



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

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Speaker*



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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature**

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, April 9, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling today the report under The Fatality Inquiries Act for the year 1990.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the '89-90 Annual Report of the Department of Urban Affairs.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister responsible for and charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table today the 1990 Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board of Manitoba.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 20—The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Rural Development): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay), I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that Bill 20, The Animal Husbandry Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'élevage, be introduced and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us today Mr. Mats Marling, who is the Consul General of Sweden.

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

Also with us this afternoon, from the Rosenort School, we have nineteen Grade 11 students. They are under the direction of Mr. Herbert Bjarnson.

This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Goods and Services Tax Sales Tax Harmonization

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, during the Leaders' debate, September 6, 1990, when all of us were debating the issues facing Manitobans, the Premier, in answering the question on harmonization of the GST said, and I quote, we will not harmonize it. He did not say that, but he was speaking to the question about harmonizing the tax. He said, we do not tax children's clothing. GST will. We do not tax haircuts; we do not tax music lessons. GST will. It is negative overall.

* (1335)

Given the fact that on Friday on the same radio show and lately in his public comments the Premier is allowing for the fact that it is now an option before his government, when clearly in the election he made it clear to Manitobans that it was not an option to harmonize the GST, I would ask the Premier today to clearly state that he will follow through on the words in the Leaders' debate on September 6 and say no to the harmonization of the GST, as he said to the people of Manitoba during the election.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for that question.

The fact of the matter is that as long as people propose harmonization, as long as people suggest harmonization, we have to respond to those suggestions. That is all that we have been doing so far, responding to rumours and suggestions by opposition politicians that somehow this is our plan.

The fact of the matter is that people are expressing legitimate concerns about the GST and its application and all sorts of complications that it has introduced into the system and, as any government does, we have to listen to the complaints of people. We have to listen to them

every day from the opposition members, but that does not necessarily mean that we always do what people say we should be doing, because we cannot agree with everyone.

To be honest with you, it is always difficult to have to choose between people presenting different positions all the time, but the fact of the matter is, we make those choices, we stand by those choices.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I was not asking the Premier to agree with everyone, I was just asking the Premier to agree with himself, from September 6, last year. That is all I was asking.

Does the Premier agree with himself and will he keep his word from September 6 not to harmonize the GST and to say categorically to Manitobans, no, just as I said during the election, I say now, it is not an option for this government?

Mr. Filmon: I said it that time, we do not tax children's clothing. I said it that time, we do not tax music lessons. I said it that time, and we still do not, Mr. Speaker.

Civil Servants Layoffs

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I have another important question to the Premier.

The economy of Manitoba now is predicted to be the last out of the recession. -(interjection)- Well, you know we have thousands of people every day getting more and more layoff notices in our province. Private sector investment is predicted to go down in a negative way.

Yesterday, in a question that was asked by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), a question asking whether the layoffs at the Selkirk Rolling Mills would be taken into consideration for public sector layoffs, the Premier refused, as he always does now in this House, to answer the question.

My question to the Premier is: In light of the devastating private sector investment, the devastating environment that we now have in terms of unemployment, is the Premier now going to change the course of the government and not engage in layoffs in the public sector that will further deteriorate the economy of this province and further deteriorate the private sector and the public sector right across this province?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition one of these days has to decide whether or not he wants to be a union leader

or whether or not he wants to be a representative of all the people of this province. He cannot keep coming here day after day trying to argue on behalf of his union friends, the union bosses, who obviously he believes are not doing a good enough job themselves. He is here in the Legislature trying to do their jobs for them.

We have to represent all the people of Manitoba. We are committed to keep taxes down. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has said, we will not raise personal income taxes. We are the only government in this country in the last three years that has lowered taxes, lowered personal taxes, lowered corporate taxes, Mr. Speaker. We inherited the second highest overall tax regime in this entire country, because consistently the NDP for six and a half years under Howard Pawley raised taxes, raised taxes, raised taxes.

Now, every day in the House they ask us, spend more, spend more, spend more, so that you have to raise taxes, raise taxes and raise taxes. That is not the way for us to fight a recession. This is a national recession. This is a problem that is being faced by every single province in this country, and this is the time when we have to work together to try and avoid the necessity to do what the NDP wants and raise taxes. The only way we can do it—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1340)

Rotary Pines Project Government Funding

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, government programs in the Department of Housing are facing funding caps, cutbacks or elimination, in spite of a great need for decent, affordable housing for Manitobans. Co-op HomeStart has had no new units built or allocated in the last two years. The 55-Plus supplement has been deindexed and only five of 106 housing proposals were funded last year.

Why then is this Minister of Housing subsidizing the controversial Rotary Pines Project?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, there are 22 housing programs in the Department of Housing established by and large by the former government. One of those, the Seniors RentalStart program, has had two projects approved during the past year. One of them happens to be the Rotary Pines. It is a legitimate

project by a legitimate group for senior citizens in the community of St. James-Assiniboia.

An Honourable Member: What have you got against seniors?

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I have nothing against seniors.

Why has this minister approved funding for the Rotary Pines Project -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, we in this party support seniors and we support the programs that we put in place.

My question is: Why has this minister approved funding for this project which is under the main airport flight path? It was opposed by area residents. It was opposed by airport officials. It was even opposed by their friends in the Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Ernst: By the way, Mr. Speaker, this is the first time that a Seniors RentalStart project has been awarded to the community of St. James-Assiniboia, where there is a definite need because of a large number of senior citizens in that community.

Secondly, if the member would take a drive down Portage Avenue, he would see existing about half a dozen projects right around the site for the Rotary Pines Project, all of a similar configuration. So the question of it being under the flight path, Mr. Speaker, I do not think is terribly relevant.

It is true that there were concerns expressed by the airport group with regard to this and other projects surrounding the airport. There is a concern that we do not cause the airport deterioration in terms of noise levels that will cause it to close, perhaps, say at midnight as do other airports around the country. So, Mr. Speaker, we are very cognizant of that and of the other portfolio, the Minister of Urban Affairs. They are in discussions with the city to ensure that under Plan Winnipeg protection of the airport for planning for the future in the city of Winnipeg will be addressed, and that I expect will happen.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, why is Manitoba Housing using almost half of its RentalStart program funds of \$4.6 million for a single project when there are much more pressing demands for public housing, co-op housing and rental subsidies for low-income Manitobans, especially in the inner city?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, the function of public housing in Manitoba, and indeed in Canada, comes under the general jurisdiction of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation allocates numbers of units to each province under each category of program.

We are using the maximum of those units offered by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. Unfortunately, over time those numbers of units have been continually reduced. We are using all of the units and the funding necessary to meet the use of all those units within the social housing structure as allotted by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

Goods and Services Tax Sales Tax Harmonization

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

The Premier goes to great lengths to tell us over and over again in this House that he is not going to increase taxes. Yet, as the direct action of this government, he has seen to it that there has been an increase in user fees for students, for seniors living in personal care homes. He has deindexed payments to those who are the lowest level of seniors income. All of those, Mr. Speaker, are a form of tax.

Why will he not admit today that they are also going to increase taxes through the harmonization of the GST?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, firstly, the member is totally inaccurate in her assertion, but I suggest to her that if every time the City of Winnipeg raises its bus fares, that is considered to be an increased tax; if every time the municipal golf courses increase the charges that they put on people who play golf, that is an increased tax, then she is totally distorting the picture.

* (1345)

The fact of the matter is that people who are in circumstances whereby they use public services, people who use services that maybe a great majority of the public do not use in some cases, and they are being charged fees for the use of that, that is not an increase in taxation. This government has the best record of any provincial government in the country, I might say, at keeping taxes down.

If she wants to make comparisons, I invite her to make comparisons with Liberal administrations in recent history in this country. The Province of Ontario, in its previous five years under Liberal administration, had the biggest tax grab in the history of Canada put upon its people. The Province of Newfoundland, under a Liberal government, has consistently raised taxes, Mr. Speaker. That is the reality of it. This province has kept the taxes down. We are proud of that record and we are proud of the fact that we have been consistent in doing that. I challenge the member to check the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the minister would reference fees on golf courses, which is a sport paid generally by upper-income earners in this province, but he does not consider—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, he has no compassion it would appear for senior citizens who may be finding themselves with 90 cents less a month because he has deindexed 55-Plus.

Mr. Speaker, why is this minister unwilling to tell the people of Manitoba that they will indeed receive tax increases this year when he harmonizes the PST and the GST?

Mr. Filmon: I do not accept the assumptions in the Leader of the Liberal Party's assertions, No. 1. Number 2, I think that the Leader of the Liberal Party is starting to get a great deal out of touch, Mr. Speaker, because when there have been increases in the golf course fees for municipal and provincial golf courses, the greatest number of letters that we have received have been from senior citizens, people on low incomes, because these are public courses that are kept deliberately at low rates so that they can enjoy that game. This is not the playground of the wealthy.

