beet 4-H projects. We had a significant number of clubs in our part of the province. We had a judge who judged the merits of the projects on the east side of the Red River, and then we had another judge who judged the merits of the plots and projects on the west side of the river. For some silly reason, the east side of the province continually won the competitions and the west never did, until the 4-H clubs decided, well, maybe what we should have is one judge. Then, of course, the west side won as well as the east side.

I make that analogy simply because I think it applies as well to our assessment process under our previous legislation in this province. When you do in fact have two authorities or two provincial assessors who have authorities for various jurisdictions, you simply cannot apply an equalized process to ensure the values that need to be applied are equal. Therefore, it was our intention to ensure that the authority of the provincial assessor would apply to both assessment authorities, both the rural as well as the City of Winnipeg.

I believe that in fact is working well. I am encouraged when I look at the values of various properties that are applied today under the market-value system. They are much, much more relevant to the current situation, and it provides a much more equal provision for taxation. I know the council of the City of Winnipeg supported the establishment of one provincial municipal assessor and the authority over the two authorities.

There was a considerable amount of lobbying. Maybe we should, at some point in time, consider

whether we in fact only need one authority, one assessment provincial authority over all of the province instead of having the two authorities in the province, as we currently do. That lobby has come from various parts of the province.

I believe that eventually we will move to one assessment authority. I believe there are probably some savings to be garnered by in fact applying one assessment branch over all of the province and one group of assessors for all of the province.

I was interested in hearing what the minister was referring to under the Mike Mercury case in questioning whether the reference here should be maintained. I was glad that the courts concurred with the legislation designating a specific year as the reference year in any legislation. I think it is important that when an assessment is done, in order to retain an equitable amount of taxation, when that happens, that all people in the province can be assured that market value in their respective municipality is similar to any other market value dictated by local markets are in fact applied. If you would allow what Mr. Mercury and a few others were professing should be the case, the current updating of values on specific properties, you would of course create a tremendous inequity of taxation, whether you drop the market value of a given property or increased it. There would be tremendous inequities created within a period of time. Therefore, I think it is important that we establish one year as the reference year and the basis for the assessment being applied and all taxation then becomes relevant.

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

Now there was also a question whether in fact you could or should be able to change or appeal the assessment on a given property. There has never been any question about that. The legislation clearly allows for the appeal under the current legislation that could be allowed. I reference some of the properties, whether they are actually being used or being vacant, certainly the application for assessment change could be made even under the current legislation. There is absolutely nothing restricting the appeal under the process.

The establishment of a computerized data base is, I think, long overdue in this province and should have been implemented years ago, instead of doing the long handwritten accumulation of data and the

tremendous number of hours that are required in the municipal offices to assure that the data is in fact all correct and being applied equitably. Now the municipalities can in fact punch a computer and up comes the data, and they are assured that it is correct and similar to the ones that are stored in the data base.

I believe that the extension that is being proposed by Bill 20 of one year is in fact something that we had considered even when we introduced the legislation, because it became very apparent that if we were going to ensure that the department had adequate time to ensure the right values that were implied, that the two-year period that we gave the department to put in place the whole process was very, very minimal. I know that some of us, even during that period of time, questioned the department whether they would have enough time to apply and implement, No. 1, the computer program and, No. 2, to ensure that all the hardware and all the data entry was made to allow for the reassessment to take place. The department at that time told us that the time period would be very, very tight. I congratulate the former minister for having made recognition of that, having also made recognition of the tremendous changes that the previous Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) made in the funding formula, and how the two have to intertwine in order that we can all be assured and satisfied and comfortable that we are, in fact, knowledgeable enough about the whole process.

I congratulate the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) for bringing forward this time the change and the assessment legislation and the amendment to the assessment reform legislation and consequential amendment act. That would ensure, in my view, the proper and correct procedure be implemented and enacted that would satisfy everybody in this province once and for all that we had given adequate time for the department to enter the data, to put in place the process, to have proper consultation with the municipalities and with the school boards to ensure that everybody was knowledgeable and comfortable about the total process.

As the minister has indicated in his opening remarks, this is a hugely complicated and very often boring subject to most people, but it is a very important element of ensuring that the correct taxation will be applied in the future. Therefore, I would believe that by 1994 the department will have

had adequate time that we can then assure ourselves that we can roll over on a regular, normal three-year process the assessment legislation and the reassessment of the province and, therefore, meet the requirements or meet the requests that Mr. Mercury and others have made of this province. Again, I want to congratulate the current minister for having the fortitude and the wisdom to introduce this amendment at this time, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (1640)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is the House ready for the question? The Minister of Rural Development to close debate? The honourable member for Swan River.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): I move, seconded by the member for the Interlake—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Acting Speaker—

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Acting Speaker, I recognize that you had called my name with regard to closing debate on this particular bill, but I know that we from time to time are busy with other things and an error perhaps has been made.

I acknowledge that the members opposite want to have the opportunity to debate this bill. I think that is only correct, but I know that the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) had a question on it as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Acting Speaker, to the same point, we do not want to make the record incorrect. The reason why the members of the opposition party were sitting in their seats was because the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) was standing trying to get the attention of the Chair, so we sat in our chairs and the minister decided to sit down and then looking over to the minister, opposition party was quite prepared to adjourn debate.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Acting Speaker, I believe also we run into a bit of a difficulty in this case because the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) had been recognized and was moving the motion of adjournment. The reason she had not risen to her feet as the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux)

pointed out quite correctly was because the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) was on his feet attempting to be recognized. We wanted to accommodate him.

I would suggest if you had recognized the member for Swan River that we could move the adjournment motion in her name and then by leave recognize the minister to speak. We have no problems in listening to the minister, but it is a little bit difficult, particularly for the record, when we have several people recognized and then not recognized halfway through their comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): The honourable Minister of Labour on the same point of order.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Acting Speaker, I am rising as the Deputy Government House Leader.

