



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

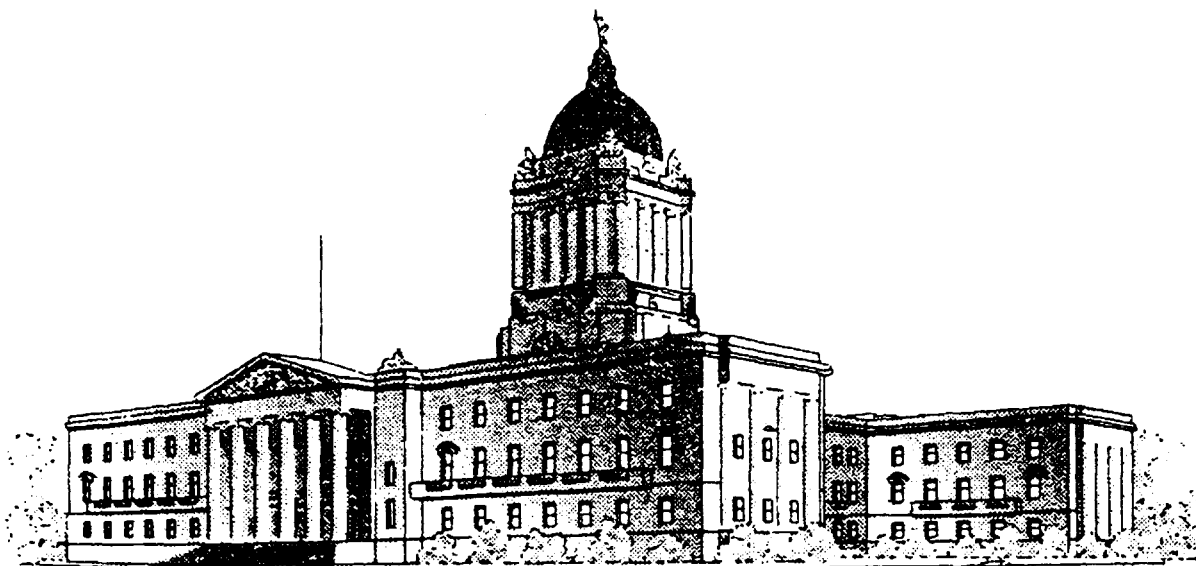
of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



Vol. XLVII No. 28 - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, April 17, 1997

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA**

**Thursday, April 17, 1997**

**The House met at 1:30 p.m.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**PRAYERS**

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY  
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

**Committee of Supply**

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson of the Committee of Supply):** Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted a certain resolution, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner), that the report of the committee be received.

**Motion agreed to.**

**TABLING OF REPORTS**

**Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Labour):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for 1997-98 for the Department of Labour.

**Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Supplementary Information for Legislative Review for the 1997-98 Departmental Expenditure Estimates for the Department of Environment.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill 21—The Jury Amendment Act**

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 21, The Jury Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurés), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

**Introduction of Guests**

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon twenty-three Grade 5 students from Christ the King School under the direction of Mrs. Shirley Gendron. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

Also, we have twenty-five Grades 7 to 12 students from Powerview School under the direction of Mr. Scott Radley, Mr. Don Playfair and Mr. Tom Paukovic. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik).

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

\* (1335)

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

**Labour-Market Training  
Federal-Provincial Agreement**

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, the Canada-Manitoba Labour Market Development Agreement was announced, and it looks quite curiously like the agreement we raised in this Chamber a couple of week ago. It is, as we noted, an agreement that follows the Alberta model where we have devolution of power to the provinces and of course our fear has been that today's devolution will be tomorrow's offload. I would like to ask the Acting Premier why the government has signed an agreement—in light of all their, quote, comments about offloading—that only includes three specific years of funding.

**Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources):** Madam Speaker, I think the Leader of the Opposition would agree and would want to

acknowledge that one of the more important contributions that we can all make to the effective future for this country is to ensure that we reduce overlap and duplication and that we do focus maximum effort to the benefit of those who need services under this program, and that is the objective.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, and of course we believe in a strong co-operative federalism. We believe in a strong national government that works on behalf of all our people in all of our regions. We do not believe in a Canada that is devolving into provinces becoming franchises of the federal government, that is why we have a different view of these matters. The minister will also note that we will have two administrations, because the federal government will still maintain the EI funding or the unemployment insurance funding as most people will still recall the correct term of the program.

I would like to ask the minister in light of the fact that when we raised this question in the Chamber a couple of weeks ago—we asked the Premier why had they agreed to a program transfer that would reduce the staff from 143 down to 119. These numbers of 119 have been confirmed in the agreement released today. Why would we agree to a devolution that would include less people to provide training and counselling for people all across Manitoba to get opportunities across our communities?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, the Acting Premier in his answer indicated that we are hoping to avoid overlap and duplication. By taking control of our own destiny and taking advantage of this opportunity, we see an opportunity to provide one point of access, no more going to small towns and seeing an office at one end of the street and another at the other end of the street, have the one point of access. That increases efficiency that is of ultimate benefit to the people of Manitoba.

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, and this is a government that whines about the offloading of the federal government and then has the temerity to sign a three-year agreement for funding. This is a government that talks about offloading from the federal government and signs an agreement that reduces the staff in Manitoba to provide counselling and training and advice for people

by 143 down to 119. The federal government is laughing at you because you have agreed to these offloads.

I would like to ask the minister: Can she specifically table in this House where those layoffs are going to take place? Are those layoffs going to take place in Thompson, Selkirk, Brandon, Portage, St. Boniface, Morden, Steinbach, Dauphin, Swan River, The Pas or Winnipeg? Can she specifically tell us today where those layoffs will take place?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Madam Speaker, obviously, not accepting any of the preamble of the member, I indicate to the Speaker and to the member opposite through the Speaker, that we do not anticipate any job losses with this particular agreement. He is speculating. He is incorrect.

#### **Labour-Market Training Federal-Provincial Agreement**

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** Madam Speaker, one of the real difficulties for Manitobans with this offload from the federal government of labour force programs is that the record of the provincial government on training has been one of cutting longer-term training programs, whether it is the two-year New Careers Program, whether it is Gateway, whether it is the Access programs and developing instead short-term training programs aimed at low-wage jobs.

I want to ask the minister: Does she intend as a result of this agreement to change her government's direction on training and its short-term horizon?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, again, obviously not accepting any of the preamble because it is fraught with errors. I would indicate to the member that we anticipate the people of Manitoba being able to receive the same services they currently receive from both federal and provincial jurisdictions, except now through easier access through one point of entry. The federal government and the province do not intend to see services reduced to Manitobans or service disrupted in any way, shape or form.

**Ms. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, could the minister then make a commitment that in the long term, that is beyond the three years, that employment counselling services will be provided outside Winnipeg where at the moment for young people the only alternative is the high school guidance counsellor, a profession that is under enormous pressure and which is increasingly scarce?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Again, the member is wrong in her preamble and her assumptions.

We have employment development centres that provide counselling outside of Manitoba, very successfully in Brandon and other places outside of Manitoba, and those will continue. Those will continue. We expect to have increased efficiency. We expect to be able to have better linkages between employment and the economy because we can control our own destiny, and we have the commitment of federal funding coming into Manitoba to maintain the funding for those programs which we can now control delivery of, Madam Speaker.

**Ms. Friesen:** Madam Speaker, could the minister tell us whether she intends the new training role of the province to follow the past practice of Manitoba, that is, the secrecy of Workforce 2000 where no curriculum, no standards, no outcome have ever been revealed and the pattern of the Employment First project which provides employers with, as the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce calls them, no-cost, no-commitment employees?

**Mrs. McIntosh:** Madam Speaker, if the preamble is accepted as fact, a great disservice is being done to the people of Manitoba. So I think it is important that I state each time for the record, the preamble is based upon erroneous assumptions.

I would say, Madam Speaker, the Province of Manitoba has an excellent record of providing training and providing employment opportunities to people who are currently unemployed, whether it is through social assistance, through EI, some of which come under provincial jurisdiction, some of which come under federal jurisdiction. We will now be providing one-point access for these people, a better co-ordinated effort which will improve efficiency for them.

Our record of achievement in getting Manitobans back to work is extremely good, Madam Speaker, and heralded around the nation as one of the best in the country. We will continue in that thrust to provide opportunities for Manitobans to be employed.

### Urban Aboriginal Strategy Status

**Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas):** Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs.

In May of 1989, this government held a conference called Workshop for the Development of an Indian and Metis Urban Strategy for Manitoba of which I have copies here. A consultant's report by Resources Initiatives Limited called Developing an Indian and Metis Urban Strategy for Manitoba was also released at the same time. Since then, of course, virtually nothing has been done at all in this area by this government. Today this government has the gall to announce an urban aboriginal strategy consultation process.

Could this minister explain what exactly was the so-called urban aboriginal strategy of the last seven years of this government prior to today's announcements?

**Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs):** Madam Speaker, this is not time to look backwards. This is time to look forward. There were many situations in the past that we have learned from. I think that the consultation group made up of myself, Danny Vandal, George Campbell, Mary Richard and Professor Tom Henley will take their responsibilities very seriously and will come up with a plan which will be of benefit to all collaborators in this enormous challenge, and those collaborators include all citizens of Winnipeg, all of the different, disparate parts of the aboriginal community and all levels of government.

**Mr. Hickes:** Madam Speaker, I hope the minister is true about his word of actions because we have been hearing this for—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

### Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Cabinet Committee Review

**Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas):** Since, according to the press release, this new strategy is timely in view of the recent release of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report, I would like to ask the minister: What happened to the commitment last November 21 by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) that said a cabinet committee would begin examining the commission report immediately? That was on November 21.

**Hon. David Newman (Minister responsible for Native Affairs):** Madam Speaker, the report has been examined in detail on a multidepartmental basis. I am very pleased to say that I am on my way early this evening, after I complete Estimates and participate in private members' hour in part, to attend a Native Affairs ministers' meeting in Regina, and that very kind of issue is going to be discussed there. Indeed, we are studying and have reviewed through our different departments that study and will be discussing that at this meeting starting this evening.

\* (1345)

**Mr. Hickes:** Since no initiatives from the Royal Commission report have been mentioned since November 21, are Manitobans to assume that this report will be ignored in the same way that the AJI, Northern Economic Development Commission report and the Hughes report were all ignored by this government? Is this new report just going to gather dust like all the rest that this government has done?

**Mr. Newman:** I will not accept any of the statements suggesting inaction on the part of this government. I want to suggest that it does a disservice to the people of Manitoba and, I would submit, the aboriginal people in particular, to suggest that there are any simplistic solutions or any one answer to this problem.

One of the great things that has been done by this government—and that I am very proud of and it is reaching a conclusion—is the treaty land entitlement settlements are in the process of conclusion. The Northern Flood Agreement settlements are in the process of conclusion. This is a matter of historic

importance that is about to come to an end because of long-term, persistent action on the part of this government that this is coming about, as well as the good will and commitment persistence of the aboriginal people. In partnership with the aboriginal people of this province, Madam Speaker, we are going to come to long-term solutions, and we are going to do it patiently, and we are going to do it in multifaceted ways. It is not simple, and we are not going to mislead anyone into believing it so.

I am prepared to work in partnership with colleagues opposite. I have told the representative from Rupertsland, the representative from The Pas that, as service providers representing the North, I will work with them towards the solution as well.

### Health Privacy Act Monitoring Process

**Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne):** Madam Speaker, earlier this week I asked the Minister of Health about stakeholder reactions to his draft health privacy act, and though he waxed both ardently and loquaciously, he really did not answer that very simple and direct question. So I would like to return today and ask the minister if he can confirm that his health privacy act will be monitored by an ombudsman rather than by a privacy commissioner as in other jurisdictions like B.C.

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** I can confirm that that is the proposal in the draft that is under consideration now by the privacy committee as part of my consultation.

**Ms. McGifford:** I thank the minister for a direct answer. Does the minister not understand that a privacy commissioner is superior in a number of ways, amongst them and perhaps chiefly because a privacy commissioner can issue binding orders and put teeth into legislation and consequently save Manitobans the time and expense of court proceedings?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, there is a variety of ways in which one can have a reporting relationship into which individuals—the proposal in that particular draft is to an ombudsman. I am waiting to see the results of that particular review, but I think if you look at the history of this legislation across the country and

you look at the powers and protections that are there and the rights of individuals, it is an opportunity or a vehicle certainly worthy of consideration of that committee. I am looking forward to seeing their results and recommendations.

**Ms. McGifford:** When we all know that the Office of the Ombudsman is pushed to its limits, why would the minister entrust the health privacy act as a simple add-on to this position and consequently put the confidentiality and the rights of Manitobans at such grave risk?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, if the issue is one of resourcing the Office of the Ombudsman, obviously if additional responsibilities are given to it by this Legislative Assembly, the resources will have to be adequate to do that job, and that would have to be part of any administrative package that was there to support the legislation.

\* (1350)

### Legislative Building Smoking Policy

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** My question is for the Minister responsible for Government Services. It is regarding an incident actually that occurred the other day for me where I was outside a government office, and I had noticed that there were a few individuals standing out there somewhat shivering as they had cigarettes in their mouths. I looked back as to why it is that they were doing this. I am told because the government has a policy on smoking, and they were not allowed to smoke inside the building.

Madam Speaker, I believe that government should lead by example and would ask the government why it is that we allow smoking inside the members' lounge when people outside of this Chamber are not allowed to do likewise.

**Hon. Frank Pitura (Minister of Government Services):** In response to the honourable member's question, my department has been in receipt of a request to review the smoking policy within the Legislative Building and would inform the member that my staff are currently looking at the present smoking

policy and any type of future policy that may be laid out with regard to smoking in this building.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, from what I understand, Manitoba is the last Legislature across Canada that still has smoking.

My question to the minister is: Will he make a progressive statement this afternoon and today indicate that in the members' lounge we will not be allowed to have cigarette smoke? Lead by example, that is what I am asking the government to do.

**Mr. Pitura:** Madam Speaker, as I indicated earlier, my staff have received the request from the Legislative Assembly Management Commission for the Assembly, requesting that my department take a look at the smoking issue, in particular to the room across the hallway. As I indicated earlier, my staff have been instructed to take a look at the entire issue of smoking in this building, and at that time we would be prepared to come back and make a recommendation to the Legislative Assembly Management Commission.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, my supplementary question then would go to the Minister responsible for the Civil Service.

In a sense of fairness and equity, should not then civil servants be allowed the same luxury as members of this Chamber are in terms of a smoking policy? You cannot tell civil servants that they cannot smoke while at the same time we are allowed to smoke in this building.

**Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister charged with the administration of The Civil Service Act):** Madam Speaker, the Minister of Government Services has clearly said that this matter is under review, and I would ask the member for Inkster just to be patient.

### ManGlobe Partnership Agreement—MTS

**Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood):** Madam Speaker, my question is to the minister of telecommunications and it concerns the ManGlobe project.

Five and a half months ago, on November 4, '96, I asked the minister of telecommunications for answers

on all the free goods and services MTS provided to ManGlobe as part of their partnership agreement. The minister promised to provide the answer at that time. We are still waiting.

Can the minister tell this House what happened to the hundreds of thousands of dollars of computers, office equipment, furniture and MTS vehicles which MTS provided to ManGlobe?

**Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development):** Madam Speaker, it seems to me that a similar question has been asked before, but I will undertake to take this question as notice for the minister responsible for telecommunications.

**Mr. Maloway:** Madam Speaker, a supplementary to the same question is this: Can the minister confirm that a \$25,000 offer accompanied with a cheque was made to ManGlobe in effect to buy back taxpayer-owned assets?

**Mr. Derkach:** Once again, Madam Speaker, I will take that question as notice.

\* (1355)

**Mr. Maloway:** Madam Speaker, my final supplementary is actually to the Minister of Rural Development. As the ManGlobe project papers indicate that rural business would be helped by the ManGlobe project, placing them on a level playing field with city businesses, can he confirm that not one rural business was recruited for the Internet mall, and would the government release the ManGlobe contracts?

**Mr. Derkach:** Without accepting any of the preamble, I can tell the member that this is not information that I have at my fingertips, but indeed it is something that I will research and get back to the member.

#### **Health Care Facilities Privatization—Food Services**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, on March 25, the Minister of Health held out a faint glimmer of hope for the many dedicated public sector workers who work in our hospitals who are now faced with the privatization move to profit under the USSC

movement towards contracting out to a couple of major food services corporations. The minister undertook then to urge a delay in this decision. Today the workers had a rally. They are desperate. Many of them worked 10, 20 and more years in our hospitals.

I want to ask the minister: Is there any hope that he can give to those workers? Will the government and the others involved in this decision back off on this ill-conceived privatization?

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Thompson for this very timely question. Let us remember just in context that the Urban Shared Services Corporation was a creation of the nine governing boards of our current hospitals under their structure. As members well know, we have now made the first appointments to the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. My commitment when I met with CUPE, who I believe represents five of the nine bargaining units involved, was that I would ask USSC, over which I have no control, to delay their decision until the Winnipeg Hospital Authority had had an opportunity to review that. Obviously, the labour relations part, the human resources part, was extremely important.

I would like to indicate I have had meetings with the USSC chair on this, as well as the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. I am pleased to table for this Legislature today a letter I received from Urban Shared Services indicating that they will do just that, and they will not proceed with the decision until they have given the Winnipeg Hospital Authority a chance to be involved in it.

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I thank the minister for that, and I hope that they will indeed listen to the many legitimate arguments the public sector workers have.

#### **Regional Health Authorities Funding**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** I have a new question. Yesterday there was a well-attended meeting in Thompson in regard to health care and many concerns were expressed about the impact of government cuts that have been in place, more specifically cuts which were initially delayed by the



Minister of Health but which have been implemented since the 1995 election. A particular concern was expressed about the move to the regional health authority with a 2 percent cut in funding that is going to be entailed with that.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health how these regional health authorities, ill conceived as they are in terms of their lack of democratic basis, are going to have any chance of succeeding in meeting the health care needs if they are now starting with less funding than the hospitals collectively had before the regional health process.

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health):** Madam Speaker, first of all, in the preamble of his question the member for Thompson talked about these authorities being ill conceived. I think his reference had to do more with how they are constituted. There are no boards today that I am aware of that are directly elected by the electors of their communities. They are appointed either by municipalities or by private organizations.

With respect to the reductions, I think the initial target for RHAs was approximately 6 percent. When we had a chance to review that, working with the RHA boards, examining their plans, we agreed on 2.25 to be found for the second half of the fiscal year. We wanted those boards to assume a status quo. We expect, because they are amalgamating administrations in a number of services, that that would be a reasonable saving to be incurred. With respect to the provincial staff being transferred for home care, public health, et cetera, they are taking that on a status quo without a reduction target.

\* (1400)

**Mr. Ashton:** A supplementary: Will the minister recognize that hospitals, Thompson, many other rural and northern communities have already been faced with significant cuts and, in fact, what will happen is, despite the assurances of the minister that the status quo will be maintained in the short run, this will only make that situation worse? Our hospitals are already understaffed. When will the minister reflect on the fact that those cuts are having a major impact on patient services in rural and northern Manitoba?

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, in working with the RHAs since becoming Minister of Health on the 6th of January, we recognize that in some of those targets that some of the RHAs do not have the number of facilities with which to amalgamate. That is an issue that we are attempting to address. The overall issue of funding and how we fund, we recognize that our current funding model is very inadequate and that is why part of the plan—because our current model funds sickness, in essence, it funds usage of often inappropriate use of facilities is why we are moving as part of this reform to a new model of funding which will take into account the health status of populations and a host of other factors. I think for northern Manitoba that will be a very good and healthy move.

#### **Canola Industry Genetically Altered Seeds**

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Madam Speaker, there has been a lot of discussion recently about genetically altering seeds and, indeed, a lot of concerns have been raised. Lema Grain of Saskatoon registered a genetically engineered canola seed in February for general release, and two days ago they pulled it from the market because it did not meet the criteria for commercial release. The canola industry is very important in Canada and Manitoba. In Manitoba it is a half-billion-dollar industry and in western Canada \$3.5 billion.

Will the minister agree that this is a warning that has taken place here and we must move carefully on genetically altered seeds, and we need many more studies done before the sale of genetically altered seeds can proceed? We cannot risk our canola industry.

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, I am confident that those who are engaged in that half-billion-dollar industry, namely the canola industry, sometimes referred to as a Cinderella crop, which I think we Manitobans can take some special pride in having to a large extent developed through our research efforts at our Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba, have every concern about its future. The question of genetically altered plant breeding and plant development is one that is being looked at very seriously in different research centres across the land. I am very pleased that the budget we

have passed this year offers Manitoba's agriculture to be part of that research and development.

I want to assure the honourable member and I want to assure consumers that canola is becoming the vegetable oil of choice in many households and in many households in different parts of the world. We will be extremely careful not to jeopardize the safety and the health of that very important crop.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Speaker, of course I agree it is a very important industry, but we must protect it. Can the minister give us any idea how this kind of a mistake could have slipped through the cracks? Is it because the federal government is cutting back on their inspections? Is it because provincial governments are not doing inspections? What has to be done to ensure that this kind of mistake does not put our canola industry at risk?

**Mr. Enns:** Madam Speaker, I am not for a moment prepared to acknowledge without further research on my own part just what the difficulty is. It may simply have been a case of the plant not performing to expected production levels. I should not withhold from her that there were genetically altered canola seeds planted last year and will be planted again this year in the province of Manitoba and throughout Canada that do very well.

You see, Madam Speaker, they present a bit of a problem for some of our environmentalist friends. These are genetically altered seeds that require less chemical herbicides in their application, which is certainly a plus if you are talking food production. So I think we have to rely on the best of science. We have to ensure that we invest in the best of science, but food production will not be arrested simply because new and different techniques are being introduced. I am confident that we have that expertise in Canada.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Speaker, since the genetically altered industry, the alteration of seeds is driven by chemical companies who want to sell more chemical or control the kinds of chemicals that are being used in the canola industry, I want to ask the minister if he is taking this so lightly and is prepared to risk the canola industry so that a few chemical companies can have more control over the industry and sell a little bit more chemical.

**Mr. Enns:** I am disappointed in the honourable member for Swan River with whom I am having a good discourse and debate as we go through our Estimates in the Department of Agriculture. Why would she in a public way cause unnecessary concern among the consumers of our province, indeed of Canada, that we are deliberately or taking lightly the safety, the sanitation questions of our food supply? We enjoy the best food supply anywhere in the world and our actuarial longevity statistics prove that, and we will continue doing that, but that does not mean that we do not look at all avenues that are available to us.

### **Winnipeg Remand Centre Harvey Guiboche Release**

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Justice: Even if Manitobans accepted just for a moment the minister's spin, his ruse of yesterday that the Guiboche release was caused by a glitch in the federal Criminal Code and not by shortcomings in his own department, could the minister possibly explain our understanding that his department actually never contacted the police, but five days later the police had to contact the department? We wonder how could the department have been so negligent.

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I do not want to get into the particulars of this case, but—[interjection] Well, I want to ensure, before I say things about specific cases, that I know the facts that the member for St. Johns—are accurate are in fact accurate. I have discussed the issue with my staff in respect of the gang protocol to see whether in fact every step that is taken generally has been taken. This was a particular situation where a direct indictment resulted in a new process being initiated and certain consequences flowed from that. It is not the usual situation, but what I have asked my staff to do is to take a look at the gang protocol to see whether that needs to be improved in any way, and I think consultation with the police is an important step to take at this time.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Given this regrettable event, I want to move on and ask the minister: Would he now table in this House the review, any review and recommendations that were made on the events that led to the Guiboche release, so we can watchdog the follow-up? Can he tell us what changes, if any, he is

committed to in his department to make sure this never happens again?

**Mr. Toews:** As indicated in some of the questioning yesterday, there have been administrative changes made, that in particular cases where a direct indictment has been initiated, an accused, even if he is in custody or she is in custody, there will have to be a technical arrest and a new bail hearing to ensure that the bail conditions are in fact clear. In the situation of the direct indictment where the old information and the bail conditions lapse, we do want to ensure that bail conditions do continue, and therefore I have asked my department to ensure that those administrative controls are in place.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Since the minister did not deal with a critical part of my question, I ask him again: Will he not table and provide us with the recommendations for change that presumably were made yesterday and may be made over the next little while even further so that we can watchdog them, unlike the recommendations regarding the escape from the sheriff's officers that the minister of the day refused to table, this minister refuses to table and we cannot follow up on? This minister will not even tell us what recommendations he is prepared to implement.

**Mr. Toews:** Madam Speaker, in fact I have indicated very clearly for the record the administrative steps that we have taken. I have also indicated the consultation that needs to take place with the police. I, in fact, was reminded by my staff that in a past situation where we had offered the police more information, they indicated that that information would not particularly help them. So before we start overburdening the police with specific information—and the type of information I believe it is incumbent upon my departmental officials to discuss exactly what type of information is helpful to the police so that they can do their job.

\* (1410)

### **Student Transportation Government Policy**

**Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James):** Madam Speaker, the other day I asked the minister a question

posed as a math question, and it was not her strongest point. So today I have prepared it as a multiple-choice question.

In relating to school buses which have exceeded the previous 15-and-a-half-year limit, would the minister recommend that school divisions buy—and Winnipeg No. 1, in particular—one bus a year and use the older buses for as long as they can as long as they meet safety standards; two, lease as many buses as they can with the provincial grant money and end up paying twice as much over seven years as it would cost to buy the bus outright; three, raise property taxes or cut 40 teachers to make up the difference; or, four, replace the old buses with a fleet of minivans? Would the minister please respond?

**Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training):** Madam Speaker, I presume that question was for me, although she did not identify which minister. I presume that the topic would lead it to me.

I would say that my desire would be for the Winnipeg School Division to take hold of the local autonomy that local school divisions fought so hard for during the Boundaries Review which they said was important to them, which they said they needed to be able to make their own local decisions. I would also suggest that the Winnipeg School Division be able to take advantage of the \$750,000 increase they received from us this year, be able to take advantage of the fact that they are getting money for the full purchase of a bus, should they wish to do that, or direct that money, should they wish to do that, to any other area of endeavour.

I would suggest as well that they consider their own busing requirements in light of the fact that we now provide—which never occurred under them when they were government over there on the NDP benches—funding for students to be transported in the city for kindergarten to Grade 6 instead of just kindergarten to Grade 3 and we now also will provide busing funding for that school division from Grade 7 to Grade 12 should they desire it.

**Madam Speaker:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

## NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

### Red River Community College

**Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek):** Do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek have leave? [agreed]

**Mr. McAlpine:** Yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the Red River Community College business conference luncheon on behalf of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey). The conference was called Directions '97, and it gave students a chance to take part in a conference which included several working sessions and exhibits. It also gave students, staff and employers an opportunity to get together for meaningful dialogue, to stop and think about the role businesses play in our communities and our economy and where we are headed economically as a new century approaches.

Many of the students who attended the conference will go on to become the business leaders in our community. I think that events like this help them understand, as well as we, the important role that small business plays in creating jobs and wealth in Manitoba. The Directions '97 conference was more than simply a chance for students to have learned a bit about planning, setting up and running a business. The conference gave them an opportunity to look seriously at their own skills and choices.