I believe that the Leader of the Liberal Party is out of touch with that issue, as she was when she said that she would turf out 40 percent of the people who were living in personal care homes in this province, saying that they did not deserve to be there, that they did not need to be there. She was totally out of touch with that issue and she is totally out of touch on this issue.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, this First Minister is completely out of touch with people who live in the inner city of this community and who live on 55-Plus supplements, because those people do not play golf because they cannot afford to play golf.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the First Minister is very simple. If he believes that we are giving incorrect information in this House with respect to their plans with respect to harmonization, will he stand in his place and say clearly and unequivocally that they are not going to harmonize the PST and the GST?

*(1350)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I will not engage in speculation that is designed for the purposes of the opposition parties. Information with respect to any matters to do with the fiscal or the spending aspects of this administration will be put forward in complete detail on Tuesday at the time that the budget is released by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). I invite members opposite to be ready for the debate, to be ready for the discussion, to be ready to admit that all of the leaks, all of the exaggerations that they have put forward have not been accurate. I invite them to have their lines ready to apologize to the people of Manitoba.

Fuel Pricing Northern Manitoba

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer Affairs.

Over a month ago, the Town of The Pas wrote to this minister requesting a review of gas prices in the town of The Pas, as prices were significantly less in many nearby communities and over 10 cents per litre less in Winnipeg.

Why has this minister not brought forward an inquiry into the prices in the North? With that, I would like to table some documents.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this question was asked and answered this morning at the MAUM convention. During that time, 11 cabinet ministers were made available to the audience for a question period, not at all like this Question Period.

I commend the members of MAUM for asking questions seeking information they did not have, for expressing questions of concern that were

important to them in a dignified and responsible way, a way in which this Question Period would do well to emulate upon occasion in regard to your comments of the other week.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: My point has just been made, Mr. Speaker, by members opposite.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: I will speak when the Chamber is quiet and able to hear my reply.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to remind the honourable Madam Minister that answers to questions should be as brief as possible, should deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I will provide a brief answer to that question as you request.

As the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) noted at the convention this morning, the concern was expressed about the gasoline prices in certain parts of the province having not yet come down as they have in other parts of the province. The gasoline prices have come down to prewar prices, to the prices that they were prior to the Gulf crisis. In certain parts of the province, they are coming down more slowly than in other parts.

For example, last week in Brandon the mayor was expressing concern that their prices were hovering around 54. Today the prices in Brandon are 47. Many other centres in the province have experienced the same phenomena.

* (1355)

Mr. Lathlin: I have a supplementary question, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to remind the minister that she is Minister of Consumer Affairs for all of Manitoba. When gas prices in Winnipeg are 10 cents less than in The Pas, it is time that action was taken. What action will this government take to reduce the gas prices in the North? We do not need any more monitoring.

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the gas prices are moving and they are moving down. They are moving down more quickly in some parts of the province than in others. Gas prices are at the wholesale level reflecting the price of world crude.

If the retail prices are slightly sticky in areas where there is less competition than in areas where they have traditionally been a little higher, I expect to see them continue the downward slide that has been evidenced in other areas in the province.

Mr. Lathlin: I have a final supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The question is very straightforward.

When will this minister respond to the Town of The Pas and demand an explanation from those suppliers who are charging northern and rural stations so much to deliver gas to the North?

Mrs. McIntosh: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken this morning with the mayor from The Pas as well as councillors from that area. I have indicated that I will be responding to them after I have consulted with those in my department on their specific concerns. If the member for The Pas is asked -(interjection)- if the member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) wishes to put a question, I am sure he will have an opportunity to later.

If the member for The Pas is asking me to regulate gasoline prices, then I may point out that which he probably already knows, that is that in the two provinces in Canada where prices have been regulated, those prices are higher today and have been higher throughout this crisis than they are in The Pas.

CKY Television Strike Government Advertising Withdrawal

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, for more than 130 days CKY employees have been locked out by their employer in a bitter labour dispute which goes to some very basic issues, dealing even with the very existence of full-time employment.

Many businesses in this province have decided not to take sides and are postponing advertising on CKY during the dispute, but one major advertiser continues to advertise on CKY. It is the provincial government, either directly or through Crown corporations through the Western Canada Lottery foundation.

My question to the Premier is very simple. Will the Premier join with the growing number of business people who are not taking sides, and withdraw all advertising from CKY until the end of this labour dispute?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in fact when the matter has been reviewed by various

observers, the changing of one's normal pattern is taking sides in the midst of a strike, and if someone were to change one's normal pattern of advertising or decision making, that would indeed be taking sides and making a determination to employ some sort of sanction. We steadfastly refuse to take sides; we steadfastly refuse to get involved. It is a labour dispute which should be handled between the two parties at the collective bargaining table.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, the government is taking sides by continuing to advertise.

My supplementary question is: Will the Premier at least request that CKY not run commercials featuring either himself or government cabinet ministers? There have been a number of commercials that have been aired on a regular basis on CKY that have featured, including the Premier, but also a number of ministers in his government. Will he at least ask that they not air those commercials?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I repeat, we will not take sides in the dispute. We will carry on whatever has been done normally in the past, and nothing will be changed in order to be free of the perception that we are taking sides. We will not take sides.

* (1400)

Legislative Building Access

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the Premier for at least two or three days indicated he would not take sides by not granting interviews to replacement workers, I am wondering, will he now join with our caucus and perhaps persuade the Liberals to not take sides by being interviewed by a strikebreaking force? Will this Premier, who is quite happy to bar the doors and keep members of the public out of this building, at least take the same actions with strikebreaking news reporters?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): The member well knows what the legal advice is of the right of access of media outlets to normal news conferences and scrums in this building. He knows full well what the legal advice is on that. We will not take sides.

Conawapa Dam Project Expenditures

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro.

We have learned now that it will be 1993 before all of the environmental assessment is completed for the Conawapa project. That has substantial implications on how much Manitoba Hydro will spend between now and then. We now learn that \$43 million has been spent already, \$36 million will be needed to complete planning and exploration, and an additional \$31 million to complete the access road and the power line for a total of \$110 million. We are not asking the government to spend more; we are asking the government to spend less.

Can the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro justify to this House \$110 million of expenditures for Manitoba Hydro before the environmental review process is complete?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister responsible for The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, we have to understand first of all that Manitoba Hydro, a good corporate citizen, will follow the guidelines laid down by the Department of Environment, both of the Province of Manitoba and the federal government. That is No. 1.

Secondly, as the environmental licences are received, if we started then, if Manitoba Hydro started then to commence building of the road and the line to the Conawapa site, we would never get the Conawapa dam finished in time.

Highway Subcontract

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): I have a supplementary question to the Minister of Highways.

A part of the monies that have been committed already are for the construction of a road into the site. A \$13 million contract has been tendered and given to Mulder Construction.

My question to the Minister of Highways is: Was that the lowest bid, and has there been any subcontracting to the \$13 million project?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, because my department is involved in the tendering process for highway construction projects, Manitoba Hydro asked whether my department—we have entered an agreement with them that my staff and my engineers would do the design aspect of it and would do the tendering aspect of it and the supervision in the construction. That is an agreement that we have with Manitoba Hydro, and

that is the involvement that my department has with them.

Mr. Carr: With respect, Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question, which was subcontracting.

The truth of the matter is that over \$7 million has been subcontracted to an Alberta firm.

My question to the Minister of Highways is: How many Manitoba jobs have been lost as a result of that subcontracting arrangement?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, my department, the Highways department, has always believed in the open tender system and that the lowest bidder get the job. In this particular project, Mulder Construction was the lowest bidder on that project, done in a proper manner in terms of tendering.

If a contractor sublets to somewhere or subtenders to other organizations or different companies, we have no involvement with that. We just basically, as I indicated before, dealt with the project on behalf of Hydro. Mulder was the lowest bidder, and how he deals with the project—our concern from my department is that my engineers are going to make sure that the job is done in a proper manner.

Civil Servants - Federal Job Transfer Statistics

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Federal/Provincial Relations.

Last week the CBC confirmed the transfer of 12 more jobs to Calgary. This is a clear result of the Mulroney Conservative national economic plan to directly alter the national position of Winnipeg. It follows on the loss of jobs in Canada Post, Canadian Forces bases, VIA Rail, CN, Air Canada, the Department of Energy, Northern Employment offices.

My question for the minister is: How many federal jobs have been directly removed from Manitoba in the past three years and, particularly, as Premier, just how much longer is he prepared to tolerate this scorched-earth policy in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Minister of Federal/Provincial Relations): Mr. Speaker, we have consistently indicated our displeasure at loss of jobs in our community. Whether it be by federal government, whether it be by Crown corporations, whether it be by private sector operations, we would like to have

as many jobs as possible in this community, in this province of ours, Mr. Speaker.

