



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

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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
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
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
GRAY, Avis	Crescentwood	Liberal
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
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	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
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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
<i>Vacant</i>	Rossmere	
<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	
<i>Vacant</i>	The Maples	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 26, 1993

The House met at 7 p.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

(Continued)

SUPPLY—CAPITAL SUPPLY

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Madam Chairperson (Louise Dacquay): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply is dealing with the concurrence motion.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I will start with the Premier (Mr. Filmon), and I would like to thank him for joining us on this concurrence motion this evening.

Madam Chairperson, I would like to ask the Premier whether he has been apprised of the situation in the Bloodvein aboriginal community of Manitoba in terms of a situation, I think, that all Manitobans would find very, very frustrating, and certainly the people of Bloodvein find it frustrating, that they have a situation where the water has been placed in the community, they have done all the engineering work, all the capital construction in that community and yet there is not any support for hooking the water up to the homes. So you have a situation where \$7 million in capital has been invested in the community of Bloodvein and the community has all these homes, they have put in a wonderful new lagoon, they have built a lot of the capital works themselves and they have absolutely no access or capital to hook up the pipes to the homes itself.

I also understand from health officials that they feel to not have sewer and water in a community like this is obviously a health risk.

I am further apprised that professional engineers have indicated to the band—and I provide copies to the Premier who, of course, has a background in engineering—that without any work starting in the retrofit project that there could raise some vulnerability in terms of the sewage system itself and the water system itself in terms of potential problems with freeze-up. Northern Manitoba Consultants Limited are concerned that sewer line

and lagoon freeze-ups will occur creating system failures which would adversely affect capital requirements and create extraordinary maintenance and repair costs over the winter of '92-93 and then '93-94.

I would ask the Premier, in his role as Minister of Federal-Provincial Relations, and also in recognition of the fact that the Prime Minister is scheduled to visit here, I believe, on Wednesday, whether this issue has been raised by his ministers with the federal government. I know we have a new Minister of Indian Affairs—a new minister, I think, from Toronto, if I am not mistaken—but I was wondering whether this issue has been raised by his government to the federal government, and if it has not been raised, could the Premier look at the situation directly? I will provide the correspondence I have, and potentially raise it with the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's staff with the Premier's staff so we can get this thing moving along. It seems to be a real shame when you have a \$7-million capital investment, but it is not working for anybody. It is certainly not working for the people of that community.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Chairperson, a number of things occur to me, and that is the planning of the people within Bloodvein or whoever made the decision to plan it in such a way that they did not leave themselves enough money for hookups of the individual houses. That does not sound like very good planning.

Secondly, Madam Chairperson, we are talking in terms of an area that is total federal responsibility. This is the provincial Legislature. We are talking about money to be spent by the provincial government. We do not have a nickel in this project.

I hardly think this is the type of project to be raised for other than political purposes by the member opposite. To be honest with you, I do not understand why he would do it. He knows the direct lines of authority. The relationship is between the Bloodvein First Nation and the federal government. Surely, they would be raising this directly with the federal government and not

running around to provincial politicians when their issue is with the federal government.

* (1905)

Mr. Doer: Madam Chairperson, I thought I would ask this question to the Premier in light of the fact that he is the Minister responsible for Federal-Provincial Relations. I have asked him similar questions before about the status of projects that deal with the northern centre for substance abuse. We have raised other questions before. We have a Ministry of Native Affairs in his government. The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) chairs it. We have letters from health officials indicating health problems.

I should say to the Premier that there is a problem between the federal government's Green Plan, which allocated money for sewer and water and capital projects and the federal Department of Indian Affairs that is responsible for the retrofitting for these community homes. It seems to me that the community did take advantage of a positive announcement, the federal Green Plan that did provide for the capital for sewer, water, the lagoons, but did not provide for the capital retrofitting hookup. So it is not as if it is a problem of planning for the community. I think it is a problem I believe that the sewer and water is not hooked up to the homes because it did not fit into the Green Plan, but surely after an investment of \$7 million, there must be a way to fulfill it.

So I am sorry. I just asked the Premier whether he could have his federal-provincial office look at it. I know that the community of Bloodvein reports directly to the federal government. I was not blaming the provincial government. I was asking a favour of the Premier in his capacity as Minister responsible for Federal-Provincial Relations on behalf of the residents of Bloodvein. I am asking him to see whether he can move this along. I am not being critical in any way, shape or form of the Premier, and I would ask him to look at it in that spirit, not in a partisan way, but in a way to help Manitoba residents, albeit with matters under federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Filmon: I apologize to the Leader of the Opposition. I am so used to him criticizing me day after day after day that when this clearly was not a matter in which there was one nickel or one aspect of provincial involvement whatsoever, I assumed that he was trying to lay this one on me.

Madam Chairperson, I will certainly take that as an initiative that can be pursued. I do have a rather extensive agenda that I wanted to cover with the Prime Minister on matters in which it is a government-to-government thing, federal to provincial, but perhaps we can get officials talking about it to see if we can move along.

Mr. Doer: I thank the Premier for that and I will send the Premier some of the documentation I have, but I appreciate that on behalf of the community. I wish the Premier well on all the other items that he will have on the agenda on Wednesday with the Prime Minister of the country. I thank him for staying a few minutes in concurrence and taking this issue, and I expect the water to be hooked up shortly.

I have a new question to the Minister of Finance. It is dealing with taxation matters, income tax reimbursement.

We are being told by, again, the First Nations communities that there are administrative agreements between Revenue Canada and First Nations citizens with various provinces and the federal government, but there is no administrative agreement here in Manitoba. Many people in First Nations communities who are now tax exempt have been paying taxes on UIC benefits subject to the provincial government.

I will quote from letters: They are eligible for this tax reimbursement; however, it is being held up by the provincial government to pass a remission in order for these years that have applied to the present.

We have further seen documentation all across the North that says clearly that the Federal-Provincial Research Branch has advised that the cabinet has not yet considered the matter, but that that matter was currently in process. He advised us that he could not estimate as to when cabinet would reach a decision; he had advised that cabinet does meet over the summer months—I do not agree with that, but this is just what the communities are being told.

Can the Minister of Finance indicate whether there is a federal-provincial agreement on this matter, on UIC, with First Nations in Manitoba? Could the Minister of Finance advise us on this issue?

* (1910)

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): I want to indicate right away, there is not an agreement at this point mainly because the issue is a lot larger than UIC.

The federal government, over the course of the last three or four years, has been granting remissions in a whole host of areas, just not with respect to the UIC issue with regard or with respect to aboriginals on reserves. This issue involves going back, in some cases, many years, again on case files of ordinary business people, ordinary citizens of the country.

The federal government has asked the provinces to take a more lenient approach to remissions, and the provinces quite frankly are balking. They have every right to balk, because it is one thing to have the federal government administer your tax policy, it is another thing for the federal government to decide now they are going to start to give back their portion of it, and then ask the tax filer to come after the provinces to give back their portion.

I can tell you that if the reverse were to be done and the provinces were to want to do some redeeming and give back some relief, and we went to the federal government, the federal government would tell us to mind our own business, they would look after their affairs. So my response basically to the Leader, as I said earlier, at this point in time, we do not have an agreement on the broader issue.

The member is asking me, no doubt, to unbundle the whole consideration and look specifically at one component of it, and at this time, we cannot do so.

I remind him, though, of all the agreements that this government is signing with the reserves and the bands throughout this province with respect particularly to the tobacco tax recently, but before that, fuel tax, and how it is that we have entered into a whole host of agreements; I would say on tobacco alone, approaching with half the bands, whereby our tax levy will remain in effect but indeed the total recipient or the recipient of that total amount collected will be paid back in cash to the bands.

Mr. Doer: I appreciate the government is dealing with the whole issue of taxation with aboriginal people in Manitoba and trying to attempt to deal with the legal and financial obligations that it has before it.

I want to know from the minister—there is a great deal of confusion in communities across Manitoba

on this issue. On the one hand, the federal government is indeed saying, you are entitled to this money based on a federal decision, but it is the province that is holding it up. People are being told that. On the other hand, they are also being told that some provinces have agreements with the federal government on this issue of remission, but this Province of Manitoba does not. They are asking us, what is the position of the present government in terms of dealing with this issue, both the short-term issue of the tax remission and the federal statutes on reserves in terms of taxation and taxation exemption and the longer-term issues.

I would like to ask the minister: Do they agree with the federal government when they say that the province can pass this on, that is the legal entitlement, point No. 1? Point No. 2: Does the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) have a status on this same situation in other provinces? Is this an unusual situation in Manitoba or are we the exception to the rule? Point No. 3: How does the minister see resolving this? Fourthly: How does he see communicating this to the various people affected?

Mr. Manness: Madam Chairperson, I do not know whether I can answer all the questions or not.

I will say very forthrightly to the member, we are a senior level of taxation. We do not have to follow in line with the federal government. Every province has different sets of circumstances. How do I know that some of the provinces have entered into agreement for remission? What is the percentage, what are they talking about in global terms?

The member could say, well this is a matter of principle. Well, it is a little bit more than that. I would have the member know that for instance the federal government, with respect to GST exemption, has gone beyond the borders in Manitoba of some of the existing reserves and are causing the Province of Manitoba no end of difficulty because of ununiform policies.

I can tell him that we are seriously looking at it but not in its own context. It is being looked at in the broader issue. The federal government has moved, in our view, in isolation, and we will not move until we are satisfied that all of the other points of principle are taken into account.

Mr. Doer: Just a question again on this: Can the minister indicate, does he have a status report of how this is being handled in other provinces? Are

we the exception to the rule? Are we the rule? Obviously, his staff keep track of this issue. Can the minister provide to the House in general terms what the situation is across the country, in more specific terms from his staff at a future time?

* (1915)

Mr. Manness: I will endeavour to do so.

I can tell you, we are not the exception to the rule. As a matter of fact, I am led to believe most provinces are conducting themselves like we are, not again specific on the UIC issue but on the whole area of remission, because the federal government is trying to involve us in a whole host of remission, and I would say to the member, going back in some cases 12 years, and of course we will not accept that—and again this is the UIC issue. We cannot separate at this point the UIC issue, so I will endeavour to try and provide more information once I avail myself of it.

Thank you.

Mr. Doer: I would also ask the minister how they are going to communicate to communities on this issue.

We hear it on an individual-by-individual basis—the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) have heard this issue. There is a great deal of concern; there is a great deal of confusion. I would just leave with the minister: (a) please try to find a way to resolve it—I agree it is not always easy; and (b) if there is a way of informing people through whichever communication devices the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) utilizes, either through the meetings he has with the First Assembly of Chiefs or other means, so that people know exactly where it stands. I would just like to leave that with the minister.

I would like to move on to a few questions on Health to the Minister of Health.

Some of these issues are pertaining to northern communities. They are, of course, communities that come under the administration of the federal government. They are also citizens of Manitoba that have received communication, as I understand it, from the provincial government.

I want to start with St. Theresa Point. Sometime last spring I and the member for The Pas had the opportunity to tour the community and visit on a number of different projects and issues that were

before the community. There are a number of people that live in the Island Lake area. In the community of St. Theresa Point the chief and council took us to a number of people that were living at home that he felt, and certainly not being an expert but I certainly felt upon visitation to their homes, needed a personal care type of program in the community. The chief and council felt that the people either were moved outside of their community, some of them could go to Oxford House. A few could go to Oxford House, but others would have to either be moved south or stay at home with inadequate or substandard health care treatment and care.

I was very moved by my visit to the homes that I had an opportunity to visit. Members of the community said that there was, quote, no more personal care negotiations going on between the federal and provincial government because, quote, there was a 1987 freeze.

* (1920)

I want to know whether the Minister of Health has had any discussions about some of these communities, recognizing of course that this is a matter that could be dealt with by both levels of government. Certainly they are Manitobans and Manitoba citizens, even though they are in communities under federal jurisdiction, but certainly the whole plight of personal care homes in many of these remote communities I think is very important. I would ask the minister what the status is of these personal care situations. Have they done any surveys? Do they have any data? Are they working with the federal government? How basically does that stand?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): I presume my honourable friend is asking how do these projects stand, which are personal care home projects being proposed on reserve in remote and northern Manitoba. Is that correct?

Mr. Doer: Yes, Madam Chairperson.

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, it is my understanding, and I will have to stand corrected if I have the community named incorrectly, but the Province of Manitoba does not currently provide financial support to any on-reserve personal care home in the province of Manitoba. There are some in existence. It strikes me that one of them, I believe, is Cross Lake.

If what I am saying to my honourable friend is not an accurate recollection of the issue, I will provide differing information, if that is the case, tomorrow. It is my understanding that those are a federal responsibility for their funding and the province does not participate in the funding.

Mr. Doer: If a person is unable to receive the personal care home facilities that they need in a northern remote community and are moved to a southern community, what is the obligation of the provincial government? For example, if somebody is moved from that community to Winnipeg, distant from their own families, what is the funding obligation of the provincial government?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, my understanding is that that funding obligation has not changed for 20 years in that the province picks up the costs. That has always been a bone of contention. The native community makes the case that the province should then be funding those facilities on reserve. With all due respect, no provincial government in the last 20 years has made that case. I am interested in my honourable friend's line of questioning. Maybe we can find out whether my honourable friend is suggesting it should be different.

Mr. Doer: No, I do not have all the answers to all these questions. What I do know is we have a situation, and I come here trying to see how we can solve the problem. We have elderly people, our elders in communities in northern Manitoba, that need, in my opinion, and I am not an expert, I am just going by my own subjective analysis, need personal care.

I am told that some of these people are moved or have to move from the community to southern communities, which provides two problems: one, obviously, for the province and the other one for the family of the individual who is culturally, perhaps, and geographically very far removed from their own family.

I am not suggesting for a moment that we should condone the federal offloading of their responsibilities. I have a great deal of sympathy for the government in dealing with this. What I am concerned about is how do we solve this problem? I wonder whether there are any negotiations? We have huge populations, say, in the Island Lake area, an aging population, a young population as well with a lot of educational challenges.

There are other remote communities as well. It seems to me that it makes the most health sense and the most sense to the community, and perhaps to the province as well, to have resources in the communities for the elders to get personal care home services, just as, perhaps, it would be the case for members of our family if they so needed those resources in our own community; take northeast Winnipeg, where the government is expanding those resources.

So I am wondering: How do we deal with this problem? Is there any strategy to deal with this problem? Are there any federal-provincial negotiations going on between the provincial Department of Health, who would then have to assume some of the costs and the federal Department of Health or the federal Department of Indian Affairs to look at this situation. Do they feel it is a problem? Are there any discussions or negotiations going on to resolve it? Is there any way of getting a provincial joint strategy on this issue?

I am just asking, Madam Chairperson. I know that there are people that need a service, and I know if they cannot get it in their own community, they are going to another community to get it. I just asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) whether he shares our concern and what advice he could give us on this issue.

* (1925)

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, I really find my honourable friend's concern very legitimate. That concern my honourable friend no doubt had in 1987, 1988 when he sat around Howard Pawley's cabinet table, when the same situation existed, and to the best of my knowledge, the same approach to the issue was taken today as then. We do not have any negotiations ongoing with the federal government to build personal care homes on reserve. That is not, as I have said today, the responsibility of the provincial government as it was not from 1981 to 1988.

Now, there are enormous resources being placed on reserve from the federal government, from DIANA. If the need in those communities is as acute as my honourable friend says, and I trust him to say that, then it strikes me that the immediate prioritization of those resources would be to meet that greatest need, and the band councils collectively in the Island Lake region would use as

their first and foremost priority the construction of and operation of a personal care home in that region using the budgets that they currently receive from the federal government.

I mean, if that is a priority—all of us today are faced with, as I have said many, many times, my capital budget has a billion dollars of requests at any given year, and we fund approximately \$200 million per year. On any given month, I will have proposals in my office to significantly expand the expenditures of our \$1.8 billion health care budget, and we do not have the resources to do that. We cannot be adding new resources. That is why we are making difficult prioritization choices from within our internal and the available budgets.

I suggest in advice to my honourable friend, would be the same advice that he no doubt gave to those very same native councils, that if this is a priority, work with the federal government, your funder. Make that urgent priority, if that is what it is, a reality on your community. It has happened in some communities. It did not happen with the provincial government being there facilitating it or, as my honourable friend said earlier, participating in the funding of it. It happened within the resources of the federal government and the respective bands.

This same opportunity exists today. It requires a great deal of will to prioritize those dollars and make that happen, but we are not at the table with that issue in personal care home construction operation on native reserves in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: I thank the minister for that answer. If I can be frank with the minister, when I was Minister of Urban Affairs in 1986 and '87, I did not have a lot of experience in aboriginal northern communities. I will be honest with him; I did not have any. I was dealing mostly with The Forks, which was trying to deal with other priorities, the second Core and some other areas that were priorities. So I want to be honest with the minister. I did not have a lot of first-hand knowledge during my tenure in cabinet. I learned a lot, but I did not have a lot of first-hand knowledge in some of these areas that I am raising today.

I guess my question is dealing with the fact that the province picks up the cost when a person—

Mr. Manness: Jay Cowan was in control.

Mr. Doer: Well, I am not into political shots right now, for the Minister of Finance. I know he

mentions the former member for Churchill with a great deal of respect and endearment and having—[interjection] Oh, I think the former member for Churchill was a strong individual. I think we can say that, and we would argue the member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) is a strong individual as well. Being in control is a different question.

* (1930)

But moving to concurrence here in dealing with the issues raised, it seems to me that the provincial government is picking up the cost when people come outside of their community and the federal government is not proceeding with projects that are needed in the northern community. There seems to me to be a vested interest from both levels of government. I am wondering, from the Minister of Health's (Mr. Orchard) perspective, do they maintain any tracking of elders that are sent to nonaboriginal communities and are picked up by the provincial government?

Do they conduct any studies of that intake on that issue, and would that help them, perhaps, dealing with the federal government to try to develop resources through the federal government, paid for by the federal government, in federal government jurisdiction, but help the community itself have a way of working with the federal government to get some of these resources that are paid outside of the normal capital, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think there is an operating capital grant every year, but there is the ability to have the capital for health care, for education, for policing, et cetera. Is there any tracking maintained, and is that a help to the community?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, I do not have that information and will attempt to provide that.

Mr. Doer: Thank you. Just looking at communities that do have a personal care home, and Oxford House does have a personal care home with serious structural damage, even though it is a fairly new building, to the floors, walls, ventilation and the gas distribution system. Would the government have any involvement, would the Minister of Health have any involvement, about that kind of issue in that aboriginal community? Would they have any monitoring responsibility? Would they have any responsibility at all, or would that be outside of the provincial government's jurisdiction as well?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chairperson, I will attempt to confirm this, but the only role the provincial government might have, and I know we have done this upon request in the past, is to examine the operation of a personal care home to assure that it is meeting the provincial standards and guidelines. That I cannot answer to my honourable friend if that has been undertaken, for instance, at Oxford House. I would fully expect that the management, i.e., the native band, has identified the structural or the physical problems with the facility on their own or possibly from the inspection of a fire commissioner's office or Workplace Safety and Health.

If I can anticipate my honourable friend's next question, we do not participate in any capital support of any renovation costs such as my honourable friend has just mentioned with Oxford House as the example.

Mr. Doer: Madam Chairperson, I want to thank the minister for his answer. We have been advised that the facility, because of the structural problems in it, will be below the standards, and I would ask the Minister of Health whether he could look at the Oxford House facility. It is an excellent facility, but as I say, it requires considerable capital renovation, not considerable, but some capital renovation. It appears to us, in my opportunity to visit there, that the longer this waits the more difficulty it will have to meet these standards.

I would ask the minister whether there are any reports dealing with provincial standards in this area, dealing with the walls and floors and ventilation. If there has been any information to the minister, could he advise us of that and see if his officials share the same view as we do and the personal care home administrator does, that this information could be passed on to the federal government, if it has not already been passed on, in terms of standards.

Mr. Orchard: I do not know what my honourable friend is asking here, but if my honourable friend is asking have we made an inspection of the Oxford House personal care home, I cannot answer that. I will attempt to provide that answer to him.

I do not know the genesis of this report. If my honourable friend has been informed of this deteriorating physical condition as indicated, I believe he indicated by the administrator of that personal care home, perchance my honourable

friend should have asked, who made the report, who did the inspection.

I am not aware of our staff making an inspection up there. I am going by memory, this is three or four years ago, we were called in to check standards of care, I believe, it was at Cross Lake. But I have no knowledge of a direct provincial involvement. If my honourable friend is receiving this information from the administrator, I know the administrator can tell him who is making the report which says there needs to be upgrading.

