



Fourth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

41 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	Liberal
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	NDP
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	NDP
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	Liberal
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	NDP
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	Liberal
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	NDP
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
MALLOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	NDP
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	NDP
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	PC
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	PC
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	PC
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	PC
NEUFELD, Harold	Rossmere	PC
ORCHARD, Donald, Hon.	Pembina	PC
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
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	NDP
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	NDP
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	NDP
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	NDP
<i>Vacant</i>	Rupertsland	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 4, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

* * *

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Conrad Hykawy, O. Carlsen, Don McDonald and others, requesting the Minister responsible for MPIC (Mr. Cummings) consider implementing no-fault auto insurance, capping insurance commissions and bringing other recommendations of the Kopstein report that the government has delayed acting on.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale). It complies with the privileges and practices of the House, and it complies with the rules (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

To the Legislature of the province of Manitoba

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the federal Government has brought in a new program called the Child Tax Benefit which takes effect in January 1993; and

WHEREAS social assistance programs are already well below the poverty line and any reductions will cause further hardship; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has still not decided whether to count the Child Tax Benefit; and

WHEREAS Family Allowance payments were exempt in Manitoba from social assistance; and

WHEREAS other provinces have already said that they will not tax this benefit.

WHEREAS the new Federal Child Tax Benefit, while it will not reduce poverty, will provide some badly needed money for low income Manitobans.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislature Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Family Services to consider exempting the Child Tax Benefit from provincial income support programs.

I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). It complies with the privileges and practices of the House, and it complies with the rules (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

To the Legislature of the province of Manitoba

WHEREAS each year smoke from stubble burning descends upon the province of Manitoba; and

WHEREAS the Parents Support Group of Children with Asthma has long criticized the harmful effects of stubble burning; and

WHEREAS the smoke caused from stubble burning is not healthy for the general public and tends to aggravate the problems of asthma sufferers and people with chronic lung problems; and

WHEREAS alternative practices to stubble burning are necessitated by the fact that the smoke can place some people in life-threatening situations; and

WHEREAS the 1987 Clean Environment Commission Report on Public Hearings, "Investigation of Smoke Problems from Agriculture Crop Residue and Peatland Burning," contained the recommendation that a review of the crop residue burning situation be conducted in five years' time, including a re-examination of the necessity for legislated regulatory control.

THEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly will urge the government of Manitoba to pass the necessary legislation/regulations which will restrict stubble burning in the province of Manitoba.

As in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

* * *

I also have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). It complies with the privileges and practices of the House, and it complies with the rules (by leave). Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

WHEREAS the provincial government has not implemented the major recommendation of the Kopstein report which was to bring in no-fault auto insurance; and

WHEREAS over four years ago, the Kopstein report found that if Manitoba adopted no-fault auto insurance it could have saved \$40 million; and

WHEREAS over two years ago, a second government report found that over \$63 million could be saved if Manitoba adopted the Quebec plan of no-fault auto insurance; and

WHEREAS the provincial cabinet this year after being extensively lobbied, rejected a business plan capping insurance commissions that would have saved Manitoba motorists a further \$2 million; and

WHEREAS the rates for auto insurance are now being raised on average by 9.5 percent to 14.5 percent when the inflation is less than 1.3 percent, making this the highest actual increase in the history of this province; and

WHEREAS one in five car drivers in this province will now face increases of 13.5 percent; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has not implemented other aspects of the implementation of the Kopstein report.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister responsible for MPIC (Mr. Cummings) to consider implementing no-fault auto insurance, capping insurance commissions, and bring in other recommendations of the Kopstein report that the government has delayed acting on.

* (1335)

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mr. Jack Relmer (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): To the honourable Legislative Assembly of Manitoba:

Your Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources presented the following as its first report.

Your committee met on Tuesday, March 2, 1993, at 7:30 p.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building

to consider the Annual Report of the Manitoba Energy Authority for the year ended March 31, 1992, together with the Financial Statements for the 15 months ended June 30, 1992.

Mr. Robert Brennan, President and Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Hydro, provided such information as was requested with respect to the Annual Report and business of the Manitoba Energy Authority.

Your committee has considered the Annual Report of the Manitoba Energy Authority for the year ended March 31, 1992, together with the Financial Statements for the 15 months ended June 30, 1992, and has adopted the same as presented.

Mr. Relmer: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Report 1992 for the Municipal Board.

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Report 1991-92 for the Seniors Directorate.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table two annual reports, one for the Ministry of Health and the second for the Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba.

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave of the House, on behalf of the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey), that she might revert back to Ministerial Statements after Question Period. There is a report being prepared on a major issue that she would like to report on at that time.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the honourable Minister of Education and Training to revert to Ministerial Statements and Tabling of Reports after Question Period?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): I am not quite prepared to give conditional leave not knowing what it is. We would be prepared to give leave—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Just for a ministerial statement. Is there leave? [agreed]

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon, from the Ste. Agathe School, ten Grade 9 students. They are under the direction of Mr. Robert Constable. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

Also this afternoon, we have from the Maples Collegiate, 30 English Language students. They are under the direction of Mr. Murray Goldenberg. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Immigrant Investor Fund Audits

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

On December 16, 1992, in the House, on questions raised on the Immigrant Investor Fund, the Premier said that the funds proposals are reviewed by the department as to the job creation benefits for the Manitoban economy, and based on that recommendation, a recommendation is made to Ottawa.

In the consultant's report which was released by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism on December 30, 1992, the report found: Our review has indicated a general lack of hard economic analysis documentation on specific investment proposals outside of the information provided by the promoters themselves.

This completely contradicts the allegation made in this House by the Premier.

I would like to ask the Premier: Has his government received the specific audits on the specific funds that were contracted by the government in their announcement in the new year?

* (1340)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition that there is an inconsistency, he is absolutely incorrect.

In terms of any inconsistency, that is the role and responsibility of Industry, Trade and Tourism officials to do the economic review. The suggestion of the auditor was that in some instances it did not go far enough. We have now implemented a policy whereby there will also, in conjunction with the internal review, be an independent review on any applications that come forward.

In terms of the specific individual audits of five separate funds that are being done by Deloitte & Touche, one is complete, four are pending, and when we receive all five audits, we will be making the necessary public statement at that time and dealing with the issue.

Immigrant Investor Fund Audits

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would point out to the minister that the report clearly said that the economic analysis was done by the promoters. In other words, Bob Kozminski and Jack Levit were doing the economic analysis, not the Premier's department in Industry, Trade and Tourism. That is right in the report on page 16, a point not highlighted in the minister's press release shortly after he received the report.

Mr. Speaker, we have received a copy of a letter indicating that not only financial audits are taking place in the five funds under the Immigrant Investor Fund, but also legal audits are taking place. I would like to ask the Premier: Since he is copied on this letter from one Mike Bessey, what type of legal investigations are being conducted by the Province of Manitoba, and who presently is doing the legal audit?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I would expect that the Leader of the Opposition would be complimenting us on being as thorough and as complete as possible, not only doing a financial audit but also a legal audit. It would seem to me that if you were interested in attempting to ensure that we get all the facts and all the information so that we can indeed judge based on actual evidence, not innuendo and not political muckraking, we would get all the information. That is what we are doing as a responsible government. That information then will be part of the background that will lead to the thorough and very, very comprehensive review that the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism will be able to then share with

the federal government and with all of the parties involved.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, I wrote the Premier in March 1991 on the Immigrant Investor Fund, and perhaps if he would have initiated the investigation at that point until a later point when it became an issue in the public media, perhaps we would be a year and a half ahead of where we are today in terms of the investments that are being made and reputation of Manitoba in terms of those investments with the careless attitude of the Premier's departments in terms of dealing with the proposals as indicated in the Crewson report.

The Premier never answered the question. Who is doing the legal audit? We have a copy of an untendered contract for some \$50,000 which specifies \$50,000 to go to Deloitte & Touche for legal counsel. We were aware that one Richard Shead was the former lawyer hired involved with this audit, but we note from Michael Bessey's memo, copied to the Premier, that a lawyer named D'Arcy McCaffrey is copied on the letter.

I would just like to ask the Premier: Is the former legal counsel dealing with this issue of a legal audit? Is he still dealing with it, or has the government had to hire new legal lawyers? Who got the \$50,000 that was untendered in the proposal that was released a couple of weeks ago?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I might indicate that the allegations that the member made in his letter of 1991 were totally unsubstantiated, did not address the issues that currently are under audit. They were just simply a cheap political ploy by the member to try and name some people whom he thought were associated with our party and imply that there were some things that were wrong with the fund because of that. As usual, he was up a blind alley and did not provide us with anything that was relevant to the issues that are being investigated today.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the information that the member has put forward is correct, although I will double check it, that the lawyer who is acting in this particular instance as counsel to the investigation is indeed D'Arcy McCaffrey.

Untendered Contracts Fleet Vehicle Maintenance

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Government Services.

We are seeing increasing evidence of the government bypassing the Provincial Auditor in contracting out auditing work to private firms. In fact, earlier today in the Public Accounts committee it was revealed that the Minister of Government Services has given out a contract for auditing fleet vehicles.

Would the minister at this time table that contract in the House and tell Manitobans who will be doing the work?

* (1345)

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, first of all, this government more than any other government, did not have a list like the previous government dealing with government services. When we took office, that particular government, when they were in government over there, had a list of many, many consultants whom they would only use. This new audit just approved by the SOA, there were six or seven proposals. I do not have all of them at my fingertips, but I will get the successful one for the member for the next sitting.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Speaker, would the minister release the criteria that were used to select the firm?

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have a list of people who are out there in the private sector. [interjection] They are in the phone book. There is a list of them.

First of all, there are people who come forward to the government, unlike the previous administration, who asked if they could participate in the audit. They go through a process; there is a grading of audits that recommends that auditor to that particular project.

Mr. Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the minister appears to be hiding this contract, and I would like to see some immediate action here and have the minister table a copy of that contract and the criteria that went into his making that decision.

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, the whole process of going through hiring auditors is a process that has been in practice for many, many years. People come forward and approach the government to participate. There is a grading schedule that is used to appoint those auditors.

Untendered Contracts Independent Audits

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the Liquor Control Commission, the Alcoholism Foundation of Manitoba, the Fleet Vehicles Branch, the Manitoba Lotteries no longer are going to be audited by the Provincial Auditor because this government is starting to contract out government agencies that were held accountable in the Public Accounts.

My question to the Minister of Finance is: Why has the government decided to contract out auditing responsibilities when the Provincial Auditor is quite able to provide this service and to ensure that as legislators we have a way in which we can put questions to the Provincial Auditor? We do not have the right to put the questions directly to these independent audits that the government is tending them to.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I find it strange the member asked that question. He asked it three times in Public Accounts committee. He got a full response at that time. As I said to him then, and I will say to you now and indeed to all the members of the House, the legislation that provides boards an opportunity to select, by way of some procedure, an auditor, either the Provincial Auditor or outside public sector auditors is permissive. It is the law of the land.

This Legislature has told Manitoba Hydro that it can engage the services of accountants, either with the Provincial Auditor's department or indeed outside accounting agencies. That is the law of the land. That indeed we have said to our boards and commissions to the extent that they set up a criteria to do so, that they bring forward, that they make public that criteria. The Crown Corporations Council has laid out that criteria, Mr. Speaker. There is a process in place. We are following that process.

Accountability

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, the government is contracting out. The Alcoholism Foundation and the Fleet Vehicles Branch are both agencies now that the board has selected from the minister, and they have been instructed obviously to set tender. The question is why are they doing that, because we do not have the opportunity as legislators in order to ask him specifically.

My question to the minister is: Why is the government moving to take accountability away from this Legislature?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, there are no dictates. The only dictate is the laws of the province, legislatively set into place by actions of this House, which said that boards and commissions can choose between the Provincial Auditor or outside agencies, so it is the law of the land.

I say to him, as I said to him this morning, Mr. Speaker, that the Provincial Auditor ultimately has an overview opportunity on all agencies and entities of government and is given the responsibility to report to this House if they find any wrongdoings with respect to any activities within any Crowns or any agencies or any entities of government and to report same to this House.

* (1350)

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Finance tell us why it is that he is downsizing the Provincial Auditor's office? There has been a reduction in the resources allocated out to the Provincial Auditor's office, while at the same time we are seeing a government—and it is the government that is giving the direction to these agencies, because they are the ones that are appointing the boards and taking the responsibility away from this Legislature in order to hold them accountable for the public of Manitoba.

Mr. Manness: What hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker. That member sits on LAMC committee with us, and he was fully aware and part of the decision team that made the decision to allow the Provincial Auditor to spend fewer resources this year, because that is the approach. What hypocrisy. He was part of the decision. He sits in on LAMC. He should apologize fully to the House.

Point of Order

Mr. Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Minister of Finance—

Mr. Speaker: On a point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, on a point of order—to withdraw the comment of being a hypocrite. Let me tell you why. Because in LAMC, I did not support the Provincial Auditor. I was the only one out of the all-party committee that commented on it.

If the Minister of Finance wants to talk about what happens at LAMC, I am quite prepared, with his—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I think that the Government House Leader (Mr. Manness) has gone far too far, and I do believe the use of the term "hypocrisy," particularly in this context, is bordering on the unparliamentary.

I think it is particularly unwise of the Government House Leader in this particular case because, having sat on LAMC and having known the discussions took place, there is no way, Mr. Speaker, that the Government House Leader can, in any way, shape or form, indicate that LAMC, which has control strictly over internal budgets and even then subject to the final decision of the government, can be held accountable for this change in policy direction by the government in terms of the use of outside auditors.

So in using that term "hypocrisy," it is not the member who is being hypocritical, and I use this in the nonunparliamentary sense, it is the Government House Leader.

I would ask him to withdraw the charge made against the member that is patently false.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, the member in his question said that the government has forced this activity away from the Provincial Auditor. Mr. Speaker, all I made mention of was the fact that the Provincial Auditor came before us and said and requested that they not re-use all the resources that they had been provided. Furthermore, the Provincial Auditor fully acknowledged today that they indeed were successful in having the Arts Council tender, and we are glad to have it so.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), in regards to the word I believe he used, "hypocrisy," Beauchesne's 490 says: "Since 1958, it has been ruled parliamentary . . ." and the word "hypocrisy" does show up on the list as parliamentary. Therefore, the honourable member does not have a point of order.

* (1355)

Winnipeg School for the Deaf Diagnostic Centre

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, desperate parents who have absolutely no place to turn for help with their severely learning disabled children have looked with hope to the diagnostic centre, which is housed at the Winnipeg School for the Deaf, as the only facility of its kind with residential services for severely disabled children, for hope and for help.

I want to ask the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) today how she can explain the actions that she has taken with regard to this diagnostic centre, the only kind, as I have said, in Manitoba, how she can explain that action there, how she can explain her reform initiatives in this area to the House today.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Again the concerns of parents and also the benefits to children in this province are of great concern to this government and to myself as minister, and therefore, we wanted to make sure that any changes were going to be supported by services within communities.

Our diagnostic learning centre from that centre has, at the moment, approximately 25 to 30 children a year, not a large number. The numbers have decreased because divisions themselves have taken on this particular service and are now providing it at the child's home school division.

The importance of that, Mr. Speaker, is the child does not have to leave his or her own home and come into a centre in Winnipeg but instead can be provided the remediation in their home division.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, that is utter garbage. The many small school divisions just do not have these services. I want to ask this minister how she can explain shutting down this service and laying off the nine staff there who have worked with these children, and how she came to that decision.