I think it is the intention on this side of the House to accommodate debate in the traditions of this House in allowing the opposition to adjourn that debate. I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, if there is leave of the House, no matter who was recognized or what the record shows, I think with the leave of this House if we could allow the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) to have the floor to move her motion and that the minister be given the opportunity when it comes the time to close debate to speak at that time, if there is leave of all members to allow that to proceed. I would like that put to the members.

I think I asked if there was leave of the House if we could have that recorded, if there is leave, simply to protect—I do not know what the record of the House is going to show and I do not want the minister to be denied the opportunity to speak at some other point.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): On the point of order raised by the Deputy House Leader, the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) will not lose his opportunity at this time.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans) that debate be adjourned.

Point of Order

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Acting Speaker, I have no problem with the debate being adjourned by the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). I merely

wanted a few moments to make a few comments on the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is there leave for the honourable minister to make a few comments?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Leave. It has been moved by the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), seconded by the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Cliff Evans), that debate now be adjourned. All those in favour?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Agreed. Thank you. Leave has been accommodated for the honourable Minister of Justice for a couple of comments on the issue.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Acting Speaker, I am awfully relieved that we have been able in such a co-operative way to sort out this rather sticky problem that presented itself just the last few moments in this House.

I did not want the day to go by without my making just a few brief comments—on this bill, of course. I say that because you never know, I may not be available the next time this bill is called or some such thing, and I will not have an opportunity then to pay tribute to people like the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), who, when he was Minister of Rural Development, undertook a very big challenge in the life of a Legislature and as a Minister of Rural Development in engaging in assessment reform, significant assessment reform which will serve Manitobans for a long time to come.

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): With a minority government he did it.

Mr. McCrae: I think my honourable friend, the Minister of Government Services, reminds me that was done during the time of a minority government, which makes the statement about that honourable member's courage and commitment to his province all that much stronger. I think it should not go unnoticed and that history should duly record the significant contribution made by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) who, as Minister of Rural Development, made such extensive reform in the area of assessment in our province.

Now, further contribution was made to the whole evolving process of assessment reform in this province by our Deputy Premier, the honourable Minister for Northern and Native Affairs, Minister of Energy and Mines, the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), who also made a very significant contribution to this whole area in doing some of the workup that brings us to the point we find ourselves today, Mr. Acting Speaker, considering Bill 20.

Just in passing, and on the point of assessment, it should be noted that in the city of Brandon there is a group called the Business Improvement Area. They have a board and membership. They agreed with the City of Brandon to allow an assessment to be made on their taxes so that funds could be raised for the general improvement of the downtown in the city of Brandon.

I am delighted that earlier today, as a matter of fact, the honourable Minister of Rural Development, the honourable member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) and I and the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) were able to travel to Brandon this morning to formally sign an agreement bringing the Province of Manitoba formally into that partnership, which will make quite a difference in the future years to the environment in the city of Brandon and to the future viability of the downtown area of the city of Brandon. These things do not happen without a high level of partnership.

Here we have a partnership between the business community, the municipal level of government and the provincial level of government, which brought us to the point where today I was able to travel with the Minister of Rural Development and the honourable member for Brandon East to have a formal signing ceremony and, not insignificant, the presentation by our Minister of Rural Development to Mr. Ron Lacey, the chairman of the Business Improvement Board of \$300,000, Mr. Acting Speaker, the first installment of a \$1.75 million commitment by the Province of Manitoba to the City of Brandon and the BIA, as it has so affectionately become known in recent years.

* (1650)

I recall standing in the former BIA office about a year and a half ago with the then minister of Rural Development, the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner)—and incidentally, Mr. Acting Speaker, that particular office is now occupied by the

honourable member for Brandon West, which is now my constituency office, the BIA having since moved two doors down and me moving two doors down and taking over that space. So I am pleased to be located so close on Rosser Avenue in the city of Brandon to the BIA offices.

I say it is a commitment to the kind of partnership that we as Progressive Conservatives have been talking about for some time with respect to building a better Manitoba. You will find that this bill and other initiatives being brought forward by this government all come together to build a better future for your children and mine. In a few minutes I am going to have a chance to talk about children, and I intend to do that.

With those brief comments I thank honourable members for their co-operation in allowing me to have this opportunity to say a few words on this bill and to pay tribute to my colleagues who are doing their work to make a contribution towards building a better Manitoba in partnership with Manitobans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): The debate has already been concluded on this.

Bill 38—The Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 38, The Manitoba Evidence Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la preuve au Manitoba, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. McCrae: The purpose of the amendments to the Manitoba Evidence Act is to bring our legislation in line with the Canada Evidence Act respecting the need for corroboration of unsworn evidence given by children or persons whose mental capacity to give evidence is challenged.

The federal legislation was amended as the result of a detailed report considering issues relating to sexual abuse of children. The report identified several problems of legislation that made prosecution of child sexual abuse cases more difficult. Since January 1, 1988, the federal act has no longer required children's unsworn evidence in criminal cases to be corroborated. However, under

our act which governs civil proceedings, including custody actions and child protection cases, it is still necessary for unsworn evidence of children to be corroborated by some other material evidence. These amendments delete Section 24 of The Manitoba Evidence Act and replace it with wording that is similar to Section 16.1 of the Canada Evidence Act.

These changes are necessary, first, to ensure that the test for admissibility of children's evidence in civil proceedings is no more onerous than that in criminal cases. Second, to safeguard the best interests of children, they are particularly essential for child protection proceedings.

Before proceeding with the legislation, we received the input of Justices of the Family Division of the Court of Queen's Bench. We consulted with the family law subsection of the Manitoba Bar Association, interest groups, lawyers practicing in child protection law, and the Director of Child and Family Services. Those responses received, and in particular that of the Director of Child and Family Services, strongly supported the changes.

We have also reviewed legislation in other provinces. Since the federal act was amended, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan have brought their corroboration provisions in line with the Canada Evidence Act or have otherwise dropped the requirements.