But, Madam Chair, let me tell my honourable friend that if the circumstance is as my honourable friend alleges, then there is a process within the federal government funding responsibility to make those funds available to do the renovations that are necessary. We do not, as I indicated earlier to my honourable friend, and have not for some 20 years as a provincial government got involved with a capital construction for original construction or subsequent renovations.

Mr. Doer: I would ask the minister if there is any record of this to please take it as notice. If there is not, I will send him what we know about it, and perhaps his department could look at it. Thank you very much.

I want to move on to the Department of Northern Affairs, to the other member of the present troika here on the front bench here this evening. I want to ask some questions to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) dealing with—I will start with Oxford House because I was just asking questions about the personal care home. At one point, the Limestone Training Agency worked with the community to prepare a road in the community of Oxford House which runs about five or six miles. So there was federal and provincial funding, as we understand it, for the road there.

I am sure the minister has been to the community and knows that the road has gone from good gravel to a moderate amount of gravel and now from gravel right down to dust and mud. We are also advised that because of the conditions of the road that there are respiratory problems in the community and that some days of the year the road does not allow for the school bus to run along the five or six miles to pick up the kids to go to school.

I would like to know whether the minister is aware of this situation, and has he been working on this

problem as Minister of Northern Affairs and Minister of Hydro in the community of Oxford House?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): Madam Chair, I appreciate the question. I am not sure whether he is talking about the strictly provincial responsibility and/or a joint road between the federal and provincial governments. I wonder if he could give me some clarification.

I will take as notice the concerns that are raised by the honourable member. I can appreciate the fact that is and has been a concern of many of our northern communities, the dust conditions which occur, and it is important that we try to resolve, the No. 1 issue of course being safety for the residents that live within those communities, whether it is dust or whether it is roads that play havoc with the equipment that has to travel over them.

I will take under advisement the question asked and get back to the member.

* (1940)

Mr. Doer: I appreciate the minister's response to look at the situation.

I want to move on to another community dealing with roads, and then I want to come back to fur trapping and to the issue of tourism and First Nations tourism. Dealing specifically with Gods River, there was a fair degree of controversy over the airport and the airstrip and the access road in Gods River.

It appears to us that the airstrip has been shortened some distance from where its original length, point No. 1, and point No. 2, in terms of Gods River, the people have to drive along the airstrip to go from one part of the community to another, being the lodge. Now, the community of Gods River has taken over the lodge. They have a wonderful new lodge there. I am sure the members opposite are aware of it. I am sure the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) is aware of it. I am not sure whether the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) is aware of it, but—[interjection] Well, you know, Radisson and Harry Enns are, of course, two great paddlers in Manitoba history.

But I want to know whether the Minister of Northern Affairs could advise us of whether he is concerned about the safety of people travelling on the airstrip and whether there will be an access road built. There is a little bit of capital going on from the Department of Highways, but there does

not seem to be a long-term plan to deal with that issue.

Mr. Downey: Madam Chair, at the outset, let me assure the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) that my colleague the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) rows forward and the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) rows backward. The member for Lakeside knows where he is going at all times, just to make sure that we keep a clear understanding of the members. In a canoe, it is most helpful if you are looking forward when you are going forward.

Can I say, in all seriousness, the questions which the member is asking, he could probably get more information from the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) to say, first of all, yes, we are concerned about people travelling on the airstrip. Of course the member realizes that there was a long-outstanding issue as it related to the Gods River airstrip and the resolving of that took some time to do, but I compliment my colleague the Minister of Highways. He was able to do it; we entered into an agreement. I know there was an upgrading that took place. There is a maintenance contract that was entered into.

I cannot, at this point, give him the status as to the road but, again, if it is on federal or a band area, then I could say it would be a federal issue, but I think when it is the area which I think it is, we will have to get the Ministry of Highways to give us some more specific detailed answer on it. As far as I am concerned, yes, we are concerned about people having to travel on the airstrip in an automobile, not an airplane.

Mr. Doer: I would ask the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) to deal with his Minister of Highways. With the position of Deputy Premier, in touch with all the budget decisions that are being made a heartbeat away from the big job, he is, of course, aware of everything that is going on in government at all times, I know. I would ask him to talk to the Minister of Highways and ensure that his colleagues appreciate the concern he has raised, that it is not very helpful to drive or to be driving around on an airstrip, especially when planes are coming in in numerous amounts. It is not a very healthy thing for kids to be walking on that road.

Again, it is the Manitoba airstrip, and it needs an access road adjacent to it, I would suggest. I would ask that this receive some consideration in capital decisions made in the Department of Highways. I

think it is a priority. If we may have to go a quarter kilometre less in terms of twinning Highway 75 and do it in one extra month, perhaps the safety of residents in Gods River would be, the government considers a priority over other capital projects, that a couple of kilometres in northern Manitoba could be considered for the same kind of priority as some of the priorities in highways in southern Manitoba.

I want to move to the whole issue of fur trading and harvest of furs. It is not a problem I know that the government has not heard about. The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), I am sure, has heard about this issue, and the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey). There is a great deal of frustration on behalf of elders, whether it is in Hollow Water or Bloodvein or Oxford House, Gods River, Gods Lake Narrows, other communities that I am sure the government has visited, that a stronger advocacy has to be conducted on behalf of the traditional ways of harvesting furs and fur trapping on behalf of the people in northern Manitoba and remote Manitoba, that there must be a lot stronger advocacy to the groups that oppose the trapping, oppose the fur business in northern Manitoba.

I would like to ask the government, what has it done? How should we answer the questions about what is the provincial Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) doing along with the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to ensure that the trapping and fur trading or fur business in northern Manitoba will not continue to dwindle? Because of the prices and everything else, we have a situation where many elders feel that there are lots of potential animals, but the prices just are not there anymore because of all the activity going on with opposition to trapping and opposition particularly in Europe. But not just confined only to Europe, it is perhaps in our own country. I would like to ask the minister what his strategy is in this area.

Mr. Downey: Madam Chair, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) may have something further to add, but let me say at the outset that it is encouraging that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) is now asking some questions from the area which the member previously was from, the member known as Elijah Harper who no longer is with the member, and he is now coming to the Legislature on behalf of those former constituents of his to get some information. I find that encouraging, that he is either taking a genuine

interest in the North, or there is maybe a by-election coming which may have something to do with it as well, but I do not want to get into the political arena—

An Honourable Member: No, you just did, but go ahead.

Mr. Downey: The other question one may ask, he refers to me as being a heartbeat away from the chair which I sit next to. I wonder how many heartbeats away he is, Madam Chair. In fact if he got closer it may cause heart failure for a lot of people in Manitoba.

Now, to deal with the matter which the member has raised, that being the concern for the fur lobby or the anti-fur lobby and what are we doing about it. I believe it was some two to three years ago, at least two years ago, that the government of Manitoba in co-operation with other organizations hosted, in fact encouraged, the European Economic Community—those individuals who would be making the rules and regulations and influencing the voters in Europe—we put on an educational program which was held here in Manitoba at the Legislature. As well, they were hosted in several communities in the North to show how truly dependent those people are on the sale of furs. It was a direct lobby with those people who were in decision-making areas of the European Community.

I want to say as well that the point they made was that we have to demonstrate, the trappers and those people depending on the fur harvest have to demonstrate, that we are using more humane traps in this country. I know the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) can speak in more detail to this, but it is my understanding that we have had a program for several years now educating and working with the trappers of the North to do just that, to change from the old traditional leg-hold traps, or what would be considered an inhumane type of system, to a new immediate-kill type trap or some new humane system that would in fact take some of the concerns away from the purchasers of furs.

* (1950)

Let me say as well, I think the member opposite has a role to play as well, as a Leader of a political party that does have, in fact, a representative sitting here from The Pas whose people traditionally have trapped and hunted; as well, a resident from

Churchill who depended heavily on the whaling industry, which in many circles is not seen as a desirable type of harvest. He has got the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) that I am sure has many people in her riding that depend heavily on the area of harvesting of furs; sits as a Leader of an opposition where, I think, in the Manitoba Legislature, legislators have to take on the responsibility of putting the facts out as to really what is happening, how important it is for the people of the North, the traditional methods of obtaining their livelihood, that they are able to continue to do so.

I happen to have had the privilege of doing a little bit of travel in the past while, and there are many people, many consumers, who still prefer to buy wild fur coats and wild fur clothing. It is really something that they want to do. Unfortunately, there is a lot of misinformation that is disseminated between the producers of those goods and the people who are purchasing them.

So I challenge the member opposite, and I know he has got a member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) who is causing considerable concern throughout the province with some of the recent statements that were made or some of the accusations that have been made about her participation. Those are the kinds of things that I call upon the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) to help get the proper message out, as I call upon the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), as I call upon the former resident from Churchill and Swan River. It is incumbent upon all of us—and I say that on behalf of the northern and the aboriginal community who have traditionally had a livelihood, and it would continue to be a livelihood if the market were, in fact, there.

So I have pointed out two particular areas that we have worked on. One, the conference and the educational process for the European legislators, we have had them here in Manitoba; they have lived in our northern community. Also, there is the financial support that the Department of Natural Resources has put forward in the humane trapping process, and it is my understanding that is the key, that they have to be educated that these animals are not allowed to suffer for a long period of time in the taking of that particular harvest. So I would appreciate the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) taking a responsible role, as we all have to, and not necessarily all agreeing politically. But I think it is the livelihoods that are at stake, as the member

raises. and I think the elders are very legitimate in their concerns in coming forward: What does it mean for the future of their young people?

In fact, as much as I had a little bit of a difficulty some years ago when there was support put in place to help some of the communities and some of the northern young people as to how to carry out trapping activity, I was appalled, to tell you the truth, that there had to be such a program put in place. After looking at it closer, it is easily understood that, as that tradition leaves some of the elders and the young people break away from that, there does have to be a reintroduction of those harvesting methods. So the whole educational working with communities, I think, is essential. It was traditional that the elders did it. Now the elders see that there is a break in the pattern as to what has followed them, and they have every right to be concerned, but there has to be a market for the product that is produced. It is up to us to try and make sure that market is established and expanded for those individuals.

Mr. Doer: Perhaps we are asking some questions in this area. We could have done it at an earlier stage in the Estimates process, but I felt—I think that people in this Legislature, members of our caucus, are doing an excellent job in representing the former member for Rupertsland. This seat has been vacant for a considerable period of time, and we are choosing a very nonpolitical forum to raise it in the concurrence motion. These are just concerns from people in the community that live in the most distant and remote area that have no representative in this House.

There are only two constituencies in Manitoba that do not have a representative. One of them is the—well, three now, Rossmere, The Maples and Rupertsland. Rupertsland, of course, represents one of the greatest challenges.

I would say to the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), that we do, and I have heard many members of our caucus, speak out on behalf of fur trading and trapping in terms of the livelihood and the way of life. We remain committed, as we were in the past, to that harvest, to that resource, to that utilization of a resource in Manitoba. I would ask the government, what has the success been with their efforts over the last five and a half years on working with Europe and working with people concerning fur trading? Do

they feel they have been successful? How do they evaluate where they are going?

Last time I listened to elders, they told me the price of beaver has not gone up. It has stayed very, very low. They have told me that the price of many furs are still a way below where it was numbers of years ago because we have not—we collectively—succeeded.

Mr. Downey: Madam Chairperson, I guess on the price side, we have not seen any tremendous successes. I would say that a success that we have seen is that we have not seen total bans on the activities carried out that have been traditional harvesting activities. So the educational process is, in fact, working.

It is extremely stressful, and I know that these numbers are not specific to Manitoba, but they may, in some way, paint the picture. A recent meeting that we had in Inuvik, which was a Native Affairs ministers' conference some two weeks, we had a meeting with an individual who went into the Northwest Territories, into that area, and the community which he went into. The first year he was there was in about 1980 or 1982. He purchased some 50,000 muskrats at, of course, the McKenzie Delta, its being one of the most productive areas for muskrats—some 50,000 at \$2 apiece.

He is no longer in that job, but three years after that, at about the mid-1980s, he indicated there were probably less than 1,000 muskrats produced, and they probably would average 25 cents apiece. That is the tragedy of what has taken place. What I would say, Madam Chairperson, you have an irresponsible lobby that is out there trying, on one hand, to put their message across that we have to save all animals at all cost, and we are seeing those communities that depended on that livelihood turn to welfare, turn to substance abuse, turn to alcohol, turn to everything but what they should be, and that is a traditional way of life and advancing their young people.

They are now trying to recapture that history. They are trying to recapture it. That is the same in a lot of our northern communities. I am sure the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) would probably agree, but what we have seen is that livelihood taken away from them. In those remote communities, nothing else to turn to but despair, and what do you do with the time you have on your

hands? You find that you are into activities that are less than productive. Idle hands mean troubled hands in most cases.

So, again, I think we have to genuinely put forward an attempt to seriously get the message across that since this country opened up with the Hudson's Bay trading corporation with the people who harvested the furs and helped, and I say helped, balance nature. It was not that they were taking all of the animals. They harvested responsibly, not taking all the animals at one particular location, but leaving the breeding stock there, same with the muskrats, the beaver, the mink. It was a balance of nature, and that has not changed.

But what has changed is the human interest in the overactive environmentalist movement; it has, in fact, taken the balance the other way where we now have substantial people living on social assistance, again, substance abuse, all of those things that none of us want to see our young people or our families have to depend upon to put in the time. So I am genuinely serious about this.

If the Leader of the Opposition, and I know he is doing this in a nonpolitical manner—I think we have to work together collectively to get them information out that in trying to save all of the animals that would normally be harvested, we have really upset the communities which have traditionally lived on this type of harvest and this kind of lifestyle, which many people would give, Madam Chair, to participate in for their young people to understand how nature develops and produces the type of animal that has to be harvested.

I appreciate this debate. I think it is helpful, and I would hope that the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) would get aggressively involved in this and take on some of these environmental—I do not call them people who do not have a right to speak out, I call them activists who have to take a look at the total picture and what it has done to many of our aboriginal and remote communities.

* (2000)

Mr. Doer: I would ask the Deputy Premier, and I mean, I am sure we all agree in this Chamber about the traditional livelihood and the traditional way of operating and trapping, Madam Chairperson. I wonder whether the government has discussed this at the Round Table on Environment, and

whether they have tried to develop this strategy in conjunction with other members of the round table.

A second question is, has this government discussed it—they are on the board, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is on the board, I believe, or an observer at least with the International Institute of Sustainable Development? Have they used the offices of the International Institute of Sustainable Development to make the case about the sustainability and the desirability for our people in northern Manitoba to continue trapping and be able to trade those traps or utilize the trapping resources with decent prices as opposed to the very low prices that they experience today?

Mr. Downey: Madam Chair, let me further add that even to a greater extent than that, not at the international scene, but particularly as it relates to the activities of the province of Manitoba and the import of the trapping and the resource harvesting industry to Manitoba, I will be publicly releasing within a short period of time the report on the Northern Economic Development Commission, which was carried out and chaired by one of the members of the Manitoba Round Table on Sustainable Development, Mr. Thomas Henley—

An Honourable Member: He is in that too. He is on a lot of things, is he not?

Mr. Downey: He chaired it. It is now completed, and the report has been delivered to me.

We also had Mr. Pascal Bighetty as well, who is a former chief of the Pukatawagan Band. We also had Chief Helen Cook from the Bloodvein Indian Band, but due to illness had to step down and was replaced by Sue Lambert from the northwest region of which the member for The Pas is familiar. We also had Mr. Doug Webber, the mayor of Churchill. Also we had Sonny Clyne, who is the mayor of the town of Camperville.

The report is in, and there is a lot of good information and direction which has to be considered as it relates to northern Manitoba. Again, the industrial mix, the resource-based activities, what people have told us is all compiled in that, and hopefully we can proceed to take some direction from what has been indicated to the government.

I do not take lightly the recommendation that the Leader of the Opposition has recommended, that this maybe should be elevated to more of an international arena which I fully endorse. The more

influence and impact you can have from the more angles, at the end of the day hopefully we can accomplish for those people who have lived on traditional harvesting methods, I think will assist in the end objective: more jobs, more and better lifestyles which are of a traditional nature and not foreign to those people who have so much depended upon that type of lifestyle for their incomes.

Mr. Doer: I thank the Deputy Premier. I would ask him to look at the strategy of utilizing the international centre here in Winnipeg and here in Manitoba with all the international contacts they have on sustainable development and environmental and economic issues. I do not know whether the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) in his recent trip to Washington has dealt with this issue. I know he was co-chairing an international meeting on sustainable development and the environment.

I do not believe that sustainable development and environmental issues is a defensive issue on the economy. I believe that sometimes we should be utilizing the comprehensive approach to sustainable development in a very positive economic way, such as utilizing our international contacts to get rid of all the myths on fur trading and trapping and to—

Mr. Orchard: Where is Karl Marx on this one?

Mr. Doer: The Minister of Health has helped with this intervention I am sure, but I would ask the government to utilize the international community here, and let us go on the offensive on this. It is a sustainable resource in Manitoba and let us utilize the resources we have in our province, and continue to develop the resources.

Mr. Downey: Madam Chair, I was negligent in my identifying who the individuals on the Northern Commission were as well. Adrian De Groot from Thompson was as well on the commission which I wanted to further add.

But again, Madam Chair, I have to say genuinely how encouraged I am by the Leader of the opposition party and his newfound ways in approaching the whole economic activity of Manitoba and particularly northern Manitoba. With his protrapping and hunting and harvesting venue that he is now on, I am elated. I am excited, to tell you the truth. I am excited that the Leader of the Opposition, and I have not had an opportunity to

speaking like this for some time, but I am genuinely—I say this sincerely, Madam Chair, that the Leader of the Opposition has been as forthright tonight as he has been, because there was some time that I was unsure of where he was on the whole Conawapa project. He was pro that and then he was negative on that, and now he seems to be coming back. I encourage him to do that because it is not to be played politics with.

The whole environmental question is very serious and we all have to make sure we work on what we call the sustainable development agenda, not proenvironmentalist or antienvironmentalist, but sustainable development agenda I believe is one which will give us the kind of responsible approach to policies that will sell not only in the Canadian marketplace, but in the international marketplace.

We truly are on a sustainable development agenda for all the people of this province. I encourage the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) to make sure that his party speaks in full support of him because I am not so sure that he has that full mandate from his party. I would hope that he could clarify that, but I say genuinely, I appreciate his newfound ways in dealing with the northern communities and the trapping and getting on with the marketing opportunities.

I say, particular from the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), who has spent a lifetime in the harvesting of whales, how important it is to him and his culture and the livelihood which he has enjoyed, the same with the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and his traditions of hunting and trapping and fishing, how important it is to his people and to their livelihood. The Leader of the Opposition, in his comments tonight, has given me new hope, and I want that on the record, Madam Chairperson. I hope it stays in a consistent manner.

Mr. Doer: Is that a yes or a no, that you are going to take that to the International Institute for Sustainable Development? I mean, I got all the other hallelujah choruses here and there. I got Handel's Mass at all four parts, but is that a yes or a no that you are going to take it to the international sustainable development centre, and when will you be taking it, and when will you be reporting back to the Legislature about your progress in this area?

* (2010)

Mr. Downey: Madam Chairperson, as I said previously, it would be my intent to give as much support through whatever avenue is possible to the northern and the aboriginal communities as it relates to the sale of product that is produced through the harvesting of furs, through the harvesting of the fisheries, of all the natural resources that have been tradition to them to in fact encourage them to get off the social assistance lifestyle which none of them want to have, to get off the substance abuses that none of us want to see them involved in.

Maybe we can see some resolve to some of these difficulties. Yes, I will make sure that it is raised through that forum, but the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) has been raising some questions about the substance abuse centre from the government of Manitoba, and of course it has been discussed with the federal government.

It is maybe time, Madam Chairperson, that we join together with those communities, and rather than building bricks and mortar and concrete, that we establish some traditional camps or lifestyles that take these people into what has been their natural trapping and hunting environment.

I would ask for the member for Point Douglas to look at that as an option. I remember as a young person in communities throughout Manitoba where some of the therapy which was encouraged for people who were having difficulties with their life or lifestyle, what they had were farms where these people were involved with some of the normal activities of looking after livestock or production of gardens, just that kind of a lifestyle that changed their dependence on some of the modern social systems.

Maybe it is a time that we should look at that kind of a system where those young people get an opportunity to be more exposed to the elders of those communities, where those young people get a chance to relive some of the life experiences of living in a community where the harvesting of the fur-bearing animals is an important part of their life, or the fishing. That to me has a lot of merit.

Rather than putting a person in a room where we apply all the modern-day medicines and all the modern-day technologies of that kind of a setting, I think we should genuinely work together with the elders and with the community leaders to work to establish some of those kinds of activities that

would take away some of the day-to-day dependencies on substance abuse or a different type of treatment.