I would like to commend the organizers of the conference for putting together such a worthwhile and informative program, and I would like to congratulate the students of Red River business education program for their participation and interest in business management and entrepreneurship. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

### Grant Park High School Teachers

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Crescentwood—[agreed]

**Mr. Sale:** I would like to rise to honour today three teachers in the Grant Park High School; Norm Roseman, Walter Funk and Dennis Kuzenko, who were the 1997 Prime Minister's awards for teaching excellence in science, technology and mathematics.

It is the first time in the history of these awards that three teachers from one school have won awards. I think that the record of these three teachers in this school is just exemplary. Mr. Funk and Mr. Roseman have taught for 32 years, Mr. Kuzenko for 22 years. The students of these teachers when interviewed by the press talked about the teachers in a way that showed enormous respect for their enthusiasm and dedication. The students said the science teaching of Mr. Kuzenko is such that he has helped a number of students start their own businesses and to learn ways of applying their upper-school science curricula to the real world that they want to become successful in.

These teachers have volunteered, as most teachers do. The real teachers of our society volunteer all over the place for teaching sports programs, leading in arts programs, and these teachers are no exception. Mr. Funk, Mr. Roseman and Mr. Kuzenko should be commended by all of us here and indeed by all Manitobans, as they have been by all their students, for being yet another strong example of how well our public schools do in reaching young people and helping our young people to reach their highest potential.

I hope all members will join with me in extending congratulations and their honour due to Norm Roseman, Walter Funk and Dennis Kuzenko, teachers of the year.

### Premier's Volunteer Service Awards

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Madam Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Pembina have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Mr. Dyck:** I had the privilege of attending the Premier's Volunteer Service Awards this week where a young constituent of mine was honoured. Stacy Lyne of Snowflake, Manitoba, is a Grade 12 honour student.

She has demonstrated leadership and contributed greatly to her school and community. Stacy's goal in life is to have made a difference, something her nominator, the principal of her school, says she has most certainly done already.

Stacy has served as class representative on student council for three years, planning dances, track meets and fundraisers. As vice-president last year she organized a jeans sale, raising \$1,000 for graduation. Concerned about the abuse of alcohol by youth in the area, Stacy volunteered to serve as youth representative on a community round table finding solutions to community problems. She has been a 4-H member for eight years, serving a variety of roles, including reporter, president, secretary, treasurer and club president. Stacy has also served several years as junior leader in Sunday School and has served as a volunteer counsellor at Rock Lake United Church summer camp for three consecutive summers.

Madam Speaker, time does not permit me to list all the accomplishments this young lady has had. Suffice it to say, with young Manitobans like Stacy in our communities who have made significant contributions through leadership, personal initiative and determination, all members should watch out if this young lady decides to run against them in the next election. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

\* (1420)

### Home Care Week

**Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway):** May I have leave of the House for a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member have leave? [agreed]

**Mr. Santos:** Madam Speaker, I rise to congratulate the City of Winnipeg for recognizing the Public Home Care Week, April 14 to 21. This is a very wise move by the City of Winnipeg and worth repeating.

The resolution reads as follows:

WHEREAS health care restructuring is making home care more important than ever before; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's system of publicly operated and funded home care is famous around the world; and

WHEREAS Manitoba's home care attendants provide a vital service to thousands of Winnipeg residents;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Susan A. Thompson, Mayor of the City of Winnipeg in the province of Manitoba, do hereby proclaim the week of April 14 to 21, 1997, as Public Home Care Week.

Manitoba's public nonprofit home care system is indeed something to be proud of. The support by Manitobans from all walks of life for public, nonprofit home care has long been acknowledged, perhaps most of all during the dispute last year when the province attempted to privatize the system. The city has sent a strong and necessary signal to the province to support public home care. Let us hope this proclamation will become an annual event.

We must remember, Madam Speaker, that people are more important than money, for the love of money is the root of all evil. They that will be rich fall into temptations and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful desires, lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. Thank you.

### Small-Business Women

**Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli):** Madam Speaker, do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Gimli have leave? [agreed]

**Mr. Helwer:** It is my pleasure today to rise in the House to congratulate 54 women who are honoured in this week's edition of the Stonewall Argus for their role in the small-business communities of Stonewall and Teulon. The businesses which they own range from pet stores to interior designing to real estate and to restaurants, just to name a few. All of the businesses mentioned are thriving in both communities. With the latest population statistics released only a few days ago, Stonewall is considered to be one of the fastest-growing towns in the province. This can only mean good news for these businesswomen. It is also exciting to see that so many women contribute to the community by

investing their time and efforts in making their businesses thrive. Many of the jobs that have been created within the province since January have been in the private sector. This province is doing better than ever when it comes to job creation in the private sector, and I am pleased to see this trend take place in the Gimli constituency. Again, I would like to congratulate these women on their business ventures, and I wish them continued success for the future. Thank you.

### Flood Preparation Volunteers

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** May I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for St. Johns have leave? [agreed]

**Mr. Mackintosh:** I thank the members for giving leave. I want to just put a few words on the record and to members about the rapidly rising waters in the Red River, of course, which we are more than aware of. It is expected that the waters can certainly be as severe as 1979 and could be worse. We know the effect this is having on individuals and homeowners in particular. This is an extremely stressful experience for those individuals. It is time to remind ourselves that volunteers are urgently needed in mass numbers. I think we all have an obligation as leaders in our respective communities to call on organizations and even individuals to volunteer to assist. Citizens certainly in this city and in affected rural areas have been turning out in great numbers to help out.

The City of Winnipeg now has a new information line, and I am glad to hear about that, but we have to do better. For example, this morning I know on Scotia Street we looked down the street at noon, and it looked like we had made very little progress. The flood situation this year does not compare at all to last year. It is much, much worse, and I think all members should be on notice that it may be, after a review over the weekend, we will have to call for more widespread and innovative ways of raising the volunteer forces and perhaps even calling on the Armed Forces to assist.

At this time it may be premature, but given what I see on those little stakes as to how high those dikes have to go and how much work can be done in half a day, I

think that this is a time for great caution on our behalf, and in the meantime let us rally the troops. Thank you.

### Women's Institute

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Swan River have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the many women over the years who have been members of the Women's Institute. This week the Manitoba Women's Institute is holding its annual conference in Brandon and will be celebrating the centennial of the Women's Institute. The first formation of the women's group took place in Stoney Creek, Ontario, and the movement has spread across western Canada.

I want to recognize the members of the Women's Institute for the tremendous amount of work that they have done to improve the quality of life for families. They were very active in the early days in working towards better nutrition, better services, better health care services throughout the province and across Canada. They have been active in many areas when they feel it is necessary to put pressure on the government for various issues, and they have done an awful lot to raise the quality of life of people in rural Manitoba. I want to recognize them for the work they have done and wish them the best in their centennial celebration and the discussions that they will have at their conference.

There will be issues that they will be discussing. I am sure they will be discussing the regional health authorities. They have discussed things such as the need for support such as rural stress lines in rural Manitoba, speech therapists, medical curriculum for rural doctors. So they address a broad range of issues and meet with government on a regular basis and with the opposition caucuses to make us aware of what the issues are. I want to commend them for the work they have done to improve the quality of life for families that live in rural Manitoba.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

\* (1430)

**Motion agreed to,** and the House resolved itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty with the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) in the Chair for the Department of Northern Affairs; and the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) in the Chair for the Department of Agriculture.

### COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

#### NORTHERN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Chairperson (Ben Sveinson):** Order, please. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Northern Affairs.

When the committee last sat, it had been having a general discussion concerning the Estimates. Is it the will of the committee to continue with a general discussion? [agreed]

**Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas):** I just wanted to raise a few issues. I was glad to hear the response from the minister in the House when I raised the issue about another urban aboriginal strategy, because there have been consultant reports after reports. I have been here since September 11 of 1990, and since I have been here, that I can only speak of, we have raised that issue every year about an aboriginal strategy, what has been happening, when it is going to be implemented, and we always got the same answer: soon, soon, soon.

That is why I was pleased to hear your answer, and I hope you are committed and serious about taking action, because in the urban aboriginal community

there is a lot of work to be done. You know that a lot of individuals need a lot of training. There are a lot of individuals that need real job opportunities. I was very skeptical. I am so far very skeptical about what really will happen.

If it is just a ploy to deflect criticism or if it is a ploy to slow people down, I hope it is not and I give you the benefit of the doubt. I will wait and see what actually happens because we have been waiting for many years. I have been in discussion with a lot of people. I know a lot of aboriginal people. I see just by the names that you have on your committee that you have excellent, excellent individuals on there that will do a very good job. I am sure that you will get some good recommendations.

The other aboriginal strategies that I tabled, there were also excellent recommendations in those reports. I hope you will read those. If there is something missed from this report that you will be bringing forward, that you will add those on because there is a lot of work to be done. I know, I am not naive enough to think that only one level of government is going to solve everything. It is going to take the work of the federal government, the provincial government, the city, aboriginal leaders and especially the aboriginal community, the aboriginal grassroots people.

I hope that there will be processes in place when you go around and do your consultation process, that you will encourage and find ways of attracting the grassroots people to have their say because a lot of times what the people want, what the people need sometimes because of everybody's busyness and over commitments, that some of these grassroots issues are missed. I think it is very, very important that you have some papers, local papers that get around, like the Weetamah and Mesanaygun and all different papers, and I hope you will get it, will advertise community meetings.

I hope that not all the meetings will just be held in the aboriginal centre. I hope you will consider Turtle Island. It is a huge community centre. The surrounding community is pretty well mostly all aboriginal people. I am sure you will get good feedback from there, because there are a lot of individuals that form various organizations and are associated with various

communities there, are very community-minded and committed to the community. The Lord Selkirk residents association is just one start. Right across you have the friendship centre. So there are a lot of individuals that I am sure would be willing to come out and share their experiences and offer you some advice.

I do not want to dwell on that. As I said, I am encouraged by the makeup of the committee, and I take your sincerity at face value today, and I hope that you meant what you said in the House, that something positive will happen. That gives me some encouragement. As I said, I have been waiting since I was elected for some action.

The other thing that I hope you will follow up on as a new minister is the commitment by your government that was made in November to start immediately looking at the royal commission. You stated—I know that because I had to sign off the pair; I know that you are going to the ministers' meeting—the royal commission would be one of the items on the agenda, and I hope that you will be fighting on behalf of us aboriginal people in trying to get some of the recommendations from the royal commission implemented in Manitoba to make things a little more tolerable and to give our people some encouragement and opportunities for training and employment opportunities.

\* (1440)

I do not have to tell you, but you know in the near future 25 percent of the whole workforce in Winnipeg will be made up by aboriginal people, 25 percent. If we want to be sincere and have opportunities for aboriginal people in the city of Winnipeg, I think we should have started yesterday in the whole area of training needs. Look at the skills areas that will be forthcoming, forecasts of the skills areas, and immediately start some training programs. I think that is crucial, or what you will see is that the aboriginal people will be just taking low income paying jobs, and I do not think that is what I want to see happen. I would like to see the aboriginal community have the opportunity to get meaningful employment and raise the standard of living that some individuals have to live under today. That is one area I hope you will seriously address.

On the subject of jobs, I do not have to remind you, but in northern Manitoba, in a lot of the northern communities, there is a high, high rate of unemployment in those communities. A lot of people are only seasonal workers. Some of the jobs only come during the summer when it comes to building infrastructure, schools or roads. But I wonder if your government would—and I hope you will take it to your caucus—consider the opportunity that, when the government is awarding contracts, government contracts awarded to contractors, there be a stipulation in there of, say, 25, 30 percent of the workforce must be aboriginal individuals.

I think that would help the North and help the aboriginal community because there are people now that have some years in apprenticeship training. There are some people that have had training and experience in heavy equipment and truck drivers and stuff. So there is more of an expanded labour pool in the North now than there ever has been in the past, and I do not think it would be very difficult if an individual contracted with the government and it was written into that contract 25 or whatever the government sets, especially in lieu now where the government has taken over UI offices, so they will have ready access to the information of individuals with their skills and their work experiences.

So you could match jobs, and fine, if there were not enough individuals in the North that could fill those jobs, then sure, fine, let the contractors hire whomever they wish. I think that if we looked at some kind of motivator or some form of an action plan, we could try and get more people employed. It is the same thing where we hear from the small, rural farm communities, like, we are losing our youth. The same thing is happening in the North. I know a lot of young, very bright individuals have had to leave the North because there were no employment opportunities. If we, as a government, try to look at plans and encourage training and employment and keep our youth in the North, hopefully, expand and develop a lot of the communities, a lot of the opportunities from work experience and education, some of the individuals will have the opportunity to work on reserves because of the whole aspect of self-government coming into place. It is so crucial that government address that.



We talk about different things that governments could do or the whole issue of youth crime and gang activity, the hopelessness of a lot of our youths, and the difficulty of opportunities.

I know the minister was at the friendship centre before. I know that you have some understanding of what the friendship centre is all about. But I hope that you have taken time to see what kind of services the friendship centres across Manitoba delivered for aboriginal people.

I will give you a quick example of our elders, our elders that have to be removed from northern communities because of lack of personal care homes or lack of medical opportunities. A lot of the elders are removed from the communities and are placed into larger centres like Winnipeg because of medical reasons. You know, I do not have to remind you, that diabetes is very, very high in the aboriginal community. The only treatment that a lot of individuals have, kidney dialysis and stuff, is in the city of Winnipeg or other larger communities.

So when we remove our respected elders out of our communities into urban centres, a lot of time there is the feeling of being lost, of not having the people around, the family around, but also traditional foods, traditional entertainment and stuff like that.

The friendship centre used to provide a very, very valuable service. The friendship centre used to be contacted by personal care homes in the city. They used to go and pick up the elders and bring them out for traditional feasts or bring them out for appropriate traditional activities within the city of Winnipeg. That was so important to our elders because most of the time the elders, when they were taken out for medical purposes and placed in personal care homes, the family never saw the individual again until they were brought back home to be buried in their own community. The families a lot of times could not afford to come out and visit on a regular basis because of the isolation and the high cost of transportation. So a lot of times the elders were left without family, without supports in the city, within their immediate family.

I know that I have raised it before, and I will continue raising it. It is not like the south, where you can hop in

a car and drive 100 miles or 150 miles and visit a loved one. It is not the same when you come from communities, say, Island Lake communities, for example, where there is no personal care home. The only way out after the winter road is closed is to fly in and out. It is very, very costly. When you have 85-90 percent of the people unemployed, the only means of money is through social assistance. When you look at \$300-\$400 air fares, I do not know how you would ever save up that kind of money.

But those are the kind of things, I hope when you are dealing with your counterparts in Regina, right, where you are going to, that you will raise some of these kinds of issues and say, how can we as provinces that are committed, are willing to deal fairly and to assist our aboriginal elders, our aboriginal peoples, our aboriginal communities, how can we address that? How can we discuss this? How can we get the federal government to, say, cost-share or some kind of an agreement? We used to have northern development agreements all the time, so it is not impossible to do. We used to have northern development agreements that tied federal dollars, provincial dollars, and it was cost-shared.

So say for instance, a personal care home, I think right now for any government, any government of any stripe, there should be a personal care home in the Island Lake area. I was there myself, I met with the chief and council, I saw the elders, I saw the families trying to look after them with the intravenous, and some of them had to change the bags and stuff like that. They were not nurses and it was very, very difficult, but they did it out of love and to keep their elders there.

\* (1450)

All governments have to be sensitive to people's needs, and I really hope that what you say you really mean, and I hope you are really committed, because I have heard for seven years a lot of talk but very little action. I hope it will be reversed with you. I hope you will have lots of action and talk all you want, as long as you act. Those are some of the issues that I wanted to raise with you. I would welcome your views on this and hear some of your responses.

**Hon. David Newman (Minister of Northern Affairs):**  
Thank you, honourable member for Point Douglas, as

usual a very sincere and thoughtful presentation of your views on the aboriginal people in the city and beyond. I am going to pick up on your last comment about all talk and little action.

I am not going to get into a debate on that. That is not the purpose of this process. But I will single out one thing which I think is a major accomplishment by this government. I am grateful that effort has been put into this for many years before I ever came into the Legislature by our government, and that is the commitment, the persistent and earnest commitment to tackle the issue of treaty land entitlement. That became a major commitment of my department, a major commitment of my predecessors and, through the political leadership and the staff, a major, focused and structured effort was made to fulfil the provincial legal responsibilities to provide lands but also to be the catalyst to bring about the process to permit the federal government to carry out its long, outstanding obligations to the bands in Manitoba who had been party to treaties and had entitlement to more lands under those treaties than had been provided.

That statute, imposing that obligation in Manitoba to provide those lands goes back to 1930. The federal government simply never in any leadership way moved that obligation to the table and into a momentum towards resolution and, of course, that has now happened and with immense good will, co-operation and commitment by the aboriginal representatives at the negotiating table and the representatives from Manitoba and the representatives from the federal government we are on the verge of bringing that to a conclusion.

The magnitude of that in terms of the quantity of the lands which will be transferred and the quantity of money that will be transferred, all in trust for the benefit of the people represented by the aboriginal leaders, will make a difference. It will be a basis for them to become more healthy and successful communities and more healthy and successful individuals in those communities. So that is a huge, I think, accomplishment. The details are not widely known to the general public. They are not even widely known to probably members of the Legislature other than those that have been following closely.

That is going to make a difference, as will the resolution by way of modification of the Northern

Flood Agreement which was entered into in 1977. There is now going to be a better relationship because of the agreement which is about to be finalized with respect to two of the remaining seven bands who were party to that agreement. Again, a persistent, focused and structured effort by my predecessors and continuing in my department by staff and all of the, again, parties and the people they represent. So that again means a significant transfer of wealth. That again means an empowerment of the people, an opportunity to develop a more effective social and economic infrastructure for healthy, sustainable communities in the North.

The other thing is that in a whole variety of different ways through departments of Health, Education and Family Services Access programs, there have been incremental accomplishments along the way which surface. For example, I attended a graduation from the Engineering Access program several weeks ago on a Friday night, and four aboriginal engineers, the product of five years of credit courses, came out with a degree in engineering. Sometimes it took more than five years because they took a year off to work.

Thanks to the Access program in recognizing that, for example, one of the students from Peguis did not have what appeared to be some of the characteristics necessary to be successful in the long term in the program. So the decision was made by that individual and the program to go out and get a job for a while and alleviate some of the family obligations as well, also just to get more adjusted to the university situation and the urban situation. That individual did that, and the employer apparently now gives a testimonial saying anytime you have a student like that, we want you to have them work for us, because that is a benefit to us. If it is of benefit to the individual, as it was here, it is a win-win. That individual came back and was one of the graduates.

Another graduate was someone who had been in the mining trade for 17 years of his life before he went into engineering, and he has graduated now as an industrial engineer, a mature individual.

All of these are role models. They were represented by members of their community at the graduation. You could feel the pride, the commitment to their people,

their desire to fulfill their careers in service of their people. Again, those kinds of things are a product of seven years, in some cases, of effort. That is how much time, and that is the persistence I am talking about.

Another example goes back to a time when your party was in government, and I have told this story many times about the youth justice committees having their origin on the Roseau River Indian Reserve. That is the first youth justice committee. They still have it there, and it has expanded; it does adult diversion work. So 22 years later that origin has resulted in now there being 74 youth justice committees under the Young Offenders Act in the province of Manitoba. That is incremental, and that is still expanding.

What is happening now is those very bodies are becoming the basis for perhaps what will become extended family conferencing models for doing not just criminal justice but also doing child protection matters, doing holistic, as I say, small "j" justice in the broadest sense for aboriginal people in their communities. There you have elders and you have youth and others work in conjunction often with the local RCMP and other justice workers, probation services. They then do justice within their communities. That is a 22-year program.

It had its origin—and I might say Manitoba is ahead of every other jurisdiction in the country. Now that we have Awasis coming forward and people like Art Schofley, an elder, with their proposals for doing enhancements to these committees to make them more a broader, extended family conferencing model, we have evolutionary improvements that I think will be the foundation of the kinds of changes that I am very optimistic about, changes which require persistent effort over a generation. I speak without hesitation about this kind of a long-term commitment extending parallel to our economic agenda, the economic agenda going to the year 2025 when, if everything goes in accordance with plan and we do not have any disasters, we will have eliminated our accumulated debt.

\* (1500)

I would submit that there is a direct relationship between our paying down our accumulated debt by \$75 million and the future of young aboriginals and the

future they have because, when those born today are in their early 20s, that debt will be gone and more will be able to be devoted to them and their children. They are going to benefit as much, maybe more than other Manitobans because of that kind of commitment.

I will not go on with all of the other details of the kinds of programs but just to illustrate that all of those things, all of those changes add up. I can talk about changes in the education system, in the health system and in family services, which I would submit are positive developments which ensue out of the strategies you have cited in the past in Aboriginal Justice Inquiry; Hughes; the urban strategy of the late '80s; the northern study. All of these kinds of things I think are reflective of the adopted provisions of those recommendations.

You made reference to training and the importance of training. In the process of doing that, you mentioned somewhat critically, I felt, a reference to just low-income paying jobs, end of quote. I would urge you and urge anyone not to devalue any job. I think that we do a disservice sometimes by thinking that any job for which you receive pay that is legal and moral is somehow lesser or not worthy of respect. I know I personally have as much respect for the most humble person doing the most humble job, and that is measured in different ways.

I find that some people are critical of a job in a fast-food restaurant. Another person is critical of a job in a—well, a lawyer's job. Someone is critical of social workers. Someone is critical—[interjection] And Mr. Ashton speaks out, someone is even critical of MLAs' jobs and say that is not a real job. Some people say that. I do not agree with that either.

As a matter of fact, I am probably as proud of this profession as any other job I have ever held, and I say that without any hesitation at all. I think being an elected parliamentarian is as worthy a profession as any.

But I do not think it does any service to our aboriginal Manitobans, particularly the young ones, to suggest that. Because if you are good at a job, you work at it; and you work at it with intelligence, commitment and heart conscientiously. You gain self-respect. In our jurisdiction minimum wage means—

some would say, well, you cannot live on minimum wage. It is certainly a lot better than nothing. Also, every time you work at a job it is a learning experience. It is a character-building experience, and you get paid at the same time.

I know I used to tell my own children that any time that they turned their nose up at a job when they were teenagers, I would suggest to them that if you treat everything you do in life as a learning experience and you are not paying tuition, they are paying you to do it, paying you to get trained, it is all in your attitude. That is what I would urge aboriginal people to do, not turn your nose up at any jobs, prove yourself, prove yourself worthy, earn respect.

Having said that, the responsibility for training—we have talked today in the House about the new agreement just signed between the feds and the province about training. My understanding of that agreement, and I think this is well known, is that the federal responsibility to provide training for aboriginals remains with the federal government. So we will be in common cause with the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) and the aboriginal people in encouraging effective training of aboriginals through the federal responsibility. That is going to be, I agree with you, the basis of effective participation in our social and economic society in Manitoba.

Another thing on training, our Partners for Careers program, in spite of that federal obligation, is an initiative by the province in partnership with the federal government, and I am also very proud to say an initiative of several departments of our government—Education and Training and our department. The Partners for Careers program is geared, focused, on young people who graduate from high school and from community colleges and universities. It is designed to focus on them as the role models, people who because of their effort and their accomplishments should have jobs. The employer community who are partnering with the federal and provincial government in that initiative throughout the province will be giving those opportunities. The aboriginal community agencies involved in the program will be training those people. Mr. Jim Bear who is in charge of that program and the advisory council of three employers and three youth representatives, aboriginal youths, young people, will

hopefully contribute in significant ways to accomplishing over the next three years not just some hundreds of jobs but some hundreds of role models who will influence others and show that it is worth sticking to it and staying in school and working your way through the system.

He made a specific comment about government contracts, a suggestion. I just want to give a caution, because I think it is something that we as members of the Legislature have to be sensitive to, and that is there is a very delicate balance that has to be maintained in terms of public goodwill and understanding. In our multicultural society, we have many people, and, interestingly, I spoke to an aboriginal last night who felt very concerned about the division that might occur in the aboriginal community if we now move ahead with programs like Partners for Careers because he never had that opportunity and he was successful.

There is a great sense that we have in our society that everyone wants to be treated equally, and it sometimes requires an effort on our part to communicate the reasons for these things. Sometimes it is the statistics and the historic injustices, and sometimes it is what Section 15 of our Constitution says and what our human rights legislation says about accommodating affirmative action and accommodation programs. I have no hesitation supporting those for the aboriginal people because they are to me, with the understanding I have, real and special needs, and so we have to do special things.

It is going to be of benefit to all Manitobans, not just aboriginals, all Manitobans. We do have to invest in this and make an effort as a Manitoba community to address this special challenge, but we do have to be sensitive. We have to make sure that we do these things with understanding. We do walk in the moccasins of the people who have that historic attitude and have made those sacrifices and made it on their own.

\* (1510)

Having said that, with the hydro power line that was put through Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei, just operational several weeks ago, 90 percent of the workers on that were aboriginal. They put the right-of-

way through. The majority of the workers on the hydro northeast-central power line are aboriginal workers. Historically, there has been a real commitment that way, to involve aboriginals in their employ in northern areas, and that commitment is reflected in those examples.

The other thing about hydro, they allow a 10 percent premium on costs in the bidding process with respect to northern areas, so that the aboriginal construction companies can have an affirmative action kind of opportunity. I might say our own Department of Northern Affairs has almost 30 percent aboriginal staff in their Northern Affairs office.

So we are conscious of these. We do not have that arithmetical formula you suggest nor that policy. I appreciate your intent, but that is not a policy, and I do not think it is something that I would be prepared to recommend. It is a little too much of a quota kind of system, but the sentiments I have no hesitation agreeing with.

With respect to the comment about the elders off-reserve, you mentioned diabetes, kidney dialysis. Whether it is age or infirmity or illness that causes someone to have to move out of their communities and come into the city, certainly I am very sensitized to that, very well aware of it and have taken a great interest in it and have a particular involvement and interest, I might say, in the aboriginals and diabetes, the epidemic afflicting the aboriginal people and will be very pleased to contribute to the debate on that in the Legislature, if I have the opportunity this afternoon. The member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) has put forward a resolution in that connection. I think that it is timely and a desirable thing to bring forward and debate in the House, and it is an issue that will receive my attention, effort and support.

But the dislocation situation, I had an opportunity to see what Island Lake support services is trying to do, for example, in providing sort of a comfort, a buddy system, a support system for people who do come into Winnipeg off-reserve, and that is something that is the kind of thing that the aboriginal community in Winnipeg, as I understand it, in a volunteer way, participates in. In fact, I attended a fundraiser by the Island Lake support services where by far the majority

of people there were representing the aboriginal community in a fundraising dinner supporting the event, and I give them enormous credit for doing that.

The focus on health and these basic social needs, I believe, is a tremendously important foundation for the kind of training and economic development which will be the product of training that you referred to earlier. If we do not address the problems of addiction, alcoholism, addictions to drugs and gambling, and even some nutrition habits that contribute to diabetes, if we do not address those kinds of issues, if we do not address the problem of consuming alcohol when you are pregnant with the result that we end up with fetal alcohol syndrome and effects in children to be born and then suffering from it the rest of their life, if those kinds of problems are not addressed in that long-term preventive and in a persistent way that is measured, we will not realize the potential of those individuals or those communities. I believe that is foundational. It is the basis for the kinds of accomplishments that are going to be necessary for the incremental achievements necessary to move toward the goals which probably you and I would share for the aboriginal people of Manitoba.