It is important, Mr. Speaker, to note that while these amendments might be considered housekeeping in nature, in effect they go further than that. They accord to young people in circumstances of abuse, or alleged abuse, kind of an equality of status when it comes to their participation in proceedings. I do not know why it is, that just because someone is young there has to be a special requirement that their evidence be corroborated when experts will tell you that in matters of abuse, especially sexual abuse, young people in tender years rarely make up stories about that. I see the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) and the honourable member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) here. They will probably back me up on that, as I think they are experts in this kind of field, unless I am wrong about that. It is rare that young people make up stories about abuse. Why should we continue the practice of not trusting the validity or questioning the validity or reliability of the unsworn testimony of young people?

Mr. Acting Speaker, with that, I commend this legislation to honourable members, to their attention, to their study and deliberation and to their support.

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Mr. Acting Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): The hour now being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 1—Canada/Mexico/U.S. Free Trade

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that

WHEREAS the 1988 Free Trade Agreement with the United States has ushered in an era in which 160,000 Canadians have lost their jobs to low wage areas of the southern United States, including more than 8,000 Manitobans; and

WHEREAS the federal government has done little to keep its promises to provide Canadians with an effective labour adjustment strategy; and

WHEREAS free trade talks with Mexico expose Canadian workers to Mexican standards of wages, environmental protection, workplace health and safety, and general living standards that are well below those of Canada; and

WHEREAS Mexican journalists and writers have themselves petitioned the Mexican government to ensure that a free trade agreement include a social charter.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the government to take a proactive stance toward the Mexico free trade talks, and to make representation to the federal government to ensure that equitable standards in the areas of labour, occupational health and safety, and the environment are written into any agreement with the government of Mexico; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the government of Manitoba to make further representation to the federal government stipulating

that a framework be established whereby Mexican industry is held accountable for these labour standards.

Motion presented.

* (1700)

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to debate this important issue. It is an issue that I hope members on all sides of the House will listen to carefully, because I think this is the kind of issue that this House can come together on. I think this is the kind of issue that all members of this Chamber can support. I note that on Thursday, June 13 of 1991, the Premier of this province in Hansard indicated that, and I quote: "we have a good deal of concern about free trade with United States and Mexico."

The dilemma that we face in Canada as we begin to move into this new trade arrangement with the U.S. is that virtually every one of the concerns that were expressed by the opponents of the Free Trade Agreement have come to pass. I am frankly astounded by the shortsightedness and narrow vision of many of those people who worked so hard in favour of the Free Trade Agreement in the face of a great deal of evidence to the contrary.

You will recall when that debate was on, and I do not want to completely revisit the debate on the FTA, but I think it is important to frame the problem that confronts us right now. At the time when we were debating the North American Free Trade Agreement, the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, people who were concerned about it said that Canada would be a net loser, that the Americans were aggressive negotiators and that we would see a good many jobs here in Canada move south of the border, that they had lower wages, lower labour standards, lower environmental protection standards, and that we were going to lose work as a result and that some of the benefits that were supposed to occur to Canada simply would not occur to Canada because the United States would find other ways of continuing to protect their industries in defiance of the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, virtually every one of those concerns has come true. What you see now over and over again are people who were strong proponents of the North American Free Trade Agreement say exactly that. I note that one of the more recent ones, Mr. Gordon Ritchie, who was one of the people who helped negotiate that, is now on

record stating that the macroeconomic policies of the Mulroney government have been highly perverse, cancelling out many of the benefits of the Free Trade Agreement. Simon Reisman, the chief negotiator, has commented on how the Americans are not living up to the agreement.

We in this country sold a portion of our sovereignty in order to extract some limited benefits from the U.S. government, and we have not received those benefits. It is my position, and I believe it is the position of my party soon to be reaffirmed at the national convention, that the Free Trade Agreement should be abrogated, that we should in fact not negotiate lightly on this one. We should exercise our ability under the agreement to cancel it, and we should begin again and attempt to negotiate a working arrangement that respects both countries as equal partners.

I note that two of the things that went on when we had the debate on the Free Trade Agreement, the federal government said do not worry about it, do not worry about the Free Trade Agreement; it will cause labour disruption in Canada, but we will provide a labour-adjustment strategy. They even had a very big study on that, that came back and recommended the nature of the labour-adjustment strategy, and to this point we have not seen a single dollar flow under that labour-adjustment strategy. It has not preserved one job. It has not helped one person get retrained in this country.

Now, the dilemma that we face with the entry of Mexico. The entry of Mexico at first blush is not a big question. We export about \$1.6 billion to Mexico. They export about \$1 billion to us. So the concern of the question about whether or not there will be enhanced trade between us and Mexico, all of the evidence thus far is that it will not have a significant impact on either country.

The concern that we face is the competition that we as an exporter to the U.S. face from Mexico as a potential exporter to the U.S., that with their lower wage rates, with their lower environmental standards, with their lower occupational health, with their lower social benefits, they are in a much greater straight dollar competitive position than we are and, as a result, we are going to see an increase in the movement of jobs and manufacturing south of the American border into Mexico. A significant portion of our market will begin to disappear.

I would like to draw the House's attention to a research paper that the library just got in recently on the North American free trade agreement. It was conducted by two Canadian economists, one at the University of Waterloo and one at Simon Fraser University. They say, to put it another way, Mexico constitutes important potential competition to Canadian firms rather than to U.S. firms, and they go on to say, Canada would gain nothing in terms of increased real income from a North American trade bloc.

There is no real benefit for us going into this agreement, but significant risk. At the same time, it has to be pointed out that by tying ourselves, by tying our future to the U.S. through the North American free trade agreement, we are, by virtue of that reality, until such time as that agreement is cancelled or abrogated, we have no choice but to be at the table with Mexico to try to protect those little interests that we can. I mean, we seem to have very little leverage with the U.S. That has been demonstrated over and over and over again as they have treated with complete disregard any of the very limited protections that they offered to us under the Canada-U.S. deal. Under this one, this is an agreement, at first blush, between the U.S. and Mexico, so at the very least we should be at that table.