That to me is what I think we should raise to the profile of the leadership of the communities, because the healing has to come from within, to raise that kind of a profile with the federal government who have a responsibility and, yes, genuinely participate as a province.

But it is not only government—I do not want to take a lot of time, to the House—but it is genuinely a concern of all of us that we live in a society today where we cannot do something to help these people who are second- and third-generation substance abusers. I say it is not only government, it is church, it is community, it is family, it is all of us that have to do something about the tragedies that are taking place in these communities.

I feel as genuinely as the members opposite about trying to develop a treatment centre, but I think we have to think of a little bit different way than building hospitals or bricks and mortar. We have to look at some traditional camps or settings that take these young people back to what their families and their family's families have participated in.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): That is what we have been talking about.

Mr. Downey: The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says, that is what we have been talking about. Well, I have not heard it explained in that manner—[interjection] traditional treatment.

I know that it will cost money and I know that we have said the federal government has a major responsibility, but I think we all have to get involved. There has to be some special funding, raised through whatever means, to try and assist those people and the assistance has to come from the leadership of the aboriginal communities, working in co-operation with us.

Mr. Doer: Thank you for the answer on the issue of taking trapping to the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and thank you for moving along to your opinion on dealing with antisniffing. Perhaps when we are talking about all of us dealing with this issue, we could remember that the proposal that starts from MKO is a proposal that starts—the minister has expressed his opinion on this—from the people that have a pretty good feel for their own citizens and their own

communities and for challenges in those communities. We could perhaps listen to those peoples, as well, along with the excellent leadership shown by the chief of Cross Lake, Chief Sidney Garrioch, on this proposal.

I would like to move to another area. We have the Minister of Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) here as well as the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey). Provinces now are entering into—

Mr. Orchard: Are we for a ski hill in Roblin now? Like, you are not going to let Carla stop that, are you?

Mr. Doer: I know the minister from Pembina is an avid skier and the last number of months, he has been a less than avid skater. So maybe the member for Pembina and the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) should stick to downhill skiing because he is going downhill fast as opposed to skating which he does all the time. You are good at downhill skiing. The problem for the Minister of Health is he has got no tow rope to go back up again—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Leader of the official opposition (Mr. Doer) is attempting to pose a question.

Mr. Doer: I would ask members of this House not to worry about the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). He has had a rough three months, you know. We should not be too hard on him.

I just raised the issue of tourism here and look at what happened—[interjection] If the Minister of Health and I had our way, I think we would be in here for another couple of months.

I would like to ask the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) and the Minister of Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) whether they have been involved in establishing any aboriginal and First Nations' tourism programs. The Province of Ontario, I believe, is working on proposals to look at the—[interjection] The Minister of Health may not be aware of this, but there are a number of potential European tourists in this area that are very interested in First Nations' communities, not only the beautiful wilderness areas, but some of the other communities.

I was in Peguis last week, Madam Chairperson, not only witnessing the opening of a new bank with all aboriginal staff, the Royal Bank, but I also saw a

number of tourists from Belgium. Many provinces now are looking at working in partnership with an aboriginal, a First Nations' tourism initiative looking at European tourists.

I am wondering, have we done anything under the Canada-Manitoba Tourism Agreement, the \$5-million agreement? Are we looking at anything? Are we letting other provinces move ahead of us, like British Columbia and Ontario, in this area? So I would ask the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), why are there not any initiatives? Why are we standing still when other provinces are moving ahead? Would he look at moving ahead and providing some initiative in this very important area?

Mr. Downey: Madam Chair, let me at the outset say to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) party that, yes, there has been some work done as it relates to not only the tourist industry, but let me also add that their tourism is not unrelated to some of the activities of which we have recently funded under the Department of Northern Affairs with some \$50,000 grant to the Northern Fly-In Sports Camps program which will support some 500 aboriginal youth in northern Manitoba this summer getting experiences in northern tourism or northern guiding and that type of activity.

There is a program established at Lynn Lake with the co-operation of the Department of Northern Affairs which is a Guide Development Program. I can tell you as well, that the funders at Buffalo Point have developed very extensively a tremendous tourism location and activity and is very much sought after by many tourists.

* (2020)

I have also had the privilege of visiting Little Black River where Chief Abraham was indicating and showing some of the most beautiful areas of their community where the Little Black River flows into Lake Winnipeg, which has tremendous potential for tourism development, in fact, looking at long-term leases for cabin development on the shores of Lake Winnipeg which is extremely important to that community, and I would like to see get off the ground.

I think that there is new thinking and certainly good leadership coming from the communities. Again, it is the initiatives that they are bringing forward, not government imposing upon them, that are important. They have to be supported by the

community, as the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) knows, that it is very much a community decision that these types of things are carried out—not enough, never enough, Madam Chair, never enough, that there can be more. But I think as we see the opportunities develop, and I say that genuinely, I think a lot of the sports camps, and one can make reference to the Big Sand lodge, at which former president Jimmy Carter was visiting some week ago, that is a tremendous example. Last week was a tremendous example of what can happen in the communities when they get resources to do it.

Let me as well say, Madam Chair, that the resolve of the Northern Flood Committee where we have established the trust funds for Split Lake and we are working with some of the other communities and giving them the resources in their hands to develop on their own with the support of government kinds of tourism packages that will work.

In that regard, and I have to compliment Don McCrae, who has been managing Big Sand recently over the last couple of years, has worked with the community of South Indian Lake, where they sell a moose hunt where the people come in, bag the moose, and they pay a substantial amount of money, whatever it is, for the right to shoot those animals. What they do is, they take a small package of meat home. The rest of the meat is distributed amongst the community to the elders and to the people who are unable to get moose meat on their own. It is a program that I think is working well.

What it is doing, it is rather than going out for that community to shoot one moose, everybody eat it, that they in fact get several thousands of dollars for the industry and for the community. I can tell you that it is that kind of thinking that I see coming from the community.

I think there is tremendous potential. We have many northern lodges which I think can be enhanced and further developed with the aboriginal community, and it is the young people, it is particularly the young people that we will be depending upon to manage, not just to be there to guide, but to manage and to bring forward their ideas as very much a part of the Manitoba tourism scene. I think we have tremendous potential, and the Minister of Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) may want

to add to it, but there has been a lot of work done. There always has to be a lot more done.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Chair, I will be very brief, but in responding to a specific part of the Leader of the Opposition's (Mr. Doer) question as it relates to the Canada-Manitoba Tourism Agreement, it has various aspects to it.

One is a product development enhancement and improvement element, and that is currently being utilized. I can certainly provide all of the details, and we discussed it somewhat during my Estimates, but there have been at least three or four lodge operations in northern Manitoba, in The Pas area, in the Flin Flon area that have received capital assistance dollars for upgrading of their facilities, adding on additional spaces and/or improving their accommodations.

We have also provided marketing dollars for those organizations in northern Manitoba. In fact, this year, 14 northern lodges came together on a co-operative basis and received some funding for marketing under the Canada-Manitoba Agreement to do marketing on a co-operative basis, which is certainly something that we encourage as opposed to seeing them in many cases individually competing with one another. Fourteen of them came together to co-operate on a marketing initiative, Madam Chairperson.

That program is very much project driven. When I say project, either a marketing project or a capital project, and northern Manitoba to date, from my perspective, has been making very good use of it, and we have been very supportive of initiatives in the North.

We have also been dealing with a group, although that is getting to be some time now, out of Brandon who were looking at a particular project, an aboriginal initiative in the Brandon area. I think the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has certainly seen our advertising campaign this year, our two main television advertisements. One of them was very much a focus on the heritage and history of Manitoba. A very important element of that is our aboriginal community, and they have been certainly a major part of that campaign, along with other elements of our history and heritage in this province which all of our research has shown is something that Manitoba has to promote certainly

and is something that tourists and individuals are looking for.

So when you watch those advertisements, hopefully it comes through, as it does from the feedback we get, that the combination of the heritage, the historical and the safe, clean, friendly environment of Manitoba. So, Madam Chair, those are some of the initiatives that we are pursuing.

Mr. Downey: Just one more brief comment that I would like to add, and I think, again, we tend to underestimate the importance of the native community in our tourism activity. We have and see many pow-wows throughout southern and northern Manitoba, a real exciting time and activity to participate in. I know in my own riding when we have the powwows in those communities, it is a tremendous tourist attraction. I think we could in fact enhance and further assist in the marketing of that kind of activity.

It is a tradition which is very encouraging. We see, of course, the native dancing which is a part of Folklorama which is a major tourist attraction of which the aboriginal community plays a tremendous and important role. So we want to encourage those kinds of activities as well, bring together the different communities to get an understanding of the cultural and the entertaining side of which, of course, is a major part of our tourism attraction.

Mr. Doer: I am not going to pursue this any further tonight, but I would just say that I think Manitoba is behind some other provinces right now in going after a component of their tourism strategy dealing with the potential for the tremendous cultural reality that aboriginal people bring to people from other lands, and I note particularly with British Columbia—and Ontario I think is behind British Columbia—there are some real systematic initiatives, real strategic initiatives, not just on a project-by-project basis. I think it is really worth pursuing on behalf of the provincial government, and I will leave that with the government.

I have one last question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism in his capacity as minister of industry. Can the minister advise us of the status of the community ownership of the Abitibi-Price operation? We heard a couple of times over the last couple of years that the plant, the deadline is this date and the deadline is that date. We heard of some problems with financial

commitments from various lending institutions. We noted last week or the week before there was an announcement on recycling. Is there a comprehensive package for Abitibi-Price? Does it include modernization? Does it include a de-inking plant? Does it include recycling capacity? Is there a community ownership plan or are we going to continue to drift, albeit a very serious situation for those workers and employees in Abitibi-Price? Can the minister advise us where that situation is today?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, there is a comprehensive plan that deals extensively with the upgrading requirements of the Abitibi-Price facility in Pine Falls over the next many years. We continue to be in ongoing negotiations with the management group, with Abitibi and with others involved with this particular project. There still are a few outstanding issues. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) is correct that the original financial plan had some elements to it that did not come through as originally projected. That is meant dealing with some financial institutions in terms of coming up with other alternatives for some of the financing aspects of the proposal.

There is also another element of it, which is a major cogeneration project element where there are dealings with West Coast Energy and dealings with Manitoba Hydro and others that still have to come together in terms of the project. There are also some environmental issues as it relates to environmental liability, the whole concerns around the financing of the project, because what we are seeing with banks, I think all of as MLAs received a package from the banks within the last couple of weeks stressing the whole issue of environmental concerns as it relates to dispositions of properties. That issue has to be addressed with the financial institutions, Madam Chair.

* (2030)

There are about four or five major issues that we are still in the process of negotiating with the management group, with Abitibi, with the financial institutions, with the cogeneration group of West Coast and others, and, Madam Chair, those have to be successfully resolved to bring the whole package together. There is a comprehensive redevelopment package in terms of what they see doing with the facility over the next many years, but there are the elements of the financing and these other issues around the financing and potential

liability which we are still in the midst of negotiations with them. We are still in the midst with Abitibi on a final price that they are in fact looking for, in terms of the equity that they have in the facility and the inventory that they currently have on site.

So we continue to have ongoing dialogue. It is an important initiative, as the Leader of the Opposition says. It is an important part of our economy, a very important part of the economy of Pine Falls, and we will continue to work with the management group and everybody involved on the project.

Mr. Doer: So, as I understand it, there are four or five again major issues still to be resolved. The government is talking about cogeneration. Obviously, there is a proposal that the gas line be extended to Pine Falls and that be substituted for the energy supply coming from Manitoba Hydro, which obviously has an impact on the load-growth projections for Manitoba Hydro that are flattening out every year or every couple of months now in terms of the manufacturing sector in Manitoba.

When does the minister feel this issue will reach a conclusion? We have never suggested in the House that he draw a line in the sand, because we recognize first of all that the Minister of Finance has already done that three times before in Repap and it really has not worked. So we have never suggested that.

When does the minister feel that this is going to be resolved? When are the kind of dates, the windows of opportunity to resolve these tough issues before the people of Pine Falls and the provincial government.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, as the Leader of the Opposition does recognize, it is a difficult issue to put a very fixed time frame on. We have had previous deadlines that have come and gone. The good news on all of that is that everybody involved in the project is attempting to work towards a successful conclusion, whether it is Abitibi, whether it is the management group, whether it is the government, whether it is the organization, the cogeneration, whoever it might be that the parties have not broken down, that the parties continue to communicate and try to resolve any outstanding issues.

Madam Chair, it certainly is an issue that has to be resolved shortly. I cannot give a fixed time

frame, but obviously we are talking about resolving it within the next short period of time, the next few months, the next two to three months. We are not talking many more months. I mean, we are talking a two- to three-month time frame, I believe, to resolve all of the issues.

Mr. Doer: At one point, Abitibi Price was asking from the community ownership some \$45 million be forwarded to the corporation. At the same time they had their own liabilities of about \$12 million, and even though the former minister's lead minister for Manitoba was communicating to people that was a fair price, I think most of us felt that that was very high.

Has Abitibi Price done the logical thing and lowered their price? Recognizing that their own liabilities are \$12 million, if they close that plant, then \$45 million is a ridiculous amount of money considering the environment liabilities of the existing plant and the lack of modernization for that plant.

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Chair, that is one of the issues that is under negotiation at this particular point in time, and the Leader of the Opposition is right in terms of, it is one of the issues that there has to be some movement on to ultimately conclude a deal in terms of what the final, not maybe so much the final purchase price, but the actual payment of the purchase price is probably even more important, the cash flowing, because the operation is projecting utilizing cash flows from future earnings to do an awful lot of the major capital improvements that need to be done.

So it is as much the combination of the fixed price, but also the terms of that fixed price that are still a matter of negotiation.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): I do not wish to interrupt the dialogue—I find it very interesting—that is occurring between the Leader of the Opposition and my colleague the minister of trade and technology.

I do want to remind the honourable Leader of the Opposition that absolutely critical, absolutely critical to the surviving interests of Abitibi Price and their 500-plus workforce is their access to resources, which has been made possible and more secure by passage of Bill 41.

I would ask the honourable Leader of the Opposition to take that into consideration as he

chooses to vote on that bill when it appears before this Chamber on third reading.

Mr. Doer: I am sure the Premier (Mr. Filmon) took that into consideration when he promised to have 12 percent set-aside land by the year 2000. So all we want the government to do is follow through on the Premier's own promise in August of 1990. I am sure the Premier was not going to put 500 workers out of work by passing the endangered spaces legislation. I am sure the Minister of Natural Resources is not suggesting for a moment that his Premier was going to put those workers out of work by having the 12 percent set-aside by the year 2000. That is all we asked this government to do in the parks bill, to fulfill their own election promise.

I am sure that that fulfillment of that promise would not have meant the loss of those jobs, because we would work with the 12 percent set-aside and over that threshold, Madam Chairperson, there would be the resources available and the timber available for the workers of the Pine Falls area. So all we are calling for is for the Premier's word to be fulfilled in the Premier's park bill brought in by the Minister of Natural Resources.

That is where we differ because, Madam Chairperson, the minister did not put "by the year 2000" in the bill. The Premier did put that in his promise. I know the Premier did not want to put those workers out of work. We know that we did not want to put those workers out of work, so all we wanted the Premier to do and the minister to do is to fulfill his own election promise of 1990 to the people of Manitoba, which called for the 12 percent set-aside and then the multiple use including logging to take place over and above that threshold. We recognize that logging must take place in this province—many jobs depend on it—but we also recognize the 12 percent promise that was made by the Premier also must be fulfilled and fulfilled in the year promised by the Premier himself, by the year 2000. That is where we differ.

I would like to ask, as I have the floor, with my last question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), unless the Minister of Natural Resources and I are going to get into it.

I would like to ask another question on dealing with the Abitibi Price operation, and I am sorry if we sidetrack the issue of the community ownership for a minute, although I do recognize that the minister

desperately wants support on his bill. Madam Chairperson, I have mentioned the price of \$45 million which, it was my recollection, Abitibi Price had proposed. On the other hand, the community ownership plan had included some close to \$30 million to \$35 million in a combination of grants and loan guarantees to be made by the provincial government.

Are we still in that kind of range of financial commitment through loan guarantees and other means by the provincial government in terms of the community takeover of the Abitibi Price operation?

Mr. Stefanson: Yes, Madam Chair, that is the range that has been requested of the provincial government in some form of financial support in actually \$35 million to \$40 million vicinity. That, as well, is obviously one of the issues that continues to be under negotiation.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Chair, I am going to be asking a few questions, not very many questions, but before I do that, I would just like to talk a little bit about the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey).

Madam Chair, throughout the almost three years now that I have been in this Legislature listening to the minister get up during Question Period answering questions and also during Estimates, when we get a chance to query him on some of the activities that are being carried out by his department in Northern Affairs, I always have this feeling that everything is A-all-right in northern Manitoba. Whenever I ask the Minister of Northern Affairs questions regarding northern employment, for example, the nursery, the road system, the health care programs, training and so on, the response that I invariably get from the minister is that everything is all right, you know, look at all this wonderful work that we are doing in northern Manitoba, to the point I think where he gets annoyed at my asking these questions.

I think that he, whenever I ask questions, that either I do not know what I am talking about or I am being partisan or playing politics and so on. The fact of the matter, Madam Chair, is that when I ask these questions, even this evening, you know the forum that we are utilizing here to be able to ask questions of the government, I take it very seriously.

* (2040)

Sure, many members may use this forum as political, but you know, in all sincerity, I say to you and members here that I take this forum very seriously. I ask serious questions and I expect to get answers that are just as genuine and serious from government ministers.

When I listened to the minister this evening describing the situation in the North, you know I could not help but get the feeling that he is now maybe speaking in terms of the reality that is there in the North.

He talks about aboriginal people, who have been virtually stripped of everything that they have had before, not to mention their land, their culture, their language, their way of life, trapping and fishing were talked about quite a bit this evening, Madam Chair. When I listened to him talk, things that went through my mind were, why are we doing this here? Is this useful or is this just politics?

I would like to think that what we are doing here this evening is, at least for me anyway, genuine, that it is because we are really interested in trying to do something for our constituents. So when I listen to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) answering questions in Question Period, as I said before, he speaks glowingly of the work that Northern Affairs is doing. Even in Estimates, I asked him, you know, what his role is really as the Minister of Northern Affairs, because I explained to him what my perception was of the Minister of Northern Affairs.

My understanding of the ministry was that he is one of the key ministers in cabinet. He is Deputy Premier. He is Minister of Northern Affairs, and I know that he has other portfolios, other responsibilities, so I always saw him when in cabinet to really be speaking for the North. That is how I saw him, and that is how I tried to explain to him in Estimates the way I understood what his job was to be all about.

But as I said before, when he talks in the House, you would almost think that there was full employment, for example, in northern Manitoba, the way he talks about the work that his department is doing. Tonight, when I listened to him speak, I got the feeling that he does have an understanding of what is happening in the North. He knows what is there. He knows the reality. He talked about Oxford House. He talked about Gods River, Gods Lake Narrows. I think he knows what is there, and

he knows that there is a lot of work to be done there as well.

So I guess I want to say, Madam Chair, that in a way I want to believe that the minister understands what is going on there in the North. I want to be able to believe the minister, that he understands those problems, that he empathizes, that he knows what is to be done, and having all that understanding about the conditions of the North, I would like to also believe that when he goes to cabinet, that is the way he presents his case to cabinet whenever he is talking about northern issues.

I guess in a way I am encouraged. So then, with that kind of genuine understanding that he seemed to have displayed here this evening, let us put those words into action then, the treatment centre, for example, in the North. We had a meeting here in the Legislature; some government members were present. A lot of aboriginal people representing various organizations were present. I was there. Some of our colleagues were there. Now, that is a real problem, the problem of solvent abuse, sniffing, alcohol, alcoholism and drugs. I think he understands why those conditions have come to be the way they are. He knows how they have developed, solvent abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse and so on.

I agree with him. We should all work together. I for one am willing to work with anybody, no matter who they are, if it means enhancing the lives and welfare of people who reside in the North, particularly aboriginal people in the more isolated areas. Let us put those concerns, the genuine understanding that he seemed to have displayed here this evening into adequate health care programs, education, employment, training, the transportation system, because he is giving me the message here this evening, Madam Chair, that in fact those people living in the North are real people. They matter. They are human beings.

So with that in mind, I would like to ask the minister to advise us, because I did get a chance while I was in Gods Lake Narrows to have a conversation with Mr. Thomas Henley, who is the chair of the Northern Economic Development Commission. I want to ask the minister exactly when he might be releasing the Northern Economic Development Commission because he seems to, whenever he talks about it, put a lot of faith and

confidence into the work of the commission, just as I do, of course.