One final point, I just mention the midwifery bill which will be emerging, and it will be, I think, again, something that will contribute to health in the communities in a responsible way.

**Mr. Hickes:** When I raise these issues, do not take these issues personally, because a lot of this stuff that happened, happened years before you were elected and years before you were appointed Minister of Northern Affairs. When you talked about the treaty land entitlement agreement, we applaud that. I do not know if you are aware, but in 1980 we had an agreement in place. It was the federal Mulroney government that was holding it all back, so that is why it was never signed.

When I raised the issue of low-income jobs, I do not know, I hear what you are saying, but also I hope you hear what I am saying. When I am talking about meaningful employment opportunities, the \$5.40-an-hour jobs and the \$6-, \$7-an-hour jobs are not going to do it when you have a family to feed. When you are a teenager living at home or a single person sharing

accommodations, sure, you might be able to do it but try raising a family on that. It is pretty darn hard.

If you look at Winnipeg, the urban area, there are a lot of single mothers there. Some have three, four, five children. Are they going to be able to raise their families on a \$5.40-an-hour job? That is why I say when we talk about training and employment, let us talk about training for employment opportunities so an individual can feel comfortable to feed their families and to look after the means of themselves and their families.

That is why, if we train for cashier jobs or McDonald's jobs for \$5.40 an hour, I do not think that is the answer. I think we have to go beyond that. I am no different than anyone else. I wish the best for myself and my family, and I am sure every other individual who is out there feels the same way, but I know, I know, I could not feed my family on \$5.40 an hour. It is impossible. I would not be able to do it, and that is not what I wish upon other people.

\* (1520)

So when you talk about the importance of holding a job versus not holding a job, I agree with you. It is important to have a job, but it is also important to put food in the mouths of your children. Some families are on social assistance, and the only reason they are on social assistance is because they never had the opportunity to get their education and to get into higher paying jobs, where their rent is paid and they have food and stuff like that, and, now, when they go get a job you want them to go work for \$5.40, \$6 an hour, but they have lunches, they have transportation expenses, they have babysitting expenses. They are further back, and they just will not be able to make ends meet.

That is why when we talk about training programs and governments talk about training programs for single mothers, you always have to make sure that those obstacles that stop an individual from taking advantage of those training opportunities are in place; for instance, daycare; for instance, transportation.

I will give you a good example of how hard-government guidelines are government guidelines. I had an individual who phoned me, and she was a

single-parent mother, and she said I am taking a training program, but part of my training program is I am on a work placement. She said, I have two work placements; I work half a day, but I work one hour here and an hour and a half over there. So she said, I have to take a bus from home to one job and another bus from that job to the other job and then the bus home. Well, she said, I really want to finish my training, George, and you know what, social assistance will not give me adequate bus tickets. I said, well, what do you mean? She said they just give me allowance for half a month bus pass not the whole allowance. I said, did you not explain it to your worker? She said, yes, but she says you are only half time. I said, yes, but you still need a bus pass to go from there to there to there. So, finally, when she explained it, the worker finally gave her the allowance for the bus pass.

But those are the kinds of silly things that we have to try and overcome, to encourage individuals to put proper support in place to make the opportunity for individuals for training and employment very, very meaningful, because most people you talk to do not want to be on social assistance. They do not, but a lot of them, they cannot afford not to be, see, and that is the problem for a lot of individuals.

So when I talk about meaningful employment, I am not making fun of \$5.40- or \$6-an-hour jobs, because for a lot of people, individuals coming out, that is very important. But when you are single or even if your partner is employed, fine, you might be able to make it with two \$6-an-hour jobs, but not if you are a single parent. It would be pretty, pretty darn difficult. That is where I was coming from on that one.

I am really pleased that the government found the money to pay that \$75 million to pay down on the debt, but the government has a rainy day fund, and for a lot of individuals it is raining today. I do not starve my family for a week so I can put \$100 in the bank. I make sure that my family is looked after first, then if I have \$100, I will put that \$100 in the bank, but I will not starve my family first.

That is what has been happening for a lot of aboriginal people. I am glad that you are a new minister because you will see where your government has made some changes, and from your sincerity and

from what you are saying I hope that you will change some of the actions of your government in the past. You talked about 90 percent of hydro lines going to communities at Thicket Portage and Pukatawagan—was it Pukatawagan?

**An Honourable Member:** Pikwitonei.

**Mr. Hickes:** Pikwitonei? Okay, going into those communities, and 90 percent of the brush cutting, I am sure, would be the brush cutting by aboriginal or northern people.

That is a real good commitment, and the other, when they lay the lines in, I hope you are aware of this—well, you must be because you are the Minister of Energy and Mines—that now that Manitoba Hydro has linemen or line people, whatever they call them now, training a lot of aboriginal people as linemen, when they graduate they will be at very good employment levels, and they will be able to feed their families and look after them.

Now, that is a commitment by a Crown corporation. Now you see why we fight so hard to protect Crown corporations, because if that was a private company, do you think that would have happened? When you were speaking earlier, you were saying that it would be hard to implement quotas or percentages for contractors that go into contracts with governments, but you were free to use a Crown corporation as an excellent model of more aboriginal people and more northern individuals being hired.

So when we talk about the possibility of a contractor that contracts with Northern Affairs or contracts with whomever in northern Manitoba, there is already a precedent that has been set by the building of the limestone dam. There was a 25 percent northern preferential hiring clause built into all contracts, and there was no problem. I never heard anything about the government being taken to court over that, and I know, I research back. I was also involved in that whole limestone project, that before limestone came to be and that percentage was in place—and it was pretty well met throughout the period of the whole contract stages—with all the previous dams that were built in northern Manitoba there were anywhere from 3 to 4 percent. The highest that was achieved that was on record was 9 percent.

So that was a tremendous increase and golden opportunities that were achieved for northern aboriginal people. A lot of those aboriginal people who went through the training and got work and got employment and got their certification, a lot of the individuals are now working and employed in their own home communities.

I will give you a good example. We were in St. Theresa Point, and we did a TV show. They shut the local stations off, and you have a local show. We had our little spiels, and then they opened the lines for people to phone in. One individual called in and said are you the same George Hickes that was on the limestone training, and I said yes. He said, well, you wait there, don't leave, I have to see you. So I said okay.

This individual came about 20 minutes later. We were just standing around shooting the breeze waiting for the calls to come in, and this individual came up and shook my hand. Gary Doer, my Leader, was standing right beside me. This individual says, I just wanted to come and thank you in person, because I was almost let go from limestone training, but you looked after it where I was not released, and I continued and finished my levels; now I am a certified journeyman carpenter. He said, you know what I am doing now? I said no. He said, I am the shop teacher for my own school. That person's chest was about here with pride, with a deep amount of pride. Those are examples that we could accomplish and we should be accomplishing. We should be accomplishing those kinds of things in northern Manitoba.

When you talked about, like, your government has done—it is fine; I applaud. Whatever your government does for aboriginal people, I applaud you. I will pat you on the back, whatever you want, but you are new. You are new, and I am glad of that, because I do not think you are aware of what has happened in the past to aboriginal people by your government. That is why we as aboriginal members get skeptical. Sometimes we get a little bitter at times, but we always question the sincerity of what you say now as the minister because of what we have seen and what we have experienced. If you take one step ahead and people applaud that, fine, but do not take three steps back because it will never catch up.

I will give you a few examples, and I do not know if you are aware of these, but since I have been here you talked about Access, the importance of Access, and Access is very, very important for training programs. A lot of your pre-med and pre-engineering programs under Access, some individuals had to go for one year, two years, to get their academic standings up to get into engineering and doctors programs, and that is because of our lack of science labs and stuff in northern Manitoba. So that is understandable. It is not because people are silly or the southern people are brighter than the northern people. That is not the case. It is because a lot of the northern people did not have the opportunity to get into the sciences like southern students do here because of the availability of labs and on and on and on.

The Access program that you were just speaking to—and it is not this minister; it is previous, previous, previous; it is the government—has been cut. In '94, the Access program was cut by \$2 million and in '95 by \$1.4 million, okay? That is the Access program you were just speaking to. Some students were caught in the middle of different funding—[interjection] Yes, they had to go to court to continue with their funding, and the government even appealed it.

\*(1530)

Also, the seats were reduced by up to—had reduced provincial funding seats by 155 seats, reduced a nonrepayable bursary, eliminated two Access programs, Electrical Technology and Civil Technology, reduced the engineering program and reduced staff for Access. With the engineering program, there is going to be built bridges and dams and whatever have you. We will always need engineers, and I was glad to see that the University of Thunder Bay picked that up. At least our aboriginal people who wish to be engineers will have a place to go.

Did you know that BUNTEP, the northern bachelor of nursing which provides for aboriginal students to become teachers and nurses, was also cut? New Careers, well, it is eliminated now. It was totally cut, and New Careers was a program that took disadvantaged and low income; what have you, aboriginal people, visible minorities and people who were on social assistance. A lot of it was a very high

success rate because the training program went in modules. You signed on for two years and you went to class for two weeks, and then you were on the job learning for six weeks and then two weeks in the classroom. The knowledge you were getting in the classroom you were able to implement on the job, so that way you kept growing and growing.

Then the agreement was that if you successfully graduated, the agency or whoever you trained for would hire you. When you look around our jails in Manitoba, you will see a fair number of aboriginal people as correction officers, and most of those individuals went through the New Careers Program to be trained as aboriginal correction officers. Some of those individuals, after about 16 years, are still employed with Corrections, and that is a great accomplishment, a great accomplishment.

Then I am sure you are aware of our 11 Indian and Metis Friendship Centres. 100 percent funding was cut—\$1.2 million, just bang one day. In one day the funding was cut. That was for youth counsellors, career counsellors, recreation workers and all the things that we hear coming from Justice. Anytime you speak to any group or organization on justice or youth, that is one of the examples they always give. There is such a high need for recreation programs, and we need a chance for career opportunities.

When you hear those children and families speaking—it is no secret, you know. A lot of the problems we have today are directly related to poverty, because when you have poverty you have hopelessness, and a lot of people give up and they just do not give a damn anymore, so the cycle continues on and on. If you give an individual a career, a meaningful career that they are choosing, and help the families to get out of the life of poverty and give them jobs, that is the secret to a lot of the problems that we have right now, is give people jobs; give them their hopes back. It is no big secret.

Are you aware that MKO was cut \$78,500, that their funding was cut? The Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, \$325,000, their provincial funding was gone, and in June of '94, payments for foster parents was cut from \$20 to \$10, and in a lot of First Nations and northern communities 80 percent of the aboriginal foster care



placements occur within extended families because there is a strong belief that families should try and be kept together, 80 percent. In '93, the province cut funding for the Northern Fishermen's Freight Assistance. That was cut, and that is where my colleague from The Pas got into a little bit of a hassle with the Speaker, because he named it something that some people were saying—

**An Honourable Member:** He is not the only one.

**Mr. Hickes:** Yes, that is what I mean. A lot of the northern people were saying it was a “blank” policy, directly aimed at aboriginal people because the majority of your fishermen in northern Manitoban are aboriginal, so that is why a lot of people view it for what it is. I will not use the word because I do not want to cause any problems here.

Then the northern hospitals, they have been cut. A funny thing, too, you know, a lot of the communities, the individuals who are sitting at this table work in and have been visiting and know a lot of the people there, and a lot of those communities are very poor communities. When you have individuals who have an accident or have to be flown out, do you know now they have to come up with \$50, a \$50 user fee, to get an ambulance? So what happens? Sometimes that will stop an individual from coming out. It might be just a pain in the stomach or what have you, but how do you know it is not someone's appendix ready to burst? There are no doctors in those communities. It is just a guessing game, and if they do not have the \$50, what do they do? You are penalizing people who have very little means as it is. A lot of them are seasonal employees, and so for part of the year they have very little income.

I do not have to mention, you have heard lots about the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. That pretty well is becoming a doorstop.

You were mentioning earlier about youth justice committees. St. Theresa Point had an excellent program, and the community was very, very proud of that. Do you know what happened to that program? The funding ran out and that was it. They would not renew it, yet there is supposed to be a million dollars

set aside to implement AJI every year. St. Theresa Point used to have one of the highest problems with gas sniffing and youth problems, and they used to have a youth justice committee to deal with their problems within their own community, but it was only funded for a year or two, and then the funding was cut off. It was very little funding. It was not that expensive of a program.

The Children's Dental Program, the dialysis unit in The Pas is not operating. People have to drive to Flin Flon. The Flin Flon Crisis Centre, Keewatin Community College has been—no one has to explain to you about conditions of the northern highways. Could you imagine if you had a highway in the condition of driving from Thompson to Leaf Rapids, if the highway, say, from Winkler to Morden was in that kind of condition? What would happen? People would be up in arms, and something would be done. Do you know that is still a gravel road?

**An Honourable Member:** Is it a road really?

**Mr. Hickes:** Well, it is a gravel road, and it is so dusty and it is so dangerous that a lot of the individuals—sometimes the police or the ambulance will not even go on that road, will not even travel that highway. My colleague from Thompson and my colleague from Rupertsland were up there this year with the chief and council from Nelson House, hoping to get something done.

So those are the kinds of examples I am drawing to you as a new minister, and I do not know. Would you have let these things happen if you were the minister of the day? From what you are saying and the way you are saying it and the way you are coming across, I would be very surprised. I would be very surprised, because you are coming out being sincere, and you really mean well, and you really want to do the right thing for the aboriginal community. So when you wonder sometimes why we as aboriginal members get skeptical and we ask some questions at times, that is why. I just named you a whole bunch of the cuts that for sure have not benefited aboriginal people. A lot of those cuts that you made as cuts used to be a great benefit to northern and aboriginal people in northern Manitoba and in the city.

That is why aboriginal people always—now you hear we will wait and see. It is because of that. What you are saying that your government has done, that is fine. That is the one step ahead, but what I just told you here, those are the three steps back, and that does not help people. If you would have continued, even little baby steps, forward, not taken the big steps back, I think people would have been a lot better off.

\* (1540)

That is why I had to draw that to your attention, because I do not know if you are aware of what has happened in the past—[interjection]

**An Honourable Member:** That was before he was elected.

**Mr. Hickes:** A lot of them happened before you were elected in 1995. A lot of them happened between 1990 and 1995, and I know that we all get elected because we mean well and we want to do the best for our constituents and the best for the people of Manitoba, no matter what colour or creed they come from, but we have to start being sincere and show that we are sincere. I talked about action. We need action, and I hope you are the person who will bring that about because we really, really need it.

You talk to Mary Richard and George Campbell. He is from Norway House. He has worked for years for Indian Affairs. You will not get a person who has more knowledge than he does about northern Manitoba and about the aboriginal people. He will tell you the truth. You sit down with him. He will tell you the truth. His brother Ed has worked for northern manpower for years. They used to go around and work with the people. They have lived the life.

You talked about walking in someone's moccasins. Well, I hope you will encourage him to speak freely and openly with you, and I hope you will listen to your northern staff who see this every day. You have a lot of good people at the table here. I know some of the individuals sitting around this table. I have known them for years and I have seen them in different roles, and the heart is there, the commitment is there, the knowledge is there, and I hope you will accept and use that knowledge to the betterment of northern and

aboriginal—when I say aboriginal I am talking about all northerners, all northern and especially aboriginal people who have been hit by a lot of these cuts.

I just wanted to draw that to your attention. I am not trying to put you on the spot or anything. I just want you to be aware of it, because Eric or Oscar or myself, we have raised these kinds of questions, and that is why we sit back sometimes and say I hope this individual is sincere this time, because we have been told lots of times, since I have been here in 1990, yes, this will happen, this will happen, this will happen. Lots of times those things just do not happen, and the government says there is no money.

Well, like I mentioned to you earlier, there is a rainy day fund, and as a small example, in northern and urban centres right now, it is raining out there. I hope the government is not just putting the money aside for an election slush fund because people need the help. I think that is what we are here for. I really believe that. I really believe that we are here to help people. I still believe it. The day I stop believing it, that is the day I will not be here, simple as that.

So I just wanted to share that with you. I did not want to get into an argument or a debate, or you justifying. You can say what you want, but I just wanted to put that on the record. Thank you.

**Mr. Newman:** Just to respond to a number of the points raised and just a general comment about the history that you have described, and I am not going to get into the history because for as long as there is government at any level, tough decisions have to be made about priorities, and tough decisions have to be made about whether or not a program has sort of run its course and something better should happen.

Some programs are dependent on partnerships, and in many cases with the aboriginal people, it is with the federal government. They have partnerships necessarily, and in many cases the federal government changes a policy, and we have to decide as a government whether we will continue a program with 100 percent responsibility by us or on a reduced basis or whether it should be continued at all. So there are all kinds of reasons which are thoughtfully considered by any government, and then you have to make a decision.

I make no apologies and, in fact, speak with pride—and I have done this before, I think, in discussions with you—of the provincial long-term economic strategy. It is the kind of discipline like one has when they deal with their own personal budgets. You have to have some sort of economic discipline on basics, and then you deal with all the other decisions within that framework.

But in the economic strategy you have a mixed investment portfolio if you have enough resources, and sometimes you invest in the long term. You put aside money for your basic health needs and basic education needs of your children. You invest some sorts of things on a risk basis which may or may not turn out, and with virtually all social investments, the long-term social things, you are never sure, but with the best research you make the best decisions, and you hope that by spending money on a diabetes prevention program, that 20 years down the road you are going to have a reduced incidence of diabetes in a given population. Sometimes you are wrong so you have to make corrections and you change.

So I am not going to go back into the past and analyze each one of the programs, and it would not be productive for this exercise. I will never hesitate to acknowledge that sometimes in hindsight a kind of program that now in the light of today's day you might have said, yeah, maybe we should have kept that one; maybe that one was working.

But funding bodies like MKO and AMC, I, with hindsight, would have no hesitation saying that that was the correct thing to do, and I had to make the decision, do I support the decision not to provide core funding to the MMF, and I take responsibility for that decision. The budget, that aspect, was really in place before I became a minister, but I supported that, and I support it to this day because I think that is best for the Metis people.

I am not a supporter of doing anything which is going to negatively contribute to bodies like MMF taking responsibility for their own communities. I can tell you that I am urging MMF to develop a kind of fee structure. I mean, I would love to see them have memberships based on a contribution, certainly so it does not deter anyone because they cannot afford it, but

to start funding their own organization to a certain extent just like our northern communities. I mean, I am moving in a direction where I believe that healthy, sustainable, more self-relying communities will be a product of not just physical effort and commitment but also investment in these communities. Then they have a sense of ownership.

I happen to come from the school of thought also, which I say with some pride, that I think is the basis of a charity like Habitat for Humanity. When there is ownership of something, there is a tendency to take care, and the value we have in our society for private property is represented in that philosophy. So programs that engender more self-responsibility, I think that is a direction that you can expect me to go in, with no surprise.

You mentioned some specific things. That is enough for history. You mentioned some specific things. You commented about the 1980 treaty land entitlement not being signed because of the Mulroney government. I do not know any of that history through your eyes, and I will probably never have the chance to study it, but one of the ways of achieving agreements has to be to have a relationship with another government, so if you could not achieve that with the federal government, that is too bad. But one has to do things to achieve agreement, so if you failed, I do not think that can be attributable just to one party.

\* (1550)

You talked about trying to raise a family on the minimum wage, and you went through some scenarios and said that in some cases that would be a single parent trying to support self and family. That is why we as a government in our ChildrenFirst strategy have a whole host of initiatives that are focused on the issue of adolescent pregnancy. This is an issue between males and females, and one of the programs is educating males about that.

All of these are found in the ChildrenFirst Strategic Plan for Discussion published in March of 1997. It has a whole host of suggested strategies, and I am going to commend you to look at these and give me feedback as to whether or not these are on the right kind of track, whether these might contribute. One is called

Preventing Adolescent Pregnancy, a development of a strategy to stop adolescent pregnancy. Another one is called On the Move, an initiative designed to encourage adolescent girls to participate in fun-filled, supportive, low-level team recreation. Another program called Baby Think it Over Project, Identification of Best Practice, is using the parenting simulation experience, a computer programmable doll to delay adolescent pregnancies. In that instance, the dolls would be distributed through the Manitoba Home Economics Teachers' Association, and the Children and Youth Secretariat will analyze the results of the project.

Another proposed project is an Options Counselling Initiative: Mandatory referral to public health within designated geographic region; case management, counselling, monitoring and options will be provided. This is one of the recommendations that came out of the Adolescence and Pregnancy Steering Committee.

All of those documents which were tabled in the House are the kinds of contributions to overcoming the kinds of root causes of impoverishment in certain families, and rather than just suggesting simplistically that the answer is getting someone a high-paying job right off the bat, sometimes there have to be steps in that direction, and down the road, I mean upstream, upstream, we are looking at thinking prevention. We are looking at introducing, we are introducing those kinds of things which hopefully will result in fewer pregnancies by single parents. It is a male and a female responsibility, and the strategies identify that and address that.

There are other foundational things. Why is it that someone who is single desires, in some cases desires to bring a child into the world? Sometimes it is out of loneliness, and sometimes it is because you are unloved. I mean, there are all kinds of complicated things and you know that, but when you think prevention, you think of making those sorts of investments of government time and energy, and you try and get broad community support for it, because the answers are not through civil servants always, sometimes rarely. The answers lie in families; they lie in religious organizations; they involve mentors in volunteer involvements, coaches and sometimes brothers and sisters in the Brothers and Sisters

movement, aboriginal elders, all of the influences of a sometimes extended family.

We now recognize this, I think, as a government, so we are doing a lot of things differently, and our Children and Youth Secretariat, through its research and consultations, is recognizing those kinds of things. To the extent they focus on programs through the aboriginal community, we are there and we are supporting those kinds of things, and we are looking for agents in the community, people in the community, to buy into these approaches and support them and work with us.

With respect to removing obstacles to getting and holding jobs other than those sorts of obstacles which are sometimes created by one's own lifestyle choices or products of their environment, there are obstacles that are bureaucratic, obstacles which can be overcome by government or even eliminated because of government getting involved in changing the way they do things. That is why we have the Taking Charge! program, for example, addressing single parents getting into the job market.

I am not sure how familiar you are with that program, but it is no accident that the executive director of that program is an aboriginal, a very successful aboriginal, Rosa Walker, who, interestingly, had training, amongst other jobs, working in the banking industry in human resources. The sort of roles that are being played by that organization is precisely the kind of thing you are talking about, and that is a partnership. That is federal government and provincial government involvement in that program, and that does have child support, daycare support. It has a mentorship kind of thing. It has facilitators who follow up with the employers and is sort of a service to people who are struggling with jobs, someone to talk to if they have a jam, a personal problem.

So that is an initiative, and there is a wonderful initiative, I know, involving the organization that I used to be the president of, the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, and they are providing all kinds of employment opportunities for people on welfare. The program, as I understand it, is working quite well in that same accommodative way.

I support attempts to educate the employer community about the importance of understanding the personal needs of working parents, and it is in their self-interest, I believe, to make adjustments in that respect, even in terms of economic self-interest of the enterprise, and I think they are starting to understand that.

\* (1600)

That is why we, our department, have supported things like the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program research when those people came to Winnipeg. I can say that I had impressed on the business community in some discussions and speeches I had given that they should take on the challenge, just like some of them did with respect to environmental matters, and make it a new moral imperative of corporate social responsibility to address the needs of the yet unborn and the zero to six-year-old age group, because with respect to aboriginal populations, you have pointed out that 25 percent of the population in the city in the year 2016 will be aboriginal workers. So there is a need for the employer community to get ready for that, and they have to start now.

With respect to your point, and I know it was done with a smile on your face, about Manitoba Hydro and its initiatives on behalf of aboriginal people and suggesting that that would not happen with the private sector, I am a proud supporter of both Crown corporations like Manitoba Hydro and also a proud supporter of the private sector enterprises that generate wealth, which pays taxes, and meaningful jobs and a spirit which I think is consistent with the spirit of the North and I would even argue the spirit of the aboriginal people for entrepreneurship.

Some of the best ones, as the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) knows, are from the band that he was once the chief of, and one of the great entrepreneurs in the history of Manitoba is Gordon Lathlin from that very band whose name he mentioned. In my discussions with people from the North and from my readings of the North, there was an economic visionary who really is responsible in large measure, as I understand it, for the blueprint which has resulted in what the Opaskwayak Band has built by way of an

economy there. There are some of the best entrepreneurs we have in the province right in that band, and there are many others. I encounter all the time the Jim Bears and many others.

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

The private sector is involved more and more in supporting the kinds of initiatives that Manitoba Hydro supports. Whether it is The North West Company or Arctic Co-op or First Nations Beverages or the banks, you look at the corporate sponsors of John Kim Bell's blueprints for careers seminar, the Native Arts Foundation event just held this month in Winnipeg, there is a real interest in supporting aboriginals getting involved in careers in the private sector.

Again, I know that members opposite have attended with me on a number of occasions events sponsored by the Council for Aboriginal Business and other kinds of events. Again, the representation filling banquet rooms in the hotels is tremendously impressive, hundreds of people, 600 to 1,000 people at those kinds of events in the city of Winnipeg. I think that is very positive.

So I think it is very important that you as aboriginal leaders in your own right work together with our government and work together with the private sector and the Crown corporations and the communities to help turn the corner and get aboriginals more employment and better employment opportunities.

You have to start somewhere, and if you start at a minimum wage job, and you get some training experience, great. I know that I see the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wanting to speak, so I am going to allow him to jump into the picture. I just wanted to share your poignant description of the St. Theresa Point certified journeyman carpenter and his gratitude. I share the goals. I share the sentiments. What we might differ in from time to time are the methods of getting there, but that is why you are on one side of the House and we are on the other side of the House. I think the people support our approach more than yours, and I am glad that the majority of people in Manitoba, I think, agree with the philosophy which I am espousing here today.

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** I appreciate much of the discussion here because I think what we need in this Estimates discussion about the Department of Northern and Native Affairs is to get some greater understanding, I believe, from the minister and the government of the reality of northern Manitoba. I appreciate the minister's efforts and I share the sentiment expressed by the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) who was born in northern Manitoba, used to live in northern Manitoba and obviously still speaks for many of our concerns.

I note that we have four representatives, perhaps more broadly there may be five or six if you include some of these with Northern Affairs communities. When there are 57 MLAs, Mr. Chairperson, you have to understand we need every ally we can get. We do not have the numbers of people. We do not have the numbers of MLAs, and we constantly have to fight, lobby, plead, urge, whatever mechanism is available. [interjection] Well, it is not that much of a threat when you are four out of 57, but we try our best.

I do want to say to the minister that I know he would rather have it both ways when it comes to talking about the government's record. I noticed in Question Period today—I think it is unfortunate because I think the minister is already falling into some of the bad habits set by some of the other cabinet ministers. I noticed when we asked a question about the urban aboriginal strategy, and we said, well, this was announced in 1989.