I must confess to some mixed feelings on this one. I have a number of friends in the Mexican government. A number of people in the administration in Mexico have spoken to me on this issue, and they are very anxious to have this agreement with the U.S. because they see it as being necessary to raising their own standard of living. Certainly, when I look at the relative difference between the two countries, I feel that we, as a wealthy and highly industrialized country, have a responsibility to those parts of the world that are not as well off.

Having said that though, there are elements of what is happening in that country that impact on us directly, and I want to reference two things.

The lower environmental standards in the poorer countries of the world as a whole affect all of us. As we strive to improve the quality of our water and air, if they do not we are impacted by it. We no longer can put up borders. We never could really put up borders, but the level of pollution has gotten to the point where anything that is done in Mexico—there was an old song by Tom Lehrer, the breakfast

garbage they throw into the bay we drink for lunch. The reality is we are affected globally by this.

* (1710)

We have an opportunity in this agreement to speak to Mexico, to begin to insist that if we are to mingle our markets, that they raise their standards of environmental protection to be consistent with those in North America, so we are no longer impacted by their lower level of environmental standards and that that does not serve as an incentive. One would hope that it would not serve as an incentive for companies to move south of the border.

The second one is on wage rates. Inevitably, as industrial production, as economic production, picks up in that country there will be upward pressure on wage rates. Another component of wage rates is labour standards, the kinds of protections that we offer labourers: the work week, minimum wage laws, and a whole variety of benefits that are part of the normal basket of protections that are made available to workers in this country. I think Canada should be sitting at that table demanding that those sorts of protections are made available for Mexican workers.

What right do we have to expect those kinds of conditions be met in that country when we are not part of that country? I think we have a right as a partner going into an agreement with them to expect certain kinds of conditions be met as parties to that agreement, and I think those expectations are consistent with the hopes and desires of the Mexican people.

The third one is occupational health and safety. Should we be party to a deal that allows business to escape the very necessary protections that we provide to workers in this country and to produce things outside of our borders and export them back into this country without any ability to extract any kind of control, exercise any kind of control, over those decisions? I would imagine that nobody in this Chamber would like to see that occur.

The purpose of this resolution is to say to this government, and frankly to support this government, to offer some support, the support of all parties in this Chamber as they speak to our representatives in Ottawa who are going to be, I believe, this week in Dallas negotiating this agreement, to offer some direction to them and to say that, if we are going to be entering into an agreement, if the U.S. and

Mexico are going to be entering into an agreement that affects our interest, that at a minimum we extract some improvements in the current conditions that exist in that country that wishes to become a trading partner of ours. I would hope that this government will not sit idly by.

I note with some interest the concerns expressed by the Premier (Mr. Filmon). I note also that the Premier has indicated that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) has been actively conducting studies. In fact, I believe he says here on Thursday, June 13, that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism has commissioned analyses and studies of the various areas of the Manitoba economy to try to assess what are the potential effects of a North American free trade agreement, the United States, Mexico and Canada.

I hope today, when the minister rises to speak to this resolution, that we will hear the results of some of those analyses and will hear in this House what action this government has taken to protect the interests of Manitobans as we move into what could be a very dangerous new agreement. Our experience to date with agreements that have been negotiated between this government in Canada and the U.S. government has not been very positive. In fact, it has been negative to us. Another example that I know the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) is concerned about—

An Honourable Member: I do not think he leaves much down there when he is there.

Mr. Alcock: He does not have much to leave anywhere.

Mr. Speaker, another example, and I think it needs to be kept in mind, you will recall when the debates were on about the Canada-U.S. agreement relative to supply management, we were assured over and over again that supply management was not part of the agreement, that they would be protected. We see today that they are not going to be protected. We were assured over and over again that cultural industries in Canada would be protected, and yet we hear from the U.S. trade negotiator that they are not to be protected, that they are very much on the table. The arrangement that was negotiated on our behalf by our current federal government has been a failure and will continue to be a failure as was pointed out at the time it was entered into. Let us not create a second failure with this new agreement.

Thank you very much.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to have an opportunity to speak on this motion. At the outset, I would like to indicate that I feel that the majority of the concerns raised in this motion have in fact been addressed by the position adopted by our government announced in this House back on July 17, 1991.

I would like to summarize a few of those to show members just how our position does cover off most of these concerns. I think, as a starting point, one might question why the Canadian government decided to enter these negotiations in the first place. Part of the rationale that we are being provided with is that it was on the basis of an attempt to preserve the attractiveness of Canada as a location for the distribution of goods throughout all of North America. The concern about the United States becoming the hub and spoke, providing services, products and so on to both Canada and Mexico without those countries having the opportunity to provide goods and services under the agreement to each other, that certainly was part of the rationale of the Canadian government.

While Manitoba and our government has consistently been a strong supporter of efforts to liberalize trade, this particular set of negotiations causes us some concern, Mr. Speaker. We support liberalizing trade on a balanced basis, because we recognize that exports are a very important part of our economy in the province of Manitoba. They represent approximately 13 percent of our total output and some 60,000 jobs here in Manitoba, and that, as we have indicated on many occasions, given a balanced level playing field, we feel Manitobans, Manitoba businesses, can compete throughout the world from right here in our province.

As I said, there are some concerns that came to the forefront based on our review of a proposed agreement with the U.S. and Mexico and through our consultation with various sectors throughout Manitoba. The honourable member indicated that our Premier had touched on that. That was part of the process that we undertook back in 1991, to consult directly with various organizations and sectoral groups, ranging from manufacturing associations to some of our service industries to our professional groups to our universities and so on, and fairly extensive consultation took place with some, I believe, close to a hundred individuals in

groups. It certainly was very useful, Mr. Speaker, in terms of giving us some incite into this very important issue.

While I say that, the concern that I would have to express is on this issue, a lack of research done in many instances, and perhaps in many cases a lack of an attempt to really come to grips with the impact of this issue, not only in the short term but in the long term here in Manitoba. I think a discussion like this is certainly worthwhile to continue to remind Manitobans that this issue is out there. It is certainly an important issue facing the province of Manitoba.