My concern is, just as the AJI was treated—there may be all kinds of good recommendations, there may be all kinds of pleasant surprises, as the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) once told me—will the minister act on those recommendations once he decides to publicize them. Secondly, when is he going to release the report of the Northern Economic Development Commission?

Mr. Downey: Madam Chair, I am going to take a minute to just elaborate, and I do not want this to be seen in any way, shape or form as me standing here blowing my horn or overemphasizing some of the things that have taken place in our northern and native communities.

I want to say at the outset that the first things that I learned in my association with the people of northern Manitoba and particularly the aboriginal communities, some of it has come from the member for The Pas—[interjection]

No, he may find that strange that I would make reference, but I say this genuinely. I had a lot of respect for him as the chief of The Pas Indian Band, as a leader of his people in a nonpartisan way, and I say that genuinely. He did not approach his job in a partisan way because he knew that he had to represent the community regardless of which government was in place.

I say genuinely that I was somewhat disappointed when he took the decision to run for the New Democratic Party, when he did make that decision, but it was his right, and I have every right to express how I genuinely felt. I think that is what the member for The Pas indicated here tonight, and I am going to do that. I was genuinely disappointed.

I did learn, and I have been learning and will continue to learn, because the day that I do not learn anymore, then I am no longer of any use to the constituencies of which I represent in southwestern Manitoba and/or the people of northern Manitoba, so it is a continual learning process.

There are three important things that I learned from the aboriginal community. One is the respect for the elders within that community and the knowledge that they needed to get from their elders as to what it means to the young people in their communities.

One of the other ones is love for their Creator and the concern, the consideration for the Earth and for all of the creations of nature.

Thirdly, which is probably as important as anything and should be acknowledged because it is a very important attribute to any people, and that is their desire to have fun, sense of humour and enjoy life. To me that is a quality which I have always been able to feel good about and I have learned from being able to associate, because that truly is extremely important.

Yes, employment and all of those other things that the rest of society—we have all put demands on ourselves and our different cultures to participate in, but there are some values that you really have to see.

Let me quickly go over some of the things, and I am not saying who has done this, but what was done was the important thing.

* (2050)

In the short term that I have had, and I call it a short term, and if he wants to compare the history of our government and the past government, I would hope that he would do that. But as chief, he was the first leader in this province to participate in a gaming agreement which allowed for the development of funding right in that community. Major resources staying in that community through a legal agreement on gaming.

Let me further add, a nursing program which again was consummated under this administration of some several amounts of dollars which provided a training program in the northern community which he represented.

Madam Chair, I cannot help but mention in his region particularly the settlement that took place under the flood agreement, which was an obligation by the people of Manitoba to pay some funds to Chemawawin at Easterville, Moose Lake and all of those communities, and even The Pas, which he knows was questionable as to whether they would get any support, receive support under whose direction? Premier Gary Filmon said to Manitoba Hydro in a letter to the chair, we believe that you should look at if there is a moral obligation to assist those communities. We know there is not a legal obligation, but there is a moral obligation.

What took place, Madam Chair, what took place? Several millions of dollars flowed into those communities under a Conservative government. I

am sorry, but it is true. It was under Premier Gary Filmon and this government that flowed several millions of dollars to the communities of which he is represented.

Moose Lake: We had a corporation known as Moose Lake Loggers, again very much influenced by the Province of Manitoba. It was us who funded it and had the board of directors in place, was going nowhere. What we did, Madam Chair, through the support of the provincial Treasury, was to put in place a self-financed, self-organized, community-controlled logging company that now provides, through contract, substantial amounts of chips and product to the Repap operation.

The same applies to Channel Area Loggers, the same experience on the east side of the river, owned by the province, no local control, going nowhere fast. It is now operating as a community-based operation and working very successfully.

Wabowden, Madam Chair, again a community that was looking for opportunity. The Community Economic Development Fund has currently lent something like \$3 million to several operators who are now having in-bush chipping operations supplying product to whom? To Repap. Who does it create employment for? Local people. Who owns the businesses? Local people. Again a commitment of this province.

The member makes reference to the nursing station which was a provincially operated system at The Pas. We just did not shut down that operation and forget about the aboriginal community. My colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) entered into a major contract with the aboriginal community of Portage la Prairie for several hundreds of thousands of dollars. What are they doing, Madam Chair? Not in a government-owned operation, it is in an aboriginal-owned operation, contractual arrangement with the Minister of Natural Resources to produce what? Seedling trees. Who for? The people of Manitoba. Not neglecting or forgetting about it is maybe not in his riding, and it is not as upfront as he would like to see it, but again an important part of what has taken place under our department.

Madam Chair, I will go on because it is important to put this on the record. The Northern Flood Agreement wanting for some resolve for how many years? How many years? Fifteen years, and you

know who said to me as the Minister of Northern Affairs, let us get on with it? He made a commitment. Premier Filmon made a commitment prior to the election of '88. What was the first thing my colleagues did? The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) advanced to those five aboriginal communities \$10 million.

We also put a team together to try to resolve globally a settlement for funds of some \$247 million of which has been agreed to for major resource control areas which are now in place in the Split Lake community, Letters of Intent signed or Memorandums of Understanding signed in Nelson House, York Landing and concluded the Split Lake agreement.

I am proud of \$47 million that is in the trust account for the Split Lake community in a resource management activity going on in those communities, giving the resources to the people to administer for themselves to hire their own people.

My colleague the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), with the Department of Northern Affairs, developed the Northern Rec Program, employing young people to do what? To organize and help the productive way in life with those people, to get on with life and help organize recreational activities—a pilot project that has turned into a major ongoing program for the development of youth—again, important to help those people.

I can take you into Berens River, I can take you into the community of Camperville, where those young people now have closed-in arenas in which they create productive activities that were supported by this administration.

That is just two communities that we were involved in. I can tell you, Madam Chair, I referred to it earlier, \$50,000 into northern sports camps for 500 young northern and native people to be involved in with summer activities.

My colleagues the ministers responsible for education year after year have fulfilled commitments to support the ACCESS and the BUNTEP and the training programs which we have been criticized for, but we have carried out commitments to young people to finish their education, again, a commitment not only made by this province, this government, but lived up to, because we know the education of our aboriginal community is extremely important.

I do not mind, and I am being very honest with the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), one area that we have to work a lot harder on is the difficulties the aboriginal community is having when they proceed to live in some of our urban settings. It is troublesome, to say the least, when we find our young aboriginal people who come to the cities having difficulties making a go, getting a way in life that is different, to sustain themselves and to look after the children that they are responsible for.

We have to put a greater effort into those communities, and we will—and we will. I am serious. But the best thing we can do is to take the partisan politics out of it, because my colleagues are not mean spirited. They are loving, caring parents of children; they have parents or have had parents who they dearly love as the aboriginal community love and respect in their own community.

It is our responsibility. I can tell you, members of this committee, that we do care, and we will continue to work within our capability to accomplish greater goals for those individuals.

I do not care what political party you come from, it is a joint responsibility, and please let us not play politics with the lives of those people.

I can tell you that I am prepared to meet at any time with any group. I have done so, as it relates to some of our aboriginal people, with Winnie Giesbrecht, who took the lead role in the establishment of Dial-a-Life facility in Winnipeg to support many, many of those people needing lifestyle support when they come to the city of Winnipeg for kidney dialysis.

I can tell you, this government was the first government to support a native elders facility in the city of Winnipeg ever, as well as supporting the first aboriginal safe house or abuse centre for aboriginal people in this city of Winnipeg. Madam Chair, I will go to the wall with our record any time, any place, and not in a partisan way, but it was done because it was the right thing to do.

It was done because the aboriginal community genuinely came forward, as the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), I believe, is genuinely coming forward.

Another area that I want to talk seriously about, because I am not going to give up on this, because I think it is extremely important.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Do not give up on yourself. You can always change.

Mr. Downey: The member for Dauphin, I will compare my record with his manipulative political manoeuvring with the aboriginal community any time. Because when he wants to stand up and take a half hour to put his successes and their success as an NDP government on the record, I will listen and I will listen for every word of it. I will tell you the speech will not be very long.

* (2100)

But I say genuinely, the whole question of substance abuse, substance abuse is extremely, it is a crucial, and it is a difficult issue that we all have to deal with, because we are dealing with first- and second- and third-generation abuse people. The way in which we have to deal with it is collectively. The government does not have all the abilities, the answers. It is incumbent upon the church community, the greater community of your service clubs. The community itself has to take the leadership to pull along with their people. It will come about, Madam Chair, because it is incumbent that it does come about.

We cannot sit back and see the suicides that are taking place. We cannot sit back and see people taking advantage of the people by taking in the substances and selling them, because it is just not right in the country that we live in that we are all so proud of. I am encouraged, but I am encouraged that if we resolve some of the other issues—and I will touch briefly on it, and I know I have gone on for too long. There are two other areas, and that is the progress we have made on Treaty Land Entitlement.

Until we resolve the land issue with our aboriginal people then we will have less than a trusting relationship. It is an outstanding debt that has to be resolved, has to be resolved. [interjection] The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), who I hope would read what I have said on the record tonight as to what has taken place, genuinely read it, and compare it to the history that we are in very serious discussions with the Island Lake communities on Treaty Land Entitlement resolve.

I know there are some differences of opinion, but if there is a genuine desire to resolve it, we will do so. We will do so, Madam Chair. That to conclude on the substance abuse. I am encouraged that the member is prepared to work in a nonpartisan way.

I think there are other players that we have to invite to the table, and I say the church, the service club community, and I do honestly take my hat off to the front-line social workers who are out there today who find themselves in impossible situations with the conditions in which they are being expected to work on behalf of government.

We have to lighten their load and show them that there is hope, because if you do not you have tremendous burnout within that workforce. [interjection] The member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) seems to have had all the answers, but I will tell you, Madam Chair, I honestly have a hard time getting how genuinely concerned he is when he had two communities in his backyard wanting to set up community status, he did not have time for them.

That I think speaks volumes, and what he has been able to do is be able to continue to manipulate their support for continuing him to come back to the Legislature. He laughs about it, Madam Chair. Let him laugh, because he is laughing at other people's misery—lack of respect.

So I say I am genuinely interested in organizing the leadership of the aboriginal communities. I am interested in organizing the church community. I am interested in taking the lead with service clubs. I am interested in taking the lead with government to try and find some of the answers for the substance abuse problems, not because it is the right political thing to do, it is the right human thing to do, and we just have to do it.

I will conclude by saying, Madam Chair, I apologize for taking the time, but the member for The Pas asked me to put this on the record. I am going to be tabling publicly the Northern Economic Development Commission report within a few short weeks. We will be expressing at that time—

An Honourable Member: How many weeks is that?

Mr. Downey: Well, the members opposite want to know how many weeks that is. Well, I would say, Madam Chair, they will be the same number as a few long weeks. It will be within a few weeks, sooner rather than later, if that will be helpful to the members.

Now, the members are going to immediately say we need more money or we need something else to happen. I do not believe that. I believe we can take the recommendations, and those areas that

are genuinely doable, we will work on. Those that are not will take some time.

I know the communities are genuinely speaking out. I can tell the member he will be seeing the report sooner rather than later. I hope he is supportive. I do not think that it will certainly be the answer to all the problems, but at least it is giving us a base line of information of telling us what is out in the communities, telling us what the opportunities are and how some of the community people feel that they fit in to the Manitoba scene and the Canadian scene.

I can tell you, Madam Chair, that I have had nothing but admiration and respect for the people living in our remote communities. I feel troubled; I really feel troubled that many of them have had to move. Many of them have had to move to our urban settings to try to find a lifestyle or a life maintenance that is better than what they had in their previous communities in which they lived. We all have a home, regardless of how good it is or how bad it is. It is always home, and there is love that has to come from that home. We need to establish those kinds of settings in our northern aboriginal communities and all our communities.

The members take it lightly, but I take it very seriously. The member who professes to be a professor at the university is taking lightly—

An Honourable Member: I will believe you, but you have to show action first.

Mr. Downey: Well, if I have not shown action in the things I read tonight—and I wanted to compare it to the action of the previous administration of which the member for Rupertsland sat around the cabinet table and did absolutely nothing.

I apologize, Madam Chair, there is one other item that I have to conclude on, and I will conclude— [interjection] Oh, the member talks about friendship centres. Well, I heard one of the community people say about friendship centres: We ran these before the government ever got involved, and we can do it again. That is right. They will run them again because they are important to them.

I am telling you that we have got in place, and you have read it recently in the northern newspapers, major work on the northern transmission line, north central line that will take overland electricity to some nine communities that have had to live on electrical energy generated by

diesel fuel, which is second rate, treating those communities as second-rate people.

I say they deserve to have overland electricity. They deserve to have the jobs that go with those transmission lines. They deserve to have an economic future in their communities, and it is Premier Gary Filmon and this Conservative government that are providing it for those communities.

I will stand up in any community in the North, and I will defend our record. I will challenge any member on the opposition benches to put on the record what they have done over the past many years.

Mr. Lathlin: I want to just close off on Northern Affairs. I am glad we got the Minister of Northern Affairs going here for a while, and I hope that excitement will carry into tomorrow and the weeks after and we will see roads getting improved in northern Manitoba, the education program being reinstated, all the funding that has been cut by this government in northern programs will be reinstated. So maybe that is a good sign. The minister is very—looks like we hit the nerve this evening.

But I also want to say to the minister, you know, when he talks about being sincere and when he talks about northern Manitoba issues, I know, Madam Chair. I come from the North. I was born and raised in northern Manitoba, and when I visit the northern communities to go and find out what concerns those northern people in northern Manitoba, I do not summon them to a fine restaurant in St. Boniface called Le Beaujolais under the guise that I am going to talk to them about issues that are concerning them and then halfway through the meeting ask them, so how do we win Rupertsland, guys? Is that being sincere? No, I suggest that is not being sincere at all.

Madam Chair, I suggest to you, that is playing politics. That is, even to me, trying to bribe those Indian people from northern Manitoba into coming with the minister, and then he says to them, how do we win Rupertsland? Needless to say, a lot of those chiefs, former colleagues of mine, were offended by the attitude of the minister. A lot of them walked out of the meeting, as I understand. Now, is he being sincere? I suggest to you that he is not.

The question that I wanted to ask next is of the Health minister. Not that long ago during Question Period, I asked the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) what he was prepared to do for those people from The Pas who were being forced to travel great distances to other centres in order for them to access dialysis services.

As I explained during Question Period not all that long ago, there is dialysis service available right in The Pas. I am also given to understand by those people in authority in The Pas that indeed there are qualified registered nurses readily available in the facility at The Pas and they are willing and able to operate the dialysis machine in order that those people living right in The Pas and surrounding area could access those kinds of services.

* (2110)

But apparently the problem lies in the area of a directive that had gone to The Pas health complex, as was explained to me by people in The Pas health complex, that you are not to use this machine for not any more than I believe it was twice a week, Madam Chair. I cannot exactly remember the number of times that they were allowed to use the machine, but in any event that is the problem. The health complex in The Pas is not allowed to use that dialysis machine, even though they have it right there. It is only open, I believe, two days a week. They have the registered nurses qualified to operate those machines.

On top of that, Madam Chair, the caseload is such that people are on a waiting list, right in The Pas, waiting to access the service. But instead what they are being forced to do is travel an hour and a half, two hours to Flin Flon. Some people from Easterville have to travel right through The Pas to go to Flin Flon to access that service.

My question to the minister this evening would be, has he looked at the situation, has he reviewed the situation as I explained to him the other day? If so, has he reconsidered his decision and if not, will he reconsider and reinstate or at least expand the dialysis service that is being made available on a limited basis in spite of the caseload in The Pas, Madam Chair?

Mr. Downey: Madam Chair, I just want to make a brief comment before the Minister of Health answers.

I think the member for The Pas does somewhat of a disservice to the community representatives

and leaders which he refers to about eating dinner with at Le Beaujolais. The member for The Pas, I think, is doing a disservice—[interjection] He does not need to get so excited.

Let me tell you, I say genuinely, Madam Chair, I have had the privilege to visit most of those communities and when visiting them have received a feast or have received a gift from those community people and very genuinely taken into their communities and enjoyed the opportunity. There was an opportunity of which many of the leaders I understood wanted to meet with myself and other leaders of the province of Manitoba to discuss issues of genuine concern.

Yes, we talked about fishing issues in Natural Resources which I can remember very clearly. We talked about hydro. We talked about employment opportunities, and yes, Madam Chairperson, there was talk about Rupertsland because his former colleague, Elijah Harper, who was of the New Democratic Party, who could not deliver anything under the New Democratic Party, in so much frustration, what did he do? He quit the New Democratic Party and walked over to the Liberals because he could not get anything from the New Democratic Party for their community.

I make no apologies, Madam Chairperson. Is he telling me that the leadership of those communities should be deprived of coming to a Winnipeg restaurant, that he, the member for The Pas, is the only one that should come to Winnipeg to eat in a Winnipeg restaurant? Is that what he is doing? Does he feel that he is better than they, that they should not come to Winnipeg?

No, Madam Chairperson, I think he is a disgrace to this House and to his people to discredit those leaders who came to Winnipeg to eat with the leadership of government in a restaurant in Winnipeg. I think he is degrading of his own people and he should apologize to them. I take exception to what he is saying.

It was legitimate, honest and open discussion, and he should apologize to them for the manner in which he has talked about his own people. I, with respect, would hope that each leader who sat there in council with us would so appropriately say to me that they felt that they did not belong, because we had a very good discussion about issues and concerns about their people. I think they have every right to eat in Le Beaujolais restaurant in

Winnipeg at any time with whoever they feel is important, that the member for The Pas should not try to discredit an activity that was very legitimate on behalf of the people of northern Manitoba.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson—[interjection]

I will tell you how much, and I will tell you who was there, and I will tell you what was said.

Mr. Lathlin: Madam Chair, my question was not directed to the Minister for Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey). It was really directed to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and I would appreciate it now if the Minister of Health could maybe answer my question.

Mr. Orchard: Well, I can understand why the member for The Pas wants to change topics, if you are getting embarrassed, as he has been tonight.

Madam Chair, let me indicate to my honourable friend the member for The Pas that dialysis is available in a number of locations within the province of Manitoba, and it is a program that has a budgeted component, which is for expected activity within a given year.

Periodically, some facilities have—because of the erratic nature of demand, there are, in some instances, a greater patient demand for a temporary period of time than the facility has budget for, yet in a nearby facility—and in the case of The Pas, it is Flin Flon, an hour and a half away—there is underutilized capacity for which budget is being made, provided.

In other words, what we try to do in these times, where there are temporary changes in the demand on various capacities throughout the province in dialysis, we do have individuals move from one facility which is stressed for capacity to another facility which has excess capacity. That makes prudent use of the trained resource and the budgetary provisions that the province has made in anticipation of the demand. That is what has happened in The Pas.

It happens, from time to time in Winnipeg, where individuals are referred to some of our centres outside of Winnipeg. It almost was required—had another one or two patients come on in Brandon, then we may well have had to refer some of those individuals to, say, Dauphin or possibly Winnipeg for service.

Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Lels (St. Johns): I just have a few questions for the Minister of Health (Mr.

Orchard). I am tempted to say low-key questions following the heated debate that we have just had, and although this may be my last opportunity to have an exchange with the Minister of Health, and therefore I am tempted to have another go-around with him on health care reform, I want to assure him that I am just asking a few questions on behalf of the constituents and some groups I have been working with over the last number of years.

* (2120)

The first relates to some of the previous discussion, and that is the whole issue of solvent abuse. I just wanted the Minister of Health to know that after the public hearings on Bill 29, we did receive a copy of a brief from MKO. They did not have an opportunity to travel down to Winnipeg for the public hearings and, I am sure, wanted everyone to get copies of this brief, and I will make sure that all the ministers involved in the issue of solvent abuse have copies of this brief.

I just wanted to ask the Minister of Health the current status of discussions with the federal government. In this brief, MKO indicates that they have had a funding from the federal government for a three-year solvent abuse project, which began in July of 1990. I am assuming that we are now at the state where those funds run out, and the future of some sort of solvent abuse project is the question.

I am just wanting to know from the Minister of Health: If those discussions are now taking place, has the federal government initiated any dialogue around joint funding for such a proposal, or how can we best pursue this issue and ensure that some sort of solvent abuse treatment program for young people in the North does become a reality?

Mr. Orchard: Madam Chair, this discussion is not dissimilar to one that we had earlier on with the Leader of the New Democrats (Mr. Doer), whose questions on health care were on the status of personal care home construction on native reserves in northern Manitoba, which is a federal responsibility.