I might say that the opposition member has not mentioned the fact that indeed federal decisions have cut back jobs in every single area of this country. In every one of those areas, whether it be the Maritimes, whether it be Ontario, whether it be Manitoba, Saskatchewan or the rest of the country, the fact of the matter is that the federal government, in its desire to reduce its own deficit, to reduce that huge inheritance of debt that they had from the previous Trudeau government in Ottawa, that debt that is costing us tens of billions of dollars a year in interest costs, Mr. Speaker, they are having to take measures rather than raise taxes.

If the member would prefer to have taxes raised, then she can let me know that, and I will put that on the table when I discuss matters next time at a federal-provincial meeting, that the New Democrats in Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Friesen: As the Premier well knows, my question was not directed to federal cuts. It was directed to the transfer of existing jobs to other parts of Canada and the economic restructuring of this country.

My supplementary question is for the Minister of Federal/Provincial Relations.

The transfers in the CBC have been going on for some time and we expect more in June. I would like to ask the minister directly if he has, in his conversations with Mr. Kozminski, the Manitoba representative on the board of the CBC, ever expressed his deep concerns about the economic and cultural impact of these cuts on Manitoba.

Mr. Filmon: What the member is doing of course is selectively choosing various areas to review.

The fact of the matter is that massive cuts took place in the employment at Air Canada, and very few of them were in Manitoba. Manitoba ended up being very well treated under those reductions in Air Canada. Manitoba gained very few of the cuts. Other areas suffered hundreds and hundreds of job losses, Mr. Speaker, so various decisions by federal Crown corporations apply in different ways.

I might say that I met at some length with Marv Terhoch, the Regional Manager of CBC, a month or so ago with one of his senior production staff to talk about the outlook for Manitoba, to talk about what they were attempting to do to try and minimize the

impact of the need to reduce their deficit, to reduce their subsidy from the taxpayers of Canada in their operations in tune with the mandate that they have been given by the federal government.

We had a lengthy discussion, I think of at least an hour, and we did discuss our concerns about the impacts on Manitoba employment-wise, on Manitoba in terms of production and regional effects and programming and all of those things.

I felt that that was a productive way to go because, indeed, Mr. Terhoch has a great deal to say about the decisions that are made, and I want to say that I was happy to be able to spend some time with him to get a better understanding of that rather than just simply—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, as I understand the answer, the Premier is then prepared to speak only to managerial level staff and not to the board, where the decisions are taken.

Nontheatrical Film Fund Cancellation

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My final supplementary is for the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

I would like to ask the minister: Is she prepared to step in now to prevent the loss of the nontheatrical film funds in Manitoba and to ensure that her federal counterpart lives up to its commitment to this province?

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Mr. Speaker, indeed, I was very shocked and surprised and disappointed in the federal government's decision to eliminate nontheatrical film funding from what is I think a problem to this region of Canada.

I am committed and have already entered discussions with my counterparts across the western provinces to determine whether in fact we can come up with a common front, but I will be writing to Mr. Masse myself to indicate our disappointment with that decision.

Personal Care Homes Patient Charges

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, last week, in response to my question about increases in personal care home fees, the Health minister indicated that the per diem increase will still leave

over \$100 each month in disposable income for seniors.

* (1410)

One woman called us and indicated that her mother receives \$776.71 from the federal government and an average of \$37 a month from 55-Plus, and her personal care home fees are \$777.98. This left her with only \$35.73 a month in disposable income. With 55-Plus frozen, personal care home increases of 9.7 percent and old age security increasing by inflation, her disposable income will be \$6.67 a month, an 81 percent cut.

Will the minister now correct a statement he gave to the media last week and acknowledge the hardship he is imposing on the seniors of the province?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): As I indicated to my honourable friend, it has been the circumstances for a number of years now that the resident charge increases quarterly, reflecting in the past the quarterly increases' intention based on the minimum pension that one might receive should be their sole source of income and that the per diems have traditionally left a value of approximately \$100-plus per month left for personal purchases. That circumstance exists.

The additional factor this year, which I explained last week, that made the per diem increase slightly higher this year than previous years is the fact that the GST rebate, which I believe comes quarterly, is part of the calculation, because one has to recall and remember that the taxpayers of Manitoba provide for the entire medical, food and shelter costs of residents in personal care homes. We did not think it an unfair imposition on the residents, who have all of their needs taken care of, to leave them with the traditional \$100-plus per month.

Mr. Gaudry: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same minister.

Given that the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Ducharme) has refused to advocate on behalf of seniors, will he now fill the cabinet vacuum and work to change this regressive policy that is hurting seniors?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I do not know quite where my honourable friend is coming from. Maybe it is the luxury of second-party status and never-have-been-in-government status, because the per diem charge in personal care homes has

been in place for 17 years or 18 years, ever since the Province of Manitoba took over the insurance of personal care home residence charges, which formerly were paid entirely by the individual residents.

In taking over that insured benefit outside of the Canada Health Act, the government of the day decided that the residents ought to contribute to the best of their means, based on the least income those individuals would have, maintaining a principle of leaving at their disposal a certain amount of income for needs not taken care of like medicines, food, shelter. That principle has been consistently maintained in the province of Manitoba through four successive governments of two different political parties. My honourable friend is suggesting the Liberals would do—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Seniors Programs Government Policy

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, my final question is for the Premier.

Given that the deindexing of 55-Plus and the huge increase for personal care homes put an excessive burden on our seniors, will the Premier reverse his policies which are forcing the elderly poor to pay a disproportionate amount for the tough economic times?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, you know, the member would do well to listen to answers and not just read the questions that have been prepared for him. He has not acknowledged that he ignored the GST rebate in his first question, so his numbers are inaccurate.

Number 2, Mr. Speaker, he is not recognizing the fact that his own Liberal Party policy was that 40 percent of those who are currently in personal care homes should be turfed out of those personal care homes. That was a statement that his Leader made in Minnedosa about two years ago and has never refuted, because they believe that people in personal care homes should not even have the benefit of that support of the people of Manitoba.

We would not have such an inappropriate policy, such an uncaring and an unfeeling policy. We are there to support the people in personal care home beds, and we indeed are doing our best to provide the service that they need.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you would call Bills 3, 5, 6, 8 and 12 in that order, and if there are not enough numbers of the members who would want to debate these certain bills, then I would recommend to the House that we move into private members' hour a little bit sooner than five o'clock if that is the wish of the House, but we will wait to see what amount of debate occurs around these bills.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I realize that the government does not have much of an agenda this week, but we do have speakers. We will be putting up speakers, and I would suggest that we have private members' hour at the normal time. We will also have speakers at private members' hour.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 3—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), Bill 3, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les armoiries, les emblèmes et le tartan du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen).

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave the bill standing in the name of the member for Wolseley.

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

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave. Agreed.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, the government House leader (Mr. Manness), seems a little bit incensed at the suggestion that there is not much of an agenda. We have been now in session since—then back after the Easter break, and this government has no agenda. We have adjourned on a couple of occasions, because there is no business before this Legislature. The government has no agenda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are being threatened from members opposite that they are not going to allow

debate to stand. For example, The Mines and Minerals Act, which was released in this paper only a few days ago, has been spoken to twice. The critic is awaiting a briefing from the minister's department—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I believe I have recognized the honourable member for Flin Flon to debate Bill 3, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act, and I would ask the honourable member to keep his remarks relevant to said bill.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, we are talking of course about Bill 3, the coat of arms, and the symbolism that is involved with the choosing of a very important natural emblem. When we are talking about symbolism, the lack of a government agenda is a symbol of this government's incompetence. That is what it is, a symbol of incompetence.

Mr. Speaker, in my tenure in the Legislature, I have never seen any greater evidence of incompetence than what we have seen in the last week and a half. The government's LAMC decisions, unilateral decisions to save money belie the fact that they have wasted the agenda of the government in the last week. They could have saved more money by having some agenda for us to deal with rather than closing the House on occasion and perhaps again today because they have no agenda. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) knows that his own government departments cannot get their house in order to give briefings to members on this side.

* (1420)

This piece of legislation, of course, actually is another example of legislation, the only agenda this government has, which actually was created in 1987 by the then Minister of Natural Resources, who began the search for an emblem for the Province of Manitoba, a symbol of the natural resources of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very appropriate that the white spruce should be chosen and, as a representative from northern Manitoba, that formed the boreal forest, I think that the decision is a good one. The white spruce grows throughout Manitoba, as everyone knows, and the white spruce I think is recognized by most Manitobans. It is a good choice.

Mr. Speaker, I know that on most occasions this kind of legislation is not debated at length.

However, I did want to add my remarks to the record. This is a tree that has a certain stature in the province. It is a synonym perhaps—I was searching for the word—for Manitobans themselves. The fact is that this tree is extremely versatile. It can endure many hardships, climatic hardships, and there is no time when Manitobans have to be able to withstand hard times more than when there is a Conservative government. That is when they have to be able to stand hard times.