As a result of our internal review, as a result of our consultations that took place, we adopted a position in this House back in July whereby we do not support a North American free trade agreement unless six very important conditions are met. We consider those conditions extremely important and they are the conditions that I alluded to, Mr. Speaker, that I feel address the majority of the concerns raised by the honourable member. I think it is worth putting them on the record again and reminding members.

I will briefly walk through them. The first condition that we made was that Manitoba insists that the trilateral negotiations must not result in a renegotiation of the current Canada/U.S. Free Trade Agreement. That is a very important condition, because in that particular agreement, there were important provisions which safeguard important areas such as Canada's cultural industries. These must not be given up or adjusted in any trilateral negotiations. We felt it was important that the current negotiations not involve the reopening of the Canada/U.S. agreement and any changes to any of the important aspects of that agreement for the protection of certain Manitoba industries.

The second very important condition is that Manitoba believes that Canada must seek assurances that under any free trade agreement, labour standards in Mexico will improve in line with Mexican prosperity and will be adequately enforced. That certainly is one of the issues that the honourable member touched on, a concern certainly amongst Manitobans relative to not only what we have heard in many cases the actual costs of labour, but the actual labour standards currently employed and enforced in the country of Mexico.

* (1720)

It was with that in mind that we adopted this particular condition, because a number of Manitobans have expressed concern with respect, as I say, not only to the wage differentials between Canada, the U.S. and Mexico, but with respect to some of the labour standards in place in the various countries. We do believe that as Mexican industries improve their technology and productivity, that wage rates in Mexico will rise in line with those improvements which has been evidenced in other developing countries throughout the world, Mr. Speaker. It was with that in mind that that particular condition was adopted.

The third condition, Mr. Speaker, is that Manitoba believes that negotiations between Canada, United States and Mexico must encompass broad coverage of issues with respect to environmental standards. Manitobans are concerned that Canadian or U.S. environmental standards may gravitate to the lowest common denominator, once again, both the perception and the reality in some instances of lower Mexican standards when it comes to environmental treatment. Clearly, it was with that in mind that we brought in this particular condition that upholds our current environmental standards and basically suggests that the standards be created on a level playing field for all three countries, but brought up to the highest common denominator, not the lowest common denominator. Clearly, that is a very important issue. As a result, I think in part of the position adopted by our government, two of the issues that I have just touched on, the labour issue and the environmental issue are under serious negotiation and discussion at the table between the three countries at this time.

The fourth important condition is that Manitoba calls upon the federal government to ensure that comprehensive and adequately funded adjustment measures be provided to ensure that Manitoba and Canada are equipped to capitalize on the opportunities provided by trade liberalization, and that we clearly recognize that if there ever were a North American free trade agreement that, unquestionably, certain adjustments would be necessary in the Manitoba economy. It is vitally important, Mr. Speaker, that not only comprehensive, but adequately funded adjustment programs be put in place to handle the adjustment needs of Manitobans that would be affected under such an agreement. Once again, that is an important

condition that addresses some of the concerns raised in the motion put before us today.

The fifth condition is that Manitoba stresses the need for policies at all levels of government which reinforce the efforts and needs of Manitoba businesses in adjusting to trade liberalization within a globalized world market, and the consultations I referred to with a wide range of business groups and individuals in Manitoba have confirmed Manitoba's view that the federal monetary policies over the past three years have operated to deny Canadian businesses advantages that might well have existed under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement, and we do not need to look any further than the value of the Canadian dollar. In the minds of many westerners, certainly, the value of the Canadian dollar was kept artificially high, in some instances to the benefit of other parts of Canada and fiscal policies of our national government that worked to a disadvantage of areas like Manitoba. Clearly, the value of the Canadian dollar is certainly one very important issue that has had a negative impact in terms of the opportunities that might have existed under the Canada-U.S. Free Trade Agreement and, obviously, policies of that nature could have a negative impact under any North American free trade agreement.

We realize that for Manitoba's and Canada's businesses to prosper under a liberalized North American trading regime that enhanced access must be reinforced through the domestic monetary and exchange rate policies, as well as the comprehensive labour adjustment policies that we have already alluded to. Clearly, that once again, to bring in an agreement that creates opportunities for Manitobans and Canadians and have fiscal policies that work against it, does not make a great deal of sense and, therefore, this condition was put in place by our government.

The sixth very important condition we attached to this particular issue, Mr. Speaker, is that Manitoba urges the federal government to follow through on its commitment to involve provinces in developing the Canadian mandate and objectives and to implement full provincial participation throughout these negotiations. While, to date, I have to compliment the federal government; I have to compliment both the current Minister of Trade, the Honourable Michael Wilson, and his predecessor, John Crosbie, in terms of keeping the lines of communication open, providing us with information,

having a series of meetings over the last several months on this particular issue. That has worked very well, I have to indicate to this House, in terms of allowing us, as provinces, the opportunities to continue to put forth ideas and reinforce our positions as government.

This particular condition goes even further than the consultation process that has worked very well to date. We see the establishment of a very formal federal-provincial agreement outlining the mechanisms for federal-provincial co-operation in this very important area. While we are pleased with the co-operation and the lines of communication being very open with the federal government on this issue for all of the provinces within Canada, we would like to see that formalized even more to ensure that on issues of this nature that have a direct impact on the economies of our provinces, that we are full partners in terms of the decision-making process.