I say the my honourable friend the New Democratic critic that likewise the proposal for a treatment centre in northern Manitoba has been to the federal government. It was a \$20-million-plus capital construction project. It was not proceeded with and approved by the federal government for any number of reasons, and I certainly am not knowledgeable to indicate for the federal

government why the project did not receive funding.

I can indicate to my honourable friend that there is currently a review on substance abuse in the aboriginal communities ongoing, sponsored by the federal government and, I think, in part, stimulated by the incident and the community circumstances in northern Labrador. It is my understanding that the federal study will report later this year. I have heard dates as early as this fall. I would suspect that emanating from that will be an opportunity to see direction that the federal government may well take, and I think that might be the appropriate time for the MKO to re-establish their treatment centre proposal to the federal government.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Just one quick follow-up on this issue, once that has happened, can I ask the Minister of Health if it is appropriate then for MKO—once they have made that contact with the federal government and the federal government is looking at the success of this pilot project, is it at that point, then, that the province enters into discussions to see if there is a partnership arrangement that can be worked out with respect to ongoing funding and support for a northern treatment centre.

Mr. Orchard: I just want to make sure that I understand clearly my honourable friend's question, because it is rather important. My honourable friend, who wishes to become a federal M.P. after serving as a provincial MLA, is suggesting that the province ought to assume responsibility for funding a treatment centre on reserve land in northern Manitoba. That is the proposal that has been before the federal government.

(Mr. Edward Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Is my honourable friend saying that the province ought to pick up part of the operating costs of that treatment centre, should it become a reality, and assume part of the federal responsibility?

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: As I understand it, the minister has indicated that the federal government must take lead responsibility on this issue. I had, at no point, heard up until now the minister or the province say that there was no role for the provincial government in some sort of future program in the North.

I am wondering, once those discussions begin with the federal government, if it is then appropriate for the province to get involved as well in those discussions. I am not suggesting, provide the core funding, provide all the operating funding. I am talking about a partnership arrangement. As I understood, that was part of the minister's thinking all along.

Mr. Orchard: It is not my thinking; I want to clarify. I have always been fairly direct in terms of federal and provincial responsibility roles, but I detected clearly two questions ago that the member for St. Johns, who is moving to the federal arena, is saying that the province ought to pick up operating costs for an on-reserve treatment centre.

I mean, that is a fairly significant policy statement by a potential federal M.P. I have to tell my honourable friend that we are not in a position to assume any more federal offloading. I remind my honourable friend, my honourable friend stood up and railed daily when she was the critic in Health about the federal government's offload on health care. She kept saying the federal government is offloading their responsibility. I can close my eyes and hear those speeches. She was wanting to lead a protest movement down to Ottawa to protest federal offloading. Now, as a candidate seeking to become a federal M.P., she wants to unload more responsibility before she is even elected to the federal Parliament. I find that absolutely, well, incredible.

That is why I asked the simple question, are you suggesting that we ought to pick up part of the operating cost for an on-reserve treatment centre, because we have not done that in the past? I remind my honourable friend when she sat around cabinet tables, they did not do that in government. So I simply say, the policy of the Province of Manitoba has not changed. Now, my honourable friend seems to be advocating, in the hopes that she become a federal M.P., that more offload occur to the provincial government from the federal government. I cannot accept that position.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Acting Chairperson, I do not want to pursue this issue. I was simply trying to ascertain from the Minister of Health how this government would be responding to MKO's proposals and letters and communication to this government, particularly their statement from the brief, and I quote: We continue to wait on both

governments to come forward with a strong commitment to support the efforts of MKO.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I was not getting into specific dollars and cents. I was asking for an indication of when MKO could re-establish contact with the provincial government on this general issue. I do not think that is an unrealistic issue or request to pose or put before the minister.

Let me go on to another issue—[interjection] Oh, go ahead.

Mr. Orchard: Before my honourable friend moves on to another issue, let us deal with this issue, and let us deal with the resourcing of this issue. Now, my honourable friend is trying to make the case that somehow the provincial government is wrong in saying that we will not have provincial supportive funding onto an on-reserve treatment facility, a policy that she upheld when she was in cabinet.

I want to tell my honourable friend that there are two options for MKO to pursue this goal: firstly is with the federal government as is in process, as I understand it now; secondly, let us deal with the issue directly of who has the money and who has the ability to fund that kind of a treatment centre if it is the priority that my honourable friend the New Democrat says it is.

This province has signed flood agreement compensation packages with member communities of MKO. If this is a burning priority for that community, those millions of dollars could be placed into that treatment facility and do their citizens a lot of good. They have the resource right now, if they choose to make that as one of their priorities.

I hope my honourable friend is not saying, well, they can receive that flood compensation money, but they do not have to use it for such things as youth treatment centres on reserves in northern Manitoba. I cannot accept that.

I do not believe that if she made that case, the taxpayers of Manitoba, who are footing the bill on that flood compensation through their hydro rates for the next 20 years, can accept that. They have the resource. If it is a priority, they can put it in place without the federal government right now.

* (2130)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Just like old times—I ask a fairly straightforward question about the provincial government being open to discussions on this very

serious issue, and I get a very defensive response from the minister.

I want to ask about an issue pertaining to women's health in the province of Manitoba. The minister will be aware of requests before him from women seeking treatment for endometriosis and a concern expressed to him and his department that the treatment available in Manitoba may not be adequate in terms of these women's needs.

In fact, they have identified treatment options outside of the province. They have, in particular, mentioned in correspondence to the minister treatment that is available in Alberta. The question that they raise is one of coverage under our health insurance system for that treatment, because in their minds it is not available here in the province of Manitoba.

I know that this is a fairly new and major topic. I wondered if the minister has recently held any discussions or reviewed this whole area. There is an endo-support group in Winnipeg that is on top of these issues, and I am wondering if there has been any consideration of the request before this minister for, at least as an interim solution, coverage of women who go to other places, such as Alberta, for a treatment of endometriosis that they feel meets their needs.

Mr. Orchard: As with all issues of this nature, it is under investigation within the physician complement of the MHSC and in collaboration with experts in the medical community practising in Manitoba.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Just one final question on this issue: Has the minister responded at all to Christine Braun, who wrote to the minister requesting coverage of her out-of-province claims but, more significantly, requesting the minister to review this whole area and to consider the specific needs of women in terms of treatment for endometriosis?

Mr. Orchard: I will have to take the specific individual's letter as to whether I have provided a reply as notice. I cannot provide that information this evening.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: On another issue, this pertains to physiotherapy in the province of Manitoba.

The minister may be aware of a letter that went to the Minister of Education, and he was copied, pertaining to proposals for a national physiotherapy

exam. A group of physiotherapy students from the 1994 graduating class have been appointed to raise their concerns with this government and have sought some help with respect to their concerns. In particular, they point to what they feel are extraordinary financial costs associated with the proposed exam. They indicate it would cost up to \$1,500 per person. They have also raised questions about accessibility since Winnipeg is only guaranteed a testing site if 40 persons apply to write that exam, yet only 30 students graduate each year from the U of M.

They outline a couple of other concerns pertaining to whether or not such an exam is justified and also the barriers it produces in terms of freedom of movement.

I am wondering if the minister has reviewed this issue and has taken a stand with respect to this proposal by the Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulatory Boards.

Mr. Orchard: Yes, Mr. Acting Chairperson.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Could the minister indicate the results of his review and what position his government is taking with respect to his proposed national physiotherapy exam?

Mr. Orchard: When I read that correspondence, I believe, from three graduates of physiotherapy in Manitoba, I was, I have to say, somewhat concerned about some of the direction that this national examination would be taking our graduates in Manitoba.

In terms of pursuing the issue, one of the things I asked of my staff to determine is whether the proposed examination would make physiotherapists who graduate with the coursework in Manitoba better practitioners of physiotherapy.

I asked that question because I have to tell my honourable friend that from time to time I find professional organizations can develop standards which forget about the reality of quality of education, quality of practice, and do more to develop artificial barriers to entry to the profession than necessarily they do to serve the clients who need their assistance in a very equitable and fair and economical fashion.

The reply I got back was twofold, as I recall it. I am going by memory, and if I am slightly in poor recollection, I apologize to my honourable friend. But it is my understanding that the provincial regulatory body of the physiotherapists of Manitoba

do not endorse this national examination; furthermore, they have answered the question that it would not change and improve the practice ability of Manitoba physiotherapists, that we graduate quality-trained practitioners in physiotherapy in Manitoba.

Subsequent to that, I have indicated to the department that we will not acknowledge the necessity of the national exam for Manitoba graduates, and, furthermore, we are seeking input from the Manitoba association. Once received, and depending on the type of advice we get, I am prepared to take this issue and pursue it to the national ministers' conference, because I think it is not necessary to assure that the practice standards of physiotherapy in Canada will be improved.

I recognize very clearly the twofold problem for new graduates: first of all, the costs of the examination or the proposed cost of the examination by itself, No. 1; and No. 2, the potential difficulty of not even having that exam sit in Manitoba, that they would have to travel out-of-province, probably to Toronto, to be so examined. I find that offensive that our graduates in Manitoba would be required by some alliance, which is not national in its context, to write an exam which will not prove that they are any better to practice physiotherapy than the current testing in Manitoba, and the standards by which we train our physiotherapists. I, quite frankly, agree with the tenet of the letter from those three individuals who are new graduates.

My preliminary investigation and recollection of same says that they have made a good case, and I am quite willing to use my good office to assure that their case is heard.

* (2140)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I thank the minister for that answer. I appreciate his comments on this matter, and his commitment to do whatever he can to oppose this proposal for a national physiotherapy exam.

I want to raise a couple of other issues. I hope I am not opening any can of worms. I am just simply seeking some information and help as I deal with some constituents. This first one has to do with senior citizens who go south for a period of time in the year. It has to do with the requirement that an individual cannot be out of the province for more

than six months at one time in a calendar year, or else lose basic Manitoba health insurance benefits.

My understanding is that that is a change. I realize that under the previous NDP government the stipulation about six months out of the country was put in place. My understanding is that there has been a change under this present government indicating that one cannot be out of province for more than six months.

I am wondering if that has been a change. Secondly, what help can the minister offer, what advice can the minister offer for seniors who are contacting us and wondering why, if they spend six months out of the country, if they cannot find a way to visit relatives in another part of the country and still be covered?

I am not trying to have a debate with the minister. I am simply trying to find an understanding of this issue and to be able to advise individuals contacting us about what course of action they should follow.

Mr. Orchard: First of all, Mr. Acting Chairperson, my honourable friend is correct that, as she sat around the cabinet table, the Howard Pawley administration put the six-month-less-a-day regulation in place. It was a strict residency requirement that they put in place.

Those were the rules that we inherited in 1988. There was no provision, for instance, for a Winnipegger who spent six months less a day in McAllen, Texas, and had a summer cottage at the Lake of the Woods and spend part of July and August in Ontario. The regulation, as passed by my honourable friend in 1987, disallowed those individuals medical coverage in the provincial plan.

That was drawn to our attention, and we have made this exemption to the NDP regulation that, if one has a principal residence in Manitoba, they can be out of country for up to six months less a day and be covered to the maximum limits that are put in place by regulation and, from time to time, altered.

We strongly urge and advise them to buy additional insurance coverage as they have always had to do. But we put in place an exception that, if they have a cottage in the Lake of the Woods or, for instance, in Flin Flon-Creighton area, their medical coverage will not be discontinued, as the NDP regulation would have mandated, and that they will

continue to be covered under the Manitoba Health Services Insurance Fund.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, I indicate to my honourable friend that currently the federal government is doing an investigation on the out-of-province residency requirements of provincial health plans and is probably going to present information to the provinces at some time in the near future. It would be my desire that we attempt to have some consistency across Canada.

But, certainly, since we have come into government, we have liberalized the NDP regulation on residency so that it does not penalize seniors who have main residences in Winnipeg or any part of Manitoba, spend up to six months, less a day, out of country in Florida or Texas and have a cottage at Lake of the Woods and would be out of province more than six months, less a day, should they spend any time during July and August at their cottage.

We have made the exception. Now, I tell my honourable friend that that information is not easily communicated, because there is a lot of confusion. I will tell my honourable friend exactly where it comes from. There was an op-ed writer with the Winnipeg Free Press, subsequently retired, who had running battles with the Manitoba Health Insurance Fund from time to time. Despite the fact that information presented was not accurate, it did not deter the individual from continuing to put out incorrect information to the residents of Manitoba. Upon retirement, this same individual has written a few op-ed pieces and had them placed in rural newspapers, basically stating that we the Progressive Conservative government of Gary Filmon have changed this and are now disallowing insurance. If he had his facts right, he would say that Howard Pawley put in the regulation to disallow it and Gary Filmon's government has changed it and made it more acceptable and more understanding of residential circumstances involving cottages at Lake of the Woods and other parts of nearby Manitoba.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I again thank the minister for clarifying that issue; however, out of it, I do have one follow-up question. The minister refers to individuals who might have a cottage at Lake of the Woods or up at Creighton. I would like to pose a specific situation to the minister just so I have a clear understanding: If an individual spends six months, minus a day, outside of the country and, in

addition, travels to Ontario or British Columbia for a weekend or whatever to visit a relative, is that person covered under the Manitoba health insurance program for those visits, or must they get additional coverage for those visits?

Mr. Orchard: As I understand the way the Howard Pawley government wrote the regulation, their coverage would be disallowed. Under the way we operate that regulation, it is not.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I thank the minister for liberalizing the regulations, and I hope that it will be appropriate for us to communicate that information to seniors who are concerned about whether or not they will be covered if they visit relatives in other parts of the country.

Mr. Acting Chairperson, a question—and again I want to preface my remarks by saying I am not trying to get into a debate—and this ties into the home care issue. I am simply wondering, we have seen in recent times a lot of new companies popping up in Manitoba that are designed to meet the needs of seniors. Whether in terms of home care or adult daycare or respite care, they are coming to our attention—new firms by the names of Life Care, SELECTACARE, PrimeCare, and I am sure that there are others. I simply want to know from the minister if these firms must go through any steps. Are there any kind of regulatory provisions through the government to ensure that these outfits meet certain standards of care so that seniors know when they turn to these agencies that they are getting licensed care?

* * *

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): My apology to the members for interrupting the debate. I am wondering, Mr. Acting Chairperson, whether or not there would be unanimous consent to have this committee recess for a short period of time. I would propose that we go back to the House, deal with some matters just at this time, and then come back to the motion dealing with concurrence and sitting this evening to roughly twelve o'clock.

I wonder if there would be agreement to recess this committee for a period of time.

The Acting Chairperson (Mr. Helwer): Is there leave of the committee to temporarily suspend proceedings so that Mr. Speaker can resume the Chair, with the understanding that we will resume later? [agreed]

* (2150)

IN SESSION

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to have the House recess after the sitting of Committee of Supply tonight and reconvene at 10 a.m. tomorrow, sitting until 1:25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow us to change the sitting hours tomorrow from 10 a.m. until 1.25 p.m., instead of the regularly scheduled 1:30 p.m.? [agreed]

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I would like to call one bill for second reading. It is on the Order Paper. That is a private member's bill but a public bill, that being Bill 212.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 212—The Dauphin Memorial Community Centre Board Repeal Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), Bill 212, The Dauphin Memorial Community Centre Board Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur le Conseil du Centre commémoratif de Dauphin, standing in the name of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave is denied.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak very briefly on this bill. I want to thank the government House leader on behalf of our caucus. I know we made this request of the government House leader today, as is traditional, Mr. Speaker, toward the session end, and this is a bill that is important to Dauphin.

It is a private member's bill, but it is of public importance. It will have an impact, I know. I have talked to the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) on this particular bill, and it will certainly be of assistance to the community centre board in enacting the repeal, which is brought about by this

particular motion. I do want to indicate that we have had a varying number of bills of this nature in the past, Mr. Speaker, and this will, I know from talking to the member for Dauphin, have a significant impact and will certainly save legal costs for the board involved.

In fact, I know that the member for Dauphin will, probably in his remarks closing debate in a couple of minutes, be certainly thanking the government for once again bringing this forward. It is appreciated, I think, not only on behalf of our caucus, but also the people from Dauphin, and I am sure the member for Dauphin in his brief closing comments will elucidate members of the House even further on this important bill for the community of Dauphin.

Mr. John Plohan (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, just brief comments at this particular time. As we did in second reading, I had explained the importance of this bill for the community of Dauphin and for the various groups involved in the agreement that has administered the Dauphin Memorial Community Centre for a number of years, perhaps close to 40 years. The various groups had come together to negotiate a revised method of dealing with the administration of the community centre, and so the legislation that was in place was no longer required.

This bill is simply repealing that act that has been in place, and the incorporation has taken place. It will ensure that all actions of the new corporate structure are validated by way of this particular bill as well. So I am pleased that we are able to pass this bill and ensure a smooth transition from the old administration to the new one, and ensure as well that the administration can get on with an agreement with the employees as well, which is something that has been delayed pending the passage of this bill. So it was very important to have it passed this sitting of the Legislature.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see this go forward at this time.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 212, The Dauphin Memorial Community Centre Board Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur le Conseil du Centre commémoratif de Dauphin. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [agreed]

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, seeing this bill has passed second reading, I would like to refer it to a Committee on Law Amendments that will sit tomorrow afternoon at 2:30, and at that time I will ask for the concurrence of the House that that committee sit concurrently with it.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, I would like to thank the honourable government House leader for that information.

I would like some clarification here, or to clarify for the members—a few minutes ago we had unanimous consent to change the sitting hours tomorrow from 10 a.m. rather than 1:30. What is actually happening, Committee of Supply will sit tonight, will recess, and then we will reconvene the House tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. Okay? That was just for clarification. That is what we all agreed to. Okay, good enough.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, back into the Committee of Supply.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable government House leader, seconded by the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to, and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) in the Chair.

SUPPLY—CAPITAL SUPPLY

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(continued)

(Mr. Ed Helwer, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Acting Chairperson, we were in the middle of a question to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard). While we are waiting for that answer, I have a brief question for the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey). It pertains to the issue of busing to immersion schools; particularly, I am referencing Lansdowne School in my constituency which is a French immersion school, which now has busing to Grade 4.

The parents continue to actively pursue busing beyond Grade 4. It is their understanding that there was some indication from the province that

there would be funding to the extent that busing for Grade 5 would take place in '94-95, and busing in Grade 6 would take place in '95-96. There is some confusion around this. I am wondering if the minister would be able to indicate whether or not the province has made that commitment, and if I can convey that to parents who send their kids to Lansdowne School.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Acting Chairperson, there have been some changes this year in the transportation portion of the schools funding formula. If the member would like to give me the details, then I will check with the department, and let her know the policy and as it applies in the area of Winnipeg No. 1.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Acting Chairperson, I have a number of questions for the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), and I would like to begin with the Student Social Allowances Program, probably the worst piece of legislation in this session, piece of legislation that the editor of the Free Press called, I think, the stupidest decision.

I said, in debate, this decision was dumb, dumb, dumb. Numerous members on our side and presenters of the committee stage criticized this minister for this decision. Finally, after considerable pressure, the minister has made a change by way of a press release today, and I will have some questions based on that press release.

* (2200)

But I would like to put on the record, one more time, that the reasons that this minister gave for this change were totally unacceptable, and some of them, in fact, were untrue. The minister said that there were no other provinces in Canada that had this program, that this was the only province in Canada that had the program. A terrible reason for eliminating it. The minister should have been proud of it, but instead he said it was the only province.

But in New Brunswick—and I would like to quote from a paper that I have here. It says: Students attending high school, living away from home, may be assisted where the parental home is unsuitable. In Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island students who were unable to live at home for reasons acceptable to the department may be provided with social assistance while completing high school.

Nova Scotia, the department will review on a case-by-case basis those clients who are attending high school. If it is not appropriate for the person to remain in their home, the department will agree to assist if the student has a plan in place, attends school regularly and keeps marks at a passing grade. High school students usually receive full assistance.

In the province of Alberta, students in the basic foundation skills program—upgrading high school, second language, et cetera—will receive 100 percent funding in the form of a grant.

In Ontario, the number of students collecting assistance in Metro Toronto in January 1993 was 12,586. They must be under 21 and attending high school. As the minister knows, the province of Ontario cost-shares social assistance with municipalities.

This government fails to recognize that investing money in education is an investment that pays good dividends. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada put out a paper called *Dropping Out: The Cost to Canada*, published in May 1992. The synopsis is very interesting, and there are very interesting statistics. They point out that the cost to Canada of students dropping out over their lifetime, of students who dropped out in 1989, will be \$4 billion. To quote from their paper: Each individual male dropout will lose nearly \$129,000 over his working lifetime, while each female dropout will give up \$107,000 over her working lifetime.

To continue quoting from this paper: The rate of return to society for investing in high school education is 19 percent for males and 17.8 percent for females.