Now, some of us might be excused for being a little bit cynical when this is 1997, and lo and behold, it is being announced again. I think, objectively, most people—well, I think the people who really count in this, urban aboriginal people, would say that nothing much happened out of 1989, so we might be considered to be a little bit cynical, but, you know, we gave the minister the opportunity.

What is interesting is the minister got up and then started talking about the government's record on aboriginal issues and outlined two initiatives. I want to deal with that briefly, but then when we reminded him of about 10 or 20 examples where the government cut back, eliminated programs, made decisions that were clearly not in the best interest of northern and native people, he said, well, we cannot get into history; that is

history; we have to look ahead. Well, the unfortunate thing is, Mr. Chairperson, you cannot have it both ways.

By the way, I have a copy of it here, the urban strategy. I do not even know if they have any left on their bookshelves anymore. Ours probably collect less dust than theirs do because we actually go through this, and, I must admit, for eight years we kept waiting. We were hoping that something would happen, that a new minister would come along and somehow all this effort—and I have the copies here, a two-volume document. I would urge the minister to look at it. There is a lot of good information in it. When the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) pointed out the history, for example, of the treaty land entitlement, he said, well, it was not the relationship with the government.

Well, Mr. Chairperson, what happened was you had a tripartite set of negotiations. There was agreement between aboriginal people and the government of the day, the NDP government, and the Mulroney government said no. What they said no to was the Saskatchewan formula: it had already been adopted in 1985—

**An Honourable Member:** I was the chief.

**Mr. Ashton:** Indeed, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) was the chief at the time. I contrast that because I heard members in the House, and I have heard the previous ministers of Northern Affairs sometimes get up and say, well, the NDP did not do anything on treaty land entitlement.

That is not true. The NDP had an agreement with the bands affected. They worked in good faith with the bands. In this case, the Mulroney government—I will not mention which political stripe; well, maybe I will—the Conservative government said no. It was not because we did not have a relationship with the Mulroney government. I do not think it made any difference, quite frankly. The minister may want to reflect on the CF-18 fiasco, where we saw how it did not really matter, that this was a government that was not really that concerned about these sorts of things.

\* (1610)

Anyway, I think that is important to put on the record. I also think, by the way, the minister should be very careful what he says about the Northern Flood Agreement. It affects five bands, and right now sitting in this room we have MLAs representing all five bands. I represent five of those communities myself, and negotiations were ongoing under the Lyon government, under the Pawley government. There were numerous settlements made. In terms of the global settlement, the key stumbling block for many years continued to be the feeling of all five communities that basically there should not be an extinguishment of the Flood Agreement, that it should be recognized as a treaty, and with all due respect, that has not happened.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

If you talk to people in the communities, the deciding factor on signing the agreements has not been because of—and I do not mean to take this away from anybody departmentally, from Hydro or the government or the rest of it. It has not been because of any specific sort of magic wand or anything of that nature. It has been the simple fact that with the passage of time, many people have felt that this was maybe the only solution, the only way to go, not that they agreed with all the provisions, quite the opposite, but there was a concern that many of the elders who suffered the effects of the flooding were now passing away.

I say that because I personally on the record have given credit to the two previous ministers for their role in this and the government and the federal government and Manitoba Hydro and the people in Northern Affairs who played a key role in this. But that is very different, I believe, from somehow saying, well, look what a great job this government has been doing for aboriginal people.

I would say, with respect, travel even to those northern flood communities. In Nelson House, for example, I will tell you what they think of the Conservative government, and I say this not just as a political comment but as a reflection of the bitterness in that community. They actually went as far as to bar the Conservative candidate from visiting the community, the reserve, the Nelson House First Nation, during the election, and this is because, by the way, of comments made by the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

Now, whether you agree with that or not as a way of expressing concern, it is a reality and that is the situation. So I say before you say that, I think it is an accomplishment for the people, everyone who was involved, and I am not taking away from that. I am not going to try and get into an argument to suggest anything other than that. I would have liked to have seen it take place much earlier, but it is not because work was not done at that time either. I give everyone full credit, but signing the Northern Flood Agreement will have a significant impact in those communities, but even in those communities it has not taken away the bitterness towards many of the policies that the government has been implementing. That is five communities. It does not affect the Northern Affairs communities in those communities. It does not affect dozens of other communities, and you can use whatever definition of how many there are.

It is not that I do not want to dwell on the record, but I just want to list very quickly some of the reasons why we are a little bit cynical in northern Manitoba about the Conservatives. Well, actually more than a little bit cynical. I think if you consider the fact that the North has elected NDP MLAs since 1969, with one exception from 1977 to 1981, and someone I beat so I know of what I speak. In the last election in Thompson, the Conservative Party received the lowest vote it had received in 25 years, and, by the way, to put it in perspective, the Minister of Northern Affairs for much of that period was the Deputy Premier. Now this may shock some Conservatives, but the NDP candidate in Arthur-Virden got more votes than the Conservative candidate in Thompson did.

Southwest Manitoba—and the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) is here and he says there are not a lot of NDPers around in southwest Manitoba. He said that on the record, I remember one time. He says none but ah, gee there are even some in Turtle Mountain. I know some of them personally. You know, the point of which I am speaking is this government has a problem in northern Manitoba. People do not trust it. They do not support it. I want to read through the list of why. The minister talked about Access programs. You know, this government was so impressed by Access programs they cut them. I mean, yes, the federal government cut funding to Access, but you know what? They cut it more. They eliminated two Access

programs and, quite frankly, I appreciate what the minister has said about the impact of the Access programs. I take him very seriously personally when he made that comment about the engineering program. I would suggest though the best tribute to the Access programs would be to reinstate some of the funding.

Limestone Training, they wound that up. You know what they did? They moved the trades programs into KCC. You know what they did a year later? They cut them. Some very innovative things were done under Limestone Training and the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) was very directly involved with that in terms of apprenticeships. That died with Limestone Training. A good way, I believe, of putting in place some of the philosophy the minister was reflecting on.

New Careers, you know, they still have it on the books. They even announced it. The Minister responsible for the Status of Women—I was reading about women and it mentioned New Careers. You know, they are not going to let the title drop, but they have cut and cut and cut New Careers.

The bottom line is they cut the Northern Youth Corps. Now there was a federal funding component of that, I respect it, but no alternative program in place.

Housing has been turned over basically. There is very little social housing in place. I invite the minister personally to come to Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei. I believe he is probably going to be up for the opening of the hydro line, and I will take him personally if he wishes to visit some of the many people in Thicket Portage, Pikwitonei that I have come to know personally, and show him the housing conditions they live in. I do not mean that to blame him. I mean governments of all political stripes have to hear this and at all different levels. You know, significant things were done in housing under the NDP. That was one of our focuses; it has been cut back. It is a major problem.

Oh, I could spend a lot of time on northern highways but this is not the Highways Estimates. I will spend a lot of time in the Highways Estimates on the fact that is it not coincidence that since the Conservatives have been in power the amount they spend on construction in northern Manitoba has ranged from about 5 percent, I mean, they get really happy if it is 10 percent. Under

the NDP, it was as high as 23 to 24 percent. I do not know if it just a coincidence of how we vote in northern Manitoba. Who can forget the Minister of Northern Affairs talking a few years ago about how we do not vote the right way?

Friendship centres. The provincial money was cut entirely. I find it interesting because the minister at that time, I heard him say directly to the friendship centres the same thing that the minister currently is suggesting for MMF which is that they should set up membership fees. I can just see it. This may be the solution to the problems the MMF has that the minister is suggesting, you know, the MMF golf, country club and federation. To the minister. I want to take him to visit people, members of the MMF. I can tell you they do not have any money for membership fees. They barely have enough money to live on. Many live in abject poverty. Many are unemployed. To talk about membership fees, I believe, is totally unrealistic and the same way that he talked about investing in communities.

One of the best things that the NDP government did in the 1980s, I believe, in northern Manitoba and across Manitoba generally was the Community Places Program. They built a lot of community facilities. It took people who otherwise would have been unemployed, receiving UI, receiving welfare, and put them towards working for community assets. You know there was one problem. The problem in northern Manitoba was they did not have the matching contribution. They did not have the money to invest in their communities. When you are dealing with communities with 90 percent unemployment, I am sorry, there are not big savings accounts that you can just dip into. You can have all the bake sales you want in the world, and you cannot raise the money to build needed community facilities. So what we did is we said 100 percent funding in remote northern communities, recognizing that there was not a matching contribution.

One of the first things the Conservative government did when they came into office in 1989—I do not blame you for that personally—they cut the Community Places Program, and they eliminated the 100 percent contribution. [interjection] Eliminated. [interjection] Well, I can run through the list—MKO, the cuts that took place, you know, job creation. I am one who believes there is a role for job creation, particularly in remote



communities, particularly where, to the minister, you do not have a private sector. Many of the communities I represent have no business sector to rely on. The only store in a lot of communities is a northern store or perhaps a band store in others. You cannot go to the local Chamber of Commerce and talk like you just did. There is no Chamber of Commerce. There is no business community, and a lot of work has to be done and there used to be job creation programs. You know what I find amazing is—and, once again, it took people either on UI or on welfare and put them to work improving the community. I can take you into communities right now in northern Manitoba and point to things that were done 15, 20 years because of that kind of approach.

You cut welfare in northern Manitoba. I will tell you, you not only cut it for those under provincial jurisdiction, you cut it for those under federal jurisdiction because the federal Liberals automatically copy it, and that has taken even more money out of the communities. We could get into VLTs. I mean that is a huge drain on northern communities. This is a government that has done nothing on equal hydro rates even though a previous minister committed to that.

You sold off our phone company, and that is the only thing that has really kept us in the forefront in northern Manitoba in getting phone service. We have the best remote phone service in Canada because of the fact we had a publicly owned phone company. Parks—you announced several new parks in northern Manitoba. You forgot one thing. You did not consult with aboriginal people in the area. Speaking of existing parks, you increased our fees 90 percent for seasonal campers in Thompson. Now is it not just a coincidence the North got hit the hardest again, 90 percent in one year? That was very popular, I might add. By the way, if that could be recorded in Hansard with a slight emphasis on it because, believe you me, there were a lot of angry people on that.

\* (1620)

Hospitals. I mean the hardest hit by cuts in the province were Thompson, The Pas and Flin Flon. Where are they all located?—northern Manitoba. What was the hardest hit school district in terms of education funding cuts?—the School District of Mystery Lake.

Guess where that is located?—in northern Manitoba. Oh, you came up with that \$50 user fee for Northern Patient Transportation. I remember—and I know the former Chair who stepped down now, the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer)—I remember when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) got up and said, well, the people in Gimli faced the same problem. Yes, Gimli is what?—a one-hour drive to Winnipeg. From my community that I live in it is eight hours. You have people who have to pay this fee where there is no road.

**Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas):** They have no idea.

**Mr. Ashton:** Believe you me, as the member for The Pas says, you have no idea.

In terms of medical care, many communities have no doctor, period; no access, and they still have to pay this fee. Many of the Northern Affairs communities, even the larger communities like Wabowden have no medical visits, no doctor visits. I have been suggesting—and I will throw this out to the minister again, that this is something that can and should be done. In remote communities, in terms of reserves, Medical Services now with a transfer to aboriginal self-government are providing those doctors' visits. I believe this is something that needs to be done because there are people who are suffering as a result.

Even in the Department of Northern Affairs, we have had an 18 percent cut in staff since 1993-94. I know some of those people personally, by the way. It is interesting the minister talked about aboriginal staff because it has been aboriginal staff that have been cut as well. It does not make any difference in the end, those that were cut. I know it was tough on staff in that building and tough on the people who had to make those decisions, and, by the way, it is not because of any devolution. We can get into the discussion about The Pas. I am talking about people in providing line service; people in very difficult circumstances; one person I know who faces some real challenges personally who was cut.

So the Northern Affairs has been cut. We could get into AJI; we could get into the royal commission, the Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission. They spend \$1 million—this was a big announcement in 1990. Now I would suggest that

anybody who doubts whether anything has been done with this, talk to the people who did the studies and that were part of the Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission. They are very disappointed in the fact that virtually nothing has been done with it.

Oh, I heard the former minister today, well we have acted on TLE. Read the document; read the action plan. We get criticized sometimes in opposition, and we get criticized in the North for complaining. I know that we do not have a lot to complain about, but this is one time where we all worked together. I was at every meeting that was held in Thompson. I participated in the workshops; I gave a detailed presentation. We all did. We believed that this was a prospect for doing it. I believe it is a blueprint for northern Manitoba. I believe it could have been used to do a lot of things. I think it still is relevant, and I am willing to work with the minister anytime and anybody in the department.

What you need is a commitment from the government to act on it. What I would suggest to the minister should be done with things like that is send it to every department and say, within six months we want a response from every department of government on how they are going to respond to the recommendations of the Northern Manitoba Economic Development Commission. That is how you get action. You do not take the study and put it on the bookshelves. You say to departments, this is real. We spent a million dollars on it; we want action.

I could go on at quite some length, but I want to stop at that point. I can list further things why we are frustrated in northern Manitoba, but I want to go one step further. I want to kind of reverse it a bit here and get focused in on some of the needs in northern Manitoba. I will give the minister credit for one thing. From the comments I have heard thus far, I do not think he necessarily fully understands the situation. I do not mean that as a shot. I just mean that I do not think he has had the exposure to that yet, but I think he has some sense of what is happening in northern Manitoba.

He has made some effort to travel thus far. That is appreciated. I know it is difficult being from another part of the province to put yourself in those shoes, but I want to suggest to the minister what he has to start with is understand this is not the city of Winnipeg we

are talking about. There is no business community; there is nothing to invest; people do not have money for membership fees. In many cases you are dealing with major poverty. And do not underestimate the strength of those communities. I believe there is a lot of inner strength in those communities, and there is a lot of reawakening that is happening in many northern communities.

You know, I believe you have to give people the tools to do the job. Education and training, absolutely. You have got to make that available. That is the key to the future, job creation. I can take you to Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei right now. The grandparents worked on the rail line for 30 years; the parents worked for 15 years and were laid off; the kids are unemployed. I said kids, adults now.

It is important in those communities to give them access to jobs, any exposure to the workplace. I agree with you, I say this through you, Mr. Chairperson, to the minister, on one thing. By the way, when we criticize minimum-wage jobs, we are criticizing the wage, not the job. We are definitely not criticizing the person that is in there, although I say to the minister most people in minimum-wage jobs often criticize the wage too. You know many people do not even have access to that.

I think young people need work experience. I want to suggest we revive the Northern Youth Corps. It was not expensive, and I think that is important. To the minister, what we need to do is invest at this point in time. You mentioned about the deficit. I can say this right now, and I will say it on the record, and I will say it directly to the minister, my constituents, especially the constituents who live in remote communities, could not care less about your deficit because on a daily basis they face their own deficit. They do not have enough. They do not have work. They do not have enough financial resources. In many cases they do not have enough to eat properly. That is a deficit that is far more real for them than the provincial deficit is. I am not trying to underplay the financial situation that any government is faced with. I am just saying that is the reality.

I will tell you, you can throw all the money you want into the provincial deficit and talk about—I believed you

talked about a long-term economic strategy. Until you treat the root causes of what is happening in northern Manitoba through education and training, through business development, through job creation in those communities, balancing your books is not going to balance the books of people in northern Manitoba. Unfortunately, this seems to be a direct relation, and every time government says tough decisions have to be made, you know where those decisions are made, whose expense they are made from, the ones who are having the difficulty balancing their own books.

I say it is time to invest in northern Manitoba. By the way, I know people who will say, oh, that is being a spendthrift. I have a suggestion on where we get that money from, from some of the resources that come from northern Manitoba. You are the Minister responsible for Hydro, through you, Mr. Chairperson. The minister is responsible for Hydro. You know how much money Manitoba Hydro makes from northern Manitoba. You also know how much money northern Manitoba contributes through the low hydro rates that we all benefit from as Manitobans.

I can take you to forestry and mining. It is interesting because every time there is a boom in the mining industry, outside of the companies and to some extent the employees, the biggest beneficiary is government. We had this big debate over the books in 1989. The books would have been balanced if the NDP government had not been defeated and would have been balanced in 1989 if the government had not transferred it to the rainy day fund.

You know why that happened—[interjection] Well, it is true. You are saying the Auditor is wrong?

**An Honourable Member:** I am saying the budget that was defeated was not a balanced budget.

**Mr. Ashton:** This is the game the minister plays, because you do two things when you sit down as a government. One is you come up with a budget. That is how much you think you are going to spend. The actual amount of money that is spent—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. I would like any members of this committee who have the floor to put their comments through the Chair. I would also ask all

members, while other members have the floor, to try to refrain from talking to them.

**Mr. Ashton:** Through you, Mr. Chairperson, I just want to let the—and this is why Conservatives are good at coming up with budgets that mean nothing. Most of their budgets, probably to the last year or two, have been way, way off in terms of the end result, in terms of the deficit. What the minister plays the game with is, and what he does not listen to, and I wish he would show the integrity to listen because what would have happened, the actual expenditures in 1988-89, whether the NDP remained in government or under the Conservatives, if it had not been for the transfer to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, would have been a surplus. My point was, do you know why?

\* (1630)

We fight over which party deserves credit for it. I will tell. You know who really deserves credit for it?—the mining industry. The mining industry, because in that year alone I believe mining revenues were \$130 million. So what happened with that \$130 million? It went into the actual books of the government. It got netted out in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and then just conveniently, when the government wants to put it back in, it puts it back in. Not into services in northern Manitoba, but where does it put the funding back in, right into general revenues and just sort of coincidentally at times when the government wants to make the books look like they are balanced, whether they are or not.

Money comes out of northern Manitoba on a daily basis to that. I will not get into the amount of taxes that people pay in northern Manitoba. If you work in the mining industry you are paid a wage that is somewhat higher than average, certainly. The last job I had before I was elected as an MLA was working underground. If anybody thinks that getting an MLA's salary is some big increase, I remember I looked at my first pay cheque after I got elected and of course you do not get a bonus if you work as an MLA—too bad, after the six-hour speech I gave in the last session, I probably would have benefitted from that—but you do not get paid bonus and your basic rate is not any higher. So I know that. I say that in respect, because I think miners deserve that, I believe people in my community who risk their lives in many ways—and I only worked briefly underground. I

am not trying to say I was a career miner and that was the amazing part. As a relatively new employee underground, I was making more than I did as an MLA, but we pay a lot of taxes, too. You know what people want?

**Mr. Newman:** How many days?

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, to the minister, how many days. He and the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews) seem to have this idea about who has worked at real jobs and who has not. I can tell you, I do not know how long he has worked underground, but I worked significantly longer underground and at Inco in the plant than that minister ever did, Mr. Chairperson. I, by the way, think that he probably worked at a real job before in his previous job as a school principal, and I find the lack of respect shown by members for something of that nature is absolutely absurd.

My point is that northern Manitoba is an asset to this province, and it is time that money was reinvested. In that spirit, I want to ask the minister some questions. I want to focus on the Northern Affairs communities for a moment, because that is the direct jurisdiction of the Department of Northern Affairs. There are communities—and I am pleased to see some are receiving sewer and water in the last few years.

I want to ask the minister: How many Northern Affairs communities have either only partial or no sewer and water? By the way, I will list these questions so if there is a detailed response, I am quite willing to take them back in writing. I would appreciate this. What the current approved capital schedule is for those communities in terms of sewer and water. If the minister could indicate any of the capital schedule for other capital items in Northern Affairs communities and if there is any long-term target in terms of providing sewer and water for the Northern Affairs communities over a period of time.

I also want to deal in terms of—and this is by way of notice more because I recognize again that they are fairly detailed questions. I wonder if we could get an update in terms of the status of Northern Affairs communities in terms of degree of autonomy, any changes that have taken place, any changes that are contemplated. Another question I would like to put on the record, too, is many concerns have been expressed

by employees of Northern Affairs communities about the northern tax allowance which civil servants receive, if there has been any consideration to adjusting that, if there has been any review of some of the per diems that are paid by Northern Affairs, whether that has been upgraded according to civil servant standards because I know that is a concern as well.

I want to ask the minister—and I appreciate, by the way, that I made a lot of comments he may wish to respond to of a more political nature—but if the minister could give us some sense of where he as a minister would like to see us go over the next several years. I know, for example, we have the infrastructure program that we have sort of renounced again. I have always thought that was a great opportunity for us in northern Manitoba with a lot of needs, but are there areas which he is specifically targeting whether it be sewer and water, other community infrastructure needs. He has mentioned community autonomy a number of times. I assume he is talking about greater autonomy of communities, but I also want—to be fair to the minister after he has responded to some of the more political comments—wonder if he could give us some sense of where he sees this department going and I recognize—but just to finish my comments—that the minister is new. To be fair to the minister, I do not expect a detailed answer.

I just want to finish on one note and that is, that I am really serious about inviting the minister to the communities. I do not mean just in a formal way. I can take him, and I think any member from the North can take him into communities that will really open his eyes. I do not mean that as a shot; I just mean to circumstances that people have to face on a daily basis. That is an open invitation, and I hope the minister will be able to take me up on it.

**Mr. Newman:** Thanks very much for the invitation. I intend to spend as much time as possible in the North when I am able to get away from the Legislature from time to time. I want to do more than just play a ceremonial role, so any opportunity to get to know situations which you hold out as examples of greatest need will be welcomed.

Generally, with respect to the political statements and the second listing today of the kinds of issues which

your party and you, as northern representatives, believe have been negatively affected in the North, so much of what you say reflects what has become obvious to me are different philosophies.

When I came into the Legislature, I was very conscious of the damage to what I called in the nonpolitical world the ecosystem of employment, and I have referred to that a number of times in my speeches in the Legislature. I chose the word very carefully when I used it many years ago because the effective working of a qualified marketplace, like we have in Manitoba and is now respected around the world, is dependent on a very intelligent and sensitive understanding by governments of what makes that system function, and with the best of intentions sometimes you can, in well-meaning ways, get involved with programs and get involved with interfering with the workings of that system and find out down the road that you have done far more harm than good.

Unfortunately, taking nothing away from the good intentions of the NDP government of the past, my conclusion was, and the reason why I am in this party and not in any other party is that you were going about it the wrong way, and you, with the best of intentions, in trying to support mining did such serious damage to, I would submit, mining in the province of Manitoba that we are spending energies to try and reinvolve companies that had bad experiences in this province under the NDP government or bad experiences in Saskatchewan under an NDP government, just a lack of appreciation for the way business functions on a world scale in a competitive marketplace.

\* (1640)

The approach that we take to the mining industry and the approach we take to aboriginal people, when we talk partnership, we mean that in terms of a trusting kind of relationship moving towards certain shared goals. We monitor very closely, for example, when we provide an incentive to a mining company to do business in the province, do exploration and hopefully find a mine.

We look at what they contribute to the economy of the province and also look at what they contribute to the environment of the province. We expect

sustainable development approaches to the environment. We expect taxes to be paid for the benefit of Manitobans, and we see to what extent they do make that kind of contribution. As a result, we know the tremendous importance of Inco and Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting as major players in relation to Flin Flon and Thompson and all of the people that are employed by them, all the people that supply huge construction projects, that they are for the benefit of Manitobans, underground construction projects in magnificent ways, really, and all of the smaller exploration companies that take risks and come here, and the big ones that take risks and invest. They are doing it because they feel safe. They feel that we have a stable government that understands how they function. We understand the constraints that they are under, and we understand their needs and their aspirations. We also understand them well enough that, hopefully, we never get fooled by them because they are smart people, and they are accountable to shareholders and creditors and sometimes bosses in other countries in the world. But we hope that we understand them well enough that we know when their interests are different from the people of Manitoba, and we protect the interests of the people in Manitoba. But those kinds of relationships are very important and we work at them.

In terms of the forestry industry, the same kind of thing, the fishing industry, trapping. I mean all of those things are part of the ecosystem of employment, and we believe that our appreciation for basic entrepreneurship will enhance the development of those resource-based industries in the North. In the same way, our partnership with the aboriginal people, we are really struggling as a government with our Native Affairs Secretariat and people throughout government and through our civil servant staff and our Northern Affairs department through our leaders, Oliver and Harvey, and many others who have an appreciation, as you pointed out, for the life in the North, the cultures, the aboriginal people in the North.

We are very, very sensitive to the special characteristics of living in the northern communities. In our partnership we want to have the same level of knowledge and sensitivity that we do when dealing with other peoples and organizations. So this understanding of the way nongovernmental groups function will

contribute to our effective policymaking and programs. I happen to think that what the NDP tried to do in the past, as I say with the best of intentions, is not even consistent with what I believe is the essence of the northern value systems, where they value more than anywhere else in the province, I believe, pride themselves in self-reliance and they look for holistic solutions and they do not want handouts. They want to fulfill their own visions. They want empowerment as individuals and communities.

I believe that is consistent with the values of the party I am part of and, I believe, our policies. Sometimes as challenging as they appear to be to individuals and communities are the ones that are going to be of lasting benefit and are going to be respected greatly over time. We are challenging people and we are going to work with them in partnership ways to help them fulfill themselves in their own life plans and in their community plans, but we have to resist the temptation to in effect control the process, to think that we have the answers, we have the solutions for them. They have to, with our help, determine them for themselves.

Then we have to resist the temptation to interfere too much because things are not moving fast enough. We are there to nurture and support, not to control, even though we all have that temptation to jump right in there and we have the answers. I emphasize we have to be very patient, but we have to be persistent.

Someone, I think it was the honourable member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) who said the other day, they are going to make mistakes in the process. No question about that. It was very interesting, one of the questions asked was about South Indian Lake, and that was when they had the water line problem. One thing that I did not find out until after I had answered the question, and some time had gone by and it came to me from the community, was that one of the causes of the problem with the water system had nothing to do with the physical plant, but it had everything to do with maybe the training, the checklist, the experience, the diligence of the people in the community who were responsible for maintenance. The filter, as I understood it, had become plugged and that was a contributing factor.

So those things will happen, but in the learning process hopefully they happen once and not again.

That is how that could be a justification for, well, why do we hand these things off to people in the community. That is because we think that is the answer and we believe the communities think that is the answer.

I know we are running out of time so I am just going to hit a few highlights. First of all, I undertake to provide specific answers and take as notice the information requested by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). I will get you in written form the information requested.

\* (1650)

I wanted to say to the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) that pursuant to our discussion yesterday I have done a letter. The information is about the Shamattawa hydro poles. My understanding was that the honourable member for Rupertsland has decided to write to the associate regional director, General Lorne Cochrane on the issue and not to the M.P. for the area, and accordingly, since he has done that letter on his own, what I did was write a letter to the Honourable Ron Irwin requesting special consideration for that community as we had discussed. So you should have a copy. I will give you a copy of this letter for your records.

As indicated yesterday, and I indicate to the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) that I see my role certainly to offer co-ordination, collaboration on aboriginal issues. I see you elected representatives in the North as being service providers to communities. They have an enormous geographical area to represent collectively. I will work collaboratively with you, and no matter what you say and no matter what criticism you give, I know you are just doing your job. I intend to treat it that way. But to the extent that we cannot constructively for the benefit of individuals or the northern community on specific issues—you will always have my co-operation and the co-operation of my staff. I think you already know that, because you have an ongoing and good relationship with the long-time members of my department, and that will continue under my ministry.