Did she consult with the parents of those kids who are involved? Did she consult with the school officials who referred them, with the teachers, with other people who work with these children? Did she consult with them prior to this decision?

Mrs. Vodrey: First of all, the number is not nine. Let me remind the member that as I said yesterday, our department is maintaining the services of two specialists to assist across the province in very specialized areas, in the areas that relate to the

emotionally and behaviourally disordered children, which has been an area of great concern across this province.

Our department is taking the leadership to make sure that there is development and expertise available in that particular area; however, Mr. Speaker, among divisions, there is now currently expertise to assist children and to assist children in their home schools or, at a minimum, in their home division. That has been official because it does not remove children from their home division, from their friends and from their family lives.

Mr. Plohman: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. In the small school divisions, these services are just not available. I want to ask this minister to be truthful with this House and explain to this House.

Point of Order

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the member for Dauphin has crossed the line significantly when he says he wants the minister to be truthful because, of course, what he is not saying is that the minister has been untruthful. I say to the member that he has to withdraw that statement.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious there is a major disagreement over the facts. Very clearly, our Education critic does not accept the answer of the minister. That is not a point of order. In terms of being truthful, if one looks at the specific references in Beauchesne, to suggest that a member be truthful, my suggestion would not be unparliamentary. Obviously, all members have to be truthful. I think the concern of the member is over the fact that the minister obviously does not know what is happening out in many small school districts. That, however, is a dispute over the facts and is not unparliamentary.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader on the comments raised by the honourable member for Dauphin about the honourable minister not telling the truth, not telling the truth appears on both lists, unparliamentary and parliamentary.

I would just caution the honourable member for Dauphin, for the watching public here, the example we are setting to everybody, the young kids watching in the Chamber the proceedings, pick your words very, very carefully.

* * *

* (1400)

Mr. Plohman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for those words of advice.

I want to just say in my last question to the minister that she knows very well those services are not available throughout this province. They are not available to vulnerable kids. She knows that. What hope can she offer those kids now that she has cut that only service?

Mrs. Vodrey: The hope that I offer to Manitobans, that this government offers to Manitobans, is, first of all, that there is expertise available. It has been developed over a period of many years.

In addition, this government, in an effort to support children with special needs, has increased the special needs grants, the money available to support those children. In addition, Mr. Speaker, in this year's funding formula, we have done what we said we would do. We have modified the formula to increase the Level II and Level III grants. So we are providing the services in the field, in the place where those children and where their families live so that they do not have to be removed from their homes and so that they can receive expertise in their own home division.

Planning and Innovation Branch Elimination

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, in the 1990 election, we saw the Premier campaign from a canoe with green promises. Then in the 1990-91 annual report from the Department of Environment, the Planning and Innovation branch had the responsibility for the WRAP program, to reduce waste and achieve the target of 50 percent reduction of waste. That report said that they would actively promote environmental protection and sustainable development. The next year the annual report had eliminated this, and the government is now cutting this branch.

My question is for the minister responsible for Environment. What stage is this government at in attaining the 50 percent target, and how is eliminating this branch responsible for that function going to aid in reaching the target of 50 percent reduction of waste?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, we are well on our way towards

achieving 50 per cent reduction by the year 2000, and the member should not imply in any way that the work that this branch has been carrying on will not proceed. It in fact will be operationalized within the other sections of the department, and the work will continue.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, it seems to many people that this government is giving up on waste reduction, recycling. Has the change in the staffing of this department redeployed these personnel to the Department of Natural Resources, where we have a minister who has said that they do not have to wait for an environmental impact assessment to decide if they are going to support a project?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, The Ozone Depleting Substances Act is now being operationalized. The beverage container regulations are now being operationalized within the department. Administration of tire recycling is now about to be operationalized within the department. All recycling is taking place on an increasing scale across this province. Newspaper recycling is growing across this province. The member simply does not understand that reorganization does not mean that the function will not continue.

Ms. Cerilli: Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to tell the House, given that the throne speech mentioned the importance of innovation 11 times, how will the minister ensure that policy and planning on environment issues is going to happen, and who will be performing this function for this government.

Mr. Cummings: We have a large number of personnel within this department who pride themselves on their abilities, their capabilities in dealing with priorities and bringing forward policies that we will act upon as a government in order to enhance and protect the environment in this province. I want to assure you, Mr. Speaker, that the operationalization of the recycling programs in this province will mean that they will be part of the day-to-day operations and will simply be added to the function within the department.

Program Development Support Services Consultations

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in this House we heard from the Minister of Education that the province is laying off numerous speech and hearing clinicians from the Support Services branch.

Can the Minister of Education tell us, did she consult with any of the school boards, particularly the ones in rural and northern Manitoba before the decision was made, or was it made behind closed doors?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): We have ongoing discussions on a regular basis with school divisions across this province to make sure that we are aware of their needs. On this particular decision, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that we have had phone calls into our office today from divisions who have said, please let us move ahead with it, because what the honourable member has not understood, and I explained yesterday, is that the change in clinician services—there is a formula within our school funding formula which determines the numbers of clinicians available.

What we have found out is, yes, 52 clinicians were employed by the department, but in fact the formula, when applied to school divisions, will probably result in more clinicians, 59.5 clinicians, being available to Manitobans, to those rural areas, so the whole issue and question of concerns of less service and not as much service are, according to the formula, not accurate.

School Divisions Clinician Funding

Ms. Avls Gray (Crescentwood): Can the minister tell us why she is sending out contradictory messages to school divisions by saying on the one hand they will have more control over hiring decisions, yet on the other hand, their autonomy and control on funding issues is rescinded? Why a contradictory message?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Certainly in the matter of clinician hiring, school divisions will have the discretion. In the matters relating to the funding announcement, Mr. Speaker, those were, No. 1, an effort to make sure the taxpayers of Manitoba were protected, and in order to protect the taxpayers of Manitoba, we did offer to the school divisions the tools that we believe would be helpful for them to make sure that the costs were kept within a reasonable limit.

Ms. Gray: With a final supplementary—at least I have some solace in knowing that most people involved in education in Manitoba have yet to understand answers from this minister as well, because the calls keep coming in—

Mr. Speaker: Your question.

Ms. Gray: Can the minister tell us, if some school divisions decide not to hire clinicians for a variety of reasons, can the minister guarantee that these services will still be provided for children across Manitoba? Can she guarantee that?

Ms. Vodrey: The funds are to hire clinicians, and therefore, we have every reason to believe that school divisions that do value this service and who will, I am very sure, want to continue the support for their special needs students within their divisions will in fact be hiring clinicians. Some divisions may decide to come together with a regional plan. They may decide an individual school division plan is not the most suitable and a regional plan would be more efficient and meet their needs, so we expect them, Mr. Speaker, to be able to have that ability to make those decisions, and they do in this case.

Health Care System Reform APM Consultants Contract

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

How can the First Minister permit his Health minister to close beds, lay off nurses, 13 in Hamiota a couple of weeks ago, 21 at Health Sciences Centre and more to come, while at the same time, he allowed his Health minister to fly in six U.S. consultants yesterday to negotiate the Connie Curran contract?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend needs to understand a couple of things. The Minister of Health, the government of Manitoba, does not lay off any nurses in any health care facility.

Now, if my honourable friend is suggesting that is how a New Democratic government would manage health care, then that is quite a different change. Mr. Speaker, management decisions within the health care system are made by boards and administration of the respective facilities, based on funding guidelines that are provided by government. That is a situation that has existed for many, many years.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell my honourable friend, let me deal with the issue of, for instance, layoffs at Health Sciences Centre, which he referred to. Is my honourable friend willing to also discuss the other side of that coin and talk about the hiring of many nurses at Concordia Hospital for the 60 beds that

were opened there, the hiring of nurses at Deer Lodge and Municipal Hospital to accommodate those patients who were shifted from the Health Sciences Centre? Of course not, because that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1410)

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry the minister contradicted his own director of Health Reform, who said the minister is responsible for all bed cuts and makes all decisions.

Will the minister answer the question? Will the taxpayers of Manitoba be responsible for flying in the six U.S. consultants yesterday to come in to negotiate the Connie Curran contract?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to my honourable friend when he brought this issue up in collaboration with my former critic, if and when we conclude a contract for consulting services, we will make the terms of that contract open for examination for understanding. If my honourable friend wishes a clarification, my honourable friend might want to understand that both St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre have been urging this government to engage this particular consulting group because, Sir, they are simply the best available for the kind of restructuring that we need to do in Manitoba.

When and if we conclude the terms which are of benefit to the health care system in Manitoba and the taxpayers of Manitoba, I will be free to discuss and openly discuss all those issues with my honourable friend.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, he thinks he has a plan.

Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary to the minister is: In addition to the \$5,500 paid Connie Curran to fly in within the last sixty days to negotiate her own contract, can the minister confirm whether or not the contract, if it is up to \$6 million, will be paid in Canadian or U.S. dollars, because if it is \$6 million and it is paid in U.S. dollars, it will cost \$7.2 million by today's dollar value?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated to my honourable friend, if and when we conclude any discussions around the issuing of a consulting contract on behalf of the health care system of Manitoba, St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre, all of those details will be available.

I want to indicate to my honourable friend that maybe he ought to just ask a few questions of, for instance, the senior management within Health Sciences Centre and within St. Boniface Hospital to find out, Sir, whether indeed they believe that this would be of benefit to health service delivery in Manitoba before my honourable friend gets on the TV.

Red River Community College Course Cancellations

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

Will the minister confirm that she has cut three courses at Red River Community College, that she suspended refrigeration and that she has made cuts to entire sections of industrial electronics and telecommunications? Will she confirm that these cuts were made 24 hours before the first class was due to begin, resulting in great hardship and dislocation for many of the students?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, there has been a cancellation of some courses at Red River Community College. There have been four, and it has been with regret that those have been cancelled. However, in the cancellation, first of all, the students registered will receive a refund. They will also be put on a waiting list to accommodate them, and in addition, just so that you are absolutely clear, no money was lost. In addition, those students will be met with, and they will receive counselling for any other institution from which they can study that particular course.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about refunds. These people gave up jobs to go to those courses.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Wolseley, with her question.

Ms. Friesen: Will the minister explain how the elimination of these particular training opportunities fits with her alternating rhetoric of cuts today and commitment tomorrow?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, again the member needs to be very clear about where some of the funding for these particular programs comes from. They were funded through Canada Employment and Immigration. We have had some difficulty with the federal government in terms of funds. Those

particular courses received assistance from the federal government.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, could the minister explain then how these lost opportunities in telecommunication, refrigeration and industrial electronics further the economic competitiveness of Manitobans as they enter the next century, the usual rhetoric of this minister?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to remind the member that in terms of decision making for courses, particularly courses which we as a province have control over the funding, we do take into consideration the number of students who wish to attend the program, the evaluation of the program following the program and the number of jobs that students are able to obtain following, and also the labour market demand for each of the courses.

Provincial Auditor Independent Audit Costs

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance, a few minutes ago, lobbed across the House a remark about a calculator and perhaps the need of a calculator. Well, we would like to know how finely tuned the Minister of Finance's calculator is, since there seems to be a variety of cost-cutting measures going on in a number of government departments.

Let us begin with the auditors. Can the minister give us a finite figure on how much money will be saved by this government for monies that will not be paid to the Provincial Auditor but will be paid for outside audits?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I cannot give that answer, because that analysis does not exist.

Mr. Speaker, let it be known that boards of these outside agencies are the ones who ultimately make decisions around audit matters. They are in charge of that responsibility by legislation passed in this House. That has been the way since the beginning of time in this province. Nothing has changed.

If the member has some indication, if she has some valid proof that it is going to cost our outside agencies more by way of providing for themselves outside contracting services with the outside

auditors as compared to the Provincial Auditor, then she will have to do that analysis.

Planning and Innovation Branch Cost Savings

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the legislation is permissive. It is not directive.

Since we cannot get an answer with regard to auditing from the Minister of Finance, will the Minister of Environment tell us just how much cost saving he anticipates as a result to the cut in the branch on planning and innovations in the Department of Environment?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, there are considerable dollar savings. I also would indicate that there are a number of decisions on both sides of the ledger that are made during the Estimates process, and they will become evident during the tabling of the budget.

Program Development Support Services Cost Savings

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear they are making decisions and they do not know what the cost savings are going to be.

Can the Minister of Education, since she has obviously cut diagnostic services which are going to be a real loss in terms of benefit to youngsters, tell us what her cost savings are going to be in this branch's cuts?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, again, I would just like to assure Manitobans that there is expertise in the field, which has been developed. This should not be an opportunity to frighten Manitobans and to scare them, because there is expertise within the field now. We will continue to provide specific leadership in the area of emotionally, behaviourally disordered young people and very severely learning disabled young people.

In terms of the amount of money, Mr. Speaker, the member will simply have to wait until the budget is tabled.

Transcona-Springfield School Division Funding Formula

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, during recent meetings of the Transcona-Springfield School Division, trustees informed the residents of Transcona that the province was cutting back in support by nearly 3 percent for the division. Trustees were unanimous in their condemnation of this unfair funding formula.

Since the division No. 12 has essentially no reserve funds to draw from while the 2 percent cap gives the Transcona-Springfield School Division only one-half of the amount per pupil that the Fort Garry School Division will receive, can the Minister of Education explain how this formula is fair to the residents and the school division of Transcona-Springfield School Division?

* (1420)

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, again, our funding formula is one that is a very complicated formula. It also depends on the number of students who are currently enrolled, and it also depends on the average teacher's salary in each division.

So I will have to look very specifically at the numbers from Transcona-Springfield School Division. They have not sent them in to me yet. The numbers across school divisions in Manitoba are, at the moment, very fluid as divisions work out exactly what their costs will be. In addition, Mr. Speaker, Transcona-Springfield School Division has the same options as all other employers do and as were stated, as we as a government do, that they may wish to talk to their employees about some form of workweek reductions.

Mr. Reid: My supplementary for the same minister, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Minister of Education explain why she has ignored at least two written requests by the Transcona-Springfield trustees to have the Minister of Education calculate the funding support acknowledging that the division is comprised of one-third rural?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, again, within that school division, our department has made every effort to assist the Transcona-Springfield School Division, as we have made an effort to assist all divisions across this province. The staff of the Department of Education have gone out to visit with

the school divisions. They have sat and gone through the formula with the school divisions, and they remain available for any assistance that the school division, Transcona-Springfield in specific, may require as they go about setting their budget.

Meeting Request

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): My final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister.

Can the minister explain why she has for many months now ignored the written request by the Transcona-Springfield trustees for a meeting? Will this minister agree to immediately meet with the trustees of the Transcona-Springfield School Division?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I have not denied meetings to any school division within this province. I fairly recently have met with a group of parents representing Transcona-Springfield School Division and looked at their particular issues.

If Transcona-Springfield School Division would like to have a meeting, I am more than happy. They only have to make the approach through my appointment secretary. Mr. Speaker, I have not turned down school divisions for meetings, so I think that is inaccurate.

Red River Community College Course Cancellations

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I want to have a follow-up question, because I asked a question yesterday of the minister, and I am going to seek some assurances. We had an individual who registered for a course, quit a job because he was told he was going to be starting the course in March, and now the course has been cancelled at least until September.