This is a government that likes to use the language of business. They should be comfortable with words like "investment" and what do they do? They disinvest in students' education.

The paper goes on to say: The \$4-billion cost to Canada consists of lost lifetime earnings and tax revenues, as well as the additional expenditures society has to make to address related social problems. This economic cost of \$4 billion becomes even more staggering when we realize this amount represents the lifetime loss to society of only one school year of students who drop out.

They say: The value of investing in education can be assessed by calculating the rate of return. A rate of return is the yield on a dollar that has been

invested. The use of rates of return to assess the value of education is similar to the use of rates of return to make decisions about other investment options such as bonds or stocks. In the case of education, the rate of return can be thought of as a yield on completing high school.

I think that is a very valid way of looking at the investment by the Province of Manitoba in the education of students, but this minister did not want to do that. Instead, all he wanted to do was to offload the expense to the City of Winnipeg, because as we know, the City of Winnipeg has to pick up 20 percent of the cost of social assistance. Instead of splitting the cost with the federal government on a 50-50, cost-shared basis under the Canada Assistance Plan, this government, through amending The Social Allowances Act, offloaded 20 percent of that expense of those 1,100 students to the City of Winnipeg. That is what they did, and the press release of today does not change that. It only allows the city to pay for them to go to school full time.

At the conclusion of this synopsis by the Conference Board of Canada they say: Any initiative that will encourage students to complete high school can have a major positive impact on the future economic well-being of both individual students and Canada. All educational stakeholders, business, government, educators, labour, parents and youth have an interest in promoting and participating in any such initiative. Given the kind of future that is anticipated for Canada, one in which education will play an increasingly important role in emerging technologies, international competitiveness and economic productivity, action on the high school dropout problem is imperative.

Now there are some words in there that we have been hearing from this government repeatedly in their throne speeches, and so I would like to repeat them. They talk about "emerging technologies, international competitiveness and economic productivity." I am sure that we have heard those words repeatedly in throne speeches, but this minister's action says no, we are not interested in any of those things, we are going to force 1,100 students to drop out of high school.

Well, they repented. They have changed their minds slightly, I think, in response to the excellent presentation by City Councillor Glen Murray, who said, if you are at least not going to change your

minds on this legislation, give us the authority to allow these students to go to school full time.

So we have this minister's press release of this afternoon. I think really it is an admission that this government was wrong all along, and finally they have come to their senses and admitted it.

I would like to ask the minister, first of all, will single parents on provincial social assistance be allowed to continue in high school? Will the minister and the department of economic security permit single parents to attend high school full time?

Hon. Harold Gillshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Acting Chairperson, I listened with great interest to what my honourable friend has put on the record tonight. I would think that he must be having a little difficulty with his conscience using some of the words that he has used this evening about his perception of motives.

Certainly there is no other province in Canada that has had a program which has categorically identified students to be eligible for social assistance. I would think if he wants to be truly honest, he would recognize that. He knows that across this country there are different delivery modes for social assistance, some with a single-tier system and some with a dual-tier system. He knows that Ontario, Nova Scotia and Manitoba have dual systems. Irrespective of that, as you look at provinces across this country, Manitoba was the only province with a particular program dedicated to students collecting social assistance while attending high school. I would hope that he would have the courage and the integrity to clarify his comments there. [interjection]

I know he has spoken in the past, and my honourable friend from Osborne is here. We have had the opportunity to discuss social programs before. If he would want to join the debate, I would invite him to do so.

My honourable friend from the NDP has—it is in the past—recognized the many issues within social allowances that we have addressed. I would maybe just take the opportunity to remind him of that. Not only have we addressed the rates at a level consistent with what his party did when they were in government—and I would remind him at that time government revenues were accumulating at double-digit increases as compared to where revenues are today, and at the same time, they

only increased rates according to the cost of living. We have done a similar thing. [interjection] I think maybe he is finding a difference in one particular year, but the pattern is similar. Other provinces do the same thing. We address those rates according to the cost of living.

* (2210)

I know the member has been very complimentary at some of the other programs and initiatives we have taken. For instance, we have created a program called Income Assistance for the Disabled at a cost of \$8 million or \$10 million to the provincial government. This is not a new issue. This was an issue that was around during the '60s, the '70s and '80s that the NDP government chose not to address and that this particular government did. I know that within the various groups that advocate on behalf of social allowance recipients and the disabled, this is an issue that has been met with a lot of good will, a lot of compliments.

I know that since I have brought it up this evening, the member will certainly want to acknowledge that, because it was not an issue that simply came to government in 1990. It is one that has been around for some time.

In fact, I am just trying to think of the name of the member who is the president of the WORD organization. I do not know whether he has any political affiliation or not, but I suspect that maybe he has some record of speaking for a particular political party. But I will tell you that I know he has been complimentary, and he has appreciated the fact that while previous governments did not address this issue, this government has.

In the same vein, we introduced something called a supplementary benefit, and I know the member was very complimentary about this. At one time, provincial assistance and other clients received a lump-sum payment, and this was subject to individuals being taken advantage of in the income tax season. I remember distinctly that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) spoke in very kind and laudatory terms about the government, in putting in a new program.

I understand he has since had other thoughts about it, but I suspect that maybe those thoughts were a result of politics, rather than saying and doing the right thing for clients. I know that the member finds this difficult, because I think he an honourable member. I know he wants to do what

he considers right for his constituents, and maybe he is prepared to change back again and say the government did the right thing, because I think, by and large, members of that community have accepted this as being something that is very positive.

A third thing that we have done is created an exemption of children's trust assets. There was a time when children who were willed or received substantial sums of money, this was regarded as new income and was clawed back by government. In recent years we have created an exemption of \$25,000 so that individuals who receive a lump-sum benefit like that will have that protected for their later life.

(Madam Chairperson in the Chair)

In 1991, this government created some assistance for children on social allowance for school supplies. We have indicated and followed up on the fact that we have allotted \$80 for school purchases for children of social allowance families who are entering the school system.

We have also passed on the goods and services tax credit, and not every province has done this. I believe the Province of Saskatchewan not only has attached the children's benefit and regarded that as income, but I think perhaps the GST as well.

I know this must trouble my honourable friend, a man who has a history in working for the poor, working for the disabled and working for those who are considered the downtrodden in society. I would hope he would maybe even criticize the government of Saskatchewan and say that perhaps they should rethink this, but I know he is very complimentary to this government, that we have taken this benefit and passed it through and not regarded it as additional income. I would hope that even if he would not say so publicly, maybe he would write to the government of Saskatchewan and suggest that we have a contradiction here with the government of Manitoba, that he would find maybe unpalatable. In a quiet way, I would hope he would lobby and ask them to do the right thing. I know he would not want to publicly say, copy the government of Manitoba, but maybe behind the scenes he could play a role in having them pass this benefit through.

Yes, he is indicating he would phone them. I know Janice MacKinnon, when she was Minister of Family Services, would be very open to something

like that. Now that she is Minister of Finance, I think she is maybe even in a better position to make this a reality. So I would hope that, as he has indicated, he would pick up the phone and talk to a fellow traveller in Saskatchewan and say, Janice, I do not think you are doing the right thing. I think maybe if you listen to the grassroots in Saskatchewan, our supporters there, that maybe she would reconsider that.

That would certainly be consistent with the image I have of the honourable member, who I believe is an honourable member and maybe overstepped the bounds a bit in his initial comments, but as is his pattern, I think he will maybe retract some of that and indicate that he is pretty supportive of what the government has done today and what the government has done in recent weeks and months, and see that in the realities of government you have to make very difficult decisions.

I know that probably he is not unfamiliar with what NDP governments are doing. We talked months ago about the realities of opposition and government. I think with recent polls and with recent awareness of where his party is nationally and provincially, he might have, sort of, a better comprehension of the difficult decisions that government has to make. I would suspect that he might even admire the way this government has shown that balance between the difficult decisions we have to make and the funds that we have for social programs.

I know that colleagues of his who want to see more highway construction, who want headwater storage—and I wish someone over there would explain to me what the Manitoba NDP really means by headwater storage, because I suspect it means building dams. I know there have been major apologies and restructuring over there as to what they really mean on PMU production.

I am sorry the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is not here, because I know that the government of Saskatchewan has made a major attack on the co-op movement. The member for Brandon East held a press conference and a meeting in Brandon to support the Saskatchewan government, against our communities in Manitoba, against the Heritage Co-op, against the Minnedosa co-op, against the Brandon co-op, and I do not know how members opposite have remained silent on that. [interjection] And the Neepawa-Gladstone co-op.

The member for Brandon East is saying no, Saskatchewan has a good point, we just want to put a gun to their head to negotiate. I do not understand how he could support that Saskatchewan government because these are grassroots movements. I want to assure members over there that there are plenty of co-op members on this side who would like to see a resolution to this problem.

I am sure my friend from Burrows, who I think is an honest man, will maybe want to give further clarification about where the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) is on this co-op issue. Right now, the community out there feels he is actively supporting the government of Saskatchewan, that they want to put the co-ops out of business, they want to destroy the co-op movement in Manitoba. If I am wrong, I am sure the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) would correct me.

Getting back to social allowances, I know the member for Burrows has been very supportive of the fact we have increased the liquid-asset exemption level, again, an issue where the liquid assets have been at a very, very low level. The previous government, the NDP government had an opportunity to address this many, many times, and they chose not to do anything about that issue. They chose to leave that liquid-asset exemption level very low.

I will tell you, I am proud this government has been able to make dramatic increases in the liquid-asset exemptions, and at the present time for disabled people, for instance, they can have liquid assets of \$2,000, for families with a maximum complement, they can have liquid assets of \$4,000. I know the member often has said, you know, we should have a situation where social allowance families should be able to save money for deep freezes, for television sets, for refrigerators and so forth, just give them a chance to assemble some money.

* (2220)

I will tell you, we have made that change to the liquid-assets exemptions, and I know the member has spoken favourably about that. I am sure he might even put that on the record again, because he has introduced this whole area of social allowances, and I know deep down in his heart he is probably proud of what this government has

done to bring in a number of reforms, reforms that the previous government chose not to do anything about. I know, as an honourable member, my good friend from Burrows recognizes this.

It was only a year and a half ago when he raised the—I know the member wants to get down to the press release and we are very pleased to be able to have released that today and pleased to have tremendous support from the City of Winnipeg. I know that my friend from Burrows will also want to recognize that.

A year and a half ago, head of the household was an issue, again, not a new issue, an issue that I am sure the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) had to deal with around the cabinet table, all members of that party who once in some fashion served in government, but chose not to recognize that the head of the household may be of either gender. I am sure the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) probably raised this at party conventions. I know the member for St. Johns probably supported him and I cannot believe that with the clout the member for Burrows has and the federal candidate, would-be federal member—would not have got this through.

I cannot believe that they would not have addressed the head-of-the-household issue. The member for Burrows has spoken on this at some length. I know he blushed when he did that, because it was an issue that should have been addressed. It was an issue that my good friend the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) assisted me with in cabinet. I know that while the member for Burrows is supportive, there must be some degree of, sort of, antagonism within him towards some of his fellow colleagues who should have addressed this 10 years ago but chose not to. I am pleased that this government did that.

I know that some of his colleagues now are nodding their heads in the affirmative and saying, I wonder where those people were, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), that they would have let this languish for so long.

I am pleased that I have the support of the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). I tell you it was just a year ago that we brought in Bill 70 to deal with the municipal assistance regulation, again something that municipalities were asking for. We

put into place a process, the SARC committee, whereby we could standardize the amount of social allowances being paid to recipients across the province.

Again, I know the member is a little bit embarrassed. He may not admit it, but the previous NDP government allowed for social allowances that were down here at a very low level, social allowances that were very high. I know it would bother him that all Manitobans were not treated the same. I suspect, sort of silently, while he did not vote for this piece of legislation, he supports it.

I want to thank him for that, because I know that while we did not have his support in a voting sense, silently he did support this, and he understands that, no matter where you live in this province, you should have the same access to social allowance whether you live in Flin Flon or Brandon or Winnipeg.

I thank him for that because I think within his caucus he probably worked very hard to get—

An Honourable Member: The only one that is that progressive.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, and I think the only one with that degree of compassion over there. Although there are others who espouse that compassionate outlook, I think it is the member for Burrows who probably mitigated some of voices against this piece of legislation.

We also have addressed the whole area of wheelchair transportation. Again, not a new issue, but we have met with groups like WORD and SACOM. I know the member opposite is familiar with the executive officers of SACOM because they often attend here for the throne speech and when the budget is brought down. I have wanted to invite them to sit over here, but I know they have already been invited to sit with my honourable friend.

I can tell you that they have brought invaluable evidence forward to help us make decisions and bring forward these reforms. Again, I know this was something that the NDP government was just about to do, but of course their mandate ran out—

An Honourable Member: Well, now, you are being awful kind.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I say that, thinking that the member for Burrows had a lot of influence there, and I suspect that they were just on the verge of

doing that. But we have given them some flexibility on how they want to use their transportation, and I can tell you, within that community it has been well received.

The final thing I would deal with before I get to the question the member posed is the extension of health benefits. I know the member for Burrows has some interest in health benefits, but for a long time we felt there were people who would leave the social allowance system if they had some comfort that they could take—[interjection] Well, the member for Burrows is interrupting here. I know he wants to hear this, and in his next question he could frame his thoughts.

But for a long time I think people who are part of the disabled community, the single-parent community, are wanting to move into that world of work but have had some reluctance to do so because they would lose their health card and their health benefits.

We have been able, within recent times, to give them some assurance that for a year, as they make that transition from social allowances to work, that they would maintain that health benefit card.

This has been a very progressive step, a step that, I think, is going to be emulated in other provinces, irrespective of their political persuasion. Believe me, the ministers in Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Ontario and other areas are looking to this initiative with some interest. We are pleased to be able to be the first province in Canada to bring this forward. I think, given some time to measure the effectiveness of this, this will prove to be a very worthy reform.

I know again that the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) will want, at some point, to recognize a rather lengthy list. This is only a partial list, I might add, of the reforms we have brought forward. I guess if I am pushed, I could get into some more detail on some of these things. If there is a need for clarification, I would be happy to offer that.

Those reforms were not new issues. I know on the floor of many NDP conventions, the member for Burrows was probably pounding his fist on the podium trying to get recognized, trying to put forward issues like this. I am just sorry he was unsuccessful, and I know in his heart he is, too.

I know on the other hand, he probably will take some pride in the fact that he was a member of the opposition that sat here as the government brought

these things forward. I compliment him for that, because there were a number of times he gave me a gentle reminder that these things should be done, and I am proud that we have done them.

* (2230)

I know that I have his support. I have been able to share with my caucus that, you know, do not always listen to what the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says publicly. Kind of watch him privately and see how he urges his members to maybe not applaud so loud and kind of in a way give me support. I want to thank him for that.

The member raised the question of student social allowances. I think if members will perhaps look at comments I made in committee and comments I have made in the House—I have had a couple of questions on this issue over the last—[interjection] Well, the member questions—a couple is kind of a vague numerical term. Perhaps there were a few questions that came forward from the honourable member.

We were listening to the community. We were meeting at the officials level with members of a number of municipalities who indicated that they wanted to have a little more flexibility in the way they dealt with student social allowance.

I know at committee—and I think the member not only came to committee but brought some friends with him and took some friends home with him that night. We listened to presentations and met with individuals who were accessing the system and had discussions with a number of groups within the community.

As a result, I am pleased we were able to bring forward an initiative today that does offer greater flexibility to municipalities in how they deal with social allowance recipients. We have enunciated today a number of policy guidelines with municipalities, and while I missed a phone call from Councillor Murray, I understand he was on the media tonight saying he was extremely pleased that the City of Winnipeg and other municipalities were now going to have the flexibility to deal with social allowance recipients, whether they are looking for work or perhaps wanting to restart their high school career, and I look forward to having some conversations with him.

I thank the honourable member for his kind words in support of this initiative. I am almost embarrassed that he supported so many of my

initiatives. I know that my colleagues here will wonder why so many things we have done have met with support from the honourable member for Burrows, but I think it is probably good policy, and I compliment him on his honesty.

Mr. Martindale: I can see that the Minister of Family Services is practising to be the next Minister of Health. It is very obvious that he comes from the same school as the Minister of Health and that he is following in his footsteps and practising to be the next minister. I know he is tired of this cabinet position and he wants a change. He wants to do something different. I assume his Premier (Mr. Filmon) will listen to these concerns and oblige him in the near future.

Now, there was so much innuendo and garbage that he put on the record, and I would like to rebut all of it, but time—

Point of Order

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, Madam Chairperson, it was a long time since I first began my remarks, but I know I began by advising the member to go back to his roots and to be honest and speak what he knows to be the truth. If he has forgotten those remarks, I would just remind him of that.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, as I was saying before the interruption, there were a lot of remarks that were really by way of innuendo that I would like to rebut, but there is no point in doing that with one exception, and that is that the minister said that I brought a lot of friends to the committee stage on the student social allowances bill and that I took some of them home, neither of which is true.

We did not need to bring people or give people rides to that committee, because those students were so upset that they came on their own, in spite of the fact that it was July. There were a lot more people who had registered than actually came out to committee, but it was the actions of this government that brought those people out to committee.

Now, I would like to ask the minister some specific questions on his press release. In the second last paragraph it says, the new guidelines

give municipalities discretion in determining if participation in secondary education or vocational training constitutes a reasonable effort to obtain employment.

I would like to ask the minister if these guidelines are by way of a policy change or by way of regulation. Could the minister clarify that for me, please?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, I know that my honourable friend would not want to have this House believe or the record to show that we did not bring this legislation forward many, many months ago, and the fact that it did not get into public hearings until July is not a function of government.

I know the member is now pointing a finger at the Liberals. They are not able to defend themselves, but this legislation was introduced in the spring, and it could have been brought to committee in April or May or June. It was clearly the opposition members who chose not to debate this week after week. Those public hearings could have been held in the spring, and this could have been finalized many, many months ago. The honourable member knows that, and, again, I know that having pointed that out to him, he may want to apologize for that. Certainly if not apologize, he would correct the record.

I am pleased he has recognized there is more than myself and others here from rural Manitoba, and these issues are issues for all of Manitoba. We are very proud to represent rural constituencies where social allowances are an issue, whether you live in Swan River, or in Minnedosa or in other areas of this province. I would urge him not to portray this as simply an urban issue.

The member has asked about the guidelines. These are policy guidelines and we have made some changes to make this more flexible and to have municipalities look at not only the employment that might be available but also the educational requirements and allow them the flexibility to allow students who want to restart their high school career, who cannot live at home or have not lived at home for some time, if they have educational aspirations which would have them restart their high school career, and if they have no family support and they have not quit a job, we have sent some new guidelines to the municipalities.

I am pleased that our largest municipality, the City of Winnipeg, has spoken very favourably on this. I would be pleased in the coming days to give the member some further understanding and something on paper vis-à-vis these guidelines.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, I would like to thank the minister for offering to give me the guidelines in writing. I appreciate that offer. I will be looking forward to that.

Unfortunately, I was not at the minister's press conference and neither were our staff because he said it would start at four o'clock, and he started it at 10 to four when the bells were ringing.

However, I have heard some comments from the media, and I would like to clarify and ask the minister directly some questions based on what I heard he said. For example, the minister is quoted as saying that a student cannot leave a job to go back to school. I wonder if the minister could clarify the rules around leaving employment to go back to school.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, we have frequently thought over here that members opposite rely on the media for information. I am not surprised that the member has now confirmed that, that there is not much understanding of these issues, and that research that is done, while I would not want to characterize it as inadequate, and I know the member did not use that word, but I would almost think that he might want to look at the complement of staff he has around him if he is receiving insufficient explanation and would offer to provide him with that information if he wanted to contact me earlier and privately. We would be pleased to give him a briefing on this. I know he was particularly thankful at the briefing we gave on Bill 30. We tried to give as much information around that.

* (2240)

At any time that the member might want to get a better understanding of issues that are either provincial issues or constituency issues, I would be pleased to make staff available to give him that sort of education in the issues that surround the Department of Family Services.

Mr. Martindale: I am sorry, Madam Chairperson, but I missed the answer that I was looking for about the rules around leaving a job in order to go back to school.

Could the minister answer that particular question, please?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I am pleased that the member does have support within his caucus to try and get an understanding of these issues.

I would explain to the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), as well as the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that what we have indicated is that the recipients who have attended school and are now in the world of work will not qualify for student social allowances by quitting a job that they have at the present time to return to high school.

We are looking at the dual issue of attaining an education and finding work. These are very difficult economic times, and for those who are already in the workforce, we are telling municipalities that they will not qualify for student social assistance if they are currently working and want to quit a job to become part of this program.