Mr. Speaker, before I become too much engrossed in that analogy, I want to just say that this side of the House will have no trouble supporting this legislation. I think that this legislation comes to the Legislature with the good wishes, I think, of most Manitobans, and I think I can say with the good wishes of the people of northern Manitoba. I think it is significant that this is one of the heavy parts of this government's agenda, the choosing of an arboreal emblem.

With those remarks, Mr. Speaker, I would close my remarks and indicate that although I am sure that many, many of my colleagues will want to add their remarks, I am not sure that they are all as well prepared as I was today.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, if I might be allowed to speak, I understand there is still some heckling going on across the floor from the remarks made by the member for Flin Flon.

I want to indicate, as I initially begin speaking on this, that it is interesting that right now we are dealing with a government that has an agenda on the Order Paper in second reading of five bills, and this happens to be one of them. Quite frankly, I wish that indeed this bill would be one of the most important bills of this session. I say that because I suspect this session may be marked by some budgetary decisions that might attract a fair amount of attention. I say that because I remember from the throne speech, what has struck me about this session thus far, Mr. Speaker, is that in terms of the government's agenda, essentially we had the quilting bee throne speech. Who can forget that?

I have nothing against quilting bees, but the throne speech did remind me of many a quilt, a patchwork of different pieces put together. This is certainly a patchwork government. It is a government that is trying to patch together an agenda, Mr. Speaker, while on the other hand continuing with round-the-clock meetings deciding just how much they are going to cut back in terms

of resources to health, education and social services.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would say that when I look at this week and the fact that we were prepared to look at dealing, for example, with Estimates of a number of departments and had indicated that to the minister who had made that—the House leader had suggested that might be an option for these particular weeks, but I would much rather be standing here dealing with what substance there is in terms of the government's agenda.

I am not saying this out of any offence to this particular bill but, really, has the government sunk to the level where this is one of their top five priorities? Do they really expect us to take them seriously when indeed, Mr. Speaker, this is one of the bills that the House leader was saying from his feet that we had not spoken on? Well, we are speaking on this bill.

What amazes me is the fact that I think the government House leader took offence at the fact that we are going to speak today. We are going to speak. We will have speakers on this bill. We will have speakers on Bill 5. We will have speakers on Bill 12.

I want to indicate to the government House leader that we are going to be indicating our general approach in terms of that. I heard the government House leader threatening from his seat that if we did not have speakers, he would refuse to adjourn debate. He knows it is a custom in this House to have debates adjourned while members of the opposition consult with members of the public.

I would note that he referenced earlier that we had not had speakers. He neglected to mention for example the speakers we have had on other bills such as the mines bill. The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is even there a briefing that was scheduled by the government, the minister and members of the department, was cancelled at their request. Our critic is now scheduled to have a briefing on the 15th. How can he expect us to be debating and passing through bills when the government cannot even get its act together in terms of providing briefings on those particular bills?

I would point, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that this is day No. 18 of the legislative session and that we really do not have much in the way of a legislative agenda. In fact, there are more bills on the Order Paper currently that have been introduced by opposition members, sitting, waiting for introduction

at first reading and also, in terms of second readings, there are a number of second readings.

I will make this offer to the government House leader, that if he wishes to deal with bills, if he does not have enough of an agenda himself at this current point in time, we are quite prepared to discuss and debate some of the many excellent private members' bills that we have on the Order Paper during the regular sitting of the House. If the government does not have an agenda, Mr. Speaker, we can provide it for them, and we will indeed. We have a number of important bills, Mr. Speaker, that are before us.

I want to say that it is really unfortunate that the government really has no legislative agenda yet to speak of—I mean, five bills, another one introduced today for first reading. As I said, I wish in a way that was perhaps it because, with this Conservative government, no bills would probably be better than a considerable number of bills.

I suspect what we are seeing is that this government is spinning its wheels. I suspect what we are seeing is that they are continuing on a daily basis to wrestle with the kind of budget decisions they were making only weeks ago, and that is why we are dealing today with a government agenda that, as I said, started with the quilting bees and is now ending up with a Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, I suppose we can engage in a pretty lengthy debate on this particular bill, and I suppose there are some who might agree with the designation outlined in this bill. Coming from northern Manitoba, I am not quite sure. I would like to see the jack pine actually as the provincial symbol. How much hardier can you get than the jack pine?

I suppose I did in jest suggest that the provincial bird might actually be better classified as the raven. Certainly if we were to have a northern Manitoba bird, it is certainly the hardiest—(interjection)—well, I am not suggesting that seriously to the minister. As much as we are proud of the North and do have some pride in the raven—we recognize it at our winter carnival in Thompson on a yearly basis—I am not suggesting that be the particular designation, although the raven does have some qualities that probably do symbolize what Manitobans I think are going through right now.

That is why I am suggesting the jack pine, which is probably the hardiest of trees, that can withstand

virtually anything, might be a good symbol, because I think Manitoba will stand virtually anything, including this current Conservative government. The same thing with the raven—I mean, how much more versatile a bird can you find? Any bird that can thrive in minus 40 degree weather, can find food virtually anywhere is certainly a bird to be honoured in some way, shape or form.

* (1430)

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I am not suggesting seriously that it be designated the provincial bird but, you know, here we are, we have a legislative session, we are dealing with matters of public importance, and the first bill being called by the government today, the first bill, something I would normally assume would be a major priority of the government, some signal, is The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

Well, Mr. Speaker, -(interjection)- well, the minister says it is the first one on the order—the government House leader (Mr. Manness) can call bills in whatever order he wishes, and I believe that -(interjection)- well, Mr. Speaker, I do not know what game the House leader is playing and what game this government is playing today, but I did take serious offense to the comments the government House leader made from his seat suggesting that, well, if we were not going to speak, he was going to refuse to have matters remain standing in members of the opposition's name.

I ask the government House leader, in this bill, perhaps we cannot be discussing this at this point. It is not a complicated bill, as the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) pointed out but, in terms of other bills, we have bills—The Energy and Mines Act is a significant item of legislation in terms of length. Many of us wish to be able to consult with people in our constituencies in terms of that. I do not think it is out of keeping with the traditions of this House to provide that sort of opportunity.

I think what is not in keeping with the traditions of this House is the fact that here on day No. 18, we are into nearly the middle of April, that this government really has no legislative agenda to speak of at this point in time and is now somehow trying to ask for the opposition to finish speaking early today so that it perhaps will not be embarrassed by its lack of an agenda in terms of the public, and I want to say to the government House leader, if he really is that light in terms of agenda, if

he is going to be trying to force us to speak on this bill or other bills before we have had a chance to consult, why does he not suggest that the House adjourn? I mean, that is what he is saying. I am not suggesting that, Mr. Speaker.

What I am suggesting is that when we are dealing with any of these bills, even this particular bill, which does have some history, I know it goes back to the previous government, and there was a fair amount of discussion. I am just saying that the government House leader ought not to make comments from his seat suggesting that somehow we are not debating.

In fact, I will make a prediction that probably over the next number of days we may find all of a sudden an interest in debating bills such as this from government members. I would suggest that what will happen otherwise is that we will be sitting here in a situation with no agenda to deal with. We will have put our preliminary comments on the record in terms of a number of bills. We will have indicated to the government that we will be consulting, whether it be in this or other bills, and that the government may have to scramble as it did last week on The Mines Act to try and kill time.

Well, if we really wanted to save some money for the taxpayers, I suppose if the government House leader was really to recognize the situation, he would probably, I would say, be suggesting that we adjourn during the rest of this week. I think that would be a real travesty, Mr. Speaker, in the sense that, where is the government with its agenda? Even the patchwork quilt—you cannot build a patchwork quilt with five bills. You cannot build a legislative agenda with bills such as The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act.

I really wonder, I know at times we are accused of being somewhat out of touch in this building, and I know the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) is an expert on that. He is making comments from his seat. Perhaps he is acknowledging as Minister of Agriculture that is his own situation. Certainly a lot of farmers in Manitoba feel that is the case, Mr. Speaker.

Really, if the people of Manitoba saw us standing here today debating as the first item on the agenda this particular act, the farmers that the Minister of Agriculture is supposed to be representing, the Minister of Agriculture in the cabinet, then I look to other members of this House. The Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach)—surely the Minister of

Education would like to have the opportunity to be discussing, instead of this particular bill, Education Estimates, something we had indicated we were quite willing to do last week, we had indicated we were quite willing to do this week. Why can we not deal with that, Mr. Speaker? There were indications that such Estimates would be completed.

Why are we dealing with Bill 3? Is it because the government is perhaps on a daily basis making additional cuts or add-backs into departments? Is it because of mismanagement, as the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) points out. Well, Mr. Speaker, I leave conclusions to members of the public.