What is she going to do for the individuals who are put in that type of a situation?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, yes, I am aware of the individual whom the member has spoken about today. He raised the issue yesterday, and I did make sure that I had the opportunity to find out about any affected individuals. In this individuals's case, we will make sure that person knows full well where this course is offered in alternate to Red River Community College, because the person obviously wishes to take part in the course or, alternatively, we

are prepared to prepare a waiting list and look at whether or not we are able to continue offering this course.

Gag Order

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell me why, when I called Red River College this morning, that I am told that if I have any questions about cuts in courses, I have to talk to the president of the Red River College; then when I called to speak to the president of Red River College, there is no one around? Has the minister invoked a gag order so that MLAs can no longer get any sort of information so that they can pass the information down onto their constituents? What type of—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member has put his question.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, certainly information is available, but I would like to assure the member that for any individual who has been affected by the cancellation of these courses, each one of those individuals has been contacted by the college, and they are fully aware of any changes.

Mr. Lamoureux: If in fact everything is in order, will the Minister of Education instruct to pull the gag order so that people in admissions and registration are allowed to tell those who want to know what courses are being cancelled?

Will she at the very least instruct the president and the Red River College to do that?

Mrs. Vodrey: There have been identified in this House four courses which have been cancelled for the March 1 start. Those four courses again were partly supported by direct purchase of the Canada Employment and Immigration, and we have had reductions in that area. So, Mr. Speaker, that deals with those four. I want to assure the member again that individuals who have applied have in fact been informed.

In addition, in any other course changes, they will be made known with the budget.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), I would ask, would there be leave of the House—I had

previously sent a letter to all honourable members requesting that we adjourn tomorrow at twelve o'clock in order to facilitate the setting up of the Chamber for the swearing in of our new Lieutenant-Governor.

I have been advised this morning by staff that will be extremely difficult, so now I am asking for leave of the House to adjourn the House tomorrow at 11:30.

Some Honourable Members: Let us do it after Question Period.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, let us do it this way. Is there leave of the House then to adjourn the House right after Question Period, and then we can all reconvene in here at 1:30 tomorrow? Is there leave? [agreed]

I would like to thank all honourable members.

Nonpolitical Statement

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Could I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for River Heights have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, this is very brief, but I know that all members of the House would be delighted that the birth of a child took place today to one of our members. Paul Edwards' wife, Anne MacKay, gave birth to a son this morning, 9 pounds, 4 ounces.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, we are reverting to Ministerial Statements and Tabling of Reports.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): I appreciate the leave to deliver my nonpolitical statement. The contents will become evident. The issue of translation was the important one. I am sorry.

I rise to welcome the Supreme Court's decision rendered today in the area of Francophone school's governance. As we expected, the decision confirms the interpretation of the Charter, Section 23, previously given by the Mahé decision. That is, that where numbers warrant, the linguistic minority has the right to manage and direct their schools.

The decision today notes that because of the numbers of children whose parents have Section 23 rights in Manitoba, in some areas at least, an independent school board is required, chosen by members of the linguistic minority.

Today's decision reiterates that governments have a wide discretion in selecting the means by which obligations concerning Section 23 governance rights are to be met. We have great respect for the court's right to interpret the Constitution and to judge our actions. We are pleased that the court today has again reiterated its respect for the policy-making role of legislators.

The government of Manitoba maintains its commitment to establish a system of school governance as required by the Charter, Section 23. As Chief Justice Lamer noted in today's decision, the government of Manitoba has already accepted as appropriate the establishment of a single Francophone school board to be responsible for Francophone education in the province, with the proviso that the Francophone parents may choose to keep their children in existing Français or French language first programs.

That decision was announced by our government last year. We have great confidence in the Manitoba government's policy. Work on legislation has been proceeding and I look forward to tabling the bill this session. I am encouraged that the court was not willing to detail the particulars of how governance should be implemented before the Legislature had a chance to consider the issue and to enact legislation.

The Francophone school board will have exclusive management and control of the education programs in schools in its division. The school board will be run by representatives chosen by Section 23 rights holders. Our government believes that the new school board will be the most effective if it has the willing support and commitment of Section 23 parents.

Our government has established an implementation support team, chaired by the Honourable Alfred Monnin. The team's primary task is to consult with Français school communities and give parents an opportunity to signal their readiness to join the new structure. We are confident the new governance structure will be effective. We believe a significant number of school communities will join at the onset.

We call upon the Francophone groups now to name their representative to the implementation support team. Further delay could result in delayed elections and that is not what this government wants. By working together in good faith, we can achieve our objective of providing Francophone governance.

I am pleased to table a copy of the Supreme Court's unanimous decision offered by Chief Justice Lamer available in both official languages.

*(1430)

Mr. John Plohma (Dauphin): I welcome the minister's statement here today. Of course, this is a very important, difficult and controversial area, and one that we can say at the outset that we supported so far as the Supreme Court decision on governance where numbers warrant, where there are sufficient numbers, and the government is now at a position where it will have to implement that decision.

The minister has announced what she believes are the first steps in that process here today. We certainly are committed to finding workable and practical solutions to this matter here in the province of Manitoba.

However, having said that, it is not going to be an easy process, because there is I believe a lack of consensus out there at the present time with regard to this issue and a great divergence of opinion as to how the government should proceed in enacting and giving effect to the Supreme Court decision that we have seen here today. Parents involved with French education as Francophones and those who are non-French language parents have different views on what exactly should proceed and happen.

I think one of the concerns that we have, Mr. Speaker, is with regard to this government's track record insofar as developing a partnership in consensus building. There is a great deal of concern insofar as the track record that we see, not only from this minister but other ministers as well, not only in Education, in many different areas, an inability to develop a consensus to consult and to ensure that all views are taken into consideration, whether it be the so-called health reform, whether it be the cuts in education that the minister has undertaken here at the same time that she is announcing this new initiative here.

So we will be watching and debating this area very carefully insofar as the implementation strategy and

the kinds of consensus building and process building that this government will undertake under this minister. We will certainly have more to say on this matter as time goes on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Oui, Monsieur le président, il me fait grand plaisir de faire des commentaires sur la décision de la Cour suprême ce matin. Je crois que c'est une victoire pour les Francophones manitobains et puis j'aimerais premièrement féliciter le comité de parents franco-manitobains pour leur ténacité et leur dévouement envers la gestion scolaire des Franco-Manitobains. C'est quelque chose qui aurait dû avoir lieu il y a longtemps.

Je regarde ici ce que le gouvernement Conservateur a déposé en Chambre le 6 novembre 1989. C'est très clair qu'est-ce qu'il voulait faire. Nous voilà rendus en 1993. "Reconnaissant que la population francophone du Manitoba constitue un élément de l'une des caractéristiques fondamentales du Canada, le gouvernement du Manitoba établit par la présente sa politique en matière de services en langue française. Cette politique a pour but de permettre aux Manitobains d'expression française et aux établissements qui desservent les collectivités francophones de bénéficier des services gouvernementaux offerts dans la langue des lois du Manitoba."

"Dans la mesure du possible, le gouvernement du Manitoba doit offrir ses services dans les deux langues officielles dans les régions désignées où la population d'expression française est concentrée. Ces régions sont indiquées sur la carte ci-jointe."

Alors je crois qu'avec la décision de ce matin, il est très important qu'on poursuive la gestion des écoles françaises. L'important, c'est, je crois, que le Parti Libéral a supporté ça dès le début et puis je suis sûr qu'on a le support de l'opposition officielle. Mais je vois qu'il n'y a aucune date d'échéance encore une fois; on dit qu'on va avancer avec le dossier. Moi, j'ai fait un communiqué de presse ce matin et je disais qu'on le verrait en place le 1^{er} septembre 1994. Je regardais peut-être le processus et puis qu'il n'avait pas encore été déposé en Chambre, le projet de loi. Le comité de parents a indiqué aux nouvelles aujourd'hui qu'ils aimeraient voir ça au 1^{er} septembre 1993. Je le verrais comme une bonne chose que ça soit implanté pour le 1^{er} septembre 1993, si les législateurs se préparent et se supportent afin de donner la gestion scolaire aux Francophones du

Manitoba qui est dûe depuis longtemps. Mais qu'on travaille ensemble pour la communauté et qu'on voie à ce que nos droits soient respectés.

Je demanderai peut-être au ministre de l'Éducation de mettre en place un régime et un système qui permettront à la minorité francophone d'exercer pleinement ses droits immédiatement et que le projet de loi soit en place d'ici quelques semaines afin que l'on ait des débats dans la Législature pour satisfaire à notre communauté.

Pourquoi est-ce qu'on est obligés d'aller à la Cour suprême afin d'avoir une décision? La décision était faite. C'est très clair et on aimerait avoir une procédure afin qu'on ait notre gestion scolaire. [interjection] Pardon? Oui.

On le voit ici: "Notre gouvernement a mis sur pied un groupe de mise en œuvre que préside l'honorable Alfred Monnin. La principale tâche de ce groupe est de consulter les communautés scolaires de langue française et de donner l'occasion aux parents de signifier leur volonté d'adhérer à la nouvelle structure." J'espère que ça ne sera pas un autre comité d'étude qui va être mis sur pied, mais de la consultation afin d'implanter la gestion scolaire au Manitoba. Merci.

[Translation]

Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise to comment on this morning's Supreme Court decision. I think that it is a victory for Franco-Manitobans and I would like firstly to congratulate the Francophone parents' committee for their tenacity and their dedication to Francophone schools governance in Manitoba. This is something which should have happened a long time ago.

I am looking here at what the Conservative government introduced in the House on November 6, 1989. It is very clear what they wanted to do. Now here we are in 1993. "The French Language Services policy of Manitoba is hereby established in recognition of the fact that the French-speaking population of Manitoba is a constituent part of one of the fundamental characteristics of Canada. Its purpose is to allow this community and the institutions which serve it to access comparable government services in the language of the laws of Manitoba."

"The services provided by the Government of Manitoba shall be offered, to the extent possible, in both official languages in areas where the

French-speaking population is concentrated. The designated areas are shown on the accompanying map."

So I think that, given this morning's decision, it is very important that we press forward with the governance of French-language schools. What is important, I believe, is that the Liberal Party has supported this from the beginning, and I am sure that it has the support of the official opposition. But I see that there is no time frame for this once again; it is stated that the matter is going to go forward. I issued a press release this morning, and I indicated that we would see it in place by September 1, 1994. I was perhaps looking at the process and the fact that the bill had not been tabled in the House yet. The parents' committee said on the news today that they would like to have it by September 1, 1993. I believe it would be a good thing if it could be implemented for September 1, 1993, if the legislators are prepared, and support each other, so as to give Franco-Manitobans the governance of their schools, which is long overdue. Let us work together for the community and ensure that our rights are respected.

I will, perhaps, ask the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) to put into place a system that will allow the Francophone minority to fully exercise its rights immediately and that the bill be tabled in the upcoming weeks for debate in the Legislature in order to satisfy our community.

Why are we obliged to go to the Supreme Court in order to obtain a decision? The decision was made. It is very clear, and we would like to have a procedure so that we may have governance of our schools. [interjection] Excuse me? Yes.

We see here that "Our government has set up an implementation support team chaired by the Honourable Alfred Monnin. The team's primary task is to consult with français school communities and give the parents an opportunity to signal their readiness to join the new structure." I hope that this is not going to be another review committee that is going to be set up but real consultation with a view to implementing Francophone schools governance in Manitoba. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would ask if you could call for second reading Bill 11, The Regional Waste Management Authorities, The Municipal

Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, and then, Sir, if you could call for a continuation of debate on second readings the legislation as it appears on the Order Paper.

SECOND READINGS

Bill 11—The Regional Waste Management Authorities, The Municipal Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), that Bill 11, The Regional Waste Management Authorities, The Municipal Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant les offices régionaux de gestion des déchets, modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois), be now read a second time and be referred a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

* (1440)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce for second reading The Regional Waste Management Authorities Act and explain the purpose of this particular piece of legislation.

The purpose of The Regional Waste Management Authorities Act is to provide legislation that will enable rural municipalities in Manitoba to combine their resources in establishing regional waste disposal sites. Municipalities have requested legislation that would set up parameters for regional waste management sites following the introduction of the waste disposal grounds regulation proclaimed in 1991 under The Environment Act. This regulation set new standards for development, operation and maintenance of waste disposal grounds. At the present time, Mr. Speaker, each municipality throughout the province operates its own waste disposal site.

The Department of Environment has evaluated a number of existing landfill sites and has summarized that the majority of them would not meet the requirements of the new regulation. As a result, we have had to find alternatives in order to address the problem before us. To this end, the sites that we are proposing would have to be upgraded. Then, if they are not upgraded, they would have to be closed.

Municipalities, over the course of the last year, have raised the option of combining resources to develop regional waste sites. The Department of Environment has encouraged them to do this and to explore the regional concept. The Department of Rural Development has proceeded to develop this proposed bill. The bill itself deals with the structure and the operation of regional waste management authorities. However, it does not address environmental issues related to the siting and the licensing of regional facilities.

Regional facilities will have both environmental and economic benefits to municipalities and the communities. The new high standards of the regulation under The Environment Act will be met and maintained, and municipalities will experience long-term cost savings by sharing the costs with neighbouring municipalities.

This bill also addresses concerns raised by municipalities regarding the imposition of user fees for waste management services. Municipalities are currently required to cover the costs of waste management using property tax levies. As an alternative payment method, they have expressed an interest in charging residents by volume for waste disposal. This new bill, Mr. Speaker, is responding directly to the requests of Manitoba's rural communities and the municipalities. We anticipate that municipalities and the rural communities will welcome this new legislation.

Over the last year or so, Mr. Speaker, we have seen some concerns expressed by some of our rural residents with regard to some regulations being implemented around the current waste disposal grounds. However, as we are able to get more education out to our communities, it is becoming evident that these new regulations are for the benefit of our communities and, indeed, the management of our waste disposal grounds has been required for some time. It is time now to assist municipalities in allowing them to, not each construct a new waste management facility, but indeed to be able to co-operate with surrounding and neighbouring municipalities in order to be able to meet their needs.

With these brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, I am recommending this bill for second reading to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**Bill 2—The Endangered Species Amendment Act**

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 2 (The Endangered Species Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les espèces en voie de disparition), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): I am pleased to rise and put some comments about Bill 2 on the record, Bill 2 being The Endangered Species Amendment Act.

Several of my caucus colleagues have already spoken about this act and have put on the record some of the things that we feel are reasonable in this legislation and some of the concerns that we have. I would like to reiterate some of those concerns and share some of my own thoughts on this measure.

The minister, in his comments introducing this bill, said that basically they were small although important amendments to The Endangered Species Act and that he did not feel that there were any major concerns that could be expressed about this piece of legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as was the case with The Oil and Gas Amendment Act that I spoke on yesterday, while the majority of the amendments may appear to be nothing but housekeeping measures, upon closer scrutiny there are some major concerns that we have expressed and that we want to have addressed in second reading and when we get to the public hearing part of the process.

First, I believe, it is a good idea to have consistency with international wording and definitions as, I think it is fair to say, wildlife—flora and fauna—knows no human-defined boundaries or should know no human-defined boundaries. In some cases the things that humankind has put in the path of a natural habitat has caused major

problems such as gas and oil pipelines and highways and suburban and urban development.

Those things have all had major impacts, and largely negative impacts on the natural habitat of our flora and fauna, but again the animals and plants do not follow political or geographical boundaries. They follow their own natural habitat which flows over municipalities, which flows over boundaries set by local government districts, which flows over provincial constituency boundaries, which flows over provincial boundaries and, as we all know, does not respect international boundaries.