Mr. Martindale: Could the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) tell me what the rules are regarding students who leave home and whether or not they will be allowed a rental allowance?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Yes. What we are indicating to municipalities is that students who are living at home and who want to restart their high school education, we would give them some support for their living expenses, but not for their residential requirements.

Mr. Martindale: Does this apply to students who are over 18 and living at home, because I have recently had a phone call from a constituent who is concerned about her daughter who is turning 18 and is still enrolled at Sisler High School? Could the minister tell me if, as a result of these guideline changes, this student will be given some support for food, clothing and personal needs while she is living at home, although over 18?

Mr. Gilleshammer: The member is entering into the same lack of understanding as the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Edwards) when he thinks that this program is for children who are part of the school system. This program is an adult program and is applicable to adults. The caseload that the previous program encompassed was basically adults from 18 to 24 years of age.

Children can avail themselves of the public school system at no cost and are part of the child

welfare community, so there is a major distinction. I think the member knows that and perhaps maybe has been listening to the member for St. James (Mr. Edwards), and has gotten confused on this.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I take it from the minister's answer that the previous rule about having to be out of school for two years before re-enrolling still applies. Is that correct?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, what we have announced today is the intention to give municipalities greater flexibility in how they deal with clients who are employable, who are part of the municipal caseload. We have indicated to them that they no longer will be encumbered by having those students take only two courses, but will have greater flexibility in allowing them to take additional courses if they have an educational plan.

For many of those clients, the world of work is what beckons them and what they wish to access. However, for those who want to complete their secondary education, we are going to allow the municipalities more flexibility in dealing with them, and this is basically what the major municipality in this province asked for at the committee hearings. We are pleased to accede today to that request.

Mr. Martindale: Does greater flexibility mean that they can be enrolled full time as students?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, that would be consistent with our thinking on this issue. However, the municipal government will take the lead on this, and their counsellors will deal with those issues on a case-by-case basis. For some, it would involve getting directly involved in the world of work, and that is where those clients want to be. For others, they may wish to pursue the completion of their secondary education, and if taking a full course load meets with a particular educational and job search plan, that will certainly be permitted.

Mr. Martindale: Going back to my previous example of parents who are on social assistance, a child turns 18, still living at home, wanting to continue being enrolled in high school full time, is there social assistance available to that family to help pay for the living expenses of that individual after they are 18 and living at home?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, the member is referencing a hypothetical case where perhaps the family is on provincial social assistance, with a child reaching the age of majority who may also be on social assistance, who will become part of the

municipal caseload. But there may be further complications to that in that if as a single parent, there are no longer any children who would make that person a single parent qualifying for provincial social assistance, they may be in a situation where they both want to access provincial social assistance.

What I am saying to the member is, there are very many variables here, and I guess what I would assure the member is that they would get fair treatment under the regulations that exist and that are being brought forward by the government.

Mr. Martindale: I will be writing the minister about a particular case.

Similarly with SOSAR, I would like to move on to the program that used to exist to help single parents attend university full time when they were on social assistance. I will also be writing the minister about a particular case that has come to my attention, the same one I brought to his attention in Question Period, and ask the minister to make an exception on compassionate grounds or to use discretion to allow this person to finish the last six months of her university education.

But I would like to ask some general questions, once again ask the minister why this excellent program was terminated. This was a program that allowed individuals to get a university education, and therefore to become independent. I am only sorry that we do not have time, and the rules prohibit preambles on our second and third questions in Question Period, but it seems to me that this is something that—[interjection] Well, we certainly try to sneak in as much information as we can in the question, you know in our carefully crafted one-sentence questions.

* (2250)

What I would have liked to have done, but what I can do now is to emphasize the fact that this program helped many students in the past become independent, independent from government support, independent from welfare because they got an education and education pays.

This Conference Board of Canada report that I was quoting from earlier talks about education as an investment. I am sure the minister agrees with that. I am sure that this minister agrees that helping people to get an education, particularly post high school, post secondary education is the key to their future, to quote their throne speech, and does

indeed get people out of the system and off social assistance.

I talked to someone today who is a social worker who was enrolled in the SOSAR program for three or four years, got a degree in social work, and now she tells me she is off the system. She is working full time. She pays her own daycare. The province is not even subsidizing her daycare. So it seems to me that the taxpayers are better off, the government is better off, this minister should be happier. Social assistance is one of the few budgets of this government that is growing every year because of the recession, so it only seems logical to me that this government should want to support programs like that.

So I would like to ask the minister what is the rationale. Why was the SOSAR program terminated? Do you not believe in it anymore, and what is going to happen to these individuals?

I know the minister is going to say they should take out a student loan, but the example that I am going to write the minister about, this individual was told, well, get a student loan. She estimates it will cost \$7,000. She says they might as well have told me \$70,000. I believe that is the advice she was given at the welfare appeal board.

I know I have asked a number of questions, but basically it boils down to one philosophical question that I would like the minister to answer please.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I appreciate the member does need to collect his thoughts, and I look forward to receiving that letter. I can assure you we will give you a timely answer.

Mr. Martindale: I appreciate the minister will get back to me, as he always does, on a particular case, but I would still like to have the minister answer the question about why the program was terminated.

You know, we are not just concerned about one individual who approached me and also approached the member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray). In fact, the member for Crescentwood wrote the letter to the minister about this on behalf of this individual, I believe dated July 15, but I am still concerned about the program. Why did this government terminate this particular program?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I am pleased that the member is interested in the correspondence from the Liberal Party, and perhaps that member will share the correspondence and the answer with him. My

understanding of the activities here today is that the ministers are here to respond to questions regarding their department, and if the member wants to ask questions of other ministers, I am sure the House leader will be pleased to have those other ministers present themselves, if not today, at the next sitting.

Mr. Martindale: I guess I should have anticipated that this minister was going to pass the buck to the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey). My understanding is that the decision to terminate it was made by his department, and now those kinds of training programs are in the Department of Education. But the program does not exist anymore, so the Minister of Education probably will not have any answers either. We will request the Minister of Education and see if she can provide the answers that this minister will not.

Now, on a number of occasions in the past, I have complimented the Minister of Family Services.

Point of Order

Mr. Gilleshammer: On a point of order, I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the member for Burrows on those many occasions where he has complimented me. I look forward to future comments.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable minister does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, the next thing I was going to say is that when I have complimented this minister, I have usually regretted it, and I would like to give an example of another one. For example, we sat in committee and passed Bill 30, the legislation regarding vulnerable persons, and I complimented this minister for having wide consultation. Well, now I am beginning to question how really wide that consultation was. Well, I will get to that by asking a series of questions, and the first one is, when does the Minister of Family Services plan to make public the report of the review committee examining legislation affecting adult Manitobans living with a mental disability as vulnerable persons, which is dated November 29, 1991?

Mr. Gilleshammer: I do not know whether the member meant to get that personal or not, but I did hear him say that often his instincts are kindly and

supportive and correct, and then he gets into some conflict with the rest of his caucus on where they think he should be and that he should be critical and condemning and negative. I would urge you not to listen to your colleagues but to follow your calling and speak your mind and to sort of be that honest and kind and caring person that I think you are.

The member is asking a question about Bill 30. Yes, we did do widespread consultation, and I know the member talked to many, many people in the community which reflected that. We had a number of people present at committee who also indicated that there was widespread support for the legislation. I can tell you that with some minor amendments, that I believe were unanimous, those people who had some minor concerns—

An Honourable Member: Not my amendments. You voted down my amendments.

Mr. Gillehammer: Well, we are not talking about amendments that failed; we were talking about amendments that passed. The amendments that were supported, unanimously supported by the committee were met with a good degree of favour.

I can tell you that since those amendments were passed we have had a number of phone calls in support, and from members, feeling that this legislation was very progressive legislation that addresses a particular problem, a number of problems. I can tell you that we are going to work with that legislation, work with the advocacy groups out there, and over a period of many months bring this legislation into practice. I am pleased that we not only had the support of my honourable friend's party but the second opposition party and advocacy groups in the community, and there seems to be widespread support for the legislation. We will do our very best within the department of bringing that forward in a timely fashion.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, I would like to tell the minister that when I ask questions in Question Period and I take positions on bills, my colleagues and my party totally support me because our positions and our questions are vetted with caucus. So the minister does not need to try to stir up division. There is no division. I have support on my positions.

The minister did not answer the question so I will repeat it. When does the minister plan to make public the report called Towards the Recognition

and Enhancement of Rights of Vulnerable Persons Living with a Mental Disability which is dated November 29, 1991?

Mr. Gillehammer: Madam Chair, I guess I am a little upset that there is just one mindset over there, that there is complete agreement on each and every issue, that the honourable member would join other caucus colleagues to support various initiatives. I am particularly disturbed that the member, and he is speaking for his entire caucus—and I think he is maybe even caucus chair or caucus co-chair—that they would support the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) who is against the ski hill development in the Russell area, that every one of those members opposite condemn that project, are against that project, oppose that project, oppose any development in that area which would bring about a wonderful recreational facility in the Asessippi valley.

* (2300)

I cannot believe that there was not a tremendous fight in caucus. Yet, they have come out of caucus all agreeing that ski hill should not be built, that they are antidevelopment, that they are against recreation, that they will oppose any kind of development like that. I suspect that they also support the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) who is supporting the government of Saskatchewan which is anti-co-op, that they are in support of the Saskatchewan government who want to put a gun to the head of co-ops not only in Saskatchewan but in Manitoba and say that we are completely against co-ops, that we will not negotiate with you, that we will not listen to you, that we are completely against you.

Of course, they are also all of the same mindset then on the PMU industry, an industry that is a lifesaver in rural Manitoba that brings forward a thousand jobs, and a tremendous increase in the horse population, the number of farms, the product that is very necessary in medical terms. What the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is saying, that while they may have some disagreements in caucus they all come to the House, they all come to the public, with the same mind-set, that they are anti ski hill, that they are anti-PMU, that they are antidevelopment, that they are even against the co-ops.

I know the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) organized a meeting in Brandon

with the Saskatchewan government where they would not support the co-op for Minnedosa; they would not support the co-op from Brandon; they would not support the co-op from Wawanessa. I cannot believe that members opposite sit there silently and follow the member for Brandon East and they do not stand up against him and say, you know, I believe the Saskatchewan government is wrong. I believe that they should get there and negotiate with the co-ops. But no, we have to put a gun to their head.

I know the member for Burrows would like to speak out in favour of Manitobans, and I cannot believe the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). Her brother told me that his land was rented to a PMU operator, and she is against PMU operations. I am sure there are co-ops in the Swan River Valley. I am sure that maybe even some of her constituents would like to ski, and they are against the development of a ski facility in the Russell area.

I can tell you that a man who had a tremendous participation in the development of the PMU industry, Reg Forbes, has written an open letter to the member for Brandon East. I would hope that he would get out of the bunker and respond to that. I know he is trying to take credit for the start-up and the support of the NDP government for the PMU industry, but I can tell you that producers in western Manitoba do not believe that.

I think the member for Burrows, who is saying that all NDPers think the same, that they caucus all these things and that they all firmly believe this, may want to change his mind on that. I know the member for Swan River may want to change her mind. I would hope that, on a number of issues, she would not vote for some of the stands that the NDP are taking.

So I am disappointed in the member for Burrows, who I believe is an honest man who has had a training that would lead me to believe that he would be honest and forthright on issues and would want to have even some independent thinking on certain issues, yet he comes to the House and tells us they all think the same. On some major issues, I would think that maybe he would want to break away from some of the thinking that is lodged in that particular party and maybe even break away from the party in Saskatchewan who are so anti-co-op.

I am disappointed and I would hope, given some of the discussions that take place over today and tomorrow and whenever this House ends, that maybe he would say, hey, there is some independent thinking over here and we are not all together on these issues. If he cannot support the PMU operators, if he cannot support the co-ops, maybe he could see himself clear to support the ski hill, maybe he would be for recreation in the Westman area. I would think that there might even be a fellow traveller from Saskatchewan that might like to come over and ski.

So I would urge the member to have his independent thinking come forward a little and not be afraid to speak out against those front benchers, who were once in cabinet, who were a good part of leading us to a road of destruction. I would hope maybe the member for Burrows might have some independent thinking—

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, obviously this minister is not going to answer that question, so I will move on to another area.

The assistant deputy minister of Health has sent a letter to all clients of the Manitoba ostomy program. Now, some of those clients happen to be clients of the department of Income Security, and some of them have phoned us and said, does this policy apply to us? Unfortunately, the department of Income Security, or at least one of the regional offices, did not know about this letter. We very kindly faxed this letter to the staff of the Minister of Family Services so that they would know about it.

Subsequently, I asked questions in Question Period, and we have been talking to this individual. Somebody in the minister's department phoned the individual and had to explain how they get their ostomy supplies and how the billing works because the person who phoned was not aware.

So I would like to ask the minister, since I asked in Question Period about this, if he has had some time to sort it out and if the minister is willing to send a letter to all of those clients in his department informing them whether or not this policy applies to them or not. Now it is our understanding that it does not, but would the minister correspond with these people and clarify for them what the real situation is?

Mr. Gillehammer: Madam Chairperson, the member has said something very interesting. He is

saying that he was afraid that there were Manitobans out there that did not understand something that he does not understand. So to further confuse them, he has sent them all a letter indicating that we think this was what the government meant, but we are going to do a little fearmongering and have you further misunderstand this.

I can tell you that I have listened here intently for days about this whole debate, but this is the first time anyone from that party has admitted that they have actively sent letters to misrepresent the issue, to confuse Manitobans. I am pleased that member has put that on the record, because that is exactly what I told him that other day, that the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) should be ashamed of himself for putting false information on the record, for being factually inaccurate. Now the member is saying, because we think that is what happened, we sent more letters out to confuse the people.

I would like the member to stand up and say, you know, given this explanation, we are wrong. Maybe we should send those people another letter and say, you know, the information we are sharing with you, we are not sure about. But what the member is saying is that they want to confuse the public; they want to do that fearmongering with the public; they want to misrepresent the facts and, as a result, scare a lot of people.

I am pleased the member put that on the record today, and I would like him to further clarify that.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, I would be very pleased to clarify. I am going to table the letter signed by Betty Havens, assistant deputy minister in the Department of Health. This is the only letter that I have referred to, and I will table a copy of it now.

I have not written to any ostomy patient in Manitoba. This is a letter which was sent to us and the only letter that I referred to.

Point of Order

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Point of order, Madam Chair, I am glad that my honourable friend now has corrected another misrepresented fact that he put on the record earlier on that I had sent a letter out to all ostomists. He now has finally told the truth.

Madam Chairperson: The honourable Minister of Health does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, another frivolous point of order because the minister knows that in Question Period I referred to the assistant deputy minister of Health. It is in Hansard. The minister can look it up if he wishes.

* (2310)

The only letter that I have sent is the letter that our research staff sent to an Income Security office because they had not seen the letter that some of their clients received. So we provided the letter from the assistant deputy minister of Health so that they could help this individual who was phoning us for advice.

But it is up to the Minister responsible for Income Security to clarify the situation for these individuals, preferably by communicating to them and telling them whether or not the program applies to them. We understand that it does not, but I think it would be much better if they heard this directly from the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer).

So I am asking him, will he inform this individual and others who are on social assistance who are ostomy patients who also received this letter, so that they know what the real situation is?

Mr. Gilleshammer: Well, I am aghast that the member refers to this as a frivolous issue. The member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has been standing here for weeks and weeks talking about an issue that is a life-and-death issue, an issue on which he has put facts on the record which are inaccurate. Now the member says it is a frivolous issue.

Now he also says that his research staff is sending letters out to correct impressions that are out in the community which have been brought about by the member for Kildonan and other members of the NDP. He described those actions as frivolous, and their research staff is further compounding it by sending letters out.

There is no wonder that there is confusion in some minds out there in some parts of the community. What the member is saying, and I think he is smiling and gloating a bit and saying we have been pretty successful in muddying the waters out there.

I think it is a time for honesty, and I think it is time, and I know the member has a difficult time with this, but he might want to distance himself from the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) who has been factually inaccurate, who has sat here and stood here day after day to put his thoughts on the record. Now the member is saying their research staff is sending letters out to the community to further muddy the waters.

There is no wonder that there is confusion out there in the minds of some who listen to the NDP, who listen to the Health critic, who listen to the Leader and have been misled. I would dare say, it may even be deliberately misled.

I would think the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) is feeling some discomfort with all of us and may want to correct the record. I would say that the NDP caucus may want to look and see what their caucus research is sending out.

The member is saying that the NDP caucus is trying to make the issue right out there. Please, I mean, who is going to believe that? We know why the NDP is doing this, and the member is just confirming that their research staff is now sending more letters out to confuse the issue.

Mr. Martindale: Madam Chairperson, for the final time, I will ask the minister if he is willing to clarify the situation with his clients.

I would like to say once again that the only letter that was sent was the letter from the assistant deputy minister of Health, and it was faxed to an Income Security office. It was not sent to any of his clients. It was faxed on request to an Income Security office.

But this is the opportunity for the minister to correct on the record or to clarify so that we can tell people what the situation is, and he can tell his clients and Income Security whether or not this letter applies to them because we would like to inform them.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Madam Chairperson, it is absolutely horrifying for Manitobans that they would have to rely on the NDP caucus to clarify government policy. We know what the NDP caucus is there for. We know the tactics of the NDP caucus, and the member must be terribly, terribly, in his mind and his heart, uncomfortable being associated with that NDP caucus doing what they are doing to muddy the waters out there on health care issues.

The member is asking me to respond to letters. I have had one letter. We have had no letters in my office, no letters in our department. The only letter that has come forward is one written on Friday by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), scratched out on letterhead with his picture placed on it to say, would you clarify this issue? That is a prime example how this is not an issue in the public mind. This is not a public issue; this is an issue manufactured, created and promoted by the NDP caucus. That is symptomatic of what he has been talking about tonight, about health care, about all of the health care reforms and about this particular issue. Not one phone call to my office, not one letter to my office, the only letter, the letter from that member for Burrows with his picture on the letterhead asking me to respond to one of his constituents whom he has generated to ask the question.

I can tell you we will do that, but I can tell you that the member must feel terribly uncomfortable being part of a caucus that is writing letters trying to clarify a number of issues that he knows are wrong. I know in his heart of hearts he may want to dissociate himself from the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and this caucus, and I think this is a time when you better listen to that inner feeling within you and do the right thing.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Chairperson, I have several questions that I would like to ask of various ministers that relate to several issues in the rural community.

I have a question that I would like to ask the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), and it relates to the flooding that just took place in the Swan River area and, in particular, in the community of Minitonas. The minister is aware that the mayor, Mr. Hart, has raised some serious concerns about the drainage ditch, the government drain, that ended up flowing back into the town and causing the flooding problems there.

In fact, when I look at—what I have here is a copy of a news report where Mr. Enns, the minister, had said that he does not—first of all, the community of Minitonas had asked that this ditch be moved and drained, the water drained away from the community. In this clip from 24 Hours, there is a quote here that the minister does not want to move the ditch to prevent flooding; he wants to build a new dam and a drainage system to protect the lands around Minitonas.

I want to ask the Minister of Natural Resources, if he has had any communication with the Village of Minitonas since the flooding and whether or not he is seriously committed to improving that drainage ditch to take the water away from Minitonas, and if he is, in fact, looking at a dam system as he did say when he was talking to the reporter as a means of preventing flooding in that community and in other communities in the Swan River area.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): I will try to respond to the member's questions. I am currently awaiting a detailed report of those particular structures that have caused difficulties or, indeed, have been damaged as a result of the flooding situation in the member's constituency in Swan River. That has not arrived on my desk yet, but I am expecting it shortly, just as the member would appreciate that the urgency of the kind of things that I have to look at is perhaps a little different from my colleague, the Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger), whose infrastructures, roads and bridges have either collapsed or suffered serious failures and need to be addressed immediately.

The kind of work that the honourable member is suggesting would have to be looked at and budgeted for, and I have to acknowledge that I do not have any capital monies for that particular drainage improvement or redirecting the course of that drainage. I have . . . on that matter, and I will be asking my staff to provide me with a proposal and estimates as to what can be done.

I have been, quite frankly, soliciting the honourable member's support, which she, I know, is capable of doing, encouraging my government, my Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) to ensure that this department, which houses the Water Resources shop, receives adequate consideration in the overall distribution of government funds to carry out these responsibilities.

I must say, Madam Chairperson, not just to the honourable member opposite but, indeed, to many members that are affected by this—I know my colleague the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) and, indeed, others, the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner)—that it sometimes takes extreme water conditions that we are now suffering to remind people that, although these conditions only arrive, hopefully, once every 10 years or maybe less often, they do have a tendency of arriving, and arriving with a vengeance.