Mr. Speaker, I thought it was very important to walk through our position announced back in July of '91 and to outline the position of our government, that we do not support a North American free trade agreement unless these six very important conditions are met. I feel that the six conditions really do address the motion put before this House today. So it is with that in mind that I would like to move an amendment.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Arthur (Mr. Downey)

THAT the Resolution be amended by substituting all words after the first "WHEREAS" with the following:

WHEREAS the governments of Canada, the United States and Mexico are currently engaged in negotiations aimed at the signing of a North American Free Trade Agreement; and

WHEREAS the three countries involved have widely divergent levels of economic development with Mexican conditions in wages, environmental protection and workplace health and safety well below those prevailing in Canada; and

WHEREAS the federal government holds the primary responsibility for providing effective labour adjustment assistance; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government, on July 17, 1991, called upon the federal government to ensure broad coverage of environmental and labour standards in their discussions with the United States

and Mexico and to ensure that comprehensive and adequately funded adjustment measures are provided to ensure that Manitobans can capitalize on opportunities provided by trade liberalization.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the government in reinforcing its position on the North American free trade negotiations and making further representation to the federal government to ensure that a free trade agreement encompasses equitable standards in the areas of labour, occupational health and safety and the environment and does not result in the lowering of any Canadian standards; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly support the government of Manitoba in making further representation to the federal government to ensure that any multilateral agreements in these areas call for the strict enforcement of standards in all jurisdictions.

I am very pleased to table this amendment which I feel clearly addresses the issues raised by the honourable member and shows support for the position adopted by this government back on July 17th of 1991.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Motion presented.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): First of all I want to say that I appreciate the amendment that has been tabled by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson). It is one of the few amendments which at least is consistent with the government's previous position on this issue, although it is somewhat self-serving, although not as self-serving as many of the amendments we have seen from members opposite and I think an amendment that is worthy of debate, Mr. Speaker.

I want to begin by also saying that when the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism released the Manitoba position on July 16, 1991, I approved of many of the conditions which the minister indicated would have to be met before Manitoba would support the continued involvement of the federal government, our national government, in negotiations or discussions, Mr. Speaker. Having said that, I believed then and I believe now that it is in Canada's best interest to discontinue discussions and negotiations immediately.

I do not believe that Canada has anything to gain by continuing in the discussions, and I do not believe, frankly, the rationale that is being used in some quarters in Ottawa that we have to remain part of the negotiations to preserve what is in the existing Free Trade Agreement between U.S. and Canada. I find it rather interesting that the first condition which the minister has set for continuing the discussions on the trilateral negotiations is that the negotiations must not result in a renegotiation of the current U.S./Canada Free Trade Agreement. The obvious question is, why not?

Mr. Speaker, the current Free Trade Agreement has provided virtually no benefit to Canada, certainly not to Manitoba, and the end result of that agreement is going to be the disintegration of our manufacturing sector and the continuing loss of jobs as we see the continuing reduction of tariffs as a result of the Free Trade Agreement.

I remind people that we have already lost some 435,000 manufacturing jobs in Canada after two and a little bit years of the Free Trade Agreement. The tariffs are going to continue to decline for the next, in fact, 20 years. Most tariffs will have been removed in 10 years. If the current tariff removal rate is not accelerated, most of them will be gone in 10 years.

The tariff on seasonal vegetables will be gone in 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, I read into the record yesterday a list of the casualties in this continuing debate over the benefits, or the lack thereof, of the Free Trade Agreement. I want again, for the record, for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) to read the complete list of the jobs that have been lost, the percentage of manufacturing jobs that have been lost by sector because of the Free Trade Agreement.

I will be the first to acknowledge that it is not just the Free Trade Agreement. Clearly, there are other factors that work in the economy that have contributed to the recession. My Leader says that is part of the repercussions of a Tory economic policy being foisted on the people of Canada.

This government is no different. The bottom line is when you compound the high interest rate, the high dollar, the deregulation, and the other areas where the government has injected its particular ideology into the economy, the end result has been a reduction of 22.8 percent in manufacturing

employment in food; 26.9 percent reduction in jobs in rubber and plastic; 38.5 percent reduction in jobs in leather; 28 percent reduction in jobs in textiles; 29 percent in apparel; 34 percent in wood; 32 percent in furniture and fixtures; 16 percent in paper and alloy; printing and publishing down 17.8 percent; primary metal down 19 percent; machinery down 31 percent; transportation down 16.8 percent; electrical electronics down 26 percent; petroleum and coal products, 10 percent; chemicals, 15 percent.

Those are not just figures. Those are real jobs lost by real Canadians from coast to coast. We also know that unlike the last recession—a Tory-inspired recession as well, at least in the province of Manitoba, 1979, 1980, 1981, where there were also manufacturing jobs lost, we will all admit. The number of jobs lost were about 50 percent as heavy as in this particular recession. Only 22 percent of the jobs lost in the 1981 recession did not return. In other words, yes, there were lay-offs and there were plant closures, but most of those plants reopened. Twenty-two percent of the jobs that were lost during that period were lost for good. Mr. Speaker, Statistics Canada says now that 69 percent of the jobs that are lost in the recession are not coming back to Canada. They are plants like the Tupperware plant that have relocated to some place in the southern states, like the Toro plant, and other plants that have relocated, and they are not coming back.

Those are the implications of the Free Trade Agreement. So, when the minister says, gosh, we have got to get into these negotiations to protect the benefits of the Free Trade Agreement, I shudder, quite frankly. I shudder if those are the benefits—the loss of 400,000-plus jobs, the loss of our sovereignty in culture, the loss of sovereignty in energy—then I say, heaven forbid that we protect that agreement.

I believe that we should not only be denying the federal government any right to negotiate on our behalf in terms of the Mexico-Canada-U.S. free trade agreement—the North America free trade agreement—I say we should be abrogating the Free Trade Agreement as it exists today, because there are no benefits. The Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) talks so euphemistically—

An Honourable Member: The minister of unemployment.

Mr. Storie: The minister of unemployment, that 57,000-person unemployment, talks

euphemistically about the level playing field. I do not know when we are going to come to the realization that there is no such thing as a level playing field. That is why we have, in fact, trade agreements between countries. No country in the world ever entered a trade agreement, saying well, I am going to have to give up a whole bunch of things, and I am probably going to lose because we entered into this trade agreement. You enter into a trade agreement only when you believe that either there is going to be a balance of benefits or that you are going to win, and most countries enter trade agreements because they are going to win.