I will table that letter, if I may, for the record that I passed on concerning Shamattawa.

**Mr. Eric Robison (Rupert's Land):** I believe that we can complete this department in the next few minutes since I understand that the minister is going to be travelling out of province this evening.

I do believe we left off yesterday on a matter concerning Jackhead, and I understand that the letter has been done and there is one forthcoming. I do not have that letter yet. There is one quick question I would like to ask the minister, Mr. Chairperson, through you, and that is The Manitoba provincial-municipal tax cost sharing act which comes from Finance ultimately to the Department of Rural Development and then to Northern Affairs, and that is of course divided up to First Nations communities and other native communities in Manitoba. I did write a letter with respect to that very recently, and perhaps the minister is unable to answer my question at this point in time, but certainly I look forward to a response either by letter or other way of communication in the next little while.

**Mr. Newman:** Yes, I will commit to that. We will get you that answer.

**Mr. Robison:** I do believe that my colleague, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), does have some concluding remarks, but before he does that, I just wanted to say that this morning the member for The Pas and I were in Thompson and joined a hundred other aboriginal people from different northern communities including Nelson House, Split Lake, York Landing, and God's River in a day of protest that is occurring across this country. Now this day of protest, of course, or day of action is not to create violence or not to try and cause any disruption to other people that share this land with the First Nations now, but simply to bring to the attention of this country and Manitobans generally the inequities that do exist in our society. Yes, I am grateful for the minister for naming off role models, John Kim Bell and others. We are familiar with these people. On the other hand, we realize that there is human suffering occurring in our own backyards. I do not think we ought to look too far.

I do look forward to a working relationship with the minister and his staff and his deputy minister. I know a couple of them certainly come from a similar environment that the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin)

and I do, and perhaps at a given point they will gain a better understanding about the realities of aboriginal people and the realities that they are faced with each and every day. We have said it over and over again—alcoholism abuse, drugs, solvent abuse, all these negative things that are occurring. In the meantime, yes, there are good things; on the other hand, the majority of our people are still suffering, and it is tough to say that our people are living in third world countries. In the meantime, many of the resources are being extracted from northern communities at the expense of our people and at the expense, I might add, that comes in the way of higher hydro rates than the rest of Manitoba. There are arguments to that in the meantime, but how do you justify and how do you explain that to an 80-year-old person that has a \$400 hydro bill for one month. So it is very hard.

At the same time, we have 10 people in the community of Garden Hill who are suffering from diabetes, that have been relocated to the city of Winnipeg and away from their families, away from their grandchildren, and we believe that it makes all the sense in the world that we have a dialysis machine located in that community, which has a catchment area of roughly 7,000 people.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples calls on our provincial governments to work with our First Nations leadership, the federal government, much as the AJI does, and we will again, through persistence, as we are known for as aboriginal people particularly, continue to knock on the minister's door. At a given point, I am quite hopeful that the minister, in time, will see things our way, because he may differ with us on a few minor matters, but on the other hand, I think that he is a reasonable person and many times I think he is sitting on the wrong side of the House.

**An Honourable Member:** I would not go that far.

**Mr. Robison:** Well, that is my feeling, in spite of what the feelings may be in different parts of this room.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairperson, we are prepared to complete this department at this time, unless my colleague the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) does have an opportunity to put a few words on record as well. There are many outstanding issues I will be

pursuing with the minister, and hopefully his deputy minister can undergo this education process with us on aboriginal issues, including other members of his staff as well.

**Mr. Lathlin:** Very quickly, Mr. Chairperson, I just want to make sure that nobody in this room leaves today thinking that all is well in the aboriginal community. I know that the minister, much like the previous minister, sits there and he lists all of these accomplishments, you know, that he sees, and I agree with him there are accomplishments there. I do not have any problem with that, but at the same time, like my colleague for Rupertsland says there is a lot work to be done yet. So I am sorry if I am not as enthusiastic and jumping up and down as the minister is, because I know the reality that exists out there in the aboriginal community.

Also, when he talks about the communities, social services rate cuts, for example, okay, one of the policies says, I think, that they ought to visit 10 employers. Well, if you go to a place like Moose Lake, you know you are lucky if you find three employers. You know, to me, that shows how much people understand. I do not mean to be negative, but sometimes I feel people are condescending when we are speaking here. Yet I know that they do not understand at all.

The minister says we do not want to tell you guys what to do, you know, so, therefore, we need to work in partnership. Well, I recall a meeting in Thompson that was held, hosted by the City of Thompson, I think, and MKO, where the previous Minister of Northern Affairs was, and I was listening to him on radio driving in on a Sunday evening, where he said, you know, you guys make up your minds what you want to do. After the meeting everybody made up their minds what they were going to do, but nothing happened.

The Northern Economic Development Commission—even before, when I was still chief when I used to first hear about it. Then I got elected in 1990. We went through another election, and I heard about it and nothing happened.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The time being five o'clock, committee rise.

\* (1430)

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau):** Good afternoon. Would the Committee of Supply come to order, please. This section of the Committee of Supply has been dealing with Estimates of the Department of Agriculture. Would the minister's staff please enter the Chamber at this time.

We are on Resolution 3.3 Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation. Administration \$3,086,100.

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture):** Allow me just a few introductions. We have joining our deputy minister the chief executive officer and general manager, Gill Shaw; Karen McEachen, director of Finance and Administration; and Ms. Charlene Kibbins, director of Program Development. I want to just briefly indicate to members of the committee that it has been and is a busy year for the corporation with activities virtually running full steam in all the programs that they deliver, including the traditional loan portfolios that they afford and offer to Manitobans.

In addition, of course, there are some of the specialty programs, particularly those in livestock, that are becoming more and more part of the corporation's business venue. I will acknowledge prior to the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), as my critic, to say that when dealing in the business the corporation is in, we do take risks, and we do have and suffer some losses from time to time. No doubt the honourable member will want to raise some of those issues.

In consideration of the size of the portfolio, just in short discussion with Mr. Shaw this morning, we are probably loaning out monies to the extent of some \$40 million in the year. Is that not close, within the ballpark? The incidents of loss or failures is extremely small and low and certainly well within the acceptable range of financial institutions, be they private or government.

So, with those few comments, I invite the honourable member's scrutiny of this division of the Department of Agriculture.



**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** I want to tell the minister that as I talk to farmers across the province about the Agricultural Credit Corporation, that most of the producers I have talked to have been very happy with the service that they have gotten from this department. There will always be those people when they get into difficulties who will have problems and, of course, there will have to be somebody to blame for the problems and in those times the corporation does come under criticism. When I have talked to people who are using the service, they have been happy with the service. Occasionally, there is a comment that it takes a while to get loans processed.

I guess there are a few general questions that I would like if I could have explanation on, one of them being: How would the minister describe the change in the direction of the corporation's lending? For example, one area that I want to ask about is, there used to be a long term lending program where farmers could borrow money over a long period of time. Has there been a change in policy in that area, and are there still long-term loans available, or has that policy of the corporation changed?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, no, there has been no basic or fundamental change to what I would describe as the bulk of the loans activity of the corporation. The long-term loans are still made available to farmers in the province of Manitoba. We still offer some encouragement to the young farmer who does business with the corporation in the form of a 2 percent reduction from the normal lending rate of the corporation, which admittedly is less than the 4 percent it was several years ago, but nonetheless it still is of significance. When taken over the period of 10 years, I believe, of the loan—five years of the loan, it can be a significant amount.

The honourable member may recall several years ago we did make some adjustments as adjustments have been made from time to time. We have expanded the limits of the loans. We have expanded such considerations as off-farm income in the past. We are not doing it now; this was done several years ago. We recognize that, in different circumstances, individuals, particularly young start-up farmers, have to have off-farm income to get started in the farming business. So where there were previously fairly restrictive provisions

in dollar amounts as to what would disqualify an applicant from successfully obtaining credit from the corporation, those have been raised.

There has been, I think as well, some new emphasis placed in some of the ancillary programs, like our guarantee program where the corporation has wrestled with some of its traditional mandate, which as our honourable member would be well aware, was fairly restrictive. You had to be a farmer. You had to qualify under the criteria of what the Income Tax Act calls a farmer to be able to do business with the corporation, or for the corporation to do business with somebody.

What of course is happening, and particularly in the livestock area and predominantly in pork production, we are finding the coming together of the association of two, three, or four, five parties that form a group, an entity, and the corporation has had to make adjustments to their traditional mandate to enable us to do business with them and provide the guarantee portion of the program that we announced two years ago under the diversification program.

Those minor adjustments have been made, but to answer the honourable member's question, the program that is being offered is essentially the same with these few changes that I have indicated.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, the corporation, from time to time, ends up repossessing land and holding a fair amount of it. There was a lease-back policy where you could get long-term lease-backs until the farmer got on to his feet, but as I look at Orders-in-Council, I see many more pieces of property in the possession of MACC now being sold back. Is it a change of policy that farmers have to take back the land sooner instead of having the long-term lease program to land that they were farming but had to have repossessed? Has there been a change in policy in the length of time that they can lease it? Is there pressure on the farmers to purchase the land at a sooner rate than it used to be?

\* (1440)

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, we are continuing to try to work with producers who, for whatever reasons, find themselves in difficulty. There are several support

programs in place. The Farm Mediation Board works with the individual farmers who find themselves in difficult financial situations, will often work with MACC and/or with private lenders to bring about a situation that enables the producer to carry on with his farming venture.

I am advised by staff that we will, and we still continue that program that, if indeed foreclosure is called for, the person is still offered the opportunity of a lease-back, with the provisions, I might add, if certain conditions are met, that he can purchase that land at some point in time in the tenure of that lease. Some of the Orders-in-Council that the honourable member refers to that she sees are in fact short term or lessees of Manitoba agricultural land taking up the option to purchase the land. There is a procedure in place. There are independent appraisals of these lands that are made, and if the lessor wants to lease those lands, then those lands are offered up for sale.

I can indicate just for the record what has been happening, and I am pleased to report that the incidence of foreclosures is going in the right direction. For instance, in 1992-93 the corporation foreclosed on some 39 property owners, farmers, and that has steadily decreased. In '93-94 it was 26; in '94-95, there were 20 foreclosures; had a little blurb in '95-96, some 21 foreclosures; and in '96-97 it is 15 foreclosures. So as serious as that always is to the individual farm family involved, the trend line is going the right way and the numbers are not great.

We are, further to her questions, actively as a corporation encouraging the sale, the purchase of these lands. For instance, we made a special provision—if I am not right, I am looking at my senior officers—that for instance in the manner, in the way the Crow benefit was paid back that in fact favoured the lessor to use those monies that kind of came unexpectedly from Ottawa to purchase his land.

Mr. Chairman, that accounts for some of the flurry or some of the additional flurry of land sales that occurred in the last part of this year, and we quite frankly, from our philosophical position, welcome that. While I have nothing but the greatest of respect for the general manager of the Agricultural Credit Corporation and his

staff, I do not necessarily see them as being the largest landholders in the province of Manitoba. So I make no secret of the fact that we encourage the corporation to sell off the land that they do hold, and that has also happened. From the time that I came back into Agriculture in 1993, the corporation had title to very close to 100,000, 112,000 acres of land. That has steadily progressed. Last year the actual figures show that the corporation still had some 66,461 acres of land that were valued at some \$12.6 million under their title. This year that has been further reduced to 46,888 acres or \$8-million worth of land.

So the hope is, quite frankly, that the Manitoba Agricultural Corporation does what it does best—help with providing agricultural credit, particularly to our start-up farmers or some of the farmers that are having difficulty in getting a line of credit from the traditional private sector, you know, credit lending agencies. They come to us and hopefully we can help them, but I do not see them as a vehicle to garner more and more title of agricultural land and, in effect, create more and more tenants of our Manitoba farmers. I hold the view that a farmer and a farm family put their best efforts into the stewardship, husbanding of the land resources. If they have a full and direct interest that can only be gained when they own the land.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, many times there are farm families who get into situations where they are not able to own the land and it does end up with a bank, and in this case with Manitoba Credit Corporation. What I was wanting to know from the minister is: What kind of pressure is put on farmers to purchase the land? Is the length of time lessened? If they have had a foreclosure, can they lease the land for five or 10 years or four years or is pressure put on them after a few years that they have to buy the land or it is sold to a neighbour or someone else who has an interest in it? Because, if that is what is happening, that indeed is not helping the farmers who face difficulty. I understand that there are occasions when that is what happens, that the length of time that they are able to lease the property has shortened and pressure is put on families to purchase this land or else let it go to someone else.

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, the staff advises me that they have an opportunity to lease the land for a five-

year period, and during that five-year period they have an opportunity to make arrangements to purchase it, if that is their will. They have a further opportunity to extend that five years by another three years to eight years, but during that last three years they have to be making arrangements to in fact purchase the land, begin some payments with respect to the purchasing of the land.

So, Mr. Chairman, yes, I suppose that could be described as some form of inducement or pressure, if you like. That can be viewed either way though. If the tenant is not happy with those terms, then there are, of course, numerous other opportunities for renting of farmland. We have a number of producers, particularly as the member is aware of, with some of the changes in farmlands ownership where we have people not necessarily farming the land, but renting out portions of the land. But the policy direction is to ownership.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** So is it that change in policy direction that has resulted in the lowering of the number of acres that are under the ownership of MACC? You have seen a reduction of over 50 percent since 1993 in the amount of land that is owned. Is it this policy that is a result of this?

If it is the policy that has resulted in this, I would have to say to the minister that in cases where I have talked to people about this one, this policy has put tremendous pressure on people. Many times young families have land that their families have farmed for long periods of time, but because of financial difficulties they have had to let the land go. They still want to be operating that land and make a living and be active members of the community, but the pressure that has been put on them because of this change of policy has created difficulties for a lot of people and problems within communities where a family may have been operating the land for some time but, of course, the neighbour is interested in it as well. It goes up for sale and does put tremendous amount of pressure on families.

\* (1450)

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, I stand to be corrected. I was not totally correct in my previous answer. The corporation does continue to provide long-term leases

to those who choose to work under them, leases that run to the age of 65, and at which time they are then given preferential status to transfer that lease to a family member, if it can be established, to maintain continuity of family farming. We have 34 such long-term leases, not to be confused with what I was talking about earlier, the short-term, five-year lease. The short-term, five-year lease is a design to bring about, within the five years or extended perhaps to eight years, a resolution to the ownership question of that land. The party has within those eight years, if you like, time—and is in fact in a favoured position—to purchase that land. Very often this is the kind of situation where there has been a difficulty of foreclosure, something that has been arranged with the Mediation Board and so forth.

So there are, in fact, two types of lease programs that are being offered by the corporation. One is the long-term lease of which there are 34 involving some 13,646 acres, and we have currently on the books some 88 of the shorter term, five-year leases involving some 28,785 acres. So I would have to say, to answer the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) more correctly, that there has really not been any great change in these policies.

What has happened, and that has happened not so much by any direction coming from the corporation or ourselves, is that there has been, obviously, a willingness on the part of more of the tenants to purchase their land. They have been given assistance with the payouts of the Crow benefit coming to them; a number of them took advantage of that. I would like to think that even just a somewhat healthier scene financially and some of the commodity prices have helped that along, and that explains the downward revision of the land controlled by the corporation.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Is it not true, though, that a person cannot sign a long-term lease now? The long-term leases were from years gone by. The policy of this government at the present time is that the corporation right now is not to sign long-term leases. Anyone who has to lease their land has to do it for five or eight years, and if they cannot manage to purchase it, then it does go up for sale. This does indeed put pressure on those producers. So I would ask the minister: when was the last time a long-term lease was signed?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairperson, that probably would date to that period of enlightenment when the good people of Manitoba chose to vote for a Conservative government. There was a sudden change in philosophy, and I come by it honestly. I saw that tenant farming or collective farming in that great and beautiful country which I still fondly call my homeland, the Ukraine in southern Russia, did not work, has not worked for 70 years. My friends opposite have not quite cottoned on to that.

There was a deliberate policy to encourage tenant farming under the New Democratic Party governments. In fact, I should not say this because they think that I am spying on them, but I actually got one of their resolution books from one of their earlier conventions in the early '70s that said that farmland should be treated as a public utility; the government should confiscate all Manitoba farmland for \$1 an acre, and it should be run by the Department of Agriculture through organizations like the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation. I can recall somebody who is now my friend—you know, this is what happens when you travel on the road to Damascus and you make a sudden conversion—it was none other than your friend, my friend Sam Uskiw, who was then the Minister of Agriculture, a very energetic Minister of Agriculture for the then government, who proposed some of those options in the House.

As I am free to acknowledge as a democrat, that government is free to carry out and one would hope they would carry out principles that they stand for. They actively pursued and they actively directed the corporation to offer the lease option program. It was during that tenure of the corporation's life that very significant acres of land came into the possession of the corporation.

That is just a bit of history that I put on the record for your benefit. You were blissfully unaware of all these things happening at that time in Manitoba politics, and it is not the time to berate or to talk about those policies in the past, but the minister has persisted in asking a question, is there a change of policy, is there a change of direction. And there has been and I, in my own little style, am explaining, yes, there has been a fundamental change of policy that reflects the policy of this government that does not see the credit corporation

as being the holder of significant amounts of agricultural land. We believe very strongly that our farm community agriculture is best served by independent free-standing farm families living on their own land. The corporation offers a variety of programs to assist them to get to that goal.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I am glad Mr. Enns indicated this change of policy and he gave us some background information about NDP convention books, and I bet if we look back at some Conservative convention books we would see in those books that we will never privatize Manitoba Telephone and we will never privatize Hydro. As in all convention books, we see some very good resolutions, and it is good for people to have broad ideas. It does not necessarily mean that these are adopted as policy, and the minister would look at his own party because I am sure there are some resolutions in their convention book, if they have resolutions at their convention. I am not sure that they do, but at our conventions we have a very open discussion, and people are allowed to bring their thoughts to the floor and very democratically we decide whether or not they should be policy or not. That is the way our conventions work, and that is how resolutions get into our books.

The minister talks about changing policy, and as a result of this change of policy I want to ask the minister—because I believe we should be all working for what is best to keep the people on the farm and I know that this change in policy that they have made has caused hardship for some families. I wonder whether the minister could indicate whether the corporation can give any indication of how many farmers who were leasing land but, because of this change of policy, were then forced to consider buying it, were put out of the business of farming.

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, staff advises me that there has been no such circumstance, certainly not one created by the corporation, that would put a long-term lessee in that position—[interjection] No, I am answering her question correctly. She is asking, because of the change of policy, how many people have been impacted by that. We have grandfathered, we have honoured all the long-term lessees that were signed in previous times.

What has happened is, and that accounts for the, admittedly, fairly dramatically change in acreage, that it has been attractive for people to buy the land, and it has been pointed out to me by my director that one of the reasons, of course, is the attractive interest rates that we currently enjoy. Now is a good time. Just as it is a good time for our city cousins to buy homes and things like that, it is a good time to take out a mortgage at these kinds of interest rates, you know, particularly when we have come through a cycle where we have seen double digits, 17, 18, 19, 20 percent interest rates. That is what drove not just farmers, that is what drove small businesses, that is what drove a lot of people off their land, out of their businesses and off the farms.

\* (1500)

So what we have done here is we have grandfathered all those people that had long-term leases, and I just repeat what I said a little while ago. We cannot, and we are not forcing any change on them. We are not putting any pressure on them to buy the land. They can lease that land as the original terms of the lease provided. They have that land until age 65 and then they can transfer it, still in lease—they do not have to sell it—transfer it to a family member. So I think that you cannot point to a single incident, we cannot point to a single incident, where this changed policy, which I acknowledge, has resulted in a long-term lessee facing the option either buy the land or I lose the land. That has not been the case.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, either I did not state myself clearly or the minister did not understand my question. I was talking about the new policy that requires a person to, after five or eight years, purchase the land. I am looking at that one. I recognize that is much more attractive to purchase land now when interest rates are lower, and I am very pleased for people who can purchase the land.

What I am asking about is, you have had a change of policy that says you can lease this land for five years and get an extension for eight years, but there are still situations where those people cannot buy that land. What I am asking for is, does the corporation have any tracking on how many producers there are, how many farm families, who were forced into a situation where they had to let their land go due to foreclosure, then

were in the situation where the land could only be leased for a short term? Has that resulted in people having to go out of business and let their farm operations go?

**Mr. Enns:** Well, Mr. Chairman, let us understand that the current policy is that we are not entering into any lease program with any people that we do business with. People come to the corporation to purchase, and we provide the credit under the terms that are available to them under the various programs that we offer.

The five-year lease, the short-term lease is really restricted only to those who have run into financial difficulty, and, in my judgment, they are then treated in a pretty generous way, with the emphasis being on giving them every opportunity, with the help of the Mediation—I cannot say those big words—Mediation Board to try to help that family stay on the farm. They intervene with the credit corporation. They will intervene with implement dealers like Mr. Tweed there, and they will intervene with the car dealers, they will intervene with the credit union or the banks, wherever they have credit problems, to try to work out a resolution to help them stay on the farm, during which time they have the opportunity to lease this land for a five-year period with the possibility extended for another three years to an eight-year period.

Quite frankly, Mr. Chairman, if the farmer, the farm family, cannot get themselves out of their difficulties in an eight-year period, it then really begs the question of whether they can.

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

I am very hesitant to be seen to be harsh on any individual farm family who runs into difficulties. There is enough high risk in agriculture for me to have every empathy and understanding of how regrettably, how easily that can happen from time to time, but nonetheless there has to be a level of individual responsibility in terms of their own farm management. We believe that the program that offers them an eight-year period, in effect, to come out of their difficulty and to get themselves back on course is a reasonable one and one that I am quite pleased to defend.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, can the minister indicate whether there are ever exceptions made? If the corporation sees that, yes, eight years has gone by and this family is starting to get themselves on the road but still cannot quite see their way to making the move to purchase the property, are exceptions ever made and consideration given to have an extension on this?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, staff advises me that they have not had incidents like that reported to them. If she is asking me or is aware of a personal situation or one particular farm family that she is talking to us about, I would certainly welcome her to talk directly to the senior management of the corporation or make my office aware of it. Rules are rules, and rules are meant to be abided by, but the effort certainly is there, the effort certainly within the corporation and certainly from within the Department of Agriculture to walk a long, extra mile to try to ensure that a family can stay on their farm. I am sure that is the kind of understanding, you know, consideration that any party would receive.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, there are several loan programs that fall under this corporation, and I would like to talk specifically about a couple of them and if the minister can tell us what has been happening with them. The first one I would like to talk about is the Guaranteed Feeder Association Loan Program. The program was started several years ago and, as I understand it, it is a loan guarantee program. Can the minister indicate what has been happening with that program? Can the minister indicate the number of feeder associations that have been established under the program, how successful it has been and whether any of them have run into difficulties?

**Mr. Enns:** Yes, we have a program that is specifically directed to the feeder business. I can report to the House that we have a program that provides for a borrowing cap of a participating member of \$125,000 and an association of \$5 million. So it is a significant program. We have some 13 such feeder co-op associations in the province, and they will vary in size. Some are fairly significant, four, five, eight to 10 members within an association.

They have the ability then within these caps, 125,000 per member or five million for the entire association, to

get into the feeding of cattle in a pretty serious manner. They are spread throughout the province, in Carman, in Komarno, in Deloraine, Ste. Rose, Ridgeville, Riverton, Hamiota, Sifton, Dugald, Killarney, Austin, Beausejour and in Neepawa. Just to give the honourable member some indication of their distribution across the province. Currently the actual number of members involved in these 13 associations is 329. That gives the honourable member some indication of the number of people associated in these 13 associations. They have a credit limit of some \$16 million, \$16,394,000, and currently they have availed themselves of some \$9.6 million of that available \$16-million line of credit. Am I reading that correct? I am.

This is where the corporation will assist an association, often work with their local credit union or with their bank and who does the actual borrowing. But there is no question that with the guarantor role that the government plays, where we guarantee up to 25 percent of the loan—and that is a hard guarantee—if for some reason the association defaults, then the public purse, through the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, is committed to providing 25 percent of the outstanding loan. As I indicated to the honourable members of the committee at the outset that regrettably we have had several failures. They are of different magnitude.

\* (1510)

We have had some difficulty at Ste. Rose. It is not all that serious. It is a case where one member of the association did not abide by the rules if you like or cattle were sold that should have been sold within the association. It has been a further complication because he owed money to a major feed supplier, Cargill. Cargill has put a lien or a hold on the funds. I say it is not that serious because the dollars are there. It is a question where the association is arguing with Cargill as to who has first rights to it. They have asked the department, they have asked the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation for legal advice, and we are providing it, or we expressed a willingness to provide it. We have of course an interest in it that we know precisely the position of the creditors, banks, the corporation, and where we stand in the event of a default. All other cases were covered by the association or an insurance fund. They do have an insurance fund as an association.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

I am not at all discouraged by the fact that we have had a bit of difficulty. We have had a more serious problem with the association located at Vita, where I regret to say that some outright fraud and criminal action seems to have taken place. But I want to be very careful because the member will understand, I think, that we are probably heading into the courts with this, and I would not want to put inappropriate comments on the record. But it is certainly a situation there where our guarantor role has been called. We have provided that to the credit union in Vita that was the financier. So we have made good our role in that thing and of course are supportive in trying to recapture as much of the outstanding funds that we can.

But, having said all of that, I want to reiterate that I am satisfied that there have been some steps taken relatively immediately by the corporation in reviewing the contract, the contract form that we signed. We have made some basic alterations to the contracts and that the corporation has acted with all due diligence under the circumstances. I do not want to have these one or two difficulties discourage us from continuing to aggressively offer this program to Manitoba cattle producers. It is extremely important for us that we do what we can within our resources, encourage the return of the feedlot industry, the feeding industry in Manitoba.

I often get criticized as I travel through the different parts of the province of Manitoba for overemphasizing pork and other parts of the livestock industry in the province, and what are we doing as a government, what are we doing as a department to enhance the opportunities for a return of some greater, more significant beef processing in the province of Manitoba. It is shocking really when you consider the facts. In 1972-73, we were processing over half a million, 560,000-odd carcasses of beef in the province of Manitoba and four or five major processing firms, Swift, Canada Packers, Burns, several fairly significant independent packers.

That compares to the 35,000, 36,000 carcasses that we process today. A great number of good value-added jobs were lost when we, in essence, lost the beef processing industry to Alberta, and, correctly so, it is

pointed out to me that we are not doing enough to recapture some of that beef processing and bring it back to our province of Manitoba.

Mr. Chairman, the first thing we have to do is we have to start feeding out more of our animals, because with the processing industry also went our calves. We are too many and I hold up my hand; I am guilty of it too. Too many of us livestock producers are shipping our calves out. I do not fault anybody. It is the buyers from Alberta or the East or the U.S. that are at our auction rings in the fall and bidding on our calves. The result is though that we are not feeding out enough of our own animals. If you accept the fact that the same economics that make pork production so attractive apply to beef, over the long haul, beef, the finishing, the fattening of beef cattle would be just as attractive in Manitoba, more attractive in Manitoba than in other parts of the country just as it is for pork production.