I suppose what some might liken this to is the calm before the storm in the sense that we do have a budget coming up next week, on Tuesday, a long awaited budget. Well, I note the member indicating, it is going to be a good one. We will certainly be watching to see how he votes and the member for Portage (Mr. Connery) votes on the upcoming budget, because they have the power—well, they have indicated to the members of the public, they have the power to determine what this government will do or not. We will be interested to see if they will be representing their constituents. Will the member represent his farmers? Will the member be speaking out on those issues?

I digress, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize for that. I apologize in responding to the heckling from the member. I just await his actions quite eagerly the next few weeks, and he will have a chance then to speak and to indicate by his vote where he stands on the issues of concern.

Really, Mr. Speaker, is that what we should be doing with these important decisions coming up? Why can we not be dealing with Estimates instead of Bill 3? The offer had been initially indicated as available. We are quite prepared to deal with Estimates at this point in time, to break out departments from the main Estimates package, to start talking about what is happening in the Department of Education or the Department of Natural Resources or the Department of Agriculture or the Department of Housing, or the Department of Government Services. We are quite prepared.

If the government cannot draft its own agenda, if it is so wrapped up in its cutbacks, its budgetary decisions, we can, if they wish, provide that agenda. As I said, we can debate other bills in addition to Bill 3. We can deal with Estimates, but we are left in a

position that we have very limited inputs, Mr. Speaker.

This bill was called today, Bill 3, by the government. It was the government's choice. It was the government's choice to introduce this bill as part of the current five-bill package, five bills, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in terms of first reading, we are seeing, I believe, that there are no other bills in the government's name even waiting on the Order Paper for introduction.

I ask the government House leader, what is he expecting us to do while Manitobans are in fear about what is going to happen from this government, Mr. Speaker? Is he expecting us to be debating this bill throughout this week, because he knows that he cannot expect speedy passage of Bill 5, in particular, where significant consultation has to take place, or Bill 6, a major, major act where the government has cancelled its act? Does he expect us to be dealing only with Bill 3 throughout this week, because that is—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I must interrupt the honourable member. Our rule states that debate must be directly relevant to the question under consideration. The question under consideration is the principle of Bill 3. I believe the tree known botanically as *Picea glauca* and commonly called the white spruce is the question before the House. Therefore, I would ask the honourable member for Thompson to keep his remarks relevant to Bill 3.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I have had the chance to deal with this bill in detail and have researched it thoroughly. My comments are on the principle of this bill and particularly the principle of this bill being the No. 1 bill on the government agenda.

I must apologize once again if I digress, but I indicated—and with the government House leader now having the opportunity to hear my remarks directly—that it is an unfortunate situation that we are in, that this may be the only bill we are going to have in terms of debate this week, the only bill.

The bottom line is, is the government House leader seriously suggesting to this province during tough economic times that we should be debating, as a first priority, making the white spruce our provincial tree? Is he suggesting at a time when they are involved in major cutbacks, major financial decisions affecting -(interjection)- I said the wrong word, the "c" word. I am sorry. I apologize to the Minister of Housing (Mr. Ernst). The "c" word,

cutbacks, but that is exactly what is happening. We know what is happening, Mr. Speaker. We are talking to many people who are very concerned.

Is the government House leader, the Premier saying, this is the main item on the agenda while that is happening? You know why? We have a world in turmoil. Should we, as members of the Legislature, be facing a position where this is essentially going to be the main bill before this House for pretty well the remainder of the week? I ask that, Mr. Speaker, because what else does the government have in store? Does it have any bills that will deal—(interjection)—and to the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), I have nothing against the white spruce. I have quite a bit against this government that seems to feel that it can tie up the time of this Legislature by having this as its No. 1 bill in this session.

* (1440)

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

I ask you, Mr. Acting Speaker, in your constituency how you feel your constituents would react if you explain that the No. 1 priority of the government this week—now that we are dealing with only a five-bill agenda—is a bill that would make the white spruce the tree of this province?

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) talked about symbols, Mr. Acting Speaker. I think this bill will indeed be one of the symbols of this legislative session. I think there will be a number of symbols. I mentioned before the quilting bee, the patchwork quilt that we have seen this government put together, the combination of biodegradable election promises that are biodegrading on an almost daily basis. We see evidence of that every day in Question Period. We are seeing a government desperate to the point that it has to fill the legislative agenda with this bill as being a priority.

I am not saying this bill should not be debated, Mr. Acting Speaker, or should not form part of a legislative agenda. Traditionally, in this House we have anywhere from 30 or 40 bills up to 100-plus bills. The bottom line is we have one out of five bills today, The Coat of Arms—

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

Point of Order

Mr. Edward Connery (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Acting Speaker, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has been brought to order once on relevancy. I realize that the member does not have much to say on the bill, but I wish we would be discussing the bill.

They complained earlier that there was nothing to talk about. The member is not talking about the bill that is before the session. I would ask you to bring the member to order to discuss the bill or to wrap up so other people can speak on it.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): On the same point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker, I distinctly heard the member for Thompson talking about symbols and referencing patchwork quilts, quilting bees—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. The honourable member for Portage la Prairie did not have a point of order. The honourable member for Osborne did not have a point of order.

I will remind the honourable member for Thompson that we are debating Bill 3, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act. I would hope that he will refrain from digressing from the bill. Thank you.

* * *

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, I can indicate that I am a lot more relevant on this bill than the member for Portage was on any bill last week. I will just leave it at that.

I am talking about the fact that this is the first item that was called on the agenda today—for the member for Portage and others who may not be aware of that fact. The government House leader from his seat was saying, well, we are not going to allow bills to stand. What bills? Five bills, of which this is one.

The government House leader suggested today that we might want to get into private members' hour early to deal with private members' hour. I ask the question why, Mr. Acting Speaker? We have a set time, five o'clock. Is he suggesting that we should somehow fill government time with private members' bills because the government does not have an agenda of its own?

Why are we only dealing with an agenda that leads with Bill 3, Mr. Acting Speaker? I believe

those comments are very relevant. I believe that essentially what is developing when we are dealing with bills such as this is that this is somehow what one might describe as the calm before the storm in the sense that right now the government is in an interim period. It is battering down the hatches. It is dealing with this particular bill because it really has no other agenda. It is waiting for the provincial budget. It is making those decisions on a regular basis, and it is going to be, we all know, a tough budget, a vicious budget for Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to say to the government House leader that indeed we will put up speakers on bills, such as Bill 3, but we are not going to filibuster to fill time in this Legislature. We will put up speakers where we believe we have some points to make.

The point we are making today, Mr. Acting Speaker, on this bill is that this is not the type of bill that should be the No. 1 item before the Legislative Assembly of this province. We are saying this should not be the No. 1 priority. The principle may be fine, but when we have only one out of five bills, and this is one of them, this is the lead bill, the government House leader ought not to talk from his seat about refusing to allow matters to stand. We have had speakers today on this—one speaker already. I have spoken, Mr. Acting Speaker. I believe we may have other speakers on this particular bill. We will have speakers on Bill 5. We have had speakers on Bill 6, and we may indeed have speakers on Bill 8. We will definitely have a speaker on Bill 12.

Mr. Acting Speaker, we will participate in debate, but let the government House leader (Mr. Manness) not suggest that we ought to bail this government out of the fact that due to its own—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please; order, please. The honourable member has been referred twice now and been brought to order. He is dealing with The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act, Bill 3, and I will not bring you to order one more time.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, I can indicate that I have probably mentioned the bill, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act, more times in my speech than I think any other bill has been referenced in any other speech before this Legislature. Indeed, I was intending to reference my remarks to The Coat of

Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act, the principle of enshrining the white spruce and the principle of this being the No. 1 bill before us today.

I was, in fact, just going to conclude my remarks by once again reiterating that we, on the opposition side, find it rather unfortunate that the government has placed us in this position. We are quite prepared to deal with other items, indeed, to deal with these at the appropriate time, Mr. Acting Speaker, as we do when we are into Estimates. We deal with bills such as this bill in two days, so we are quite prepared to do that. Why does the government not bring in some substantive items for us to deal as has been suggested? We are willing to deal with Estimates right now, Mr. Acting Speaker. We are willing to forgo our chance to speak on Bill 3, The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act, until a later time.

I do not think the province, quite frankly, will be ill served if this bill does not quite pass immediately and was not passed through in a week or a month or three months. We have gone without the white spruce as an emblem for 124 years I believe it is—121 years I believe is the exact length of time. I believe we can wait that length of time, but I want to indicate from the opposition's side we would rather be debating matters of substance. If the government does not have an agenda, if this is the only item they are going to be dealing with, Mr. Acting Speaker, we indeed will debate to the extent that we can, but they should not expect us to treat seriously any agenda that has this bill as the No. 1 bill.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Acting Speaker, I was listening with interest when the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) put a few of his remarks on the record regarding The Coat of Arms, Emblems and The Manitoba Tartans Amendments Act, and I could not help but rise and also put some of my comments on the record.