We have been lulled somewhat by going through most of the '80s in moderate, in fact, even in some instances, drought conditions, to lose sight of the fact that the works that the Water Resources Branch does are extremely important to communities, to the farmers involved and, indeed, important to the overall ability to withstand these kinds of natural disasters.

* (2320)

Now, the honourable member raises a point that she has raised—I think the very first time that I had the privilege of meeting the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk)—in fact, I believe it was before she was an elected member, if my memory serves me right—she made such a lasting impression on me. I do not forget these occasions.

She raised the question of a project that is near and dear to some of the residents of her constituency, including the member, a project to impound water and to restrict water flow. It would not only offer—as I know and I have experienced and as members that have experienced this, my colleague, the member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) understands this—in such projects like Stephenfield, which supply communities like Morden not only with a reasonable supply, an adequate supply of water, but some good recreational opportunities as well.

These are always the multipurpose benefits behind these projects; in her instance, it would, I really believe—and I think that was the original thing. Because of the geography of the land, it is important to slow down the velocity and the runoff of waters when we do get these heavy rains. That is what is causing the damages. I am asking the department, I suspect that there will be several millions of dollars of damage that has been done because of water coming off the escarpment, off the Duck Mountains in the manner in which it does under these conditions that causes damage, so there are these reasons.

I say to the honourable member in all good faith that I had hoped that I could encourage the federal agency, the PFRA people, to be involved in helping with the funding of that project, because these are the kinds of projects that, throughout the province, they normally are prepared to fund. It was with some regret that earlier on in my return to the ministry I found out that, regrettably, the PFRA people had this one on a fairly low priority. The

year that we still had some funds available we had four other projects, the Jackson Dam, improvements to the Stephenfield Dam, improvements to—my memory escapes me, but there were four projects which the federal government had agreed to share on a 50-50 or a 40-60 basis with us, and the decision was to use our limited capital funds on those projects.

Madam Chair, I would like to be in a position, and I will undertake to correspond with the honourable member in a few weeks time when this reporting from field staff is more or less complete. There is also a possibility, I would like to say to her—and I need to consult with my colleagues—that if we can put together all the costs associated with the floodwaters in that area as a result of that thing, under some emergency support program which would provide some additional federal dollars as well, the chances of doing some of the these projects is, of course, improved.

I have been asked by my Finance department, by my government, that we are doing this inventory of damage partly for that reason, as is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). We are also asking the municipalities to provide us with their costs, which they will, so that we can see what, in fact, the damage to infrastructure totals up to be. That will determine the extent to which we may have some federal government support under the emergency formula that I think the honourable member is conversant with.

Ms. Wowchuk: I hope that the minister is sincere and that he will look at every opportunity there is to address the concern that has been raised by the people of Minitonas with this drainage ditch, and if there is an opportunity to make this correction through the emergency measures funding formula, it would certainly be a benefit.

The minister mentioned the other project that I am concerned about on the north Duck River headwater storage, and indeed that project was very close to having been put in place until there was a change in government and for some reason it dropped to the bottom of the list as far as priorities went. We were quite disappointed with that because it is important to the area that I live in. In fact, had that been in place there would have been less damage downstream. There was a bridge that was very close to going, was closed down, because of the water coming down that river.

I hope that the minister will look into these projects, and I look forward to hearing any information he can provide to the community on that particular matter.

I want to touch on one other area that falls under the area of Natural Resources, and that is bear licence allocation. I had written to the minister last year, I believe, and he had had communication from several people who are concerned that the number of bear licences are being concentrated into the hands of larger operators, and there is not any opportunity for smaller operations to expand or even get started.

We had suggested to the minister that since the allocation of bear licence took place some eight to 10 years ago, in that range, somewhere in there, whether it was not possibly time to review the allocations of those licences and look at possibly redistribution of some of them that are sitting idle, and thus giving the opportunity for smaller operators to expand their operations.

The other area on bear licence is that some of these operators who have bear tags that are not licensed for outfitters are looking to convert those tags. We had also asked the minister if he would review that.

Can the minister tell us then whether he has assigned anybody on his staff to review the allocation of licence to outfitters and also look at the other idea of whether those hunting—the tags that are not attached to hunting licences for outfitters, whether any consideration is being given to changing those licences?

Mr. Enns: Madam Chairperson, I wish to speak softly, just in case Carla hears this, because we are talking about shooting bears and trapping bears and skinning them and doing all those kind of things to them.

An Honourable Member: Was that Rosann saying we should skin the bears?

* (2330)

Mr. Enns: I would not want to upset the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) at this stage of this session because one never knows, it could prolong the session.

But to the honourable member Rosann, she strikes on a point that is very valid. I can indicate to her that there is a review that has, in my understanding, just about completed. I share the

member's concern that the allocation system was established some seven or eight years ago. They have had some arbitrary features about it. I am not happy in the manner in which the department is allocating the licences. There needs to be some better method found to enable new entries into the outfitting to gain access to these tags. I share her concern that in some instances, too many of the tags currently allocated are in the hands of very few people.

So essentially, I can tell her that—and I have a request from her colleague, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), that addresses the same issue—in this case, is transfer it seems. Under the current rules, the tags are not transferable or saleable, and I do not know whether that is what we want to do, but I need to find some way of freeing up the rigidity of the current allocation system.

On a more positive note, I can inform the honourable member that while, you know, our data on bears is not as sophisticated as I would like it to be, all indications are that bear population is up, that the bear population is extremely healthy and, if anything, is increasing. Now, some of that may have to do with the fact, as an aftermath of the fires of '88 and '89, it certainly improves the habitat for bears as it does for many other wildlife species, but my reports from field officers is that the bear population is healthy, and we can indeed and are looking at making more tags available in the coming year.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chair, I want to thank the minister for the answer, and I look forward to seeing that report. Hopefully, we can resolve some of the concerns that have been raised by both the constituents of the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) and also the constituents in my area.

I want to ask a question of the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) with regard to the Swan River airport. It is an issue that I have raised many times, and I have attempted through private members' bill to change the taxation system on the Swan River airport so that it is equivalent to what—that they become tax exempt as the airport in Neepawa is. Unfortunately, that bill could not pass because it deals with money, and opposition members are not allowed to deal with that, but I have asked the Minister of Rural Development whether he would look into this matter and address the concerns of the people of Swan River and the surrounding areas that are involved in that airport.

I just want to ask him where he is on that, whether he has any intention of dealing with that issue that is a concern to the people in the Swan River Valley?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Chairperson, yes, it is true that the member for Swan River has indeed raised this issue with me on several occasions and attempted to introduce a bill to exempt the Swan River airport from taxation. However, the issue is much more complex than it appears on the surface because of the fact that one should consult with his/her community before one moves ahead with such type of legislation. Although I know the member for Swan River has discussed this issue with several members from her community, not everyone is agreed that that is the approach that should be taken.

Indeed there are members who are on council and hold prominent roles in that community who feel that perhaps this is not the proper approach to take since there are other buildings and joint initiatives in communities, such as libraries, et cetera. So that would also have an impact if we were to exempt one particular facility in a community.

Let me say to the member for Swan River that I am encouraged by the fact that she looks at the importance of such a facility as an airport in a community like Swan River, because not only does it act as a service to the community, but it also draws to that community potential industries that might be interested in locating in that community. Indeed, I would hope that as a member representing a rural community, she would talk to some of her colleagues about the importance of economic development in rural Manitoba. Now I know we have talked about this before, but indeed it is important for her as a rural member to inform her colleagues, such as her seatmate, the environmental critic, for example, for the NDP party, who has put her name to documents which would suggest that certain operations which lend themselves to agriculture and to rural activity should perhaps undergo some strict environmental assessments.

Madam Chair, this means that there could very well be a danger to some of these operations closing down, like the PMU operations, in our province. This is an important type of industry in rural Manitoba and indeed in her area, in that Swan

River region, where we have some of the largest PMU operators in the province.

Now, I get a little sensitive about PMU operations because that is an extremely important industry in rural Manitoba. I have not heard the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) stand in her place and denounce the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) for the approach that she has taken with regard to the attack on PMU operators in our province and indeed the Ayerst industry. I think it is time that she perhaps would stand in her place and put on record where she stands and the fact that she does not support the approach that has been taken by the member for Radisson. I would hope that she would encourage her colleague the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) to do the same.

This is a disturbing issue for people in rural Manitoba, especially in the western side of the province where we have a number of large PMU farms which add considerably to the economy of our province. So although the member for Swan River and I have had many discussions about the importance of rural development, and I know that deep down she believes in a healthy rural environment because that is where her home is—her family certainly have represented the area of Swan River. As a matter of fact, I am told that a member of her family leases land to a PMU operator. [interjection] And she says that we do. So I would hope that she would take a more proactive stance when it comes to talking about the importance of that industry not only to her area but to our province.

I hope in the next question, the member for Swan River is really going to put on the record where she stands on the industry with regard to her area and Manitoba.

It does not stop there. You know, Madam Chair, airports are an important service area to our rural communities because we have many people who need to get in and out of some of these communities quickly to do their business and get back to their home, whether it is here in Winnipeg or elsewhere in our country. The globe is shrinking. Communications are very important in this day and age.

If we are against economic development, and it does not matter whether it is the PMU industry or whether it is a ski hill which will provide jobs, yes, it is in my own constituency, and I would love to see

the project go ahead. But every time we talk about economic development in rural Manitoba, we have some member from the New Democratic Party stand up and object to rural development.

I understand the fact that they know very little about rural Manitoba, but there are some members in their midst that should have a very good knowledge about rural Manitoba. The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) is one of those individuals who in fact does have. She does have and I congratulate her for that, an interest in rural Manitoba, but I think she needs to stand up and be counted. She needs to take her member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) to task about her approach to economic development in rural Manitoba.

Madam Chair, I have to also mention one other issue. We heard about the need for water in rural Manitoba to provide industries the ability to produce and to add value to their product. Even before the assessments are done, even before the verdict is out on the project, we have the New Democrats standing up in this House and criticizing the project, criticizing the initiative, before there has been an adequate assessment done of the project.

I would ask that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), who understands these elements, I know she understands these issues, that she would stand up in her place and perhaps talk to her members, to her colleagues, and inform them that perhaps we should wait for the assessments before we jump into the criticism of projects and before we know the value of these projects, because, Madam Chair, we are not going to develop this province with that kind of an attitude.

* (2340)

We need to work together in order to be able to develop our province and in order to be able to allow the rural part of our province to also take an active role in the progress that we have in this province. So, Madam Chair, I look forward to working with the member for Swan River on these initiatives.

With regard to the Swan River airport, I think that as time goes along we will certainly be talking to the community and seeing where it is they stand on the issue of exempting the airport, but it is not an easy one, and it is not a simple one, Madam Chair.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Chair, I am really surprised that the minister should say that all the community is in support of this, because I have

resolutions that are passed by each council in the Swan River area that is affiliated to this airport. I got them from all the municipalities that have asked that this amendment be made to taxation. I will provide the minister with those resolutions that were provided to me when I was first elected and when I was first asked to bring this issue forward.

If there is someone within the community—and I have a suspicion that I know which area where it might be coming from—if there is someone that has changed their mind on this, they certainly have not let me know or certainly have not asked me to continue pursuing this matter. So I will go back to the community, and if it is their wish that the matter not be pursued, certainly we will let it fall, but that is certainly a change from what I have heard.

Now, the member gets into the whole issue of the PMU and tries to imply that I am not supportive of the industry, and he has not heard my position on it. It is very clear. I have made my position very clearly known. The member across the way knows that I have been very supportive of all economic development in rural Manitoba. I have been disappointed in this government in the steps that they have taken in misleading rural Manitoba, telling them that they are going to create jobs and stimulate economic development, but in fact, they are draining money out of the rural community and not reinvesting all of it again.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) says that it is our intention to shut the PMU industry down. That is a pile of garbage, and he knows it. It is a pile of garbage.

Madam Chairperson, they accuse a member from this side of the House of lobbying to shut down the PMU industry, and her name was affiliated. She said that she did not give her permission to be on that, and we have to respect that.

I think that we saw clearly that the actions taken by the member for Brandon East when he tried to raise this as a matter of privilege that she had put false information on—[interjection] Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), pardon me—that he did not have a matter of privilege and there was not the adequate information out there, that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) was not involved with that petition. She did not sign the petition.

Now, clearly there are people of different views, and I think that we as rural members have the responsibility to make other people aware of how

valuable the industry is to rural Manitoba. We have that responsibility. But, we also, as farmers and people who work in rural Manitoba and, indeed, people who work in the cities, no matter what we are doing, we have a responsibility to protect the environment and to protect the resources.

As farm people, when we use soil, we do not have the right to abuse that soil. It should be there for future generations to use. If someone is questioning whether—

An Honourable Member: Are they not putting land into forage?

Ms. Wowchuk: Pardon me?

An Honourable Member: Are they not putting land into forage?

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, and they talk about—

An Honourable Member: Is that not a conservation approach?

Ms. Wowchuk: Of course it is. Now, I am not saying that it is not conservation. What I am saying is that when farmers use the soil, they have to protect it.

I know most people who do farm want the soil to be there for future generations to use. We have a responsibility to protect it and use it. When people are having another industry, if someone questions whether they are polluting, there is nothing wrong with questioning whether or not—there is nothing wrong with asking for an assessment.

As I understand, the affluence that comes out of the Ayerst operation in Brandon is cleaner than—

An Honourable Member: Well, say that publicly.

An Honourable Member: She is, it is on the record.

Ms. Wowchuk: Can I finish, please? It is my understanding that there is not a problem. If I have information of that, I am satisfied.

But I think that there is nothing wrong with asking for the information, ask for it. It is like any other business getting started, you can ask for the information. But that does not mean that you are—[interjection]

Madam Chairperson, if the member from Portage (Mr. Pallister) would just kindly sit quiet for a minute, I will finish my comments and then if he would like, he can put his comments on the record. If you would help him, Madam Chairperson.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

Ms. Wowchuk: Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and if the member for Portage has a question to ask, he should stand on his two feet and ask the question rather than shouting from the back row there.

Now, Madam Chairperson, I think the government latched onto this PMU issue because they are desperate in rural Manitoba. They have cut education, they have cut health care, and they have not created jobs in rural Manitoba. They promised jobs for Swan River with the REPAP, they did not deliver. [interjection] That is right.

But there are jobs in the PMU industry, and that is a good project, but the promised jobs in our area were in Repap. This government did not deliver on those jobs. They have cut back health care services; they have cut back home care services; they have cut back on education funding, and we are seeing rural Manitoba going down. We are not seeing rural communities growing.

They have latched onto this idea that they are going to blacken the NDP on the issue of PMU. We have said loud and clear, we support the PMU industry. I have said that I support the PMU industry.

I have talked to my constituents, and I have talked to the PMU operators in my area. I think that it is a very valuable industry, and people have the right to ask questions about it—

An Honourable Member: Legitimate questions.

Ms. Wowchuk: Yes, people have rights to ask questions, but for this government, for these members across the way to say that we do not support the PMU industry, again I will say is a pile of garbage, because that is exactly what it is. It is hogwash. They know clearly that we support the industry and when we were in government, when Howard Pawley was in government there were expansions made to the plant, but I see nothing wrong with people asking questions. We ask questions all the time about various issues. There is nothing wrong with asking questions.

* (2350)

Madam Chairperson, as the member has just reminded me, this is not a time for debate, it is a time to ask questions, I would like to ask the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) one more question if I might before I pass my time on to someone else. I want to ask him about an issue that is also important to rural Manitoba, to help us to

create jobs in rural Manitoba, and that is the gasification and extending of gas lines. I want to ask the Minister of Rural Development where they are on the study, when can we expect to see that study, and when can we expect to see natural gas expand into the Swan River area?

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I could not allow the member's comments to be left on the record without responding to some of the—well, I have to choose my words carefully, I suppose, but let me say that the words that she has put on the record pose questions in my mind as to the sincerity that this member has with regard to an industry that is very important in our province. Then she tries to downplay the effect that her colleague has had on the industry as a whole and in this province—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Rural Development is attempting to finish his comments.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, I find it almost amusing at the members opposite getting a little exercised over comments that I am making with regard to the response that we just heard or the question that was posed by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Now, she could not contain herself to asking questions. Rather, she had to go on and try to explain her position with regard to the PMU industry, but she did not clear the water at all, and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) gets a little exercised. I can tell you, if this were an issue that affected his community, he would be standing on his chair screaming about it.

Madam Chair, I have to tell you, you know, the member for Swan River can play down this issue as much as she likes, but when her colleague the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) makes a comparison—[interjection]

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, when the member for Radisson—[interjection]

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Rural Development has the floor.

Mr. Derkach: Madam Chair, as I was saying, when the member for Radisson compares Premarin to thalidomide, I ask the member for Swan River, is that the way you portray questions

with regard to an industry by putting the fear of God into people who are out there by comparing it to something like thalidomide? I ask the member for Swan River where she stands with regard to a statement like that, and why she did not stand in her place and completely reject that kind of an approach that her colleague the member for Radisson has taken on this issue. She says it is a trivial issue, and we are whipping it up—yes, because of the statements that were made by her colleague the member for Radisson. That cannot be forgotten.

Madam Chair, if the member feels that strongly about this industry, then I ask her party to answer the letter that was written by Mr. Reg Forbes. I would like to quote the last paragraph when he says, I challenge Ms. Cerilli and her friends in the animal rights movement and the environmental activities to name the industries which are more environmentally friendly than the PMU industry and to name the livestock enterprises which are more kind to animals. I look forward to seeing the two lists published in this publication, and I look forward to a strong response from your party.

He is calling on the NDP to respond to those letters and that petition. Where is the response? I wonder if he will ever get a response.

Madam Chair, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) also indicated in her comments that this party, this government has done little for rural Manitoba. Let me just spend a few moments and explain what this government has really done for rural Manitoba, and I would like to start with today's announcement.

Today we announced another Grow Bond initiative, and this Grow Bond initiative is for \$417,000, I do believe, or \$413,000 in the community of Winkler for the expansion of Elias Woodwork. This will add something like—

Mr. Orchard: Leonard, do not say this; Carla might hear and try to shut them down.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Madam Chairperson, that is a just tiny example of the kind of activity that is going on throughout rural Manitoba. This will add an additional 20 jobs in that community. Do you know what that means to a community like Winkler?

I could not only talk about Elias Woodwork in Winkler, but I could talk about Rimer Alco in Morden. I could talk about the care company in

Teulon. We could talk about the REDI proposals that have gone out as approvals to the many industries throughout our province, creating jobs and creating wealth in our communities so that we can afford those social services that are so needed in our province.

Madam Chair, we are doing something constructive for rural Manitoba. When we introduced the REDI program, it was criticized by the New Democrats. When we introduced the Grow Bonds program, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was the one who led the charge of the criticism of the Grow Bonds program.

Madam Chair, now every time we come up with an initiative for rural Manitoba, as an example, the PMU initiative which will provide a thousand jobs to rural Manitoba, what do the New Democrats do? They are against the jobs that are created there.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): How come you lost 10,000 jobs?

Mr. Derkach: So the Leader of the Opposition says now he wants to add to that. He wants to add to the lost jobs by losing another thousand.

* (0000)

Well, Madam Chair, is PMU the only initiative? No. What happened with the proposed ski hill? We had the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) come forward again. Even while the project is in a formative stage, the member for Radisson is already fomenting some kind of fears about the fact that we are going to have an environmental problem here.

It goes on and on. When a community wants water, what does the member for Radisson do? Before the Clean Environment Commission even concludes its hearings, we have all kinds of fears being promoted by the member for Radisson. So this is the New Democratic approach to rural economic development.

The member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) asked a good question on rural gasification, because her community does require natural gas if they are going to go ahead with the initiative of the feedlots and also the ethanol plant.

Madam Chair, I can tell the member for Swan River that a great deal of work and energy has gone into the establishment of an approach to providing natural gas, at least to the communities where

there is a need for it, and Swan River is one of those communities.

Madam Chair, I can tell the member for Swan River that as soon as we have our numbers together and as soon as we can get working within that community where there are people who are interested in hooking on to natural gas, we will begin the process of working with those communities to ensure that that service is provided.

I know that the good people from Swan River have done a lot of work by themselves in trying to attract natural gas into the community. My

understanding is, they have met with gas suppliers now and are working very positively towards that initiative. I look forward to us being able to extend natural gas to, not only Swan River, but also other communities that really need it within this province, and we are working very aggressively at that.

Madam Chairperson: Order, please. As previously agreed, I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 10 a.m. tomorrow (Tuesday), with Mr. Speaker in the Chair.

Committee rise.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 26, 1993

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