It is important that we be as consistent as possible with international wording and definitions in this area, and that element of this amendment we congratulate the government for introducing. We feel, as the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) stated yesterday, that it is a bit inconsistent with the current government's normal modus operandi in that it does take into account the fact that governments do have responsibility for taking initiative and taking leadership on many things.

This government's basic philosophy has been, and as we have seen in a multitude of areas, to eliminate the role of government in the lives of the people of the province of Manitoba. Their thinking is that the less government, the better. In many cases, this has been taken to an extreme which has proved to be extremely deleterious to the people of Manitoba.

However, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this particular case, they have understood that wildlife and the preservation of wildlife does require more than individual voluntary support in order to maintain and enhance wildlife in this province. We applaud the government in that area of this legislation.

* (1450)

There are, however, some elements to this legislation that are missing or we feel are not clarified enough for our comfort and for the safety of the wildlife of this province, and those are the areas that I would like to concentrate my remarks on.

First of all, there is no provision, as far as my reading of this legislation, for an inventory of wildlife. Now, it is all well and good to talk about the preservation of wildlife that is currently in existence and attempting to change the definitions of the various types of wildlife numbering; i.e., the definitions of endangered species, extinct species, indigenous species, et cetera.

That is all well and good, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it would be more productive and more reasonable, we feel, had the amendments dealt with an inventory of what currently is present in our province—what types of animals, what types of flowers and other forms of flora are in the province of Manitoba and in what numbers.

It seems only reasonable, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if you are thinking in terms of preserving and enhancing the flora and fauna of the province of Manitoba, that it is important, nay, essential to know what the current situation is. If you do not know what the current situation is, you have no benchmark against which to measure success or failure in the future. So again, we would appreciate the government responding, ideally during debate on second reading, but failing that, certainly in the public hearing process, to our concerns on this issue.

Why is it that there is no provision in this act, or in these amendments, for an inventory of the current status of the flora and fauna in this province, particularly when the United States has been much further ahead of us in Manitoba and in Canada in this regard?

I will say, parenthetically, that the United States has been more progressive in this area, even given the fact that over the last almost 20 years the United States has been governed by a very regressive, nonprogressive national party led by Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush, not noted for their concerns for the environment.

Yes, parenthetically, again, we have high hopes on this side of the House that the current President and particularly Vice-President of the United States will carry on and make even more stringent rules and regulations dealing with the environment than currently is the case.

I would like to give a brief little personal comment that I believe fairly accurately reflects the political environment of the United States in the years of Reagan and Bush. As I said, it is amazing that they have progressed as far as they have on some environmental issues and given their ideological perspective.

I think, as many members know, President Reagan, before he was president of the United States, was governor of the state of California, which is home to many of the most exotic and unique forms of wildlife and trees and plants in North

America, many of which are becoming more and more extinct by the day.

One of the most famous and most awe-inspiring of these life forms is the redwood trees of California. I would strongly urge anyone who has an opportunity to visit California to take advantage of going to see the redwoods of California. They are truly magnificent life forms that demand an enormous amount of respect from humankind.

When Mr. Reagan was governor of the state of California, there was concern raised about logging these redwood trees. Many of the private logging companies wanted to be able to have access to these trees which are huge, very old and would of course make an enormous profit for these lumber companies. The governor did not see anything wrong with this and was quite prepared to open logging to these companies and when asked in the state Legislature why he was so prepared to devastate one of the most magnificent life forms that our world knows said, well, if you have seen one redwood you have seen them all. I find this to be an unbelievable statement made by the then-governor of the state of California and latterly president of the United States, Ronald Reagan—as I stated earlier, not one of the most progressive or environmentally sound individuals who has ever held public office in North America

An Honourable Member: And the highest deficit in U.S. history to boot.

Ms. Barrett: And the highest deficit in U.S. history to boot. However, I should not digress.

Even in the atmosphere of the United States in the 1970s and '80s in the reactionary conservative milieu of the Ronald Reagan-George Bush years their environmental protection acts are light years ahead of what we have in Canada and Manitoba. What this says about the federal government and the provincial government has been put on record by members on this side of the House on many occasions. It is a very sad thing to say when Ronald Reagan is held up as an environmentalist in comparison to the current provincial government in Manitoba. That speaks volumes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Within that context I again ask the government why they are so unwilling to extend these amendments to provide for things such as an inventory of current wildlife and plant life in the province of Manitoba. Perhaps, Madam Deputy

Speaker, I can answer that question in light of the fact that there is no response from the government side of the House. Perhaps it might be that there is not the political will or the ideological will to do this. I think we can make a fairly strong case that that is, in fact, the rationale behind the lack of an inventory process in this act.

Another lack in this act, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the lack of enforcement. It is all very well and good for the government to say that we are going to provide for this and that and the other thing without talking about enforcement procedures. The concerns on enforcement, as I have stated, are ones that we would like to ask the minister to address in second reading, but failing that, certainly in the public hearing process.

I would suggest that the lack of inventory and the lack of enforcement processes in this legislation are due, as I stated earlier, not only to a lack of ideological commitment on the part of this government to the environment. That lack of commitment can also be seen in the fact that this government has consistently over its term in office eliminated and cut back financial and personnel resources in these areas in particular with the possible exception, as my honourable friend the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has said, of outside, contracted-out, U.S.-based consultants who do not come cheap.

* (1500)

Madam Deputy Speaker, how can a government stand in its place and say that they are committed to the environment, that they are committed to the protection of the environment, that they are committed to the preservation and enhancement of our natural resources, when they implement legislation such as the Oak Hammock Marsh legislation? It gives a virtually free hand to the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) and the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) to do anything that they want, and with the only caveat that the government can provide us, the only little sop of security, is this: trust us. Well, that smacks a great deal in my mind of the 1984 commitment made on the part of the boy from Baie-Comeau: medicare is a sacred trust.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the federal government is a macrocosm of the provincial government in these regards. They have virtually no commitment other than verbal to environmental security, to the

preservation of programs and services that enhance the quality of life for all Manitobans and for the physical surroundings that all Manitobans live in. We cannot, and the people of Manitoba understand that we cannot, continue to decrease the human and financial resources necessary to protect, even in the most minimal of fashion, our natural resources without serious and potentially incredibly damaging outcomes.

I think we all know that many species, thousands of species each day, each month, each year become extinct throughout the world. It might be said, well, what has that to do with us; we are fine; we do not need to worry about that; we have lots of trees; we have lots of lakes; we have lots of water; we have lots of natural resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as John Donne said several hundred years ago: No man is an island. We know that we ignore our natural resources, we ignore the preservation and enhancement of our natural resources to our peril as a society. This act does not give us much feeling of comfort that this government is prepared, in any meaningful way, to deal with those major issues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, another change that we have some concern about is the fact that under the current legislation animals could be held by department personnel or others only while they were alive. I know that the minister has explained in his comments some of the reasons why it is felt necessary to amend this to allow for the killing, in certain instances, of wildlife. The reasons given by the government for this change in legislation are reasonable on the surface.

It is for humanitarian—if I can use that word in conjunction with wildlife—purposes, so if there is an animal that is seriously injured with no possibility of being able to be revived or assisted back to health, this act would allow a person to kill that animal, to put it out of its misery. Now there is no one on this side of the House who would deny that is very definitely a goal we should achieve and strive for and perhaps something that was left out of the legislation originally that needs to be clarified and put in.

The second change this legislation allows for is that certain killing permits can be issued for killing certain animals for scientific purposes. Now this is an area where I have some serious concerns. I have them because the amendments, to my way of

thinking, are not clear in this regard. I am very concerned that the lack of clarity and the lack of definition of some of the terms in these amendments will lead to the potential for abuse.

Legislation is implemented by humans, all of whom are prone in one degree or another to make mistakes. The purpose of legislation is to protect the community from as many of those human errors as possible, and so the legislation, to be good legislation, must be as tight as possible, as clear as possible and allow for as little human error as is possible in legislation that is drafted and implemented by humans. Consequently, we have some concerns about some of the areas in this particular part of the legislation.

The allowing for killing for scientific purposes has been used by Japan and Norway to commercially hunt and kill whales including species of whales that are on the endangered list under the auspices of the International Whaling Commission. This is not to say that would happen in Manitoba but, as I have stated earlier, legislation should protect as far as is humanly possible from that type of behaviour occurring.

We do not see that the legislation as it is currently worded protects the wildlife in this province as adequately as it must do no matter who is in the role of minister responsible for implementing this legislation although, parenthetically, I will state that the past history of this government in this province has not been exemplary in this area, so we are concerned in that regard as well.

The new wording, we are also afraid, may have allowed with the minister's permission Ducks Unlimited, that infamous head office complex of Ducks Unlimited, to damage the habitat or kill such endangered species as piping plovers since their development at Oak Hammock was mostly considered a scientific, educational and research project and, as the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) has just stated, not just an office complex.

So theoretically, Madam Deputy Speaker, under the new legislation as proposed by this government, additional wildlife destruction could have taken place under the minister's approval with the wording that is currently in place.

All we are asking is for the government to tighten up these regulations, these definitions, so that is not something that could conceivably happen.

Again we are concerned about the definition of scientific purposes. What precisely is a scientific purpose under these amendments? As I have stated earlier, other countries have used under the guise of scientific purposes killing of whales, including endangered species of whales.

* (1510)

We must ensure that this does not happen under this legislation, so what we are asking is for a tightening up of that definition, a clarification of that definition so that will not happen in the province of Manitoba.

Prior to this there was no definition of scientific purposes and there did not seem to be any reason for defining scientific purposes under the old act because there was no allowing for killing for scientific purposes.

Now, under the new amendments as proposed by the government, killing can take place under certain permitted circumstances for scientific purposes, and according to my reading of the act it is pretty much at the discretion of the minister.

Well, I am sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker, but we on this side of the House have some major concerns with that part, that permissiveness of the legislation. The government has not shown itself to be environmentally active. It has not shown itself to be concerned overly with or even moderately with the environmental problems that face us in Manitoba. Cutbacks in their staffing have occurred every year since this government has been in power. Major cutbacks have just been announced in another department of Environment. Other legislation that this government has passed has given sweeping discretionary powers to the ministers of Environment and Natural Resources. This is yet another example of that broadening of the discretionary powers of the minister, and we feel that this is not the way to go in this kind of legislation which is designed to protect the wildlife of our province.

So, again, how do you define scientific purposes? What exactly are the discretionary powers that the minister has? Again, who is the person who can receive a permit to kill wildlife under this legislation? There does not appear to me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is an adequate definition, if any definition, of the term "person" who is allowed to access a permit. There is an advisory board, but it

is an advisory board to the minister. We do not know who the people are.

The minister in his discussion on the legislation in December says that we have a committee comprised of half a dozen individuals who meet on a regular basis to take up the question of whether or not specific species ought to come under the protection of this act. Well, who exactly makes up this advisory committee? Is it six individuals? Is it a minimum of six? Is it a maximum of six? Are there any technical or expert qualifications required for these positions? Do they advise the minister? Do they have any control or any power?

As we saw yesterday, Madam Deputy Speaker, the changes that have been suggested to the oil and gas act give far more power to the minister and far less authority and impact to the board that is working with that act. Again, we have the same type of concern with this piece of legislation. The minister has far too much discretionary power. The powers that the minister has are not clearly defined. The people to whom these permits can be issued are not defined. Is there a guarantee? There is no definition of the term or the concept "scientific purpose." We have no comfort in any of these definitions and any of these terms. They are not clearly defined. They must be clearly defined.

I guess, Madam Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, my concern is that this government has not just made oversights in these amendments, that it is not just something that the minister will say as a result of our discussions or our concerns being raised in debate on second reading—oh, you are right we should have done this; we should have tightened this up. No, my concern is that the minister knew fully and completely what his objectives were in making these amendments.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is what causes us concern for two reasons. One is we do not know what the minister's objectives are in this regard. We do not believe that they are merely housekeeping and small insignificant changes. No, we do not believe that because we have seen too many instances on the part of this government where ostensibly small insignificant changes have been made that have enormous implications on the part of the province of Manitoba. This government has no qualms about making major changes to the child welfare system in this province, not through bringing in legislation that could be publicly and openly debated in the House and in public hearings, but

through a weekend change, overnight, of the regulations.

Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, the changes to the social assistance regulations in this province were done—ostensibly there were changes to the act, but the numbers and the way the government was going to implement those changes were not explained in the discussion of legislation.

These are only two examples of this government's willingness to attempt to slide through changes to legislation that have sweeping and broad implications under the guise of housekeeping and minimal, unimportant, inconsequential amendments to legislation, hoping, I assume, that we on this side of the House would not pay any attention, hoping that the public hearing process would go by just in a brief period without any discussion.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we are not prepared to have that happen. We are going to put on record our concerns, and we would hope that the government would pay attention to those concerns. We would hope that the government will take our criticisms in the way that they are intended, which is to be constructive and to suggest additional alternatives or amendments to be made to this piece of legislation, and certainly to provide some questions to be asked in the public hearing process after we get through second reading.

Madam Deputy Speaker, with those remarks, I would conclude my concerns on Bill 2, The Endangered Species Amendment Act, and would hope very seriously that the government would listen to our concerns and take constructive action as a result of those. Thank you.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to close debate on—

Madam Deputy Speaker: To close debate? It has been left standing. Leave was granted to leave the—

Mr. Enns: Well, you cannot blame me for trying, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Bill 3—The Oil and Gas and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 3 (The Oil and Gas and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi concernant le pétrole et le gaz naturel et apportant des

modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois), standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Bill 5—The Northern Affairs Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 5 (The Northern Affairs Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les affaires du Nord), standing in the name of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak on this bill if I could, Bill 5, The Northern Affairs Amendment Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak on this particular bill. I think it is important to put a number of comments on the record.

I would like to indicate that I know our Northern Affairs critic, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), will be raising a number of concerns. He is currently in northern Manitoba. He is unable to speak today, but I know he is very anxious to contribute to the debate.

I hope members, and particularly the Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger), would appreciate that this is the one time of year in northern Manitoba—and he being Minister of Highways, I know he is a little bit sensitive about this, but this is winter road season for those members of this House who are not aware of the importance of our winter road network in northern Manitoba. I know the Minister of Highways is a little bit sensitive about this because the Minister of Highways had very much in error deleted winter roads from a budget a couple of years ago, leading to an outcry in many northern communities, and it was subsequently reinstated. I must say I could never understand why it was cancelled in the first place, but this is the time of year when the winter roads are open.

* (1520)

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): They were closed today in the afternoon because of the weather conditions.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the weather conditions, as the Minister of Highways says, are pretty difficult. We had a major snowfall in Thompson these past couple of days, a couple of feet actually, Madam Deputy Speaker, and it is certainly going to make it difficult.

I was fortunate, actually, Madam Deputy Speaker, to be able to travel on one of the winter roads just recently to York Landing and to Ilford. Many people in that community are anxiously awaiting responses I know in terms of a possible future connection into those communities of all-weather roads, particularly in the case of Ilford, which is on the bayline. I must say that many people on the bayline are very concerned about the future of the bayline. I know the Minister of Highways is certainly aware of those concerns and certainly has discussed those concerns in this House, as has our critic.