Specifically after having listened to some of the things when he diverted his comments away from the bill, I want to probably, Mr. Acting Speaker, give you forwarning that I might fall into that same path.

However, I believe that the designation of the white spruce is very timely, as is the introduction of Bill 3, and the importance of it should not be underestimated. I believe that we have previously—or this government, and I believe all

parties have—been involved at one time or another with the designation of various animals, be they wildlife or other, as important to this province, various birds, and I refer to the buffalo.

I think some of these emblems that we have basically created through this act for the province, are significant and the importance of it should not be minimized. The buffalo, for instance, I think indicates very clearly the strength and the strengths of our people, and the emblem and the symbol that we use should be seen as the strength of the buffalo. I think that the statues that we have within this very building, clearly to all of us who enter this building every day, indicate the provisions that the buffalo provided to our forefathers when this country was opened up.

* (1450)

Similarly the wisdom of the owl when it was designated as the provincial bird, I think is another demonstration of the peoples who live in this province, and the wisdom that they have in demonstrating on a daily basis, although sometimes we wonder in this Legislature, and the rules and laws and regulations that we from time to time debate. But, regardless of how close we stay to the subjects in those debates or how important some might see the debates or the comments that are put on the record are, I think it is important that we note the freedoms that we have and the wisdom that we use to retain those freedoms. Again I believe the owl symbolizes that.

Similarly the crocus that we have designated as our provincial flower, the beauty of the crocus I think demonstrates clearly to all people wherever they are, the beauty of our province. Also there are many others, and I could go I suppose to the snakes at Narcisse and what they represent to that area, and catfish of Selkirk and Emerson, and the fights that we have had as to which is the capital of which, and so on.

However, when the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) deviates from the debates of the importance of this act at this time, I have to reflect on the period of time that I was fortunate enough to be the Minister of Resources. I have to think back of how important the wood resources are to this province, to the industries. Abitibi-Price for instance and the large number of people that industry employs, and the importance of the white spruce to that industry, to the pulp and paper

industry, to the lumber industry, to the building industry.

Manfor, formerly owned by the province which is now owned by Repap, again an important industry to northern Manitoba, of which the honourable member for Thompson represents a large area, cannot be underestimated, and the employment opportunities created by this tree that we are going to be designating as the provincial tree, I think, cannot be underestimated. The importance of this bill in recognition of it, I think, bodes well for the sincerity with which this government not only treats all its natural resources but in fact wants to ensure that the white spruce is enshrined in history as an important aspect of the development of this province and also in its ability to provide shelter, employment opportunity and industries to this province.

I find it interesting when the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) talks about the lack of importance that this government designates towards the economy and job creation and the likes. All members in this House recognize that if it had not been for the neglect of the previous administration, of the NDP administration over the last 20 years, with the exception of a few short four years that the Conservative government held office, we would not be today in the serious situation we are. We would not have to pay \$600 million in interest cost, and we would not have to assume the layoffs that some talk about now. We would not have to look forward to a very tough budget that we are going to be debating starting next week.

I want to remind all members that the many people who came here and opened up this province depended not only on the forestry industry but agriculture as a whole. The importance of this—the economic importance of the diversity and the diversified action, the decentralized economies that the forestry industry provides, as well as much of the agriculture community—should not be underestimated, and the economic impact that this tree provides to this province.

I think it is important that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and his party take some responsibility for the desperate state that our forestry industry is in at this time, and some of the layoffs that are actually happening. Had it not been for their inaction, and had they ensured that replanting and reforestation in fact would have been an ongoing responsibility and action that the previous government had taken, we would, in fact,

be ensured that the white spruce might have a much larger area that it inhabits in this province than it does now.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I had to, I thought, put those few comments on the record, and I would also like to indicate at this time that there are other industries that are now in jeopardy of closing. I think that we need to bear some attention to those industries, and the opposition parties so far have totally ignored the importance of some of those industries. One of them, and I name it, is the sugar industry—and the seriousness with which it is being threatened now, simply by labour and the union bosses indicating that they will negotiate very tough and very hard and, if necessary, force the closure of that industry.

Well, let me say to you, Mr. Acting Speaker, you might question what relevance this has to the discussion on this bill. I say to you that the New Democratic Party, in its wisdom, the opposition, had they given any serious consideration to the urgency might have, in fact, at some point stood in this House and questioned what this government or the ministers were going to do to ensure that that industry would survive but, no, their union friends are indicating clearly their desire to impress upon the industry that they will no longer be threatened with closure, that they will proceed in their actions to raise their salaries and to raise their indemnities and other benefits in all opposition to fairness.

I say to you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that it is important that we recognize as a government the importance of that industry, not only to this province but as a nation. If the sugar industry in this province should close, we would within a year or two become totally reliant, totally reliant, on sugar moving into this country from outside sources. We would not have the ability anymore to raise any amount of sugar. Therefore, I say that it is important that the opposition members make some contact with their union people and impress upon them the urgency of ensuring that the negotiations proceed quickly and that they resolve their differences at that plant.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to thank you for allowing me the diversion—as you did the opposition member—to put those remarks on the record, because I think it is important that we realize if there is not going to be a settlement in the very near future within that industry, that farmers are going to make plans to plant other crops and, therefore, jeopardize the retention of an extremely important and a multimillion-dollar industry to this

province that farmers are today preparing for planting. The unions are still not agreeing to a contract, and the seriousness of the negotiations at this stage cannot be underestimated.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I thank you once again. I say to you that the importance of the designation of the white spruce to our shelters, the warmth of this in the winter has largely been indicated by the minister in designating the white spruce. So, again, thank you for allowing me the opportunity.

* (1500)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to take two lines of, not necessarily attack, but take two approaches to this particular bill. The bill itself is a good bill, and I want to comment directly on the bill towards the latter of my remarks.

The first thing I would like to talk about, Mr. Acting Speaker, is the priority of the government in reference to Bill 3. I can recall during private members' hour of sessions past, when the government of the day stood up and talked about the priority of the Liberal Party. They made reference to the former member for Assiniboia's Bill 4, and member after member of the Conservative caucus stood up and talked on Bill 4. Their talk, Mr. Acting Speaker, was basically saying that this is the priority of the Liberal Party, that licence plates is the first priority of the Liberal Party.

That went, as I have said, time after time. Now, what we have before us is an important bill. There is no question about that. The government itself has said there is going to be substantial legislation that is going to be coming before this session that needs to be dealt with before we adjourn. One of the single most significant pieces of legislation that we will see is in regard to The City of Winnipeg Act.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would imagine, and I hope I am wrong, that the government—how long will we have to wait before we start seeing that type of legislation, or is it the intention of the government, like what it has done in the past, to wait until towards the end of the session and then introduce the legislation?

The City of Winnipeg Act will be a major piece of legislation. It in fact should be a first priority to this government. It should be demonstrated in terms of the orderings of the bills, using their own logic during private members' hour.

If the government does bring in the proposed legislation, end of May, beginning of June, I hope

they will not come across saying that we have to be out of here by the end of June in order to save taxpayers' money, because try to usurp or to end debate on what would be substantial legislation.

We have seen that in the past, where major legislation has been put off toward the end for whatever reasons, because they do not want to debate it. They do not necessarily want it to go to the committee stage so that it will be closely analyzed and positive amendments can be put forward.

Mr. Acting Speaker, there are good things—and I will now speak in reference closely to the content and the principle of this particular bill. The emblems that we create through this act are positive things.

The former Minister of Natural Resources had commented on the fact of the buffalo, the cauc—the crocus—I was about to say the caucus.

The Manitoba tartan, our owl and our flag, Mr. Acting Speaker, these are all symbols that can provide an education for many members of the public. In fact students in classrooms, when they talk about symbols, they talk about the pride in Manitoba; we talk about our history; we talk about the heritage that we have here in Manitoba. Mr. Acting Speaker, anything that goes to promote that, we should be supporting because, after all, it is for the betterment of the province. In that sense, all members should be supporting legislation that will bring to light different aspects of Manitoba, and put it in such a positive atmosphere, as no doubt this will.

We see different symbols in terms of Canadian symbols when we look at the beaver, the Canada goose, the Canadian flag, and all of these symbols in themselves say something. All the symbols have history behind them.

We look at the white spruce, and that is what this particular bill is here for is to enable the white spruce to become an emblem of the province. In itself it is a softwood with clear grain wood, if you will. It is very tall; it matures to a very tall, beautiful tree. I think that bodes well for Manitoba, and no doubt will do us well as a symbol of this province. On that, I conclude my remarks and trust that in fact, and I would expect, that this bill will pass this Chamber.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): I am pleased to rise and to speak on this bill. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) talked about symbols,

Mr. Acting Speaker; they talked about the symbolism of this act and how it symbolizes the actions of the government. I think what it symbolizes, the fact that the NDP are not prepared to debate any of the government's bills, that they have, in fact, stood those bills on a regular basis, shows that they are afraid to debate the government's agenda.