* (1740)

Certainly, if I was Mexico, I would be trying as hard as I could to get a North American free trade agreement, because they will ultimately be the winner. Certainly, there are many in the United States—I think it is probably a mixed bag if you go to Congress right now about the relative pros and cons of the United States.

Even the government of Manitoba has finally had a vision clear enough to say that the agreement, getting into a free trade agreement with Mexico, is fraught with danger. Even the Manitoba government recognized, on July 16th, that there were dangers. We know that the federal government is going to push ahead regardless of the concerns of the government, certainly if they continue to pussyfoot around the issue of the concerns and what needs to be done.

I want to put on the record as well—first before I get off on a tangent. The minister may not be aware of the fact—he says he has consulted broadly with Mr. Wilson and Mr. Mazankowski about the discussions and negotiations and has been briefed. I do not know if he has seen the latest federal documents that were obtained by the Ottawa Citizen, which say: Secret papers show Canada gets less than it bargains for. The fact of the matter is that the federal government is using—I do not know what kind of logic. Certainly, anything that I have read coming from the government, coming from independent organizations, including a study that was commissioned by the minister himself, says that most Canadians, even Canadian businesses, are not satisfied that there are any real benefits to us getting involved in the free trade agreement.

I want to say that if we are to succeed in terms of employment creation in Canada, if we are to succeed in terms of benefiting from a free trade agreement, whether it is the Free Trade Agreement with the United States or a free trade agreement with Mexico, then we have to talk in advance of signing an agreement about the conditions that need to be met before we sign the agreement. For this government and for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) to believe that we can tell the Canadian government, here are our concerns, we are concerned about labour standards, we are concerned about environmental standards, and then rush in and sign an agreement having registered our concerns, does nothing to protect our interests.

If in fact we are going to enter into a trade agreement with another partner, then as a condition of entering the agreement, signing on the dotted line, we have to have a staged progression where those concerns are addressed in the country that is going to become our partner. It is not good enough to sign the agreement and then hope that the labour standards in Mexico improve. It is not good enough to sign an agreement and then hope that the environmental standards are going to be improved.

I understand that Mexico has some very progressive labour legislation on the books. It is not enforced. It is one thing to sit back and say, well, here are our conditions, and then to receive a letter in some script from the Minister of Trade saying, yes, thank you very much for your concerns; they have been addressed.

Mr. Speaker, what I would suggest is that the minister translate his concerns into some objective criteria, that he translate his concerns and say, here is what we need to see from the Mexico government; here is what we need to see in terms of environmental legislation and all of the safety nets that working people have in Canada and come to believe are part of their birth right, part of their right as workers to receive protection through the legislative process.

It is very dangerous, and I think foolish, for us to start contemplating signing another agreement before we come to a concrete understanding of what issues we need to have addressed, how we are going to create that level playing field, and where there cannot be a level playing field to compensate.

I think there is no more better example of where the concept of a level playing field is illogical than in the area of agriculture. We cannot have a level playing field with the United States in agriculture when in California and Florida they can grow two or three crops a year and we can grow one, where the yield of a potato yield in the state of Washington is something like two and a half times the yield in Manitoba.

How do you compensate for those kinds of climatic and geographical advantages? Mr. Speaker, you can do it by recognizing, for example, in Canada we are at an energy disadvantage. People often say that we are the energy hogs of the world. We consume more energy per capita than any other country in the world.

Well, if you simply look at that on paper, you say why are we such energy gluttons? The fact of the matter is we live in a country and an environment that demands that kind of consumption if we are going to compete. The distances of transportation, the climate, the cost of heating our homes and the energy required to heat our homes and heat our businesses make it illogical for us to assume that somehow we are not going to use more energy. So if we are going to get into a trade agreement, and we all agree that it requires some kind of balance for it to be fair to both partners, we have to provide a mechanism for compensating for our disadvantages.

It is not good enough simply to say we want a level playing field. You have to construct an agreement which is going to create a level playing field. I think everyone would agree with that, and the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) certainly does.

The bottom line is that the free trade agreement with Mexico has no advantages. It has no advantages. If the only rationale this Legislature can up with is that we want to preserve what is in the Free Trade Agreement, then I think we are on the wrong track.

There are very few advantages to Canadians and certainly not to Manitobans under the Free Trade Agreement. Not at all. If that is the only rationale for saying we are going to be involved in this tripartite negotiations, then I say abandon them, abandon them now. I go one step further. I say the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) should finally come clean with his colleagues and

with the Legislature about what is happening to Manitoba under the Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, we got into the Free Trade Agreement the same way we are getting into this agreement, without the facts at hand, without understanding what the implications were really going to be. I read, probably as much as anybody in this Chamber, the propaganda material that came out sector by sector from the federal government when we got into the Free Trade Agreement.

I read the energy sector material. I know that it was nothing more than propaganda. There were no facts in there. What I am asking from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) is—never mind the political niceties anymore of saying, here are our conditions—what is the minister going to do if they are not met? What is the minister going to say? Is the minister going to be on TV before we sign the agreement saying: This is ridiculous; my federal colleagues, my federal cousins do not know what they are doing.

Further than that, if he really cares, if he really cares about the future of industry in this province, if he cares about the economic well-being of this province, will he now agree to study in a thorough and thoughtful way, the impacts of the Free Trade Agreement on Manitoba? Will he present that information to the House? Will he invite critics of the Free Trade Agreement to sit with his colleagues in his department, for example, to do some kind of objective analysis?

Will we quit being cheerleaders for the Free Trade Agreement with the United States?—because there are few benefits, if any, in that agreement, and there are none to be had in the North American free trade agreement. We should be out of it.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Free trade causes a great number of my constituents to raise very valid points of concern to myself, and I believe Manitobans as a whole do not care for what has been going on in terms of the whole free trade negotiations, not only with what has been happening in Mexico, but also the first agreement that was struck back in '88 with the then Prime Minister Mulroney.