I say that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I know our critic is travelling extensively in the North. One of the unfortunate things, one of the ironic things is we tend to sit often in February and certainly in March, and that is basically when the winter roads are open. Most of the winter roads in my area open up in late January, and it is the opportunity to get into many of the communities, many of the Northern Affairs communities connected by the winter road network.

I want to say that, Madam Deputy Speaker, to begin with because I had the opportunity to talk to residents of a number of Northern Affairs communities and official representatives of those communities over the last number of weeks. I have been in Wabowden, which is a Northern Affairs community, and Ilford, which is in an interesting situation.

I do not know how many people realize, but Ilford basically has been approved as a reserve. Many of the people now have been clearly given status, either through C-31 or through direct status, and it will soon become a reserve, but it is technically still a Northern Affairs community. In fact, I would assume there may still be a Northern Affairs community alongside the reserve when it is established, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I have

had the opportunity to talk to people in those communities.

In the next few weeks I will be into Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei. I know that we are not supposed to make reference to absence in the House or not, but I am sure that within the next week or two, in fact, I can tell members of this House that there will probably be at least a day or two when I will not be in the House. To the minister across the way, that will be because I am travelling the winter roads into Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei, which hopefully will still be open at that time.

I know the minister would love to go in with me. I believe he has already been in Thicket Portage. In fact, I would like to take him back to look at some of the continuing problems with housing conditions in the community. He is more than welcome to come up with me, Madam Deputy Speaker. It would be an approximate seven-hour drive—pardon me, about an eight-hour drive to the turnoff of the winter road and about another 45 minutes into Thicket Portage. So if the minister has eight or nine hours to spare there and eight or nine back, I would certainly be willing to take him in on the winter road.

I realize it is not an experience that many people in government have the opportunity to do, because the tendency, because of tight schedules—and I am not blaming anyone—is to fly into communities. Of course, the winter road is only open for a couple of months, but perhaps we could arrange a pair for the minister to come up with me to Thicket Portage. If he was to promise to visit house to house with me and to come to a couple of people in Thicket Portage in particular to look at some of the housing conditions in the community, I think it would be greatly appreciated.

I think many people would love to have the minister there, love to see the minister and show the particular conditions either in Thicket Portage, which the minister has already visited, and I do not believe he has had the opportunity to be in Pikwitonei. Pikwitonei, I know, would be very anxious to do that. I am not just strictly blaming the minister. I do not want any misimpressions to be left. Part of the problem is with CMHC.

I know the minister certainly knows the minister responsible for CMHC and the federal government and perhaps might be able to assist those of us who have been fighting for better housing conditions in those communities. [interjection] Maybe we can get

the federal minister. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, if this minister could get the federal minister to come to Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei, I would be impressed. I hope that he will immediately fax him today and say that he has made this commitment or request the attendance of the minister, because quite frankly there are major problems with housing.

What I want to point out, too, and this is particularly relevant when we are talking about The Northern Affairs Act, is that one of the difficulties in northern Manitoba currently, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that while 20 years ago the trading communities, the First Nations communities, were probably in worse shape on average than the Northern Affairs communities, because of lack of self-government, lack of block funding, lack of funding generally. I include education; I include health to a lesser extent; but I particularly include housing and provision of infrastructure.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what is happening increasingly is that the Northern Affairs communities in the 1990s have fallen consistently behind the other aboriginal communities. The vast majority of people living in Northern Affairs communities are aboriginal, whether it be treaty or whether it be in terms of the many Metis residents, but they have fallen behind other areas. There is a particular degree of frustration in the Northern Affairs communities right now. I will tell you where it starts from. It starts with the kind of funding cuts that we have seen in recent years by both federal and provincial governments that have led Northern Affairs communities to the situation where they have high poverty.

For the information of members, in 1986 the most recent information that is available—and I was just reading this just recently—the average number of Manitobans below the poverty line, the low-income cutoff, was about 17 percent. In many areas, many Northern Affairs communities, Madam Deputy Speaker, that figure is as high as 54 percent, and that is in a whole census area of strictly Northern Affairs communities. Fifty-four percent of people are below the low-income cutoff.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is the problem in Northern Affairs communities with limited economic base and without the access to funds that First Nations communities are increasingly accessing as part of their move to self-government, increasingly demanding and rightly so. Many Northern Affairs communities are placed in a very difficult situation.

I can tell you, it was very difficult last year to go into Thicket Portage and meet with the mayor in Thicket Portage, Maurice Clemons and sit down and be told of the grim situation for young people in that community in terms of employment, and to be told that virtually all the government programs that have been in place have now been eliminated and what government programs that are available now require additional funding from a sponsoring community. People should understand we are talking about Northern Affairs communities that do not have a taxation base in many cases or a limited taxation base if they do, do not have access to other revenue. I am referring here to The Northern Affairs Amendment Act for the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), Bill 5.

It is of great concern to me to find out the situation that has occurred. In the case of Thicket Portage I was fortunately able to contact Manitoba Hydro in regards to a number of suggestions by the member in council in that community, and a number of positions were made available in terms of summer employment in Thicket Portage.

I want to say that when you are talking about communities of a couple of hundred it is particularly frustrating for people in those communities to see almost no job opportunities for young people. I had an interesting experience just two days ago to run into a former resident of Thicket Portage here in Winnipeg through a friend who lived in Thicket Portage in its boom days. Thicket Portage was actually the staging point for the development of Thompson. Many people may not be aware of this. It had a hotel, it had stores. It was, in fact, when one looks at the historical records, the sight of the first voting lists for people who essentially were developing the Thompson site in the mid-1950s with the eventual opening of the shaft in 1958 and opening the mine in 1960.

Many people in that community want to work. Many do work on a seasonal basis. Let us not allow anyone to suggest otherwise, because sometimes there are stereotypes that are put out. When people in that community end up on social assistance, believe you me, it is reluctantly. I have probably a disproportionate number of cases of people in that community who end up working, end up on social assistance and find that they are being penalized in many cases for the kind of income they have made. Incidentally, that is particularly the case if they are

self-employed. I have received concerns from many people in those communities.

* (1530)

I want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the problem is particularly significant among young people. Across the province there are more young people working proportionately than there are people over the age of 25. Under 25 there is more employment, but in northern communities there is often not only less employment for young people, there is often significantly less, and in many communities there are virtually no jobs.

This is serious because what it results in is a whole generation of young people who come out of school, who are encouraged to continue their education, and in many Northern Affairs communities there is not a high school, so it takes a major relocation for the young people in those communities to go to another community to continue high school. What kind of role model are we offering to young people when, even if they continue their education, they are unable to find employment not only on a full-time basis but in the summer?

I know the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) is listening to the comments right now, and I think that is fortunate. I want to say to the minister that it is time for the government, in looking at Northern Affairs communities, to look very seriously at bringing back some of the kinds of youth employment programs that existed previously, the Youth Corps program, for example. I realize it was federal funding in terms of that particular program, but let us look at it.

We currently have \$40 million in VLT funds going to the government from outside the city of Winnipeg, by the latest estimates. That may have increased since the last estimate. If the city of Winnipeg puts in VLTs that will be another \$60 million. My understanding was that was supposed to go to economic development. Well, some of it may have been put to that use.

I would suggest that if members opposite want to deal with the very serious problem in Northern Affairs communities and also the First Nations communities, to a lesser extent in the urban communities such as Thompson, that one place you could start would be in terms of northern youth employment and at least start with a functional summer youth employment program that recognizes the many remote communities, the

many Northern Affairs communities, do not have the kind of funds to be able to access the few programs that still are in existence.

Even the program offered by the RCMP, I know, requires shared funding. Even the few programs that are left, federal programs, require that the communities come up with money. Madam Deputy Speaker, they just do not have the funds. The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) knows that. He knows the way the Northern Affairs communities operate. He knows the tight control over budgets, the limited resources that are made available. I say that because, as I said, I just had the opportunity to travel into a number of communities where this concern was expressed very significantly. There is a great deal of frustration about the lack of youth employment in those communities.

That, I think, is something that is important in looking at any legislation in regard to Northern Affairs, and that is the unique situation Northern Affairs communities are in, the unique situation on one hand of local self-control and, I know the minister will agree I am sure, the need to maximize the degree of self-control in communities and of course the fact that because of the limited tax base, that different structure is required inherently because of that fact.

We are not talking about a community such as Thompson or Winnipeg or Brandon or the small towns in southern Manitoba where they can access those type of resources.

They are very much dependent on funding priorities of government. There are many concerns ongoing. I mentioned youth employment. We are dealing here with a bill that does deal with a number of issues relating to Crown lands, for example, and the approval of by-laws, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would say that is certainly an area that should be dealt with. From my consultations with people in northern communities, which I have not completed yet, certainly I know that a number of the items in this bill are here very much at the request of Northern Affairs communities themselves.

An ongoing struggle in many northern communities now has to do with provision of basic infrastructure. It is an ongoing concern. I know the minister is aware of that, the particular criteria they put in place in particular in terms of sewer and water.

Many Northern Affairs communities are faced with a major challenge now because of the impact of Bill C-31, which reinstated the treaty status of many people in northern Manitoba. That has led some to relocate to obviously First Nations communities but many to remain in the Northern Affairs community.

Wabowden is a good example. You may not be aware, but by estimates of local people, there are about 65 percent of the population of Wabowden that is C-31. Many of them by the way still identify as Metis. Because of the opportunity to have a historic wrong righted through C-31, they have retained their treaty status, and that is having a major impact on Northern Affairs communities. The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) knows that.

Northern Affairs communities, for example, are seeking reserve status and are looking to Ilford as an example. Ilford is an example where virtually the entire community now, apart from I believe seven or eight members of the community, is treaty and has received the treaty status.

That goes back to the late Adam Dyck, certainly one of the most respected elders that we have seen in northern Manitoba, an individual I came to know personally and have great respect for. We are dealing here with his legacy when we are talking about the fact that the status has been approved.

I say it has been approved; it has not been finalized. I know the Minister of Northern Affairs is working, or at least I know his department is working, on the final negotiations on the reserve boundary, the question of the relationship between the community and the reserve and a whole series of issues that result from that.

That is what I am saying. There are major challenges facing Northern Affairs communities, even in terms of their very existence as we know them.

There are Northern Affairs communities, Madam Deputy Speaker, where virtually everyone has received C-31 status. In fact, what happens in some cases, you have people who are treaty, who by choice live in the Northern Affairs community rather than the reserve. In many Northern Affairs communities, you may have people who are treaty but from another area who choose to live in the Northern Affairs community. In many cases, there are people now who have received C-31 status, but

not received band status. People may not be aware that the two do not go hand in hand and that has created some rather difficult situations, some confusion certainly.

There really is an identification process now going on within the Northern Affairs communities. We really cannot say where it will lead, because the whole identity of many of the communities which traditionally have been called Metis communities has been affected by C-31 although many people, as I said before, who have obtained C-31 status have told me that they still identify as Metis. So one is in a situation where you have a very fluid situation in those communities.

Beyond those issues, Madam Deputy Speaker, the key theme—and it relates to what I just talked about earlier in terms of youth employment, and it relates to the infrastructure questions I have pointed out—in many of those communities is the need for proper infrastructure, including roads, a number of communities do not have an all-weather road, for example, the need for proper educational access, in particular to make sure that Frontier School Division receives adequate funding to be able to provide education in the Northern Affairs communities that it serves and ultimately the need for enhanced economic development in those communities.

What I find of concern, Madam Deputy Speaker, is when I talk to the elders in many communities in northern Manitoba. We think we have progress in our society at times, that somehow we are improving decade after decade, generation after generation, but there is something that wrenches the heart when one talks to elders in communities where they talk of the good old days, the days in which there was self-sufficiency in their communities based on the land, the days when there was self-sufficiency in the communities based on employment, in many Northern Affairs communities, for example, on the bayline. A significant number of people spent their entire working life working for CN and later for VIA Rail. They talk about the kind of role models that were provided by people who spent their lives trapping or commercial fishing or hunting, the traditional ways, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether they were part of the market economy or not.

* (1540)

They talk about the role models, of people who worked 32 years at CN. I talked to an individual just a few days ago of 79 years old who spent 32 years

at CN, VIA Rail in northern Manitoba. They ask the question, where are the role models, Madam Deputy Speaker, when what is happening in the North is that jobs are being cut back. I mentioned about CN and VIA Rail. The number of jobs in CN and VIA Rail on the bayline has been slashed in the last number of years, slashed to the point where there are barely any people working on the bayline in those communities at CN and VIA Rail, good-paying jobs, traditionally jobs with some level of job security. Traditionally, though that sadly is changing and jobs that provided a role model to the communities.

We are seeing, Madam Deputy Speaker, in many communities, many small Northern Affairs communities out-migration. We are seeing it not just of young people who have given up hope of being able to find job opportunities in their own communities. Interestingly enough, we are also seeing it from many seniors, from many elders. I was in Ilford the other day and many seniors in that community, many elders have relocated to other communities because a lack of facilities are available for them. I say that it is sad because what is being lost at the same time is both the history of that community, the oral history through the elders themselves and, on the other hand, with the out-migration of young people, the future of those communities.

You know, there is something, as I said, that really hits you when you talk to somebody as I did, as I mentioned a few moments ago, from Thicket Portage who remembered the good old days when he went to school in Thicket Portage, lived there for many years and how that community was a thriving community. Many people today who travel into the community of Thicket Portage would be surprised to know just how vibrant the economy was, just how many stores were in that community, would be surprised by the fact there was a hotel once in that community, would be surprised there were literally hundreds of people who came through that community and hundreds have lived there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I guess what I see, though, on the other hand, is the continuing spirit in many of those communities, you know, the fact they have given everything, for example, in Thicket Portage or Pikwitonei or Ilford, all Northern Affairs communities or a community such as York Landing in my area, none of which have all-weather roads, all of which are accessible

only by winter road or in the case of the three bayline communities by three-day-a-week train service, only one of which currently has scheduled air service. It is amazing that those communities have survived the way they have. It is amazing that they are continuing to survive even given some of the new challenges.

I look at what is happening at Thicket Portage, a once thriving commercial fishing industry which is being devastated by the economic situation and what I consider the mismanagement of the northern fishery by the Freshwater Fish Marketing board. It is amazing, given those continuing blows, Madam Deputy Speaker, given the fact that Conawapa, which was going to be developed, was a potential opportunity for many of the people who worked on Limestone, because many people had specialized in construction related to Hydro sites over the last number of years as a way to get employment. Now that opportunity is no longer available.

It is amazing, given the government cutbacks that have taken place in terms of programs that have provided jobs in those communities, that have provided jobs to young people, that they still continue to hang in there and still, Madam Deputy Speaker, show a degree of community spirit, I think, that would amaze many people.

I would hope at some time that members opposite would have the opportunity to attend some of the winter carnivals that take place around this time of year. Traditionally, as we get hopefully towards the end of the winter in northern Manitoba many communities have winter carnivals to celebrate the end of the season, hopefully the beginning of a new season. There is a level of hope which I think is unprecedented, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I went into Split Lake, a First Nations community, last Thursday, Friday to attend a number of events at the winter carnival where, for example, dog teams are being revived for the first time in many years. There was a dog team race of six and seven dog teams, something that is an indication, I think, of the fact that many communities are rediscovering their traditional ways. I know that Thicket Portage has traditionally had a winter carnival. Wabowden is having one the first part of April, and I hope people will take the time to go.