We should be doing more to encourage that. That is why I want to encourage the corporation. I quite frankly look for support from the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). I even look for support from her colleague the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). I need the support of the honourable member for Wellington—[interjection] She wounds me by disparaging me by telling me she will withhold her support from me. But I know that the honourable member for Swan River will, with her skill and tact, convince members of her caucus to support this worthy program.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I can assure the Minister of Agriculture that my honourable colleague for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) is more than willing to support any initiative that will see industry grow in rural Manitoba in a sustainable way, that will encourage families to stay in rural Manitoba.

Mr. Chairman, we were talking about the feeder association and how that program works. I was not being critical of the program as the minister may have taken. What I am looking for is clarification on how the program operates. I am not looking for specific details. I was asking generally about what was happening and whether the programs were successful. I am pleased to see that out of the 13, 11, I believe it is,

are running very well. Of course, we have to look at ways that we can get the beef industry to grow in this province and get the secondary jobs from it as well as we do from the hog industry. Not everybody in this province is going to raise hogs. There are many people in Manitoba who want to raise livestock. It is a very important part of the economy. If we can get them to a second stage, it only helps the economy of the province, and through feeder associations, if that is one way to do it, then that is very good.

\* (1520)

As I said, I am not interested in specific cases. I am looking for general information on how the program works. The minister used the example of a person in Ste. Rose who had moved outside the rules; well, I would, rather than referring to the person who in Ste. Rose, take any of those feeder associations. If one person did not hold up his or her part of the bargain and were not able to fulfill their part of the loan, is the minister saying that the rest of the association is then responsible to pick up that tab, or is there a pool of—the minister talked about insurance. So, if one person defaults, is it the insurance that covers it? Is it the other producers that cover it, or is it the corporation that is on the hook as well for 25 percent?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, for your information, I am pleased to, just in a more general way, say that in the first instance I do not know how well this program is being advertised, if you like. I know that through our Ag rep offices and through our livestock specialists, the Animal Industry Branch and others that the information on this program is made available, but in essence it works fairly simply. A group of producers, four or five, half a dozen of them, can sit down together over a cup of coffee in somebody's kitchen and decide to call on somebody from our department to explain the program to them.

There is certainly a kind of a self-examination that goes on as to whom you want to associate with, because it is a form of a co-op. You associate with people obviously that you feel comfortable with, but you then avail yourself to the opportunity of collectively going to the source of credit, to a private bank or the credit union with the support of the

Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation to source significant sums of money, \$125,000 per member, \$5 million as a cap over the overall association.

There are different assurances that the associations have within themselves that cover some of the types of losses that are normal to the cattle feeding industry, but the kind of situation that we found ourselves with in Ste. Rose, something like that, is really a more serious role in the sense that part of the conditions of the associations that the cattle are sold under the name of the association and the monies in fact all come back to the association and then are distributed to the appropriate proportion to what a member has a share in the association to that member.

What has happened and partly because of I suppose not quite the degree of self-direction, self-supervision to begin with, these associations normally form a small, little executive. They have a secretary who looks after their record keeping and their accounts, their books, but what happens is that if care is not taken in one case or if it is deliberately that association members—you have to remember, these animals are not necessarily centrally housed. They are housed at different farm operations that reflect the membership of the association. If one of those members then chooses to ship a truckload of cattle unbeknownst to the association under a private and separate sales arrangement, that is a serious fault on the part of that member and puts in jeopardy the association. The association is responsible to the lender.

While the individual members have signed their John Henry's and they are governed by the caps, it is the association that makes the loan for a million dollars or for \$700,000 or for \$2 million to the credit union, which we guarantee 25 percent of. So it is the association that is left owing the money. We have looked at the contracts a little more carefully. We have made some alterations and changes. We feel more confident that we have corrected some ambiguity in the language or some loopholes and hopefully that that will not happen again.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I do not know if the minister has answered my question or made it more difficult for what I am trying to get at.



Can the minister explain? You have two lines here. The minister is saying that each member of an association can borrow up to \$125,000, and then he talked about \$5 million. Is the \$5 million made up of different people borrowing \$125,000? There are not two lines. There is not \$125,000 and then another \$5 million on top. It is made up of association members borrowing the money. The minister is nodding his head yes. Okay then.

I am just trying to get clarification on how the program works. Is there a restriction to the number of members that can be in an association? I guess I am asking because, if there is a restriction, if I look at it at \$125,000 to a million, so you are saying it would be a limit of about 15-16 members to an association. If there is a limit of 15-16 members to an association can—

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, 15 or 16 is the minimum; 15 is the minimum, and it could be any number between 15 and up. The \$5 million is, in effect, the cap on the size of the association. These 15 people have an individual cap of \$125,000. Some members may buy 40,000 head worth of cattle or 30,000 or 80,000, but to keep some level of constraint on the overall program on the individual basis, that cap is on the individual's \$125,000. For the association, it is \$5 million which is made up of these same dollars, but, in effect, you can add up—if every member takes up the cap to the cap \$125,000, then how many members can you have in an association?

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, to borrow \$125,000 is a lot of money. I am wondering what kind of guidelines the association puts in place. I understand that there are some regulations that you cannot borrow it all the first year. So can the minister indicate what kind of scrutiny the corporation puts on people, whether there are checks done as to whether they are involved in the cattle industry before this, or how do you ensure that you are not lending the money to somebody who does not understand livestock? How quickly can the person who is borrowing the money get to the \$125,000? Do they get that all at once, or is there some staging that is done to get the money?

**Mr. Enns:** Well, Mr. Chairman, there are a number of steps that ensure that we have the kind of responsible people with cattle background in these associations.

They have to, first of all, be accepted by the association themselves. It would seem obvious, and the honourable member is well aware that you are not going to associate yourself with known people who are suspect in this case. There are some very specific restraints, but I think they are kind of proper ones. For members feeding for the first time, a person could have spent a better part of his lifetime in the cattle industry but has never fed out any cattle, so there are limitations therefore. For members feeding for the first time, there is a \$50,000 limit. Members who are feeding for more than one year but less than three years, it is \$75,000. So there are steps as we are trying to bring about experiences and create a comfort level of the individual and a confidence level for all in the association that we are doing it.

\* (1530)

Secondly, of course, because they are getting their capital from a bank or from a credit union, they then have to pass muster. They have to go through the credit checks that are normal for any application for somebody making a \$50,000 or \$70,000 or \$100,000 loan. They have to satisfy those requirements. We provide the information. They also have to not be indebted, to be in good standing with the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, and we do, in fact, provide further kind of credit information to the association. That has been part of the challenge that we have to look at within the department, although it is the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation that is on the hook—if you like—in terms of providing the financial guarantee.

It is the Department of Agriculture employee who works—a gentleman, I think it is Mr. McNabb—out of our Animal Industry Branch that spends a great deal of time, works with these associations, sits down with them, meets with them, provides technical advice, provides farm programming advice. It is my concern sometimes that those activities have to be more closely co-ordinated with Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation who, after all, are the ones who are called upon if something goes wrong. I am satisfied that those are working out reasonably well at this time.

So it is a combination of, first of all, gaining acceptance amongst themselves, the group; 16 or 15

people have to feel pretty good about themselves. All 15 have to be approved as creditworthy by the credit-granting agency. They have to have a good standing with the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation. They have to then agree to work with—and I do not want to say—I think the word supervision may be a little heavy, but certainly our department's and Manitoba's Agricultural Credit Corporation's interest, because they have a financial liability involved. We keep pretty close contact with these associations, and, if anything, I will challenge them that that contact be even more closer and co-ordinated because we do not want to see failures in the system.

I see this as a good opportunity to be a kind of model, the return of the feedlot industry into Manitoba. We watch, some with concern, but I, with a great deal of enthusiasm, the kind of coming together of three, four, five, six people that will form together as a group to take advantage of the opportunities in pork, for instance. They do it for several reasons. They do it so that they can pool together the necessary capital to get involved in today's modern pork industry. They also do it because it brings different expertise to the organization. They also do it because it spreads the risk. All of these things could apply to a major feedlot operation.

Half a dozen of our farmers or 15 of these farmers could come together, use their numbers to access the bigger amounts of money that are involved in running a major feedlot. I would like to think that the 11 associations that we are talking about here that are working with Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation and the Department of Agriculture could provide and are providing a model for the return of the feeding industry to Manitoba.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated that a number of farmers could get together and form an association. Is this program restricted to farmers or can other people come into the program? For example, if the Minister of Justice, maybe the member for Wellington, new people who were involved in agriculture wanted to be involved in a feeder association, could they take a loan out that would be guaranteed by the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation or is it restricted to people who are actively involved in farming?

**Mr. Enns:** Yes. There are some specific rules about eligibility. As I already said, members cannot already have a separate MACC stocker or guaranteed operating loan account. Two-thirds of the members of an association must own or lease a farm in Manitoba and have facilities to feed cattle, so there is room for nonfarm people providing again of course that they can convince a banker or a credit union that they ought to be worthy of \$50,000 or \$60,000 or \$80,000 worth of credit for a cattle operation. Maximum of one-third membership can be persons with no land holdings but who feed cattle in custom feedlot. Members are required to place in the association's assurance fund 5 percent of the value of cattle purchased under the feeder agreement.

The member asked before about the responsibility about the payout. The first assets of course are the cattle themselves; then you have this assurance fund that the association provides; then we are fourth on the list or something like that. [interjection] Then the individual assurance funds, and at the end of the day, the fourth, the call is on the public purse to provide the 25 percent guarantee.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** The minister said that the corporation provides a hard guarantee for 25 percent and, if the association goes broke, that is when the corporation kicks in their funds to pick up the costs. That is not just money given away. If the association goes broke and the corporation does have to put in 25 percent, the MACC does try to recover that 25 percent. That is not a clear giveaway. I would like the minister to clarify that, because that seems to be the impression that some people have, that the government is guaranteeing a loan and, if there is going to be a loss, that it is going to be the government's loss. In actual fact the government is going to try to recover that money? Is that accurate to say?

**Mr. Enns:** It should be kept in mind that this is a guarantee made in the first instance to the lender, to the credit union, to the bank. We do that so that they will make their capital more readily accessible to the feeder association. When a loan is defaulted on we then have some 90 days and a claim is made. The claim will come from the lender, from the bank or the credit union and will notify Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation that they have a loan that is in default. We

then have 90 days to do whatever can be done to try to correct the situation but, in the final analysis, after 90 days we have to honour our guarantee. We pay the lender out our full extent of the liability that we have undertaken. Then the lender—I do not know the word that is used—enables us, then we will continue to try to pursue the parties who are owing the money to do anything that we can to lessen the impact and the extent of monies that we are actually out of pocket.

\* (1540)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** When we look at the annual report of MACC and we see guaranteed loan activities and in 1995-96 we see some \$45 million, that is the amount that is guaranteed. Can the minister give an indication under these loan-guaranteed programs, or is there a number that has actually been spent? Or would that would only show up when you have had to pay out on somebody that has defaulted in one of these programs? That is not the amount that has been spent, that is the amount that has been guaranteed, so what has been the cost to the corporation for these programs? When we look at the budget for MACC, what kind of money do you set aside each year for the operation of these guaranteed loan programs?

**Mr. Enns:** That was a question that I was hoping she would not ask. While I am waiting for the answer, I had the great pleasure of watching Gilbert and Sullivan's "Mikado" last night at the Pantages Theatre. What wonderful words of advice there were for our Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), when I heard the Mikado talk about his object being sublime, that he shall achieve in time, to make the punishment fit the crime: "The punishment fit the crime; / And make each prisoner pent / Unwillingly represent / A source of innocent merriment! / Of innocent merriment!"

My, what a marvellous way that would be to control your gangs and all the other things, the flotsam, human problems, you have to put up with every day in life. It is a pleasure to have you join us here with the good and the virtuous people of Agriculture and learn where the real world really is.

I will have to go on for a little while yet because my staff has not got my answer yet.

**An Honourable Member:** Do you want a five-minute break?

**Mr. Enns:** That is a grand idea, Mr. Chairman. I think we can do it.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Is it the will of the committee to take a five-minute break?

*The committee recessed at 3:44 p.m.*

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### After Recess

*The committee resumed at 3:50 p.m.*

**Mr. Chairperson:** The committee will come to order.

**Mr. Enns:** I can tell the honourable member that in the feeder association program we have only had one call on our guarantee and that was a sizable one of \$527,669, and that involves the situation at Vita. We are now in the process of attempting to recover whatever portions of that amount that we can, but I will not suggest to the honourable member that that is a difficult situation there which possibly could lead to, as I say, some court action.

I want to put that into context to within the \$16 million that is currently out. The program has run for, I believe, three, four years now and has run at roughly speaking those levels, so that in the years '94-95 there were no defaults, and '95-96, no default. In '96-97 we have this one major default that I referred to. So in keeping with the overall, I think we have to keep that in some context. On the guaranteed loans program we have had five defaults for a dollar sum of \$91,112 that the corporation had to stand good for.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would take it then that the minister is saying under the Diversification Loan Guarantee Program there have not been any defaults, and the corporation has not had to pick up any costs? Can the minister indicate, under the Diversification Loan Program—I think that would probably be the one that would cover this—has the corporation had any requests or has the corporation made any loans or investments into the Isobord plant that is being established in Elie at

the present time, or is there any section under the corporation where money could be borrowed from it?

**Mr. Enns:** I am pleased to provide some additional information on the very exciting project that is currently under construction at Elie which will literally spin straw into gold as Rumpelstiltskin did many years ago in some of Grimms' fairytale books. The financial contribution on the part of the province—I know the member is not asking me directly, but it does not come from the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation in any extent at all. The province is providing a \$15-million payable loan to Isobord through programs being offered by Industry, Trade and Tourism.

The federal Farm Credit Corporation is providing through its offices loans to the farmers' straw co-op that has come together to provide the raw product for the plant, the straw for the plant, and that amounts to some \$11 million or \$12 million that individual members of the surrounding area—well, not just the surrounding area, it is actually quite a large area that is going to feed straw into that plant, but these producers have formed a co-op. They have worked with the federal credit corporation to, in essence, finance the cost of the building itself, the shell of the building, some \$11 million or \$12 million. But to indicate directly to the honourable member, Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation has no money in Isobord.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, when we look at the loan diversification program, it was anticipated that this would be start-up money for various kinds of ventures to diversify the rural economy. When we heard the preliminary discussion it could be used for any number of things from potato production and storage, hog operation, beef feedlots. Can the minister indicate what kind of interest has been shown? I understand in the first year of operation there were three loans given. Has there been further interest and how many other loans have been made under the loan diversification program?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, I can report to the committee that to date there have been 11 loans approved for a total of some \$7,105,000 since the inception of this program on December 31, 1995. The types of loans have been diversified, as the program calls for, **one** to a dairy operation for \$165,000, a large

hog operation, to five separate hog operations for a total of \$5,355,000. To the enhancement of potato production there have been four potato loans made for a sum of \$1,335,000, and we have an aquaculture loan, one, for \$250,000. This one catches me by surprise, fish. We are into fish farming, okay.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to see that there is another diversification in loans. At one time there used to be a loan that was a fish farming loan. I think it was under the department. As I looked through it I saw that I did not see it anywhere, and I guess there was no interest in it. So there was no interest. I would certainly encourage the corporation to encourage fish farming, because there are many parts of the province where people do make a living from fishing, but their livelihood, the opportunity for them to continue to make a living along those lines has been very difficult.

So I guess I would ask the minister what steps the corporation takes to make the people aware that opportunities are there for other diversification rather than the traditional agriculture? Is there any effort made to reach into the aboriginal community not only with fish farming but with other opportunities to involve them in the agriculture industry? So what efforts are made to expand the agriculture industry and encourage some of the people who are not traditionally in the production, involved in the production of food, rather they have been involved in the collection of food, to make that more available to them?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, I am delighted to talk about this particular program, because I acknowledge that when we announced this program in '95 that, you know, it was our best effort at that time. It was a start. It was kind of, I think, an immediate response to the news, the information, that had just been publicly made that Canada's longest standing support program, the Freight Assistance Program, the western grain transportation assistance program or the Crow as we all know it, was coming to an end, and it became immediately apparent that its impacts on Manitoba were particularly serious and that there would be and there will be and there are right now as I speak some very significant changes taking place on the landscape.

\* (1600)

I wanted the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation to be part of that and, quite frankly, I see this as an area for significant growth for the corporation. I want that loan limit to be expanded from the present \$10 million to \$100 million, because we are going to see the kinds of things that are already happening only accelerate in the future. The honourable member talks about nontraditional types of involvement, and it is nontraditional, not just nontraditional for the producers out there, but nontraditional for the corporation as well, and it will be a challenge for us and for management to kind of roll with the punches and to anticipate what the needs are going to be out there. It will be nontraditional in the sense of who is going to be involved. There will be some different people involved.

It is of ongoing concern to all of us that we cannot as we are presently structured do an adequate job with respect to the aboriginal community. It has to do with some very understandable things. We simply cannot provide, we cannot find the kind of collateral that our own rules call for within the corporation to resolve these issues. I am advised by the manager that we are talking to the aboriginal communities. There are some programs on the horizon that I think will make that even more urgent that we come to some resolve of that issue.

In view, in recent years, we have added to the list of activities that the corporation is involved in that include such things as bison for instance. Allow me to take this opportunity to report that we have a small but vibrant and growing bison industry developing in the province of Manitoba. I believe we have some 80-85 producers involving upwards to 10,000 of those majestic beasts that used to roam the Great Plains country here in such large numbers, as some wit made it.

It can be argued that the coming of the railway to some extent helped extinguish those bison along with some pretty indiscriminate hunting and slaughter of those great animals. Now that the railways are abandoning us, you know, the bison are coming back. Truly they are coming back, and I welcome them, and the corporation welcomes them. The corporation does do business with bison farmers in Manitoba, and I want to encourage them to do even more. They will become involved, I am sure, in due course with the fledgling elk

farming business that is just in the process of being established in Manitoba, and it is particularly in that area that I am going to challenge the corporation to see whether or not we and our services cannot come to some arrangement that will enable us to provide satisfactory credit to aboriginal communities.

I am extremely proud that we have today at least three, if not several, more aboriginal communities who are showing a great deal of interest in elk ranching. I am hopeful that we can understand that there can only be one set of rules for elk farming in Manitoba and that the aboriginal community will have to accept and understand that, that this is not some—well, I have got to be careful because this is always put on record, and history records that I was going to say something disparaging about some of my sister departments, but I will not.

We in Agriculture run things one way, and the right way, and the Department of Agriculture wants to run a carefully managed, carefully controlled elk program that can meet our obligations to those who want to ensure that we have and maintain healthy animals in the wild, that there is no indiscriminate slippage between the wild and the domestic herds taking place and that the health of the animals is secure. All of those things are very much uppermost in our minds as we draft the regulations, as we draft the program that we are going to introduce.

What is extremely encouraging for me is that there is, in my opinion, a real opportunity for providing an economic opportunity for some of our First Nations people in this program. It is a kind of an operation that lends itself to their land base. It is a kind of an operation that they themselves feel comfortable with in terms of dealing with the wild animals. It is the kind of program that could very quickly mean that we could have on several First Nations reserves \$1-million, \$2-million, \$3-million operations running, and, quite frankly, that would be a far greater contribution than we have made over the past number of years in 101 different types of programs of trying to bring about some economic viability to our aboriginal cousins.

So I think Agriculture will prove to be a leader in working with our aboriginal communities in this sense, and I look forward to the honourable member's support.

The honourable member represents a party that is privileged to have several members of the First Nations people as colleagues in their caucus, and I think that they want to look extremely carefully at how this program is being administered and how this program is being introduced. I will acknowledge and accept that it is their democratic responsibility to criticize me, to criticize my department. Do not criticize my director for the Animal Industry Branch, Mr. John Taylor. He is rather sensitive about it, and his Australian background, you know, he is not used to the rough and tumble of politics in Manitoba. He is an honourable man, and I want you to take it easy on him. He is not worthy of that kind of abuse. But you can abuse me anytime you want on this issue. But I want you to support me at the end of the day. I want you to support this opportunity at the end of the day. I want you to support the aboriginal communities that are showing the interest in this program at the end of the day.

We have at Crane River the makings of a first-rate operation. They are co-operating with the Department of Natural Resources in housing the capture program we have at Pine Creek who have housed animals for us in the past year. We have people from the Waterhen that want to talk to us about this. Those are the band that has run a relatively successful bison operation and has done so for a number of years.

So I speak with some passion because I believe that this is for Agriculture. Not only are we providing a new and diversified program for any producers in Manitoba—and I acknowledge, Mr. Chairman, that it will only be a relatively small number of people that can avail themselves of this program or who want to—but there is a particular challenge to us in Agriculture, and a challenge to the corporation, that we find a way that we can provide some of the services that we provide to all other Manitobans; that we can provide some of the expertise, some of the credit management knowledge that the corporation has garnered over the past number of years and be helpful to aboriginal communities who wish to join us in this venture.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I am very pleased to see the minister speak so passionately about aboriginal people and economic development for aboriginal people. I hope that he will take that same message to the rest of his

colleagues in government, because certainly the activities we have seen by this government have not sent that same message to the aboriginal community, whether it be health care or education or those issues.

The minister has put very good information on the record as far as his commitment to the aboriginal community and economic development, and something that I would support him on tremendously because I think that we have—and I represent a large number of aboriginal people who really do want the opportunity to take a share of economic development. The minister is well aware that those opportunities have not been there. Many doors have been shut in the face of aboriginal people. So I am very pleased that the minister is now saying that there will be opportunities.

\* (1610)

So I would like to ask the minister then, is the minister saying that this loan diversification program is available to people who live on reserves, to bands, to borrow money? If that is the case, what is the requirement on this loan? Is there a certain amount of money that they have to have down? Because I had a meeting with a group of aboriginal people just this last weekend who expressed a real frustration. They said that there are all kinds of opportunities, but every time we go to get started we have to have 20 or 25 percent down, and for them, this man said to me: Well, if I have to have \$20,000, I will not be coming for a loan to get started.

It is a real difficulty and a real challenge that is facing the aboriginal community. Yes, they do want to be a part of it.

I have to say to the minister that not all of them want to be involved in the elk industry. Not all of them agree with what is happening, but there are other opportunities. I refer to the one with aquaculture. There are different things, and as government, as representatives of people, we have to work towards resolving that. But if this money, these loans—the diversification loan, the feeder association loan, stocker loans—are available to aboriginal people and to reserves, I am very pleased about it, and I would like to know what are the strings attached, what is required for them to access that money.

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, I am well aware that the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) has, as she indicated, significant experience with the aboriginal community, members within her constituency, and just in her overall experience in government. There is the one particular hurdle that is a very serious one. I am going to challenge my new colleague the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs who perhaps comes to government fresh with, one hopes and I know, the kind of enthusiasm of a new member to government, to try to resolve it. That is the question of security. It is not a question of not wishing to do business with an aboriginal First Nations client. There is the fundamental problem of security which we in the farm community kind of take for granted. The first thing that we put up for security is our land. Of course, as the member knows, that is not possible to do on a collective basis. We believe that there are ways around it, but there needs to be some action taken by the band, by the First Nations people themselves, in the coming to and the passing of some by-laws that will help us and help the corporation out of this dilemma to some extent, if we can. I have to be an optimist that we can find a way.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

I agree that not all of them want to be in elk ranching, but, for instance, in elk ranching there is already a possible way out for them. My understanding is a negotiation, a discussion, that they are having with Natural Resources in terms of participating in capture of elk that we will, for instance, acknowledge and take in kind. If they are capturing elk, that they will retain a number of elk while giving up others to the government for distribution to future elk farmers. Particularly in the case of elk, it does not take too many animals to have all of a sudden an asset that is collateral able of \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000. That, together, then starts making it easier for private lending agencies. I will challenge the corporation to see whether or not we cannot develop a program that when we can document some tangible assets, that is when the corporation will be able to provide support for them. I think that is a challenge that we face.

I know I speak with enthusiasm, but I do not want to underestimate the problems associated with it because

one would think that surely we should have been smart enough to resolve them. Then, of course, not everybody is as radical as I am, in essence, a red Tory as I am. I am more radical than the socialists and the New Democrats are. I ran as leader for my party on the basis of abolishing the reserve system. I do not think the reserve system does the aboriginals any good. It is a form of apartheid that we have universally, internationally condemned, when it happened in another country like South Africa. That is part of the problem that we have and we will not resolve it, quite frankly, in this country unless Canadians are prepared to look at it seriously. However, I was defeated.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I am pleased that the minister does recognize the challenges that the aboriginal community faces. I would ask the minister if he would take challenge a little further and see what can be done, or tell us what his department has been doing to meet the needs of aboriginal people. Has there been any consultation with various bands or the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs to talk about the opportunities of moving into this diverse economy that we are talking about in Manitoba? What steps have been taken? Because it is one thing to say that you want to see the opportunities there and identify a challenge of assets, but what steps, or what direction is the minister giving the corporation to ensure that when we come back a year from now, there will be a program available under Manitoba Agricultural Corporation that will meet the needs and be friendly to the people?

What I am saying, we have to design a program that involves the people that have an interest, and we have to see what they are really interested in. Then that information has to be made available because I am sure that there is a very small number of people in the aboriginal community who know about any of these programs. So the challenge to the government is, how do we involve these people? What role is the minister willing to take to ensure that this community is involved, that they understand that there are programs available, that there are opportunities? You cannot push opportunities on to them. People have to take those opportunities, but you have to make it available to them. The corporation has to take some steps, if it is the will of government, to ensure that those doors are opened for the aboriginal community.

**Mr. Enns:** As I indicated the other day, I think it is always an advantage to have senior members, senior management from the corporation, hear this directly in this Chamber from all of the members, from opposition, that we double our efforts to try to bring about the greater opportunities on First Nations land.

Let me say, though, and I share her thoughts, let us not talk exclusively about elk ranching. We should be looking at the broad range of programs that could be of interest to them. Certainly within the cattle industry, the beef cattle industry, we have a number of first-rate, excellent aboriginal cattle producers in the province. Whether or not we can instill and use some of them as role models to develop, with our assistance, feeder associations or some stocker loan programs, or greater loans program, we would like to do that. I will challenge the department, the corporation, to take very seriously this challenge.

I know that we have some First Nations people that are heavily committed in the intensive business of potato production. We have several of them that are doing that very well. One of them just acquired one of the larger potato-producing farms. My former colleague, federal colleague Charlie Mayer, included amongst cattle operation some significant 400 or 500 acres of potato production.

\* (1620)

I just despair sometimes when we focus so much of government's resources, government's attention on government's direction, on trying to turn all of our First Nations people into social workers, trying to resolve all the complex problems of urban society with our First Nations people when, in fact, they are housed—I know, I am not blind to the fact of in-migration to the city of Winnipeg that is taking place—but their bases, their land bases, their 61 corporate farms, if you would like them, are scattered throughout rural Manitoba.

We really have not done a very good job about seeing how we can address our collective smarts in helping them cross that line that all of a sudden makes for some viable economic operations that do two things—earn some income in a part of our community that badly needs it and provide the impetus. Just as non-Native, rural people farmers, we decry the fact that our

youngsters are leaving our farms, or there is not enough economic opportunity for them in the smaller communities in different parts of Manitoba. So they come to the cities, they migrate to the States, they migrate to other places. The same situation is implicit in the situation with the First Nations people. We have nothing or very little to offer them on their land base throughout rural Manitoba. We can only expect that in-migration into the urban centres to accelerate.