I want to put a few thoughts on the record regarding the Free Trade Agreement, and I also want to comment very briefly on the amendment that was put forward from the minister. Mr. Speaker, opposition members are given an opportunity during

private members' hours to bring forward resolutions. Many of us put endless hours in trying to come up with what we believe are sincere resolutions. The government has many other vehicles in which they can make statements. They can write correspondence and so forth, take official lines as a government to the federal government.

(Mr. Jack Reimer, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Acting Speaker, once again, I hope that this is not another example of what we can see in the next number of resolutions that come before this Chamber, where we see really the resolution and the work and the effort, the sincere effort, that was put into this particular resolution from the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) be wiped out because the government does not feel that the opposition member can contribute in a positive fashion. Mr. Acting Speaker, the member for Osborne, through the Liberal Party, has brought forward a lot of valid concerns that need to be looked into, and I think it is imperative for the government to take seriously what the member for Osborne has brought forward.

We are talking about different labour laws, environmental laws, different working atmospheres in Mexico as compared to Canada. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) pointed out numerous examples in terms of why Canada is not able to compete with Mexico. Those are very valid comments that the member for Flin Flon has made. Mr. Acting Speaker, this is what we as a Chamber should be debating and then sending the message, so that members of the opposition benches feel that they are contributing to the process, that whenever we bring something forward that, in fact, it is given that debate and it is treated seriously instead of having to feel somewhat obligated to tell what the government itself has done because there are so many other ways in which they can do that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Liberal Party has opposed the free trade deal with the United States. We oppose the free trade deal or any potential free trade deal with the U.S. and Mexico or any potential free trade deal that the Government of Canada might enter into with the United States and Mexico, and we oppose it for good reasons. The member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), through the resolution, has brought out a number of those reasons why we feel so concerned that something has to be done.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we believe it would be irresponsible to say that here in Manitoba we should

stay out of it, do not consult with the federal counterparts, that we have no role to play, because even if the U.S. enters into an agreement with Mexico it is going to have at the very least a very strong indirect costs to the workers, to Canada as a whole. Those who might say we should not even participate in any form of dialogue, I would suggest to you, are wrong. We should be participating in some sort of dialogue to ensure that if, in fact, something does happen, even though we oppose it, there are certain standards that have to be there.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we have heard in terms of the Free Trade Agreement, the free trade deal that was entered into between Canada and the United States and some of the concerns that have come right out of that, and I found it interesting in terms of—and I want to read just one quote, and it goes: To date Canada has gained very little from the Free Trade Agreement as a result of the government's high interest rate, high dollar policy. Even Mr. Gordon Ritchie, who helped to negotiate the Free Trade Agreement, is on the record stating that the macro-economic policies of the Mulroney government have been highly perverse, cancelling out temporarily and possibly permanently many of the benefits from the Free Trade Agreement.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this is one of the things that has come out of a Liberal Party dialogue from across the country, and even those who were in support of the free trade deal, and still remain in support of the free trade deal, disagree with what the federal government is doing and how they are implementing it with the current policies. Then you have those who were in favour of the free trade deal when it was first implemented who have completely reversed their positions. So the free trade deal with the United States just is not there. The support is not there. The only ones who are talking about the free trade deal with the United States as being a benefit to Canada are the Conservative Party, and much to my concern, the provincial Conservative Party is still endorsing the free trade deal that the Prime Minister entered into.

Mr. Acting Speaker, if we continue in the direction, if we do not send a strong message to our current Prime Minister about the free trade negotiations that are going on between Canada and Mexico, we will lose out much more than what we are with the Canada/U.S. free trade deal. Because as we cannot compete with the United States in many different areas—and agriculture was one of the ones that we

had pointed out, manufacturing of many widgets—we are at a distinct disadvantage and any potential Free Trade Agreement or deal with Mexico is not going to be in Canada's best interest.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

The role that this Chamber has in ensuring that Manitobans and in fact Canadians' interests are in fact being looked after is to ensure, first and foremost, I would argue, that we avoid any free trade deal with Mexico, but, failing that, to ensure that there are specific standards that Mexico, the Mexican government, has to adhere to. We cannot compete when Mexican workers are on average I believe paid in and around 80 cents an hour.

There is just no way that we can compete with that type of labour rate. There are other labour laws, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) has pointed out, that say one thing, but in reality do nothing because they are not enforced. I recall the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) talking about scoff laws. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that many of the labour laws that are in Mexico—from the information that I have been given and the dialogue that I have entered into—are in fact what the Minister of Natural Resources has said in terms of being scoff laws.

Mr. Speaker, it is not quite as simple to say that this is what they are going to be doing in Mexico in order to make it more acceptable to any potential free trade deal with just the United States or, heaven forbid, the United States, Canada and Mexico. There has to be a more hands-on approach to ensure that the interests of the worker in particular are being protected.

Mr. Speaker, free trade, I believe, in general is not a good thing for Canada primarily because of those who will be put out of work, the type of industries that

we will lose, the diversification that we would lose in provinces especially like Manitoba. The more we give up our economic levers, the more we give up our independence as a nation, our abilities to determine the future of our own nation. Many would argue that when the United States raises its interest rate, we have to raise our interest rate. Wherever we enter or whatever levers we give up, whether it is economic, whether it is social, to some degree political, especially over the last six or seven years, we lose that much more as a sovereign country.

I would suggest that we should be moving in the opposite direction, that in fact we support the idea of global trade, but first what we need to do is to start within Canada. We have trade barriers between provinces that need to be tackled before we start entering into all these negotiations with other countries.

If the government wants to start talking free trade or continue the debate on free trade, let us start the debate within the provincial boundaries. Let us open up Canada to free trade before we start opening more and more to the free trade to the countries to the south of us. In fact, we should not just be concentrating on the U.S. and Mexico. We have the Asian countries; we have European countries. We believe in terms of what the GATT is doing, and that it is important that we not put all of our efforts or concentration just on those countries to the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am interrupting the member according to the rules. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining.

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Tuesday, February 18, 1992

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