It is unfortunate in many ways that we are sitting at this time of year. I have always said that it is unfortunate that we sit during the summer when

many of the summer festivals take place traditionally. [interjection] Well, the minister opposite says we can do something about that. I really hope that at some point in time we recognize that there are times of year that members of the Legislature should not be sitting in this Legislature, particularly when no one is particularly watching anyway but when we should be out visiting the winter carnivals, when we should be out visiting the summer festivals. [interjection]

The minister says that I can deal with it through my role as House leader and indeed we shall see and in fact, he may wish to remind his own House leader of that. I say this, all politics aside, that I think that is important. I think it is important that we be able to get into the communities. [interjection] Well, this is work. This is the work of the Legislature and I think it is fairly important. [interjection]

Well, the member opposite says it is work listening to me, and I hope he will be educated, though, at least, not from my words, as in many cases these are the words of the people in the many Northern Affairs communities throughout the north that I am referring to.

I think it is one of the unfortunate things about what is happening increasingly with our Legislature and with government, that we do not get a chance to get out of this building as much as we should. I know that is a particular problem with government, and I do not mean that as a political shot. It is a reality, given the pressing responsibilities of being in government in the 1990s.

I was just in Ilford, for example, and I talked to the owner of the hotel there, Micky Thompson, who reminded me of back in the early 1970s when the entire Schreyer cabinet and caucus had gone up north, hooked up on the bayline, chartered a train, travelled up to Churchill and stopped at pretty well every community along the way.

I think that would be a tremendous idea in the 1990s, and I am not talking about a farewell tour of the bayline either. I think it still has a lot of years ahead of it if we fight for it. But I would like to see us do that, members of the Legislature, perhaps drive to The Pas, if they are not able to hook up through Winnipeg, or fly to The Pas, whatever, and then take the bayline up from The Pas, one of the three times weekly train service up to Churchill.

An Honourable Member: Good idea.

Mr. Ashton: I think it is excellent. I had the opportunity to travel the bayline myself, because I get into Thicket Portage in particular by rail, especially when the winter road is not open, and you learn a lot about what is happening in the north. You learn about our tourism potential when you talk to Americans who have come from as far away as Florida, flown up to Minneapolis, caught up to the train system and are taking the train up to Churchill.

You will see European tourists who have seen much publicity on Churchill. Anybody who has been in Europe will have seen, I am sure, as I have, documentaries on Churchill shown on satellite television that covers all of Europe. I saw a program that was on the French satellite channel. Out of two hours on Canadian railways, one and a half hours was on Churchill, and it included the bayline. It included the polar bears, the whales, the many tourist attractions. It was a tremendous sight for someone sitting a long way from home to look and see someone wearing a Manitoba conservation uniform and say, wait a sec, I know that, and then to see the polar bear and say, I know that too—[interjection] not quite knowing the bear—and then to see the train station at Churchill and feel a sort of sense of pride that here in a satellite channel that probably covered 300 million Europeans, they were learning about Churchill, Manitoba.

You know, sometimes, what I have found from talking to people on my travels on the bayline—and I wish I had more time to travel on the bayline, had more opportunities—I find sometimes that people from outside of our own area appreciate it more than we do. I have talked to Americans who cannot understand why we are cutting back on our rail system or cannot understand why there would be even train service only on a three-day-a-week basis. They feel it is tremendous. They really are excited about Churchill.

I have been to Churchill many times. I have been in the hotels and talked to Americans. I remember having a meeting a number of years ago with Jay Cowan in one of the hotels. We were having a meeting up there at the time, and somebody mentioned the word New Democrats, and somebody came over and said, hey, I am an old Democrat. I said, an old Democrat? Well, of course, he was an American visitor who was up, I think, from Chicago, having I think one of the holiday experiences of a lifetime.

I really think that this is one of the major problems we have. I was just in Ilford talking to Micky Thompson, as I said. They operate the lodge in that area, Silsby Lake Lodge. There are many people who fly from Tennessee, Madam Deputy Speaker, to go to fishing lodges in northern Manitoba—Tennessee, Chicago, all over the United States. I have been on the plane back home on the weekend and have run across people from New York.

I mean, Manitoba has a real reputation out there. It is probably one of the best kept secrets at times. I think part of the problem is that we do not understand it ourselves. I say to the minister responsible for Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) that I think sometimes we do not promote ourselves enough in terms of some of those hidden aspects.

* (1550)

I am not being critical of what we advertise. That is a discussion for another debate. I am referring specifically to the North. I think there are a lot of times we could do a lot more in terms of promoting the lodges, promoting Churchill, promoting the wilderness experience at a time when that type of market is growing dramatically. The Europeans are a potential market, for example. I talked to this tour lodge operator, for example, who has received a write-up in fishing magazines in Holland, and that shows the kind of reputation we have received.

I have run across many tourists from Germany, and they are fascinated. They know about Manitoba, by the way, because of Shilo. They know about our aboriginal heritage. They know about Churchill. Many of the contacts that have been established have been from people who have been in Shilo and have had the chance to travel when they have not been at the base. There are many people who have been able to travel in northern Manitoba.

Winnipeg also has a reputation because of the Shilo connection. We sometimes tend to forget that. I say that out of some positive suggestions in terms of northern development, because I know we disagree with the government on a number of issues, particularly in regard to job creation. We have certainly disagreed with the cuts that have taken place in terms of youth employment programs and the Community Places program, which had provided 100-percent funding to northern communities that did not have other funds. We will continue to disagree on that.

We may have disagreements also in terms of the degree to which we should be expanding northern road access. I think that is important, not only for the convenience of people in the communities but also for economic development. Without all-weather road access, many communities cannot develop, so we may have disagreements on that. I will look forward to continuing that debate with the Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) when we are into Highways Estimates, because I know he and I have traded back and forth a number of memos and letters on the need for northern road expansion into a number of areas. I think that a number of northern roads need to be upgraded, and a number of roads need to be put into communities that currently do not have any all-weather road access.

As I said, we may have disagreements in that area, but there are areas, I think, we can all focus on in common, and that is the fact—I mean, let us look at it, the growth industry, the growth sector in Canada right now, despite the recession, is in what?—is in services. Tourism in particular has been, despite some of the problems we have had in Manitoba in terms of performance—we have had some tough years—I would say, one of the major growth sectors, and increasingly people are looking to the leisure society. People are looking at shorter vacations. They are willing to travel to more faraway places. There is a real opportunity out there just starting with tourism alone to develop northern Manitoba, particularly Northern Affairs communities.

I mentioned about Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei. They have beautiful surroundings. They have tremendous fishing there. One of the things I was most disappointed about a number of years ago was the cancellation of the rail bus, which at the time had been proposed as a way to supplement the train service that exists currently, to have a bus that ran on the rails essentially, and that would provide service into those communities on a far more frequent basis than the three times a week service.

There is a lot of ability to generate tourism within northern Manitoba. Many people in Thompson, my home community, have never been to Thicket Portage—I have never been to Pikwitonei—probably do not even know if there is a winter road available, probably are not even aware of how safe the winter roads are at this time of year.

The minister could probably update me more than I currently could, but I mean the ice—when you are talking about three feet of ice in many locations, it is safe. I have often told people that I would rather drive on a winter road across some of the lakes in northern Manitoba any day, in terms of the kind of comfort that one has, certainly compared to some of the overland passages on the winter roads.

I can relate that to the minister. There are a couple of stretches I would like him to come with me, particularly from Split Lake to York Landing. He might want to check that one out, Madam Deputy Speaker. [interjection] Well, I will take a list afterwards. All I would advise people is to take a crash helmet if they go because there are some stretches of the road which require, even if you are in a 4-wheel vehicle as I was, that you probably have some other insurance of not only wearing your seat belt, but wearing a crash helmet because it is pretty rough.

The point of what I am saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, in terms of the Northern Affairs communities, there is a lot of potential, and a lot of times in this House, we focus strictly on areas where there are policy disagreements. As I said, when the Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) cut the winter road program, we had a pretty heated debate in this House, him and the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey).

There are areas to focus on in economic development, and in many ways, what is being talked about in this particular bill, if one looks at the requests from the Northern Affairs community councils, is to have more efficient operating systems that are put in place so that they do have that ability to implement them themselves.

An Honourable Member: Is there anyone in Manitoba that has not driven on a winter road?

Mr. Ashton: Well, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) says, is there anybody in Manitoba that has not driven on a winter road? Yes, there are many people who have never driven on winter roads, many people in Winnipeg and many people in Thompson. [interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I think one of the problems with the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) is that whenever she speaks, she has this automatic reaction of disagreeing with everything I am saying. I know it was creating difficulty in committee last year when I

agreed with a series of amendments put forward by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), and she was wondering if there was something wrong with the amendments because I supported them.

I would assure the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, I am not suggesting that nobody else in the Chamber has ever been on a winter road. What I am suggesting is that one of the things that would be nice when we do schedule our sittings is that there will be greater ability of people, instead of being in this Chamber right now, to be out there right now because this is the winter road season. Winter roads are essentially basically open in February and March. [interjection]

Well, the minister says she knows that. I do not think everybody in this Chamber knows that, even the minister. Even the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) would have to admit that not everybody in this Chamber would know when the winter road season is. I do not even know if everybody would know what a winter road is, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I am not pointing at any party. I am not pointing at the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. If she says she knows what a winter road is like, and she has been on one, I accept her at her word. That was not the point of my criticism.

My criticism was based on the fact that we often sit when we cannot travel on them, and— [interjection] Back lanes in Winnipeg. Well, I will compare the back lanes in Winnipeg to the northern roads any day. I mean, the northern roads are not quite as comfortable. Mind you, after some of the civic cutbacks that are going to take place, the back roads in the city of Winnipeg may approach the condition of some of our Northern Affairs winter roads, but that is another issue.

The point I was making—I was trying to be positive, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am often accused, as are members of this House, of not being positive on issues, and I always get a little bit of—

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): We are positive.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs says that we are positive. I do not know which "we" she is referring to.

Mrs. McIntosh: Collectively.

Mr. Ashton: Collectively. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker. apart from—

An Honourable Member: How is she defining positive?

Mr. Ashton: I must say that I do not know. Perhaps we all tend to black out Question Period sometimes, Madam Deputy Speaker. I can see why sometimes, and we are all part of it, but I do not think we are always exactly positive, and I do not think just the opposition can be accused of being negative. You know, I really think that one of the criticisms sometimes is that we are not positive enough.

Part of the problem is that we spend a lot of time debating bills. Right now, who is listening? I mean, there is maybe a sound feed. There may be some people, citizens of the province of Manitoba listening. I know some do. I have had phone calls from people who do follow debates very closely, but very few people follow this compared to Question Period.

Question Period, I think it is part of the parliamentary system. It does emphasize the adversarial nature of politics, and I think that does have its positive features, although we do probably get carried away in terms of being negative. [interjection] I have been asked what it has to do with winter roads, and I am digressing because of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh).

My point was that we should take the time to get out to the Northern Affairs communities on the winter roads. I am quite willing, and I have offered this to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) and we just have not been able to schedule it. I want to take him on a tour of the roads in my constituency before he finalizes the budget. Well, I guess maybe he has it finalized. Is it finalized? The figures are finalized.

I have a number of roads and they are all not winter roads, the road into Nelson House—and we will continue that back and forth. It might save us some paper in these memos we have been fighting each other with the last couple of weeks. [interjection] Oh, the minister has driven it. When did you drive it last? Well, Madam Deputy Speaker I am digressing again. The Nelson House road is a sensitive issue for both the minister and myself.

The point is that there is a lot that can be done in Northern Affairs communities and I really think that when we are discussing bills like this, which do have very serious technical aspects to them, and are requested in many cases by the Northern Affairs

communities, we should reflect that in our debates. I look forward, by the way—I think it is a good opportunity for members opposite and members in our caucus and members in the Liberal caucus to talk about Northern Affairs communities, northern development and a whole series of issues that are important and take the time to travel to the Northern Affairs communities.

I know the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst) was in and I know the Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) has been, but I think it is a good opportunity to hear it directly from the people.

Bill 8—The Insurance Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 8 (The Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les assurances), standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Bill 10—The Farm Lands Ownership Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 10 (The Farm Lands Ownership Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la propriété agricole et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois), standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Bill 12—The International Trusts Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 12 (The International Trusts Act; Loi sur les fiducies internationales), standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Bill 13—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 13 (The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba), standing in the name of the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

* * *

Madam Deputy Speaker: What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock? Agreed and so ordered.

* (1600)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: Bill 200 (The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): It is a pleasure to speak to a bill that is in my new critic area as Family Services critic.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I miss you, Doug.

Mr. Martindale: I think the Legislature will hear many speeches on Bill 200.

The Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh) says she is going to miss me, and I will miss being the critic for housing legislation. It was something that I was very familiar with, and I enjoyed it, and I knew her staff and enjoyed working with them, but I think we have a new critic who is

going to do an equally good job, and the minister likes the new critic—that is good. We will not get into comparisons here.

I would like to begin debate on Bill 200 by talking a little bit about the origins of the bill and then talk about some of the problems, to give some examples, and then to conclude by talking about the interests of children and how they are best served.

As we know, we are into this debate because there have been recommendations over the last 10 years that there be a Children's Advocate. After many years of reports and many years of delay, the government in the last session, in the third session, finally introduced Bill 64, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, also known as the Children's Advocate bill.

The purpose of this bill was a laudable one. The purpose was to advise the Minister of Family Services on matters relating to the welfare of children. It was also to review and investigate complaints, to represent the rights, interests, viewpoints of children who fall under The Child and Family Services Act, to prepare and submit an annual report to the Minister of Family Services. Now we get into areas of disagreement between our party and the government, which I will go into later. The final purpose was other duties as prescribed by regulations or as required by the Minister of Family Services. We as an opposition party had many, many problems with this bill, and our concerns were shared by the third party, by the Liberal Party as well.

First of all, the main difference we had with the government in this legislation was that the Children's Advocate is responsible to the Minister of Family Services and not to the Legislature. That was our concern during the third session. It is still our concern, and it is the reason that our former critic of Family Services, someday to be minister, of course, introduced a private member's bill. So we have an amendment to the government's bill, and we hope that the government will listen to our amendment and that they will agree to our amendment and change the legislation.

I find I am getting myself into trouble here. What I meant to say was that some day the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) will be a cabinet minister. I was not saying what portfolio, but we all agree that someday she will and should be in cabinet. When she gets there, she will do a good job, whether it is

Minister of Family Services or some other cabinet portfolio.

An Honourable Member: Is she crossing the floor?

Mr. Martindale: And she does not need to cross the floor to do it. She will get duly elected.

As I was saying earlier, there have been reports that have recommended that the Children's Advocate be an independent position. There were four major reports in the last decade which all stated that the Children's Advocate must be responsible to the Legislature, not to the minister. In spite of these reports, the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) chose to ignore those recommendations, chose to ignore that advice and did what he wanted to do and did not follow the reports that recommended something different. Mr. Kimelman, the Reid-Sigurdson Report, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Suche report all recommended that the Children's Advocate must be responsible to the Legislature, not to the minister.

None of the previously mentioned reports recommended reporting to the minister. Why? Because of a lack of independence, real or perceived, because of the potential for political interference and because of competing for financial resources with other programs in the Family Services department.

The minister himself stated that one of the reasons for introducing the Children's Advocate was that the director of Child and Family Services may be perceived as lacking independence necessary to advocate for children. He also stated that because the Children's Advocate would have no direct responsibility for service delivery, there would be no real or perceived conflict of interest.