We have two very major bills on this agenda, The Mines Act and The Mental Health Act. They are not prepared to debate those because I think they are afraid, they have a lack of interest in what is important to Manitobans, and they want to simply be on their own agenda. We saw what their agenda was yesterday; we saw what their agenda was last week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please. On the second reading of an amending bill, it is the principle of the amending bill not the principle of the act which is the business under consideration. Debate must therefore relate exclusively to the principle of the bill. My honourable members, we have allowed you a little bit of leniency here, and I think everybody has had a shot at it. I would respect you to bring it back. Thank you.

Mr. Ernst: Thank you, very much—

An Honourable Member: Well, Jim, I think you had better apologize for them not wanting to deal with the real business of the House.

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Acting Speaker, I do apologize. I did branch out a little bit in my speech, I must say, but now we are going to get to the root of the matter.

The root of the problem is they are afraid to debate the government's agenda. The root of the problem is they are more worried about their indemnities and allowances than they were about any of the government's bills on the agenda. That is what they wanted to debate.

Mr. Acting Speaker, emblems for Manitoba are important. They are important from a number of different perspectives. They are an indication of who we are, of what we are. It says that to ourselves, to the rest of the country and to the world for that matter, the fact that we have emblems such as the Great Gray Owl, the provincial bird, the crocus, symbol of Manitoba as a flower, the buffalo which roamed the Prairies here for many hundreds of years and which provided sustenance to our aboriginal people for thousands of years before the white man ever immigrated to this part of the

country. Mr. Acting Speaker, the crocus is a flower, the symbol of spring, the symbol of renewal, that very fragile flower that blooms very, very shortly in Manitoba during that early spring period, all of them symbols of what Manitobans are and of what we have here.

It is appropriate that the white spruce, I think, is chosen because its habitat covers almost all of our province. It goes considerably way into the north country. It covers the Precambrian shield territory to the northeast and the east part of our province, and where it is not naturally found, Mr. Acting Speaker, where it has not grown of its own free will, it has been planted, planted by farmers looking for shelter belts, planted by people as an ornamental nature for around their homes and so on, to act as a centrepiece for their property.

* (1510)

As far as our economy is concerned, it has been a very important part of our economy, as others said before me. It has been an integral part of our forest industry and as an integral part of our forest industry in the lumber area, Mr. Acting Speaker, it has become an integral part of our housing industry because those very trees are providing the structural lumber, the plywood, the variety of other materials that are used to build the houses of our people here in Manitoba, and has provided a great many jobs throughout our province, both in the lumber end of it and in the house building end. We are very fortunate to have those kinds of forests in our province. It has also provided the pulp industry, the pulp and paper industry has been important to us particularly in the communities of The Pas and of Pine Falls where those mills generate a great many jobs and a large contribution to the economy of this province.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it also deals with the question of tourism in our province because the white spruce by and large frames most of those lakes that are very attractive to tourists throughout our province where they come to fish. Those trees also provide habitat for a wide variety of birds and animals and provide food in fact for some of them.

It is a value to agriculture, as I indicated just a minute ago, because those trees provide shelter belts for many of the farms in our province. You need to only drive through the agricultural districts of Manitoba to see a great many. As a matter of fact, Mr. Acting Speaker, this morning driving to Portage la Prairie for the MAUM conference, I remarked at

the fact that there were a number of spruce trees in almost every shelter belt as you drove down the Trans-Canada Highway. We do not normally refer to these trees as being vicious, but on occasion, Mr. Acting Speaker, they can become vicious. I need only refer to my colleague the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), where just a short time ago one of these beautiful white spruces, now to become the symbol of Manitoba, viciously attacked him.

We have found these trees, Mr. Acting Speaker, across the whole of the province in a wide variety of settings. We find them, as I indicated earlier, in our forests, in our front yards, in our shelter belts, in a wide variety of locations. In our parks, they are used extensively, golf courses and things of that nature. They provide us with a great beauty for our province.

It is also important that we consider the white spruce as an emblem for Manitoba. It is particularly significant for Manitoba, because it is a coniferous tree. It is green all the year round, not like its name suggests, a white spruce. The fact of the matter is, it is green all year round. In the wintertime, when we have a blanket of snow across the province, it is very pleasing to the eye to see that green white spruce tree standing out against the starkness of the white snow.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I think it is important that we have this symbol, the fact that we have a tree such as this for our province, and the fact this particular tree is most significant and one that I am sure all members will endorse as they vote for this bill.

Thank you.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Acting Speaker, I had my research staff going through my library to see whether I could not commence my comments on this most important bill with that poem that some of us remember as well in song: I think that I shall never see a poem lovely as a tree. It would set the right tone for this debate on this bill, that I am pleased to enter into. I want to congratulate my colleague the honourable Minister of Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Mitchelson) for bringing forward this bill.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to first of all assure you that my comments will be directed fairly well within the confines of our rules, the principle of the bill, the tree that we talk about, because I note with some genuine sadness that the opposition chooses not to

see in this bill an opportunity to in fact debate about a subject matter that we seldom hear in this Chamber, anything that has to do, quite frankly, with nature, with our natural resources, unless it is of course of some regulatory problem involved in it, some environmental problem of it.

We do not hear debates in this Chamber anymore about the primary sources of wealth in this province. We hear very little about agriculture, again, unless it is having to do something, unless the member has drummed up some support and has a bus full of understandably disgruntled farmers here, and then he wants to get at my colleague the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) for a specific reason. Is there any serious debate about the long-term future that contains contribution to the problems that rural Manitobans have, that farmers have?

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, in the same light, this bill—yes, it is a symbolic bill. We are designating the white spruce as the official tree of Manitoba. As my colleague from Emerson has already pointed out, we have other official designations—the beautiful crocus that now is popping up through the meadows throughout Manitoba to remind us of nature's wonder and beauty. We have the bison, of course, that we walk past in our grand staircase here so eloquently displayed in our Legislative Assembly.

An Honourable Member: Also intact.

Mr. Enns: I might say, fully intact, not subject to any abuse that they had been threatened with.

Surely, the symbolic nature of this bill, the tree, would have allowed honourable members opposite to do something other than what they do day in, day out, and I will guarantee they will continue to right through this session, that is, to beleaguer those ministers responsible on this side who have the responsibilities of carrying out the important social services in this province, whether it is the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), whether it is the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), whether it is the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), and so forth.

This would have given them one opportunity, two days set aside from this whole Legislature, to talk about the importance of trees, talk about the importance of forestry, talk about the importance of that to our environment, to be able to question, to be able to ask the government: Are we looking after our trees in a proper way in this province? Mr. Acting Speaker, we are. It is particularly apropos that this bill be introduced at this time.

We have complained about some of our ongoing relations with the federal government, and we have many reasons to complain, but it was only last week that we signed another five-year agreement, a \$30-million agreement, designed to protect and to continue to look after the welfare of our forests in Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I will be in the next few days taking to cabinet a further agreement that includes a wildlife concern with respect to how we manage our forests. This is a multiparty agreement involving some of the major operators in our forests, Abitibi-Price, Repap; it involves the Department of Natural Resources; involves the Canadian Wildlife Service. That will enable us to do what correctly—and many people are telling us to do, that we look at our forests, not from a single-use point of view, not just to provide the jobs and the timber products that we require, but indeed that we recognize the importance of forest in its totality.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

* (1520)

In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have concluded this year the strenuous exercise of consulting with Manitobans about developing a strategy for our forests. I pause just to draw to your attention that it was not that long ago that kind of a strategy would have been for our forestry, implying that we were concerned only about the industry and the industrial contribution that the forestry industry makes to the province, which is considerable. Today we do not speak about forestry as such. We speak about our forests and today, of course, more specifically, about a specific tree, because forests are much more than simply providing jobs for upwards to 10,000 to 12,000 Manitobans and that is significant.

It is not simply an industry that provides the lifeline for communities like Pine Falls, The Pas, but, Mr. Speaker, forests are equally important in their urban setting. That is why my government and the department, particularly in the last few years, has continued its unabated concern about the problems that the Dutch elm disease creates for the beautiful shade trees we have in the city. That is why we have entered into it, albeit that they do not present them here as major programs, but a program that was appreciated by many residents who lost trees. It was an opportunity for upwards to 18 to 20 students to have summer employment with a tree planting program that we offered to residents in the

city of Winnipeg during the last summer to help replace those trees.

Surely it would be a disaster, Mr. Speaker, if we sat by and did not in a planned way reintroduce new tree growth into the city knowing full well that we are going to lose, regrettably, our elm trees in due course. We can hold off that loss for a decade and several decades and to the extent that we and the city of Winnipeg co-operate in doing this will accomplish what we are doing, that is keeping the loss ratio of elm trees in the city to about 2 percent per annum. That is still small comfort.