I think the Department of Agriculture, I think the corporation that is currently under review, could play a role in trying to reverse that. With your encouragement, I will take to my Cabinet, I will take to my government, the kind of thoughts that are being expressed to see whether or not we cannot more aggressively try to deal with some of these issues. There will, of course, be some risk in it. But nothing ventured, you know, nothing risked—nothing—I am not very good at these things. I can remember one time saying I will cross that bridge when you get to it. The way it came out with me is, I will cross that bridge when I find the river, or something like that. My wife still gives me problems about that. Anyway, you know what I mean. The corporation is hearing this, and I am going to challenge the management of the corporation to sit down and do some heavy-duty thinking. Challenge governments. They will come back and challenge governments. This is what has to happen for us to be able to employ our resources in some meaningful way within the aboriginal community, and that is a challenge that I will have to take with my colleagues in government.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, it was with interest I listened to the minister say that when he ran for the leader of his party, he ran on the basis of abolishing reserves. I would like to ask the minister whether he has thought that through and what the solution would be.

You know, he is also talking about these corporate farms. Well, not very many people would want to, if they visited some of these areas, would not be very successful in farming on some of that rock that is out there. Many of these reserves are not on very good land, but if the minister talks about that his belief is we should be abolishing reserves, where will the land base come from then for these people to take part in—where



will we have the land base for the herds of livestock or elk that we hope that these people will have the opportunity to partake in, because the way I see it, there is not really enough land there for them to establish. So I guess I would like the minister to maybe enlighten us a little bit more on what his views are as to what should happen. If he believes that reserves should be abolished, what would be the solution then to the land that would be required for all of these people to make a living in the many different ventures of agriculture that might be available to them?

**Mr. Enns:** Well, Mr. Chair, I should know better. You know, I have trouble walking and chewing gum at the same time, and I do not think, when I am standing on my feet, all that well either, but I think the honourable member for Swan River is kind of leading me on into what surely could become a bit of a political abyss that she would like me to fall into, but you know, we do strange and innovative things, particularly in the Department of Agriculture. We decide from time to time—we were worried about too many foreigners buying our land. We passed legislation in this Chamber that says foreigners cannot buy our land. If the issue is land and the way it is held by First Nations people that prevents banks, credit unions, Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, FCC from doing business, from extending doing business with First Nations people, then we have to address that issue.

So when I say abolition of the reserves, I am not saying that lightly. I am saying that for very hard political reasons. Now, I am also well aware that that maybe sets up a situation where they could lose their land, you know, but there are also legislative ways of putting down that land currently held by First Nations people, land that we are expanding to with the—finally this government, this government that is often abused and, regrettably, not supported by the First Nations people, we are resolving the long-outstanding land claims question now. The last 23 outstanding claims are being resolved. So is there not a way that we cannot devise legislation that will secure for First Nations people that essential land base? It might be a simple: that land cannot be sold to aboriginal people. If I can stop a Frenchman, a German and an Italian from owning land in Manitoba, and I can—[interjection] Pardon? We have the legislation to do that. We have legislation on the books to do that—then I can prevent a

lawyer or a doctor or a businessman from buying up reserve land.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

But if we find some different way of doing it, I would enable Mr. Shaw and the corporation to find some way of providing collateral and providing money to do the kind of things that the honourable member just asked me to do for the First Nations people. I am just thinking out loud and thinking that we have to think differently than we have for the last 100 years, because what we have done for the last 50 or 100 years has not brought any satisfactory results.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** My understanding is that the royal commission has made recommendations on ways that we could address this where First Nations would be able to have the ability to deal with banks and credit corporations and credit unions. I hope that with the minister's words that would mean that he would be supporting the recommendations of the royal commission.

Is that the minister's indication, then, that we can expect him to show his support for the recommendations of the royal commission that would then open the doors and give the opportunities for his corporation, the Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, and banks to then have the ability to do the kind of negotiation that is needed, that money can be lent and economic opportunities will be there for our First Nations people?

**Mr. Enns:** It is hard enough for any of us to make, you know, our farm units work economically. That is why we have farm credit corporations; that is why we have banks; that is why we have credit unions.

To ask First Nations people to try to do this without availing themselves of these services is really, you know, asking the impossible. We ought not to be surprised that you can drive through an area of Manitoba, and you see fairly successful farm operations, dairy operations, cattle operations, hog operations, and you come to a boundary of a reserve, and you drive through, and regrettably, you see used cars, a few homes, and maybe a little bit of gardening and that is it. You do not see farm equipment; you do

not see cultivated land in too many instances, and that is the net end result of the system.

I thank the honourable member for her reminder of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry commission report, and I will challenge particularly the corporation and the government to avail itself to those particular chapters that address that. It has been a longstanding problem, particularly for the government agencies involved in credit. I know that the same thing applies with the federal public lending institute, the federal farm credit service. They are in the same bind or in the same situation that our provincial corporation is in.

\* (1630)

**Ms. Wowchuk:** It is the royal commission report that I was referring to, and I hope that the minister's staff will look at that report. I hope that when we come back, or have the opportunity to look at the activities of this corporation when next we do Estimates, we will see some progress, and we will see a program there that will give the opportunity for aboriginal people to have availed to them services and opportunities to gain credit that the other Manitoba farmers do.

**Mr. Chairperson:** Shall the item pass—pass. Item 3.3 Net Interest Cost and Loan Guarantees \$3,728,500—pass; Allowance for Doubtful Accounts \$1,000,000—pass; Special Farm Assistance \$100,000—pass.

Resolution 3.3: RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$7,914,600 for Agriculture, Manitoba Agricultural Credit Corporation, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 1998.

We now move on to Resolution 3.4.

Item 4. Agricultural Development and Marketing (a) Administration. Does the honourable minister wish to wait for his staff?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, I am delighted to introduce some additional members of the department's senior staff. First of all, Dr. Jim Neufeld, who is director of our Veterinary Laboratory Branch, and the services housed on the campus at the University of Manitoba; and Dr. John Taylor, who is the director of the Animal

Industry Branch; along with Mr. Dave Donaghy, and I think he was introduced before.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Chairman, we have had some discussion on the livestock industry under the Agricultural Credit Corporation.

Earlier this year the minister had indicated at one point that he had done what he had to do in the hog industry, and he was now going to focus his attention to the livestock industry. Some of the producers said, well, heaven help us, he has changed the Hog Marketing Board when we did not want it. I wonder what his plans are for the livestock industry, and I say that tongue in cheek to the minister, but the minister did say that the livestock industry, the cattle industry needs much more attention than it is getting and it certainly does.

Many cattle producers have been through some very difficult times with price fluctuations, and the livestock industry has not grown as much as we would like to see it in this province. We are not feeding enough cattle in this province. We are certainly not processing them, they are all being shipped. The majority of the livestock is being shipped out of province or out of country and we are not getting the value-added jobs that we do have, so I would like to ask the minister if he can tell us what he envisions as happening, or what his plan is for the livestock industry, particularly the cattle industry in this province, that he believes should be happening or what supports he thinks should be in place to encourage more the finishing of livestock and perhaps going even farther where we would also be having the slaughter of livestock in this province.

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, I think the honourable member is picking up from comments that I made at a livestock meeting that was held when there were many regional meetings that we hold during the wintertime in different parts of the province. In some cases we call them beef days; in other cases just livestock development days. This particular meeting was in Holland and that caught some notice in the farm press about my changing my emphasis in the year '97 to paying greater attention to the beef industry and that report is correct. I have asked and challenged the department, and we are looking at the host of programs that the Department of Agriculture is involved in with

respect to beef cattle production, certainly with the view that our opportunities in beef cattle production are equally attractive, as in the case with pork. We should be examining ourselves about what some of the particular challenges there are in that part of the livestock industry, and how we as a department can, perhaps, be of some assistance.

It is also borne out of the fact I am a modest cattle producer myself, and I am sensitive to some of the criticism I was getting. We did, despite what the honourable member may think, a rather successful job in focusing on the pork industry in '96. I know that I took some action that was not universally applauded with respect to the marketing of hogs in the province of Manitoba, but overall, what the effort was meant to do was to focus and profile hog production in Manitoba. I believe we have done that with some success, not just in Manitoba but around the world.

The honourable member was present. The hog industry is inclusive of a whole number of factors—financial people, business people, feed people, packing people—along with the pork producers. We had a very successful Manitoba Pork Advantage launch at the Lombard Westin in the close of the year that was attended by well over 500 persons to help us focus on the opportunities in pork.

Understandably, people not involved in pork would remind me as I travelled through Manitoba that there are other aspects to the livestock industry other than the pork, and they are quite right. So I have challenged the department to let us take a hard look at beef production in the province in the year '97, and we are doing that. It is an internal examination of the programs that the department offers. It could be an opportunity for us to visit and talk to the organized cattle producing organizations, actually the Manitoba cattle producing organization. We will talk to the problems associated, what needs to happen to try to attract more processing into the industry.

We are working with the smaller regional packers. That seems to be the way, the only areas where some beef is being processed these days. But that simply is what is meant by those comments that we are focusing in on the beef industry. It is not to be taken out of context. I say the same thing about hogs. We are

saying we are focusing on the opportunities there are on that. I do not believe the department nor government should be actively intervening in the production of any of these commodities. All that generally happens is that markets get distorted, wrong signals get sent out, but the information has to be supplied and in some cases launched policies have to be made.

\* (1640)

We have to examine our policies in respect to how we manage our Crown lands within the department. We have to look at the policies that are being directed by the director of the Animal Industry Branch to see whether or not they are the kind of policies for the '90s and the year 2000 and what can we do to assist them.

We have an immediate problem right now in Dr. Neufeld's shop. There is pressure with some of the downsizing, if you like, or offloading of Ag Canada and some of the services that they have supplied, particularly in the livestock industry with respect to laboratory services, brucellosis testing and so forth; then all of a sudden find ourselves without the capacity to do the testing in Manitoba for the cattle that require those tests for export shipments and for other reasons. The challenge is right now to ensure that we can get that capacity developed right within our facility at the University of Manitoba and at our veterinary lab. This is what I mean by paying attention to the opportunities in beef cattle production.

The honourable member is right, of course, that we have had some difficult years, but she is wrong when she suggests that the cattle producers have not maintained and in fact, indeed, expanded their herds in the province. We are one of the few jurisdictions where that has happened. Virtually all other jurisdictions, not only in Canada but in the United States, have seriously downsized their cattle numbers, which speaks encouragingly for the future in terms of supply and demand and future prices, and I think the markets are starting to reflect that.

The conventional wisdom is that we have bottomed out from the difficult years that we have just experienced, and all market indicators are that we are moving into a stronger cattle cycle. Manitoba is well poised to take advantage of it. Our herds have not

diminished. We have a record number of beef cows on our pastures and on our farms in Manitoba as I speak. I believe, and there are others that believe, that we could, through good and prudent management of our grasslands, also with the recognition that again the fuller impact of the loss of the Crow begins to manifest itself on some of the more marginal land that has been put into cereal production, goes out of cereal production or even some of the good land that is in cereal production.

We are not going to be exporting much feed grain out of this province any more, period. We will export premium malting barley out of this province; we will export premium wheats out of this province, durums and the likes. We will export quality vegetable oils out of this province. We will export specialty crops, lentils, peas and beans, but it is going to be very difficult to export barley that is worth \$2.20 or \$2.30 or \$2.10 or \$1.80 a bushel and pay the freight bill. It is going to be very difficult to export utility wheat, wheat that might have been premium wheat worth \$5 or \$6 a bushel, hopefully \$7 or \$8 a bushel in the future, but if it has gone through some bad weather, which we can expect sometimes—and regrettably we are setting ourselves up with the late seeding season, certainly in the Red River Valley with the impending flood—that we could see a lot of good grain damaged by poor weather in the harvest season end up as feed wheat. That is the kind of grain that is going to be very difficult to move out of this province. It is just not going to pay the freight, and that is the kind of grain that we have to find a home for.

(Mr. Peter Dyck, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair)

The kind of cereal crop production agriculture we have, pretty well tells us that we are always going to have that kind of grain. We need to grow those grains in rotation. Even as I encourage producers to get into potatoes and into other crops, into canola and some other crops, but every crop needs its rotation. You can only grow potatoes once every four years in that acre of land. In between, the farmer puts in barley, he puts in other crops. That is why there are those that say that Manitoba could support a million beef cows. We certainly can do a much better job in backgrounding. I think our calves, instead of sending them out as 500-pounders, 600-pounders, getting them up to 800- and 850- and 900-pounders, then when we are one step

away from finishing them, and when we start finishing consistently 200, 300, 350,000 beef animals, that is when we can knock on Mr. Cargill's door, that is when we can knock on Maple Leaf's door, that is when we can knock on somebody's else's door and say, gentlemen, it is time you brought a world-class beef processing plant that will employ 1,000 people and value-add them right here in Manitoba.

That is the future I think we should work towards. I know that is not going to happen overnight. It will happen maybe within a decade, and I intend to stick around till the end of that decade to make sure it happens.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I would like to thank the minister for sharing his vision, but I want to say that if I did say that the number of livestock had decreased in this province, that was not my intention. I am well aware the number of livestock has increased and, in fact, many people have carried their herds over basically because they have not been able to sell them because there was a low price in there. I know that there is room for growth in the industry and I know that we have to look at other ways to use our grain. Certainly I have to agree with the minister that we will not be able to ship that barley out at the price we are getting for it. We are going to have to use it to a second stage then putting it through livestock. Whether it is hogs or cattle, we are going to see the dynamics of agriculture in this province change. We will, and I am sure that the changes that come about as farmers adjust will be good changes for the economy of the province. We will see it.

Earlier, under Agricultural Credit Corporation, we had talked about the aboriginal people and certainly livestock is also one of the opportunities that we would look at. There are many areas close to reserves that would certainly work as pasture.

One of the challenges that faces us as we move toward an increase in livestock and, in particular, as we move to an increase in hog production is one that we talked about yesterday when we were discussing the private member's resolution, increase of hog production, is waste management and how we address the whole issue of the location of these barns in sensitive areas where there is a problem with water. I heard the minister say yesterday, oh, well, if you do not

like the barns in the Interlake we will move the barns out of the Interlake. That is not an answer, but we do have to have a plan in place about where these barns are going to be built, how we are going to manage the waste, and it is a very serious challenge for government.

I think it is wrong for government to say when the issue is raised, oh, you are against the industry, oh, we will move the hog barns. That is not the answer to this very serious situation. It is a matter of looking at the province as a whole and doing some planning of where the soil is conducive to these kinds of operations, where they make sense and where they do not make sense and having in place a government and a department that is willing to address this and show a leadership role and be prepared to say if there are plans for a hog barn to go in a particular area or other livestock operations, but I refer to hog operations in particular because they are the ones that require the most water and have a tremendous amount of waste from them. It is something the department has to address. We are going to have an increase in hog production. We are going to have an increase in other livestock production in this province.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

\* (1650)

I would ask the minister if he would share with us how his government plans to address this, not by saying, oh, well, you are against it so we are not going to build any hog barns there, oh, you are just anti livestock operation. As I say, this is a very serious issue and one that has to be addressed and one that we have to do a lot of education on. Those of us in the rural community have to be sensitive to other people who are living in the rural community, but we also have to be sensitive to the fact that there are people right across the province who are concerned about environment and how we are going to ensure that water qualities are not jeopardized, that water in lakes is not jeopardized.

How is the minister addressing this issue to ensure that we do see the industry grow at a reasonable rate and meet the demands of market, but also what

safeguards is the government putting in place to ensure that there are not problems down the road?

**Mr. Enns:** Mr. Chairman, having the advantage and privilege of having introduced a set of Manitoba Department of Agriculture Estimates some many years ago, in '66, and doing it now is perhaps the best way I can answer the honourable member's question. I am going to read to her just some of the things that are happening in this regard on a daily basis in Agriculture. A lot of this, of course, is relatively new, and I am the first one to acknowledge that.

It was only several years ago that we passed a farm practices act, a protection act; we now have a board that sits, that listens to individual complaints. Neighbours, anybody who feels a farm operation is operating in a manner that is not acceptable to guidelines or to regulations has a formal body that is provided by statute authority to listen to these complaints and make rulings.

We have livestock waste legislation; we did not use to have that on our books. We have technical review teams. Virtually any serious operator that is now proposing to develop a hog barn or any livestock venture will come to the Department of Agriculture and will submit their plans to the technical review team, and we will provide them with the kind of information that steers them in the right direction. We held a very large manure management symposium in March of last year. Ten years ago, 15 years ago, we were not doing these kind of things in the Department of Agriculture.

We have courses for applicators for those who are using herbicides and pesticides in the province. We run, of course, all kinds of open houses on livestock environmental issues. We have a wide range of programs that are sponsored on our conservation program, the CMAAS program, over 80 programs, many of them dealing with various conservation aspects, but many of them having to do with manure handling and waste disposal. We communicate with producer groups; the Manitoba Agriculture staff is constantly involved with them.

We reach out to individual rural municipalities. We work with Manitoba Rural Development staff. We work with the Union of Manitoba Municipalities and

other government departments. This is not just on an as-it-happens basis; this is on a regular basis.

Farm inspection services. Just to give you an indication of some idea of what happens on our dairy farms, farm inspection is provided by four farm inspectors. Two additional inspectors from the Food Quality and Product Development section assist with dairy farm inspections. Manitoba dairy farms are inspected to monitor compliance with regulations aimed at public health and safety. Bulk milk truck drivers are monitored for performance of duties such as sampling of quality and component testing. Bulk milk graders are trained and licensed by Manitoba Agriculture. Dairy inspectors maintain close liaison with the Manitoba milk producers to co-ordinate activities aimed at production of the safe supply of milk. Inspectors review lab results on raw milk quality and work with producers who fail to meet the standards. Information is provided by inspectors to producers contemplating either building or equipment changes. Inspectors assist in the adjudication of milk rejection for the dairy industry. Inspectors provide assistance to the Manitoba milk producers in selecting the Manitoba Dairy Farm Excellence Award.

In other words, the point that I am trying to get, Mr. Chairman, is that there are far more levels of on-hands supervision, inspection, direction being provided by the capable staff of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture in conjunction sometimes with the very commodity groups that we are inspecting. We are doing this in an increasing manner to answer the kind of concerns that Agriculture has to address in these days. Those concerns, we appreciate, are valid, and they are real, and because of the nature of agriculture and its changing pattern to larger units, it makes it even more important that we address these issues.

I simply want to indicate to the honourable member that while hogs, because of the nature and because of their profile and because of the expansion that is currently taking place, was the first target for our developing list of dos and don'ts regulations, guidelines if you like, as to how and where and under what circumstances you can properly operate a hog operation. We moved right away into the same kind of regulations for beef, for dairy, for poultry, for all livestock are covered with a published book of

regulations that is available at every Ag rep office. Anybody that plans to go into these activities should avail themselves of them, or else they can find themselves in front of the Farm Practices Board, in trouble. I have a situation right now where a major hog barn is and may be closed down. It is going to cost somebody a great deal of money. It may end up into a messy court case. I hope that will not happen, but it will happen unless the operators, the managers of that operation, do not come fully into compliance with the regulations that have to be complied with.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I guess, that is the kind of thing that I am raising with the minister and wondering what can be done to prevent this kind of situation from arising. What I am looking for is, is there any way that the department—or should the department in conjunction with the Department of Rural Development, or other departments, do the preliminary work ahead of time before someone ends up making these expensive investments in an area? I am assuming that this barn may be closed down maybe because of compliance. In most cases it has to do with water and sensitive areas.

Is there not a way that the Department of Agriculture along with other departments could do a better planning ahead of time? Maybe there should be a plan across the province where we would be spelling out where the sensitive areas are because of low water table or because of the quality of soil, that maybe barns or livestock operations should not be put in these kinds of areas to avoid just what the minister has referred to, and that being the possibility of a barn being closed down and a tremendous expense to the investor and, perhaps, expense to other people.

**Mr. Enns:** I think we have an understanding on the issue. I will just remind the honourable member that is precisely what the technical review committee that I referred to a moment ago is there for. They come to us. It is not a committee just composed entirely of Agriculture staff. It is also staff from the Department of Natural Resources with respect to water, because water is an important issue, as the member correctly—

**Mr. Chairperson:** Order, please. The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour. Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

\* (1700)

## IN SESSION

### House Business

**Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):**

Madam Speaker, I am announcing today that the subcommittee established to review the operations of the office of the Children's Advocate will meet on Tuesday, April 22, 1997, from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. in Room 255 in order to hear from the Children's Advocate, and I am announcing that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Thursday, May 8, 1997, at 10 in the forenoon in Room 255 in order to consider the 1996 Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

**Madam Speaker:** For clarification, the subcommittee of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections will meet from 10 a.m. till 12 noon on Tuesday, April 22, 1997, to hear from the Children's Advocate, Mr. Govereau.

**Mr. McCrae:** The subcommittee will be hearing presentations, but this day is set aside for the Children's Advocate himself, April 22, ten o'clock, Room 255.

**Madam Speaker:** Room 255, 10 a.m. to 12 noon. The Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Thursday, May 8, 10 a.m., in Room 255 to consider the 1996 Annual Report of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

**Madam Speaker:** The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

## DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

### Bill 200—The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act

**Madam Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), Bill

200 (The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), who has 14 minutes remaining. Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

**Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley):** I want to speak on this bill, which is a bill to urge Manitoba to move to the office of an elected Speaker. Now, the office of Speaker has been one of much debate and, indeed, of public debate in Manitoba over the last few months, and I think that is a very unusual situation. It speaks to the urgency and concern with which the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and others have introduced this bill.

It is very unusual for a Speaker to become the object of concern by the general population, and I would suggest it is because many members of this House have lost confidence in the Speaker. For those who watch the House on television or listen to it on the radio, they too I think recognize that things are not as they should be in this House and that one of the reasons for that is indeed the actions over a number of months of this particular Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I want to make it clear that this not personal. This is an issue of how this office has been conducted, and it is an issue that is of concern, I think, to all members of this House. Every member of this House has an interest and a concern and indeed the right to ensure that their rights of speaking are protected, and it is the role of the Speaker to protect the rights of individual members.

Madam Speaker, we have heard over the last number of weeks since the House reopened many, many speeches on this. Perhaps, in fact, as a result of one of your decisions, more speeches, indeed, than we had anticipated when the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) brought a grievance on this last week. The member for Broadway and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) have spoken very eloquently on this on a number of occasions, and it is in some ways quite difficult to add to the comments which they have made. It is something which I think all members should take an interest in and which they should be very carefully looking at—the office of an elected Speaker.

What is so puzzling about this, Madam Speaker, is that the government itself claims that it is interested in an elected Speaker, that it will, before the next election or after the next election, look at more detailed proposals for the office of an elected Speaker. Well, that suggests a certain kind of dissimulation on the part of this government; either they are interested in it, or they are not interested in it. If they are interested in it, then they should be moving full speed ahead with the co-operation of all the members of this House to looking at the different alternatives for elected Speakers. Indeed, there will be many to look at.

Speakers are elected in the majority of Canadian Parliaments now. The House of Commons has for many years now had an elected Speaker, and those elections are followed with great interest by all members of the House. In British Columbia, in Saskatchewan, in Alberta and in a number of the Maritime provinces, as well as, in the province of Quebec, there are elected Speakers. This is not unusual. The government is not going out on a limb, and the government, in fact if it were to move to an elected Speaker and to adopt this bill, I believe, would be serving the interests of Manitobans and would be seen visibly to be serving the interests of Manitobans.

Madam Speaker, the hesitation on the part of the government seems to me to be only for pure partisan reasons. I urge the government, as many Speakers have before me, to set aside those partisan reasons, to look at the rights of individual members, and to move to an elected Speaker as so many other Canadian legislatures have done.

Madam Speaker, I have said before in discussions on this the importance of recognizing the reluctance with which a Speaker is brought to their Chair, because that reluctance does indicate the nature of the level of responsibility and the importance that we all attach to having confidence in a Speaker of the House.

I was in fact chastised by the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for speaking about the 17th Century. It always surprised me that the member for River Heights would want to ignore the experience of Charles I. I think he remarked rather flippantly about heads rolling. He did not want to read anything or hear about anything in the past. It is only the here and now.

I had anticipated that the member for River Heights would have been interested in that crowned head which did roll in the 17th Century, because I believe that he did have quite a considerable interest in the history of the Catholic Church, and, of course, that monarch lost his head because, in part, of his religion. So I was disturbed by the member's flippant reference to such discussions of history, but then I thought, well, part of a government which, of course, is abandoning the teaching of history, not only British history but especially Canadian history.

\* (1710)

This is a government which, by the fall of this year, will be leaving it up to individual school divisions across Manitoba whether or not Canadian history is taught, required at the senior level. To me, that sets us apart from Alberta, sets it apart from British Columbia, from Saskatchewan. If we look at all of the western provinces where Canadian studies are often required for four and five years and where history and Canadian studies are certainly taught at the Grade 12 level, Manitoba is going to be an anomaly. But then, when we have members like the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) who wants to speak so disparagingly of the history of parliament, then I think perhaps we can see the origin of some of these members who take such a flippant and uncaring attitude to the teaching of the past.

I must say, Madam Speaker, that so often many of the letters I get about the government's decision to drop Canadian history from its requirements are from new Canadians, from people who will find no other way for their young people to learn the history of this country, and that is very serious. In fact, I have often challenged the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) to produce one letter, one speech, one telephone call, one Manitoban, one veterans association, one museum, one archives, one senior society which has asked for or which supports this loss of Canadian history at the senior level. So far, not to my surprise, the minister has been unable to produce one.

But I digress, Madam Speaker. We were discussing the history of parliament and the importance of an elected Speaker in the history of parliament. That is because I think a Speaker must have the confidence of



the House. They must have courage in order to do that, and the Speakers of the 17th and 18th Centuries certainly had that courage as they entered the presence of unpredictable and powerful monarchs. Our Speakers do not face that kind of autocracy, but they do face another kind of autocracy in this House. They do face the government which rules in a very authoritarian manner, which is unprepared, I believe, to look at the rights of all members of this House, and which, I believe, is not serving this House well by not taking into account and not moving with full speed to an elected Speaker.

The confidence of the House is very important not just for the maintenance of discipline in the House, and perhaps, in my view, we saw some of the breakdown of that today, government members ignoring the Speaker while she is on her feet. That is not right, and it is an indication of the lack of respect that has developed in this House and particularly on the government side as well as on this side for the influence and presence of the Speaker. Why has it come to this stage? Well, I would say, speaking from this side of the House, that there have been three decisions which have been significant in the loss of our confidence in the Speaker. The first of those, of course, is the judgment on racism, the argument that "racism" as a word cannot be used in this House. That is absolutely and fundamentally wrong, and every member I think on this side of the House has certainly continued to use the word "racism."