Well, the question for us to ask is, if the minister agrees that there is a problem with real or perceived conflict of interest, why is the Children's Advocate a Civil Service position, as is the director of Child and Family Services, and why does the Children's Advocate report to the minister, as does the director of Child and Family Services?

We were also concerned in debating Bill 64 in the third session about the looseness of the definition of additional duties as determined by regulations or the minister. While it could be stated that this allows for more flexibility, especially when legislation is so new, it also gives enormous power to the minister. This is problematic, especially in light of the

concerns I have already raised. Other examples could be the Minister of Family Services using regulations to recentralize Child and Family Services agencies, or the Minister of Urban Affairs using Bill 45 to allow for more municipalities than just Headingley to secede from the city of Winnipeg, or the Minister of Housing, who repealed housing authorities.

We remember this quite well, when the Minister of Family Services, by a stroke of a pen, by an Order-in-Council, abolished 98 publicly appointed and more or less autonomous and independent housing authorities, abolished 600 volunteer board members with one Order-in-Council. That is the kind of power that the Minister of Housing had, and that is the kind of power that he used to make major changes; similarly, the Minister of Environment on the Ducks Unlimited bill, which allowed Ducks Unlimited to build an office headquarters in a marsh.

Our third concern is a lack of adequate resources. The staffing for the Children's Advocate in the 1992-93 Estimates are for one Children's Advocate, one technical/professional and two administrative support positions. As well, there is \$70,000 for administration, travel and all other expenses. We believe that if the Children's Advocate is to be truly independent and to truly do the job that the legislation requires that they need to be able to travel, to be able to investigate and consult, and that in order to do so, the Children's Advocate needs adequate resources.

* (1610)

The Children's Advocate will only be as effective as resources allow, resources for outreach, publicity, travel to rural, northern and remote areas, and this is something that is present in the Ontario Children's Advocate. They do have adequate resources. Given the small amount of human and financial resources, it will probably only be able to put out fires; that is, to be reactive, rather than proactive or preventive, and I think that what we need here is a service that is preventative, so that the Children's Advocate is not always responding to crises.

Fourth, we believe there is a lack of consultation. According to the minister, the staff looked at Ontario's Children's Advocate system and spent a week in Alberta looking at their system. However, there does not appear to have been any consultation with other groups, such as the Coalition

on Child Abuse and aboriginal groups, and it is particularly important that this minister consult with as many aboriginal groups as possible, because the majority of children in care are aboriginal. So that is some of the purpose and some of the problems with Bill 64 of the third session, which created the Children's Advocate.

This debate was very closely followed in the media, and I would like to quote from some of the articles that were written and some of the critics in the community and what they said. Some very good reporting was done, for example, by Ruth Teichroeb, a reporter for the Free Press, their social affairs reporter, someone who won a journalism award. I think it was called the Michener Award for excellence in journalism.

Very interestingly, she quotes Dr. Charlie Ferguson, the director of Winnipeg's Child Protection Centre, who said: It is not satisfactory and is merely another rotation in the Family Services department's long and involved history of self-examination.

He said this in testimony in Brandon at an inquest into the suicide of an aboriginal teenager. When Family Services officials investigate themselves, they have a disturbing habit of "navel gazing," which usually "comes up with the innocence of everybody involved," Mr. Ferguson said. He concluded, the public is tired of that.

As far back as 1983, the Kimelman Report in child welfare recommended that a Child Advocate should report to the Legislature to maintain autonomy. The Aboriginal Justice Inquiry Report repeated this recommendation while a provincially commissioned report by Colleen Suche on residential treatment centres reiterated it as well.

Rob Grant, the spokesman for the Manitoba Coalition on Children's Rights said: "It is ridiculous to pay for these reports to be done and then ignore them. This is a very weak, almost a token bill."

Cathy Mallett, a member of the Winnipeg-based Aboriginal Women's Unity Coalition and now a trustee in Winnipeg School Division No. 1 said children and families will not trust an advocate who reports to Gilleshammer. They will be just another number in the system.

It was also pointed out by Alberta's child advocate—in fact he told an audience in Winnipeg that he would be more effective with more autonomy. So that is a report from the personal

experience of the advocate in Alberta who believed that if he had more autonomy, he would be more effective.

The minister, when he introduced his bill, said that his rationale for having the office report to the minister rather than the Legislature was a sound one, but provincial Associate Chief Judge Brian Giesbrecht's report on the inquest into the death of 13-year-old Lester Desjarlais makes it imperative for the government to change its approach.

Our critic in the last session said that we were opposed to a short-term political approach which did not serve children. An advocate must be apolitical and accountable, but reporting to the minister has the potential of political interference.

So we know that there have been a number of reports recommending that the Children's Advocate be independent and report to the Legislature rather than the minister, and we know what our parties said in the last session. We know what we will be saying again. I am sure that the Liberal Party will be saying the same thing, that there needs to be an independent advocate who reports to the Legislature.

I would like to give an example that I think illustrates the problem, because I had a phone call from a former employee of Child and Family Services. This person had made some allegations of a problem in Winnipeg Child and Family Services and alleges that there was a cover-up and is trying to get me to help this individual because this individual alleges that, even though his supervisors and others were made aware of the problem, nothing was done to correct it.

If we had an independent Child and Family Services advocate, I think there would have been an investigation, that something would have been done and that this would have been made public, because the amendment to which I am speaking requires that the advocate report to the Legislature.

Now what happens in the existing system is that even if the Minister of Family Services becomes involved, if the minister becomes aware of the problem, what is the minister going to do? Well, the minister is going to phone the chief executive officer of Winnipeg Child and Family Services—I am even unhappy with the name CEO, but we are stuck with it. And what happens? It never sees the light of day. The minister orders the CEO to do an

investigation, and then we never hear about it again, because he or she will take care of it.

Of course, the ultimate person who takes care of the problem is the minister. What happens is they engage in damage control, and the public is never informed and the public never finds out whether or not there was a cover-up and what the consequences are and whether anything is done to correct the situation.

In conclusion, I think we need an independent advocate because that is the only way and the best way that the interests of children are going to be served. That is part of this amendment which says that the rights, interests and the viewpoints of children will be best served by an independent advocate. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Bill 203—The Health Care Records Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading public bills, Bill 203 (The Health Care Records Act; Loi sur les dossiers médicaux), standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Bill 205—The Ombudsman Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 205 (The Ombudsman Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman) standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 4—Rural Gasification

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer),

WHEREAS natural gas is a low-cost form of clean burning energy; and

WHEREAS many rural communities do not have access to this form of energy; and

WHEREAS not having access to this form of energy inhibits the economic development opportunities for these rural communities; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has implemented an economic initiative known as the Rural Economic Development Initiative for infrastructure support; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has stated the need for further rural development and job creation through infrastructure development; and

WHEREAS the government of Manitoba has adopted a policy of supporting rural Manitoba with the introduction of the Rural Gasification Program

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the government of Manitoba in its commitment to rural gasification.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: Madam Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce the resolution on rural gasification, and it is certainly my pleasure to speak on this.

This is very important to me, to my constituency and to all of rural Manitoba, especially the Gimli constituency, which I represent, and the Interlake constituency, which is important to Manitoba.

One of the reasons for the importance of natural gas and why it is so important for us is because it is more efficient than any other form of energy available, such as hydro, propane or things of that nature, but it will replace the use of propane to a great extent.

In my constituency, I have a large turkey hatchery. [interjection] curling rink, right. One of the big users of energy in my constituency, in the south end of my constituency actually, is a turkey hatchery which, today, uses large amounts of propane, where natural gas would in fact make them more competitive in Canada and in North America.

* (1620)

This hatchery is one of the largest in Canada, or is the largest in Canada, and one of the largest in North America, as a matter of fact. Therefore, it is important for them to be able to maintain a competitive edge with other areas of the country. In order to do that, it is important that they have natural gas. That is one of the reasons why I support this resolution, of course.

We also have another poultry processing plant, a goose processing plant, in the community of Teulon that is a high user of energy also. They use a lot of propane at the present time and electricity, whereby natural gas for them would certainly be a great benefit and would certainly help to make their industry also more competitive, so that they could compete on a worldwide basis.

Natural gas for heating and water would be one of the main benefits for many industries, also for many of our recreational facilities such as curling rinks, arenas, where they have to heat water with propane or electricity. They could quite easily cut their costs by using natural gas by probably at least a half and maybe by more, maybe by two-thirds, as a matter of fact. It is just another example of the benefits that natural gas would provide for many areas, many communities in Manitoba where they do not have natural gas.

In my constituency also, the farmers are quite innovative and progressive, and they grow a lot of corn, sunflowers and crops such as that, that need a lot of grain drying, and to dry with propane is very expensive. If farmers could use natural gas for drying grain, they could probably get their costs to somewhere down about 2 cents a point of moisture, which on an average could be maybe 8 or 9 cents a bushel, which would be probably a third or less what they pay at the present time.

Today, when farmers are fighting high costs of operation, low prices, this would certainly help to make them more competitive and help them to be able to compete with farmers in other parts of the country, southern Manitoba and in the U.S. where they have to dry their corn and sunflowers. They would be able to compete. It would also open new avenues for new markets for many farmers, so that they could grow more crops to diversify from the traditional wheat and barley and things of that nature.

Also, this past fall we went through a very difficult time with the late fall, with the frozen crops and poor harvest weather. A lot of our crops came off in a tough and damp condition. This certainly had a detrimental effect on many farmers as far as their economic being is concerned, because it did cost them a lot of money to dry grain. The propane companies this past fall took advantage, I think, of the farmers by increasing the price from 24 cents a litre to about 35 cents a litre, when yet you could see propane advertised for automotive use here in the

city of Winnipeg for about 19.9 cents a litre. So I believe that some of the propane companies took advantage of the demand that was there, because the farmers needed it at any cost. They certainly had to pay the price, unfortunately.

Also, there are some new projects up in the Interlake area that could be coming on stream, and one is the Interlake beehive project in the Arborg area. This is an alfalfa processing plant that could be built in that area. There we have a number of progressive farmers who have done a feasibility study and have put their own money into a feasibility study. They have travelled to Japan and to China and to other parts of the world looking for markets and looking at a feasibility study of the equipment and different things, as to what they would need to make a beehive plant a success in that area, because there is a lot of forage grown at the present time, such as alfalfa. This would certainly be another form of diversification for our farmers throughout the Interlake area. This would be another way that farmers could possibly get out of the traditional wheat-barley syndrome and get them into new crops such as alfalfa and into other forage crops.

There are a lot of these that are grown already in that area. We certainly want to do everything in our power to try to get these farmers into this business and to help them along in this beehive project. One of the things that they need most of all to get this project underway would be natural gas, of course. I certainly would support this fully.

Also, in the Interlake area and in my constituency, as well as north of me, there are a number of food processing plants that are operating. As a matter of fact, one in the Arborg area now is doing a feasibility study on some food processing. This would create some employment opportunities, plus it would help make the communities grow and make them much more competitive in that area.

At the present time some of these food processing plants, such as we have one in Teulon there where they employ some 30 to 40 people, right now with propane or electricity as an energy form, they were having difficulty competing. If we could get some natural gas, certainly it would open up new opportunities and make us more competitive.

Today many rural communities do not have the option of gas, such a luxury that some city residents take for granted. I am pleased that our government

is examining this important initiative. I feel that low-cost natural gas is a low-cost form of clean burning energy that could strengthen our rural economy. We do not want to see some rural regions miss out on the economic development opportunities because they do not have this form of energy. This means that companies that require natural gas cannot consider a number of rural communities where they do not have natural gas. Through our government's rural gasification program this roadblock would be eliminated.

I am very pleased to present this resolution today and certainly hope that our opposition could support it. I also should mention that one of the reasons we have a large industry in Gimli, the Seagram plant, which is one of the most efficient distilleries in Canada or in North America, is they have of course natural gas there at Gimli. That is one of the reasons why they were attracted to Gimli, the availability they brought in the gas there and also because of the water there.

* (1630)

In the Interlake area we have some of the best water available in Canada or in North America. This is one of the reasons why Seagram located in Gimli and they are certainly great corporate citizens. They are good employers in the Gimli and the Interlake area. We certainly want to support them.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I certainly thank you for the opportunity to present this resolution here today.

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Madam Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), with his resolution, has made quite a few interesting points and, I must say, a lot of good points.

However, having said that, I would like to just refer to a few items that the member for Gimli has indicated about how this present government is acting on rural gasification, is acting on getting it moving in the Interlake. He knows as well as I do, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I certainly do support and it would be facetious for me to say that I would not or do not support gasification in rural Manitoba, in the Interlake especially. I have letters and notes here dating back to April 1990, three years, when we came to see the then-Minister of Rural Development. It will be three years in April that we came to see this government, the Interlake Development Corporation executive, that I was there speaking to the then minister, requesting that

this government look very seriously into gasification for the Interlake area.

An Honourable Member: And we have done that.

Mr. Cliff Evans: You might have done that. You may have looked into it. However, where are we moving with it? Where are we moving with this now, three years later?

The honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), again, I say has stated an enormous amount of excellent points for the need for gasification in rural Manitoba and in the Interlake. He has failed to state the fact that we, three years ago, sent him letters, the government at that time and the ministers at that time, requesting that the government take upon themselves to react with a study immediately to proceed to looking into the prospects for natural gas in the Interlake region. Three years, we are standing here still waiting for any sort of study. They have put boards together. They talk about this and they talk about that, but where is the beef?

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, I am in constant contact with the Interlake Development Corporation and my municipalities and towns when it comes to gasification in the Interlake, constantly, the reeve of Bifrost, the mayor of Arborg, the mayor of Riverton. Their question to me, and I am sure the question to them too is, when are we going to get some action on this? When are we going to see something that is going to give the opportunity for the Interlake to be able to proceed with plans for economic development? When?

Mr. Speaker, I must say that the member made points about the processing plant, an important part of the Interlake for the future. Processing plants in Arborg are important for the future of the Interlake. Teulon itself—I will recognize the fact that the honourable member for Gimli whose responsibility or jurisdiction is Teulon—is also a centre that requires gasification. The future of not only Teulon, not only of Riverton, Arborg and the others is important. We again say, where is the happening?

June 1992, IDC natural gas delegation—Mr. Speaker, in June of '92, less than a year ago, the Interlake Development Corporation, which I must say I was a member at one time, executive member, came to see the government of the day to talk about gasification. They spoke to the Honourable Eric Stefanson, Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. The honourable member for Gimli was there, and

the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines, Mr. Downey, was there—June of '92.

Mr. Speaker, the question is still the same as it was two and a half, three years ago. So what is being done? Where are we moving with natural gas in the Interlake? Where are we moving with natural gas in Manitoba, in the communities that do not have it? Are there studies being done? We do not know. We have not seen anything. I have not seen anything. The Interlake Development Corporation has not seen anything. The community of Riverton has not seen anything.

Needless to say, what the honourable member is and what I am in agreement with him on is that the natural gas is the way to go for our rural communities now. Mr. Speaker, for an example, the community of Riverton in the last five years has lost almost 100 people. In Riverton alone, there are approximately 30 businesses, 30 businesses that are paying out. I might say, without putting my foot in my mouth, that that is first-hand knowledge as far as what is being put out in costs to run a business in a small community. Natural gas is the way to go.