The House is not a tea party. The House is not a place for manuals of decorum in the sense of tea-party decorum. The House is a place of debate, a fierce and argumentative debate, and so it should be. The word "racism," the concept of racism must be named. It has to be named in Manitoba as it is throughout the rest of the world. [interjection] Well, the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) wants to say in an appropriate fashion. There is one word to describe what many of my constituents face on a daily basis and that word must continue to be used in this House, and I believe that the Speaker was very ill advised, in fact, absolutely wrong, to try to attempt to forbid the use of that word.

The second error, I think, which is significant, was the way in which the last hours of the Manitoba Telephone System bill were dealt with. Never will I

forget a Speaker who in that last day turned her back, literally physically, on the opposition, who did not respond to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) raising a point of personal privilege. Nothing could be more poignant, nothing could be more striking than that physical demonstration of a turning of her back on the members of the opposition. That was not right. It had no place in this House, and I believe that it was wrong and was one of the major features in the lack of confidence that we continue to have on this side of the House.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, most recently the private member's resolution that was put forward to discuss the issue of an elected Speaker in this House was, I believe, very ill-advisedly ruled out of order by the Speaker. I do not know what kind of advice was received on that, but it did not seem to me to accord with the responsibility of the Speaker to preserve the rights of every member of this House in private members' hour. That was an important hour. It is important for the members of the opposition, as well as for all members of the House, including the government, and it set a very unfortunate and, I think, a precedent which we certainly reject.

So those three issues, I suggest, are keys to our urging of the government for an elected Speaker. It is not a new idea, and I think the support is there by most Manitobans for an idea like this. It is one, I think, which comes from their reflections upon the practices of a continuingly and perhaps increasingly authoritarian government. They believe that it might, indeed, be some check on that.

I want to draw the attention of the members of the House to the Saskatchewan experience. Saskatchewan is one of the more recent provinces which has moved to an elected Speaker, and I believe has had great success with this. I particularly want to draw the attention of members of the House to the role that the Saskatchewan Speaker has taken upon himself. He has taken upon himself the role of educating the people of Saskatchewan, not just children in the schools, but adults in community centres and in church basements, educating them about parliament.

Increasingly, as we go to 300 channels and we are inundated with American television, a different

practice, a different legal system, so many people seem to assume that those are the principles and practices of Canada and they are not. We have a very different tradition, and I believe that all members of this House believe that there is a very proud tradition, but it is one which is increasingly difficult to get across in the sense of public education. Particularly, of course, as we have a government which is about to leave a vacuum in the study of Canadian history and in Canadian studies in Manitoba schools, then I think the role of the Speaker in taking on that public education role would be most important and very appropriate for Manitoba and would perform a very significant public service.

So, with that, Madam Speaker, I conclude my remarks and urge the government to take very seriously and perhaps even urgently our bill for the election of a Speaker in Manitoba.

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** It gives me pleasure to rise to speak to this private member's bill. The first thing I want to put forward is that as my amendment in the first matter of privilege that came before this session called for an elected Speaker, we, of course, are in favour of the concept. I think we have heard insinuated, if not directly from government benches, that the concept of an elected Speaker is something the government is not totally against, but they have spoken about now is not the time to do it.

So, if this bill goes to committee, what we will be doing from our caucus is bringing forward an amendment to make this bill effective upon the first session after the next election. We call on the government to support that amendment, because with that it puts this matter to rest for now. It is admitting that the concept of an elected Speaker is something that can be welcomed by all members of the House. As the government House leader said, even when he spoke in favour of the concept, now during the time of dissension is not the time to do it. Let us be practical. The bill will not pass unless we have government support. It will never get to committee. So there is a possibility if all members have spoken out in favour of the concept of an elected Speaker, and I think all members would find some merit in it, it is just a matter of timing.

\* (1720)

I would challenge the government members to allow this bill to get to committee and amend it so that it comes into force immediately after the next election. In that way, they could support the concept without any admittance to the fact that it was forced, that it is any reflection on the present Speaker, but support the concept. I challenge the government members to rise and speak in favour of this bill going to committee so it could be amended, and I hope that they will do this.

As far as the idea of the elected Speaker and having the support of all members, I know in recent developments in Alberta the newly elected Speaker, Ken Kowalski, who is absolutely no relation whatsoever—he is a Conservative, I am a Liberal—we know that in the recent election that he has already demonstrated his independence from the Premier and, yes, we may see that in an elected Speaker.

It is not a cure-all to have an elected Speaker. We will be looking at the qualities that person will bring to the House, but they will have the support, and that is why at the beginning of the session I brought forward the amendment to the matter of privilege motion that we have an elected Speaker, copied off the B.C. experience, because whichever Speaker we have should have the support of the members of this Chamber so it could be done effectively.

On a number of occasions, I have spoken and I have supported the Speaker, and I have also, on occasion, disagreed with the rulings of the Speaker. I could say that as late as the latest Question Periods I see the Speaker, because of the fire of this session, just like a metal that has been fired, has become stronger and more valuable, and I believe the Speaker is becoming a better Speaker as a result of that.

During Question Period, I believe that we see fairness both in the asking of questions and in the answering of questions, but to have an elected Speaker would be a benefit to this Chamber. My brief comment is, I would like to see that the government members allow this bill go to committee so that it could be amended, so it comes effective immediately after the next election.

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** My light seems to be flashing. All right, there it is. [interjection] No, but it was flashing in a very excited kind of way, and I was

just worried about it, you know. Thank you, my lights are on, Madam Speaker. [interjection] There is someone home, that is right, exactly.

I rise to support this motion by my honourable colleague from Thompson. I think that this is a very important bill before the House. It would be very nice if the sentiments of the member from The Maples were sufficient to move us forward, and in the absence of the kind of events that we unfortunately saw in the last session and have seen a couple of times in this session, his sentiments would probably move us forward. We could all agree that following some period of time we would have an elected Speaker.

But the difficulty is we have two years or so, perhaps 18 months, not likely less but potentially less, before we would get to the point where this legislation would come into effect if we followed the advice of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), and we might reasonably ask, why an election, why not the rise of a session, why not immediately? Why not—I mean, if an elected Speaker is a good thing, Madam Speaker, why is it a good thing to wait for a long period of time for that to take place?

The people of Ontario just witnessed a situation which was not terribly dissimilar to the situation that we had in this House last fall. We had legislation that was massively unpopular. Some 80 percent of rural Manitobans and 67 percent of Manitobans overall opposed the government's legislation to privatize MTS. In Ontario, some 80 percent of Torontonians opposed the massive centralization of power in the hands of a small council to govern three million people. They made that very clear in a referendum or a plebiscite organized by the municipalities themselves, with a very high turnout. Yet the government persisted in massively unpopular legislation.

What did their elected Speaker do? Madam Speaker, he showed tolerance, he showed discretion. He refused the demands of government that the rules be bent and broken and suspended and moved and changed to pass this legislation, and he essentially presided over a very difficult debate that went 24 hours a day for I believe 10 days to dispose in an orderly fashion of all of the 11,000 amendments that were proposed by the opposition in Ontario, chiefly the New Democratic Party opposition.

What happened here last fall? Well, this party put forward some 35 amendments, not 11,000, and there was apparently no will to even debate 35 serious, substantive amendments. Not one of those amendments was simply cosmetic, all of them were substantive. Yet this House was prevented from debating those substantive amendments.

Madam Speaker, you by your actions rescued the government from a nonexistent crisis. You put in place rules which are not required by any reasonable interpretation of our then provisional rules. Even if you had done that and then moved in some kind of reasonably tolerant way to bring your imposed closure, you did not need to do what you then proceeded to do, which was to cut off the most precious right of members, and that is the right of privilege to speak on a Matter of Privilege.

So I would say to the honourable member for The Maples, we are talking about two different issues here but, unfortunately, because of the conduct of this House under this Speaker, those two issues have come together and they cannot be separated, in our view. I will say again as we have said before, the current Speaker does not enjoy the confidence of this side of the House. It is not a question of not enjoying the confidence just when we disagree. When you do not enjoy the confidence of the House, it is a very serious and persistent problem, and it cannot be remedied by being a little more tolerant for a few days.

The difficulty is that last week we saw again the kind of intolerance and lack of discretion which got us into very serious difficulties last fall in which a motion that was properly on the Order Paper had been ruled able to be drawn for a private member's resolution which spoke to a matter that had not been disposed of. Witness the fact that we are now after that period of time now debating this bill. It had not been disposed of at all. Yet it was ruled out of order.

\* (1730)

I think that the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) and other members opposite will probably find that there are a number of resolutions in previous session which, if the same stringent and narrow criteria had been applied, would also have been

found out of order, but Speakers were wise enough not to do that, because they recognized that private members' hour is the only time that backbenchers on the government side and opposition members have to put things before the House for debate and discussion which they feel are important. So that privilege of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) was essentially abrogated by a Speaker who should have been wise enough, in our view, not even to be in the Chair for the debate of that motion, let alone not to rule it out of order if she insisted on being in the Chair.

Madam Speaker, I think it is unfortunate, but we have to deal with this act now, and waiting for two or one and a half years is not good enough. I think we have seen that elected Speakers across the country have provided judgment and wisdom and have retained the confidence of the House. There have been, so far as I know, no crises in legislative assemblies or the Parliament of Canada of a procedural nature since we elected Speakers in those bodies.

In fact, as the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) pointed out, the honourable Speaker for Saskatchewan is using that office in a very wise and proactive way to educate adults and children, young people in particular, in Saskatchewan about the nature of the parliamentary tradition in Canada, about the role of the Speaker, about the privileges and responsibilities of members on both sides of the House. I cannot think of a more valuable thing to be doing at a time when all of our roles are held in somewhat low repute by far too many of our citizens.

So I think, Madam Speaker, that if you truly had the interest of your office at heart you would have heeded the several opportunities that you have had to put this office up for election, and this Legislature would be a stronger, I think, a wiser place if it had chosen you on an elected ballot basis or chosen someone else on an elected ballot basis because the whole incentive then of the elected person would be to act in such a way as to retain the trust and confidence of the House, having earned it by secret ballot. There is a much greater incentive to retain it on the same basis.

Madam Speaker, I think if we look at the question of an elected Speaker, we have to not just think about the

mechanics of election, but we have to think about what the office as it is now held has done to this House.

Madam Speaker, I do not think you can understand, though I know you were very stressed and very distressed by the events of last fall, the feeling that I had of the quiet march of boots that said this place is no longer free, that at the discretion, not of the House as a whole, but of the Speaker, the most vital rights of mine, my colleagues' and indeed other members' could be restrained and eliminated for a period of days by a Speaker operating quite outside any rules and precedents that we have ever had before.

I do not think you can understand the chill that went through this side of the House when we recognized that though we would likely lose the vote, we were not even going to be allowed the dignity of opposition. We are not naive. We know that a determined government using the rules will ultimately achieve its purpose. We always hope, as the government hoped when it was in opposition, to amend and to change legislation in a progressive and a hopeful way. All oppositions hope that, but all oppositions also know that at the end of the day a determined government will have its way using our rules.

You did not need to help them do that, and I do not believe an elected Speaker would have done so, Madam Speaker. I believe an elected Speaker would have said, sort it out for yourselves, folks. You have rules, use them. You have closure, use it. You have got speed-up, use it. You have got extending the session, use it. You do not need me to solve this problem. You have got rules, use them. But this Speaker did not do that and the chill that went through the House when those rights were suspended, when rules were invented to go into a vacuum that did not exist, I do not think you yet understand the degree of harm that you did to the House and to the office.

So I do not think it is simply a matter, with all due respect to the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski), that we can all agree as goodhearted folk that, at the end of the sitting of this Legislature, at the call of an election, then when the new House convenes we will elect a Speaker. That is, of course, something that should happen, but it should happen before that too. It should happen this session. It should happen now so

that the people of Manitoba would begin to have the kind of president of their Assembly, presiding officer of their Assembly that would take the proactive steps taken by the House of Commons Speaker to issue instructional, educational materials, would have the opportunity to do what the Speaker in Saskatchewan is doing, would have the confidence of the House as the Conservative Speaker in the Conservative government of Ontario's legislative assembly has, who presided with absolute impartiality over a very difficult and very fractious debate, did not break the rules, did not feel the need to invent rules, simply said, well, we have procedures, we will follow them and the debate will ultimately end.

Madam Speaker, I call on all members of the House to recognize that we have a problem here. The problem is not going to go away by simply saying, well, perhaps by the next election we will talk about it. The problem is going to persist and it has persisted, not just last November, not just when "racist" policies was ruled an unacceptable term in this House. It was underscored even as late as last week when a private members' hour motion resolution was deemed to be out of order on some very weak grounds indeed.

So I call on all members on both sides of the House to recognize that we need to repair the trust and confidence in the procedures governing this House and to do that we need to elect a Speaker.

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert):** Madam Speaker, I was not going to speak to this, but I have come to the point where I have been listening to the debate and it has finally gotten to me a little bit. The smoke screen is being putting up here. We are not debating the issue of an elected Speaker. We are not debating the issue of a secret ballot. We are reflecting on the Chair and that offends me, because I do not think we should be dealing with reflection on you as our Speaker but on the issue before us, and that is the election of a Speaker.

Whether we discuss the issue now or in the future, I think it is an important debate. But let us look at what we do within Manitoba. Part of what I am looking at when I see this bill, it says, we should use until such time as we have our own rules the rules of the House of Parliament. Well, Madam Speaker, I do not think that

would be right. I think before we move to an elected Speaker we should discuss and debate the issue but debate the issue around what it is, the secret ballot, around what it is, the elected Speaker, and around what the rules would be of that elected Speaker.

Throughout the country we look at the elected Speakers and the members are often referring to those Speakers. They refer to Speaker Hagel, they have referred to the past speaker from Alberta. These Speakers are not challenged within their rulings. When they make a ruling there is no challenge of the Chair. Those rulings are the ruling, and there is no challenge to that ruling.

So, before we look at the concept of an elected Speaker, we have to make sure we have in place the rules that flow with it. I think the proper place to have the discussion on this matter would be at a Rules committee, or we could get together and strike a committee as we did on the past rules even though they fell apart. We came pretty close. We came pretty close in the long run to coming together, and I think that is closer than we have come in this House in a long time.

\* (1740)

Madam Speaker, I think it is time we get together as members of this Legislature and possibly discuss this issue and look at it. We are all here within the room. The honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), I remember just the last session when he was speaking against the issue of secret ballots. Strongly he opposed secret ballots when it came to certification within his unions, but it is funny he supports a secret ballot here. I would like to hear the concepts around—[interjection] But I would like to hear the concepts around—[interjection] But explain to me the reasons why one secret ballot is okay and the other is not.

**An Honourable Member:** I did not even say that.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** I thought it was you. I might be mistaken. It might not have been the member for Crescentwood, but I will research it, Madam Speaker. It might have been the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), but I will research it. I know it was from that area. All I am saying is it was somebody over there, because they voted against the bill.

Madam Speaker, it is not the concept of elected Speaker. I think we have got it across the country. The elected Speaker is working. If we are going to have an elected Speaker, let us look at how we establish that. We are going about it the wrong way right now. Right now we are using this as a hammer and a smoke screen. Let us get down to business and let us deal with the issue of an elected Speaker for the future, but let us deal with it in a rational fashion. I do not believe this is the forum to be doing it in, because I do not think we are gaining any points and we are not getting any closer on the matter.

Madam Speaker, I would like to see us—and if we are going to debate here, bring forward the issues on why it is good. Bring forward the rules that would go with it, so we can hear those rules and the reasons why. [interjection] It works in British Columbia. It worked in Alberta.

**Mr. Ashton:** It worked in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** That is correct.

**Mr. Ashton:** It worked in Ontario. It worked in Quebec.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is correct. It has worked throughout the country, but they had established rules prior to putting in place an elected Speaker.

**Mr. Ashton:** You have to pass the bill first, then you pass the amendments.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** Well, this is where I disagree with the honourable member. He says pass the bill first and then make the amendments. Madam Speaker, I do not believe in making sausage backwards, and that is what we would end up with.

**Mr. Ashton:** Marcel, you have to do it by legislation.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** We can do it by legislation, Madam Speaker, by putting forward the rules first. That is all I am saying. There is no reason—[interjection] We put the rules together last time without bringing the Rules committee together until such time as we would hammer a deal. Why not pool together as what we are

in this House, work out a system that works, bring it to the Rules committee once we have struck a deal, and after that we could come back in the House and debate the matter. But this is wrong. This is the wrong forum and the wrong way to do it. If we are going to do it right, let us get together and work together to correct whatever the inequities are within the Chamber. Thank you.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments on Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, that was tabled in this Legislature by my colleague the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Madam Speaker, I want to talk a few minutes about the efforts that the member for Thompson has taken to ensure that this House operates in a clear and democratic fashion and that the office of the Speaker is essentially operated as an impartial and neutral office to oversee the affairs and conduct of this particular Legislative Assembly and, hopefully, future Legislative Assemblies. The member for Thompson, I know, has over a period of time worked very, very diligently. We see it time in and time out in this Legislature where he stands up either on points of order, or he is able to stand up and represent his constituents, where he quite clearly believes very deeply in the democratic process of this Legislative Assembly and has taken steps here again today to instill even further the principles of a democratic institution and, by that, I mean the office of the Speaker.

I want to thank the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for his efforts in bringing forward this bill and for his efforts in the past in the debates we have had, whether it be on MTS or on other issues, where he has raised time and again the rules of the parliamentary process, the traditions of this Legislative Assembly and other assemblies, including the Parliament of Canada, in the operation and conduct of the affairs of governments throughout Canada.

Madam Speaker, this is not a matter to be taken lightly. There was considerable pressure on the

member for Thompson when he, as our House leader, was having discussions with this government during the MTS debate last fall, and I watched our member for Thompson very clearly work within the rules, the existing rules of this Legislative Assembly. He did not take steps or look for ways to get around the rules, he worked within the rules that were established practice of this Assembly. He believes very strongly in those rules, as do I.

Madam Speaker, I am one of 57 MLAs in this Legislative Assembly. I am elected by the 13,000 electorate that are in the constituency of Transcona. They expect me to come here to represent their interests on matters that affect them.

Madam Speaker, last fall, when the MTS bill was being debated in this Legislative Assembly, Bill 67, the constituents of Transcona, through a survey that I had done, had given me a very clear message, 99.9 percent of the constituents of my community who responded, and I brought those surveys to this House, and I showed members of this Legislative Assembly what the people of Transcona were saying. They did not want their MTS sold. This government and the Speaker of the day told me that I could not represent the interests of my constituents who had given me a clear message: Do not sell MTS. Yet, I was denied the right as one of 57 equal people in this Legislative Assembly to represent the wishes of my constituents on third reading of Bill 67. You denied me through the office of Speaker and the utilization of Speaker of my right to represent my constituents' interests.

Madam Speaker, there is only person after an election that is chosen to be Speaker. I have watched now through two elections where the Premier of the day, the Premier having been elected of the government, and the Leader of the Opposition go to the Chair of the member who has been chosen to be Speaker of this Legislative Assembly. I have watched on two occasions now, having been a member of this Assembly, watched that person dragged from the chair as the tradition would have and escorted through the centre of this Assembly to the Chair of Speaker. I expect when that action happens that the Speaker will act in an impartial and neutral way so that I can represent the wishes of my constituents, and that is what I expect from my Speaker when I come to this Chamber.

There is an honour and a tradition of any Speaker going into the Chair to act in that neutral and impartial way and to put aside their political beliefs, as strongly as they may be held, so that other members, the other 56 members of this Assembly, can represent the wishes of their constituents and get on with the business affairs of this House. I do not expect to have any special treatment, but I do expect to be treated fairly, and that is something that did not happen during the debate on Bill 67 last November when this government utilized the office of the Speaker, hid behind the skirts of the Speaker to ram through Bill 67. That was an impartial and a politically motivated act, and I will never forget that as long as I live.

I want my Speaker to be a nonpartisan individual. I expect that when I come to this Legislative Assembly. I do not expect when I stand up in this House to speak, because I did not know when I stood up to speak today whether my microphone would be on, when I stand up to speak and I am the only member on my feet at that time, I want my microphone to be on to be recognized to represent my constituents. I do not want to have to guess every day that I come here, is the Speaker going to recognize me today or not? I expect to have that opportunity to represent my constituents as I would expect the opportunity for each and every other of the 56 members of this Assembly to have that opportunity. That did not happen on November 27 and 28 of 1996. The microphones at this Assembly were turned off. I and my colleagues in this House were denied the opportunity to represent the people of our constituencies, the people that sent us to this place.

I do not know how members opposite feel, but I get paid and I am compensated very adequately for coming to this building to represent their interests, and I expect to do the job to the best of my ability, and they expect me to do the job to the best of my ability. But when you turn off my microphone, utilizing the office of the Speaker to do that, you have denied me the right to represent my constituents and to earn the money and to do the job that I am paid to come here to do.

\* (1750)

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the government say that you are interested in electing a Speaker but only if it is at your convenience. Not now, sometime in the

future, you will have an elected Speaker. That is what you say. You said you believe in electing a Speaker. Well, here we have Bill 200 before us here today that has been tabled and in second reading, brought forward by my honourable colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), that will give the government the opportunity to go forward and debate this bill and to let this bill move into committee to give the public the opportunity to come out and comment on this bill.

If you find there are parts of this bill that maybe do not meet your needs, maybe it needs to be amended, let it go to committee and hear the public, and let them have their say on what they think about this piece of legislation, because I can assure you the comments that I got back from my constituents were we want an elected Speaker of this Assembly. If you judge whatever weight you want to put on the surveys that were done in the media in the province here, they too showed that the public of Manitoba very much wants to have an elected Speaker.

I know I have had the opportunity to talk to my colleague the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) as one of many members on this side who surveyed their constituents, and I believe, Madam Speaker, that 90 percent of the people of Selkirk that responded to that survey want an elected Speaker. Now if that does not speak clearly to the government opposite about electing a Speaker, I do not know what does.

**An Honourable Member:** Look at this tally here. Look at this.

**Mr. Reid:** There is a survey that was done, and I talked a few moments ago about a survey, and I thank my colleague the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk). The survey that was done I believe was in the Winnipeg Sun in March of this year. The question was the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly should be elected by MLAs, not appointed. Of the call-ins that were made to that line, 90 percent agreed with electing a Speaker—90 percent of the people. It is very, very clear that it is the will of the people that want this.

But judging by the arrogance of this particular government and going back to the legislation that they tabled in this Assembly last fall, you want to consolidate power. You consolidate power, and we are

seeing it again in Bill 17 that you brought forward here again this session, the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) tabled here, The Retail Business Holiday Closing Amendment Act.

You are consolidating power again into the hands of the minister just like you did on Bill 17 last time, The Essential Services Act; just like you did in The Labour Relations Amendment Act. Bill 26, last session; just like you did in Bill 73, The Construction Industry Wages Amendment Act last session, and other bills dealing with health care. You consolidated power, power into the hands of the ministers and the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

You do not want to give the opportunity for members in opposition the ability to represent their constituents because they may be somewhat critical of some of the decisions that you make. But that is my role as an opposition member to come here and to be constructively critical of the operations of government and to provide suggestions to members in government to allow them to effectively carry out their duties and responsibilities. I have tried to carry out that mandate to the best of my ability. I have provided suggestions to the government which you have chosen to ignore. That is your right and your responsibility if you choose to do that, but I have tried to be constructive in the criticisms that I have brought forward.

Madam Speaker, if we had seen the former Speaker of this Legislative Assembly take the actions that you had taken last November 27 and 28 when we were in debate in this Legislative Assembly during the Meech Lake constitutional debate, where would this country have been today if you had denied that right? I believe we would have been into constitutional gridlock in this country because you would have broken the rules of this Assembly affecting the Constitution of Canada. Yet that Speaker had the intestinal fortitude to make the decision he did to allow the Legislative Assembly to determine its own fate and its own future without imposing the will of the office of Speaker, and I think that was the right decision. It is still the right decision to allow the members of this Assembly, duly elected by their constituents, to make those decisions.

Madam Speaker, I listened to the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) talk about this particular bill,



and he says that he does not want to send it to committee. He does not want to give the public the opportunity to come out and add comment to this particular piece of legislation because he says you should not amend it when you go to committee. Well, the question I have from his comments then is: If you do not want to amend it when it goes to committee, then why did you bring in 36 amendments on Bill 67, the MTS bill, in committee?

If that bill was that bad that you had to bring in 36 amendments, then why did you not withdraw the bill? Obviously, your arguments are weak. You should allow this bill, I believe, to go to committee to give the public the opportunity to speak on this very important matter, because I can assure you the public will tell you that we should have an elected Speaker of this Legislative Assembly as we have in many, many other provinces of Canada, including the Parliament of Canada.

Now, I listened to the arguments of the member for St. Norbert as well when he said he did not understand the clause dealing with the rules because he says we do not have any rules and what this Bill 200 proposes is to follow the provisions of the Standing Orders of the House of Commons respecting the election of Speaker. Well, there is a tradition because they have had elected Speakers for some time in the Parliament of Canada, and we can follow those rules for the election of a Speaker. It is not a complicated matter.

**An Honourable Member:** All it takes is the will.

**Mr. Reid:** I think that all it takes—as the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk) suggests—is the political will on the part of the government to come forward with this particular bill to allow it to go and complete second reading. I know members opposite will probably continue to stand this piece of legislation and not want to debate it, to try and drag it out to the end of the session and never add perhaps another word on this bill, as I saw today when the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) was prevented from speaking. He was asked to sit down and have it stand in his name. Now I expect there will not be another opportunity for that member to stand up and add his comments on this, that members of the government will be stymied or muzzled from adding their comments on Bill 200 to allow this

debate to conclude, to go to committee to allow for public hearings.

Madam Speaker, with those words, I hope that this government will recognize the error of their ways, that they have in a sense taken away the honour and the tradition of the office of Speaker by utilizing the office of Speaker for their dirty deeds in the passage of Bill 67 last November. I think it is improper to use the office of Speaker, and if you want to restore some credibility to the office of Speaker, you have the opportunity here today to do the honourable thing, to allow this Bill 200 to go through to public hearings and allow the public to have their say, pass Bill 200 and then have an election for office of Speaker if you really believe it is necessary to have a Speaker elected.

Madam Speaker, with those few words I will give members of the government the opportunity to stand up and add comment on Bill 200, and perhaps then we can pass this bill and send it through to committee.

**Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James):** Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to put a few words on the record on Bill 200, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, and it basically brings in a bill which provides for an elected Speaker by secret ballot.

This is a timely bill, a bill that is supported by our side of the House, by the independent members of the third party and I am sure by most of the members who sit on that side. What we ask is for them to look larger than the political party and do what is the right thing, do what the people of Manitoba want, do what the members of this Legislature want and pass on this bill to committee so that it can be reviewed by the public and have an opportunity to be amended, if needed, and then to ultimately be given final approval and to proceed with the will of Manitobans.

As we have seen from petitions, from the survey, from the newspaper, the majority of Manitobans, over 90 percent, are in agreement for the process to be elected. Madam Speaker, the time is now for the government to move on this. The opportunity is there for them to make the difference. The opportunity is there for them to show leadership and say, yes, this is a good bill brought forward by the member for

Thompson (Mr. Ashton), and it meets the needs of Manitobans.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable

member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), who will have 13 minutes remaining; and the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), who will have 14 minutes remaining.

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 17, 1997

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