Again, the Minister of Energy and Mines: natural gas needed to spark development, Downey says. Well, Mr. Speaker, let us spark it. Let us get the spark under somebody's seat over there on the other side and let us get moving with this. Let us not just sit back here and make resolutions and promises and studies and what not.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with Centra Gas on this matter. Centra Gas has indicated to me that, well, Mr. Evans, they said, what about getting a return on bringing natural gas out there? My comment to them was if you were to go out and talk to the people of Arborg, Teulon, Riverton and all the smaller communities and the homes and the small businesses, you would see that your return would be there. It would come. It may take some time, but it may come. More importantly, it would boost the economic development and the future of the Interlake, I am sure, by tenfold.

The processing plant which is situated or to be situated somewhere between Teulon and Arborg, again, the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) indicated that the IDC had sent a delegation over to Japan, and it is there for them. The market is there for them, but it is not just that one aspect, not just the processing plant. [interjection] Well, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) says the

economy is a little tight, but I am sure that the economy in the Interlake and in rural areas where gasification could be implemented, that economy could just loosen up a little bit and the market value of the communities would be more feasible for companies and for other outfits to come into the communities and set up small companies, set up small processing areas, set up jobs for the communities that right now are devastated.

* (1640)

Mr. Speaker, there are many aspects to natural gas. In talking to my constituents when I go out to different meetings or to different functions and that, I ask what do you think about natural gas? What is your feeling on natural gas? Nobody in the Interlake has said to me that they feel that it would be a worthless situation. They all say that something has to be done, that it has to be there. It has to come. [interjection] Of course, it costs money to do it. Anything that you must do has to cost some money. I mean the Minister of Agriculture is saying something that does not make any sense. If you go across the street and park your car it costs money, but you have to spend some money to make money.

An Honourable Member: It is an investment in our future.

Mr. Cliff Evans: The honourable member says it is an investment for the future for rural Manitoba, for the Interlake, and I have to say that I believe that the Interlake would prosper.

I must say, and I want to put it on record here, Mr. Speaker, that I commend the Interlake Development Corporation and its executive and its board members for taking a strong leading role in lobbying the government, in talking to the ministers, in making their presentations. They are doing a fine job, and they are bringing forth to this government the need for gasification in the Interlake area and in rural Manitoba. Without it and without the potential of it, whether it starts out on a small scale and works up or whether it goes on a big scale, it is needed. We all know that.

But what is happening over on the other side? What is happening, I believe, Mr. Speaker—there was, about a year ago—and the name of the gentleman fails me right now who was head of PUB, that was supposed to have, told me personally, that there was going to be something feasible on paper presented within a year. That is now over a year ago. Again, where is it? Where is the action?

I say to the government side, I say to the Minister of Energy (Mr. Downey), I say to the Minister of Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), let us get together with the proper organizations. Let us get together with the people in rural Manitoba. Let us get together with the people from the Interlake region and the leaders, and let us develop this plan. Let us not just say study, study, study; let us look into it in numbers; we will study those numbers some more. We will do this some more; we will do that some more. Let us get moving on this before we in rural Manitoba lose some more people.

They talk about, Mr. Speaker, using the money that is available through the REDI program. Up until just recently, I have yet to see any action taken by this government to use any of this REDI money towards finding out whether gasification is the right way, which we feel it is the right way to go in the Interlake region and rural Manitoba. They talk about this REDI money. They say that it is for infrastructure for the rural communities. The money is coming from rural communities. Let us put it back into rural communities, millions and millions of dollars, millions of dollars that I would think the government would be more than willing to use, a percentage of this money towards gasification and towards a study. Obviously, the study is being held up for whatever reason. Reasons are nonexistent. They give no reasons. We are looking into it. We have to keep telling the constituents the government is looking into it. They are studying it, and that is what they are told, too.

An Honourable Member: Evaluation.

Mr. Cliff Evans: Evaluation. Evaluation of zero is zero. If you are not evaluating something, then where are you going to get any answers from? Evaluate it then. Study it. [interjection] You are evaluating all right. I know. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) keeps piping up over there and that is fine.

However, I do want to say on closing that rural gasification in the Interlake is one of the most important projects that this government should and better well undertake and get moving on it instead of sitting. Like I said before about spark development, well, let us get some spark underneath some of those ministers' seats. Let us get some flame underneath those ministers' seats. Let us get some flame under the government seats, and let us get some gasification. Let us get some

natural gas in the Interlake so that the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) and the member for Interlake can support it wholeheartedly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Avis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure for me to speak on issues that affect rural Manitoba.

You know, it was not that long ago that I remember, in speaking about power coming to Manitoba, that it was in the early '60s where a number of farms out in southwestern Manitoba where I come from that in fact we did not even have electricity. I remember very well going to visit my uncle when we were children, and it was always the coal oil lamps that basically lit their house for a number of years.

It has not been that long, but I think it is important that we put a few comments on the record to talk about the importance of gasification in rural Manitoba. We certainly basically support the idea of that. It is important that we assist rural Manitoba in moving into the 21st Century. I think government has to take leadership and take responsibility for this endeavour.

I know my colleagues on the left talked about a plan and expressed some concerns about where was the beef and when was this going to occur. I would only encourage this government to proceed with rural gasification, but I would hope that it is done in a planned and orderly way and that in fact there is consultation and communication that does occur in rural Manitoba with the communities affected. I say that and I make that a very strong point, Mr. Speaker, because unfortunately what we have seen in some of the other departments in the past number of months is a lack of consultation and communication.

I think it is very important that we involve the communities in a partnership when we are taking on an endeavour such as rural gasification. We know that it is critical for Manitoba as a province to stimulate economic development in rural Manitoba as well as in the cities. I think with rural gasification and some of the spinoffs of this that we can see economic development occur; we can see the province being afforded opportunities so that in fact we will be in better shape financially as we do move into the 21st Century. So certainly we on this side of the House do support the government in those endeavours.

I again would caution this government that as they are looking at rural gasification and how they plan to do this, they as well keep us informed here in the Legislature and let us know as to exactly how they are proceeding and what their plan is. I think that is very, very important, because we are quite prepared to support governments in endeavours that we feel are worthwhile. We have no difficulty with that at all. I think that is part of what responsible opposition is.

Let me just close by saying, Mr. Speaker, and I do not think it necessarily takes 15 minutes to say that we support something, but again, we encourage this government to proceed with rural gasification. We look forward to seeing a blueprint, their plans as to what they do. We do support it. We have heard back from communities and we know that there is support out there as well. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I want to put a number of comments on the record on this issue.

First of all, in my constituency there is no natural gas hookup. We have propane gas that is brought in, which is much more expensive. That is something that has been of concern I know to homeowners. In fact, I had the interesting experience to talk to people who have moved to Winnipeg recently. They found a dramatic difference in their home heating costs because of the cheaper cost of natural gas that is available here and not in northern Manitoba.

I also want to indicate that the use of natural gas also has some other possibilities. I received a call this morning from an individual who pointed out that there has been some talk recently of the use of natural gas in school buses. I think it has a lot of possibilities. He pointed out that in British Columbia they have a program in place whereby it is now being used in vehicles generally. In fact, his brother has a car which uses natural gas. He says it is not only good for the car—the car operates appropriately—but it also, of course, has some benefits potentially for the environment, because natural gas is not considered to be as major a pollutant as the traditional engines which rely on gasoline. I will be raising this during the Estimates of the Department of Energy and Mines as the newly appointed Energy and Mines critic from our caucus.

* (1650)

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I think it is something that should be investigated here. We do have a small amount of production of natural gas in Manitoba, and there is also natural gas produced in other areas that could be put to use.

I want to say that it is unfortunate, I think, in looking at this resolution—I have no problems with the intent of the resolve, but once again we are seeing an unfortunate pattern that is developing amongst government members. I think it is unfortunate. I think the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) would have been far better off putting on the record his comments in some other way, or at least if he was going to move a resolution leave out some of the attempts to pat the government on the back, or at least pat himself on the back. I have some problems with that.

I note in the resolution that it says the government recognizes the difficulty in rural Manitoba. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are not looking for recognition in this House. Neither are rural Manitobans or northern Manitobans looking for recognition of the problem. They are looking for action. I found it unfortunate that even the WHEREASes included, what is supposed to be the response of this government, reference to the REDI program.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know where members of this government have been, but there are severe criticisms about what has been happening and the policy of this government in terms of rural and northern economic development, criticisms related to the fact that while it is taking out \$40 million a year in VLT funding, it is not putting anywhere near that amount back into rural and northern communities. It is becoming increasingly obvious that what is being sold—if you stand outside any establishment today and look, for example, where they have video lottery terminals, it will have this big sign up—I was just at a hotel in Ilford, as I related earlier—a big sign up that proceeds will go to rural economic development.

Mr. Speaker, how much of the revenue from VLTs is going to rural economic development? That is the kind of question I think the government should be answering, perhaps even placing in these kinds of resolutions, because the amount that is going out of northern Manitoba from VLT funding is nowhere near the amount that is coming back in. In the case of the REDI program, what we have seen in northern Manitoba thus far has been people laid off from full-time jobs and REDI hiring people back on a

part-time basis to fill those jobs—no net benefit in terms of jobs.

Even then, the REDI program we are seeing now is nowhere near what is being sucked out of the North in terms of VLT revenues. The VLT revenues are hurting local groups. I have received many complaints from my local service clubs and organizations. Whether they be in Thompson or whether they be in communities such as Wabowden, many existing community facilities are not only in danger of losing some significant funding, I will predict now there will be closures of some facilities if there is not some recognition made of the fact that VLTs are costing service clubs a significant amount of money.

I know in the case of Thompson, I talked to a member of a local service club. Their revenue from bingos, which goes to many valuable community projects, has dropped by 60 percent since VLTs were introduced—by 60 percent, Mr. Speaker.

There is no recognition of that by the government. This resolution talks about VLTs and rural development—no recognition in this resolution.

I look to the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) because I am sure he will find that that is the case in many of his service clubs and organizations in his own communities as well. Many of them are hurting right now. What was billed, was sold is turning out to be something that is not what is happening.

I would say that some of the stuff that is being put out by the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation in terms of VLTs borders on false advertising, because if people in my community or any of the rural and northern communities in this province think that if out of the money they put into those machines anything more than a small percentage of it is going back into their communities, they are wrong, but if you look at the signs, there is no reference to that.

The signs do not say: Video lottery terminals, most of the money out of this is going to go to the Minister of Finance to bail out the provincial government and its spiralling deficit. There was no reference in any of those particular banners and signs, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that this was a general revenue grab by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). What is happening is, this thin veneer of economic development is beginning to fool very few people.

There was a press conference in Thompson recently by the mayors of the three largest cities in

the province—Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson. What did they say? They know the money is not being kept in the communities. They urged that it be given to municipalities. As I said, I know the money is not being kept in the rural and northern communities, and I think the only people in this House who are having some difficulty dealing with this is the current government.

I wonder, and I look at this resolution which makes specific reference to that, why the ministers in this House and some of the members of rural communities are not saying anything about this issue. Are they not talking to their service clubs and organizations? Are they not talking to their municipal leaders? Are they not looking at the amount of money that is being sucked out of rural communities and being sent straight down here to the Perimeter to the coffers of the Minister of Finance?

I mean, I realize they have financial difficulties, that their deficit is spiralling out of control, but do not take the money out of service clubs and organizations in northern Manitoba and rural Manitoba, and do not go and say you have a program for rural development and not have anything.

Mr. Speaker, this particular resolution refers right in the WHEREAS as saying, the government recognizes the need. Well, I am sorry, that is not good enough. To go around with rhetoric when times are as tough as they are in many rural and northern communities simply is not good enough.

It is the same thing in terms of the gasification. I think a lot of the rest of the resolution, and if members care to consult it, I think what they will find is it takes away from a very good concept, rural gasification.

Natural gas is a cheap form of energy. It is a relatively clean form of energy. It would make a significant difference to many rural and northern communities in being more competitive when it comes to attracting industry, because one of the problems is the fact that natural gas is available in certain locations and it is not available in others, and it creates a competitive disadvantage.

Not only is that the case, Mr. Speaker, and I find it unfortunate this is included in this resolution, but hydro rates are not equal either. If you live in the city of Winnipeg, you have the cheapest power in the province. If you live outside of the city of

Winnipeg, it depends on how big the community is. I am not blaming anyone for this. This has been the case for a considerable period of time, so anybody who has been in government can share some of the blame.

Mr. Speaker, I sat in committee the other night with Manitoba Hydro. Because of the revenue from Limestone, there is going to be a situation where over the next number of years, we are looking at \$110 million a year from the Northern States Power sale going into Hydro as a result of that. There is going to be a net benefit. There are going to be rates of increase in Manitoba Hydro of less than the rate of inflation.

Mr. Speaker, we have a golden opportunity here to correct something that has been bothering rural and northern residents for a considerable period of time. Why do we not take the opportunity, given the fact there is some leeway with rates, to equalize the cost of hydro regardless of where you live in the province?

Mr. Speaker, I will give you an example. I was in Ilford, Manitoba, just recently. I had mentioned that earlier. You can buy a case of beer in Ilford, Manitoba, for the same price you can buy a case of beer in Winnipeg. Ilford is about 50 miles from the nearest—[interjection] You can even bring them back in Ilford and get the same deposit, as I am reminded by the member opposite. They are about 50 miles from the nearest Hydro dam, so what do you think, do they pay less than the city of Winnipeg? No. Do they pay the same rates as the city of Winnipeg? No, they pay the highest rates because they are in a small community. Hydro is based on the size of community, on the density of service.

I just talked to one of the people in Cross Lake, just moments ago. He was protesting over hydro rates in that community. I want to say I support the frustration of the people in Cross Lake and other communities. They have been particularly hard hit, the Northern Flood communities. In my own constituency, York Landing, Nelson House and Split Lake have also been affected by Hydro development in the past. Did they get lower rates as compensation? No, they did not even get the same rates as Winnipeg.

The ultimate treatment for anybody from outside of the Perimeter—we will treat you like a Winnipegger. No, they did not even get that. What they have to do is, every month on their Hydro bills,

and Hydro bills are considerably more expensive in northern Manitoba because of the longer winter, they pay more than if they lived in the city of Winnipeg. This is not just a consumer issue. This is an issue that affects rural economic development in the same way that gasification does.

How can rural and northern communities compete with Winnipeg if they pay more because they do not have natural gas or they do not have Hydro? So as we continue to debate this particular resolution, I hope the member will realize that when it comes to mentioning rural development, there is a lot of frustration out there. While rural gasification is a good idea, many of the other items that are mentioned in this are really missing the point. We have to do a heck of a lot more than recognize the need, Mr. Speaker, in the communities. We have to act on it.

I have given a specific suggestion right here today. I know we in opposition get criticized for not coming out with specific proposals, but look at Manitoba Hydro. Look at the books. Look at the fact that Limestone is working. Look at the fact that Limestone will bring revenue in. Look at the fact it

is from northern Manitoba. Look at the fact that we have an opportunity here to correct an injustice with the opportunity to—in fact, Mr. Speaker, some of us in northern Manitoba, might I suggest that we should pay less than in Winnipeg. But at least give us equal rates.

Some in rural Manitoba might say, you want to give us rural economic development, give us cheaper rates than the city of Winnipeg. I am not suggesting that we do that overnight, although, personally, I think that would be an excellent idea. What I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is start by levelling the playing field on one score, and I think we can all agree on this in this House, and that is the cost of energy. That is one of the first steps towards economic development.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Thompson will have three minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Thursday, March 4, 1993

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