The fact of the matter is we are losing our elm trees, and unless those of us both at the civic level and the provincial level pay attention to replacing these trees we would be acting in an irresponsible manner for future generations of Winnipeggers who, after coming through a long winter, really look forward to the beauty of our shaded elm trees, the beauty of our treed boulevards to enjoy the summer months with.

Mr. Speaker, I just mention these and many other subjects that the opposition members could have chosen to engage in an active debate. It is all too obvious that unless it can be an instant profit to them politically to badger this government about a particular program that is not getting enough money, or frighten the general public about a program that for different reasons may have to be altered and some priorities have to be changed that we do not find time to discuss these matters in this Chamber any more.

Mr. Speaker, I do not belabour the House and honourable members too often, in reaching back in my memory about some of the subject matters that used to occupy a fair and equal time in this House, because while I appreciate that upwards to two-thirds of our population is urban, nonetheless, rural Manitoba and all what goes on in rural Manitoba and in northern Manitoba is of extreme importance to the welfare of the entire province and to the city of Winnipeg.

It is important that this provincial Legislature from time to time concerns itself about the welfare, in this case, of our forests. They could be legitimately asking, what am I doing as Minister of Natural Resources to ensure that we can withstand the onslaught of the devastation of the drought years and the fires that can generate in our forest industries; are we doing enough to protect not only

the white spruce tree that we are symbolizing by dedicating in a specific way today.

Surely, Mr. Speaker, there would be no reason to call members out of order for not speaking to the subject matter of trees and the importance of trees if honourable members chose to address themselves to what this symbolic bill means and can mean and indeed should mean to all members of this Chamber.

As I said as I rose, unless it is an appeal to spend more and more of the taxpayers' money; unless it is an appeal to try to embellish some perceived reduction of services in a social program; unless it is believed to conceive that somewhere along we are not handing out more money and more government grants every day, let us have a little interest to honourable members opposite. I say shame on you. I say shame on them. I say shame on a former Minister of Natural Resources who should know better.

I think just maybe I will be encouraging the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) to deliver one of those fine speeches because he is capable of delivering the kind of speech that brings to bear the conscience of all honourable members. I think the honourable member may just be doing that in his notations here, as he diligently sits and attends to the business of the House.

But what I am trying to say is there are a lot of things that can and ought to be said about this tree, about all trees, about forests, about how we care for them, what they mean to Manitobans, what they should mean to Manitobans. It would be an opportunity to understand that we are not treating our forest in the same way, for instance, that the concern that is being expressed around the world internationally, about what is happening in the Amazon, the rain forests of Brazil.

We are not reallocating forest lands to any other use other than forests. We are replacing every tree that we cut down. In Canada we are planting two trees for every tree that is harvested. That is going to ensure that there will be trees for our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. You do not have to take my word for it, but I invite all members of this Legislature to go out to my colleague's constituency, north of Pine Falls where Abitibi-Price is now harvesting trees that were clear cut 65 years ago. You would have to be an experienced forester to be able to tell the difference between second-generation trees and old growth.

So let us not have the David Suzukis of this world tell us how we are mismanaging our forests, because we are not to be confused with what is happening in Brazil or what is happening in the Amazon. What is happening there is dreadful; what is happening there is the slashing and burning of trees and changing that land for other uses, for ranching, for agriculture. That is not happening here. In fact, this government can take a great deal of credit. One of the first forestry agreements ever signed in Canada was done by this progressive government that called for Repap to replace every tree that they harvest with a living tree.

* (1530)

So this is the kind of debate that surely we could entertain on this bill. We need not hear this kind of nonsense from members opposite, simply because they are waiting for the kind of things they want to get their teeth in after budget, and they want to badger our ministers because we are not spending more and more of the taxpayers' money. They do not particularly want to listen to the same taxpayer who says, look, I have been taxed enough. They do not particularly want to worry about those senior citizens who are still living in their own homes who simply cannot afford to pay more taxes.

An Honourable Member: The ones who are paying those increased property taxes—

Mr. Enns: That is right because you are asking for more and more services in health and in education every day in this Chamber, so you cannot have it both ways. Now at least take advantage of a debate like this to tell us, to show us and to advise government how we can produce more wealth in this province, how we can manage our forests in such a way, how we can find more jobs in our forests, and we can provide a healthier economy in our province so that we do not have to tax our ordinary everyday people for their services that we all agree are necessary.

Mr. Speaker, I find a great deal to speak about this bill, and I would like to just continue with a few more of the specific happenings that have happened just in the last month. I already alluded to the renewed five-year forestry agreement that I recently had the pleasure of signing with the Honourable Frank Oberle, the federal Minister of Forestry for Canada. It is an agreement of which 80 percent of the \$30 million goes directly into reforestation. That ensures that for the next five years, upwards to 14 to 16 million trees will be planted every year here in

this province of Manitoba. I wish honourable members would take note of that. -(interjection)-

Yes, we are cutting down trees. Yes, we are harvesting trees, but Mr. Speaker, again, because we become so urbanized, you know, how many of us have wandered through the boreal forests of northern Manitoba? How many have taken trips outside of The Pas and through our North? I know many of our members have, but it is important to note that takes place.

Well, this agreement, Mr. Speaker, that I refer to, ensures that that kind of forest activity will take place for the next five years. Now, in addition—and I am extremely enthused about this because I look forward to working with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay)—we have different soil conservation programs that had been in place last year.

There is a component in this forestry agreement that will, for the first time, encourage some of our southern farmers to consider wood lot farming, some of those farmers who currently are, perhaps, in a position to set aside 40 acres or 80 acres and take them out of the cereal grain productions, take them out of wheat production. We seem to be producing ever-increasing quantities of wheat, and the prices are not all that conducive even with the support program that the minister is bringing forward.

There is a great opportunity that we can, with technical help, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps with some financial help, induce tree lot farming in southern Manitoba which has multiple benefits. It improves the opportunities for wildlife to flourish. It holds down more land for soil conservation. It will retain more water on our landscape. In other words, it truly will build for a cleaner, a greener environment throughout our province.

Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity, and it is my dream to turn Manitoba truly into a garden state. We have programs like the North American Waterfowl Management program that is designated to spend upwards to \$134 million in the next 15 years to recapture and enhance waterfowl nesting grounds, the pothole country of Minnedosa and Shoal Lake and that southwestern portion of the province.

One of my great joys is to work with individual farm groups and allow them to do the small things in their district, in their farms, build small little \$5,000, \$3,000 little structures, earthen structures, that keep

water on the land for a few extra days, or in pond, flood a little bit of reservoir. I am not speaking of the big Rafferty-Alameda's, Mr. Speaker. This is a program here that will enhance the natural environment of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I feel rejected, I feel dejected, I feel saddened, because it is only with the understanding of my own colleagues here, both urban and rural, that we have an understanding for this. This opportunity is lost on honourable members opposite. They only want to talk about the pressing urban problems. They only want to talk about what union leader is driving them next. They do not want to talk about the landscape of rural Manitoba.

I said to my friend, the former Minister of Natural Resources, it is inconceivable that we are watching a hundred million dollar industry go down the drain and there has not been a single question from the members of the opposition, not a single question. They do not care about jobs. They do not care about what is happening. I can remember standing in this House when we worried about agreements.

I am going to turn to my Liberal friends, because I honestly believe that there is hope, that there is potential for redemption there, and besides the fact that my parents voted more often Liberal than Conservative. You know, maybe that has stuck with me a little bit, so I am going to address myself to the friends in the Liberal Party.

I want you to make sure your Leader gets the—you begin to show some genuine concern about what happens throughout the province of Manitoba; you get from out of the confines of the union hall and the immediate pressing problems that are generated there. Mr. Speaker, I do not ignore them. I am prepared to acknowledge that 60 percent, 70 percent of our time, or 80 percent of our time should be about urban problems. Surely we could find 20 percent of our time or 5 percent of our time, or at least 7 percent or 8 percent of our time to talk about rural matters in this House.

We await with some enthusiasm when obviously the official opposition has delegated the one farmer, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk)—it is now her turn, once a month she can ask an agricultural question, once a month—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I hesitate to interrupt the honourable minister, because his remarks have been fairly relevant to this Bill 3, but he is digressing somewhat. I would ask the honourable Minister of

Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to keep his remarks relevant to Bill 3.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, you have wounded me. You touch me. You know, Mr. Speaker, the absolute high regard I have for the authority of the Chair that I take it in a very personal way to try to conduct myself in a way that indeed it will be, immodest as it sounds, a role model to my colleagues. For you to have to call me to order will likely mean another sleepless night, but I will try to get through it and take your admonition in a most serious manner.

Back to trees, white spruce trees in specific. Mr. Speaker, I agree we have all digressed somewhat from the rules with respect to spruce trees. What I intend to do, Mr. Speaker, in my few comments is to point out that the symbolic significance of Bill 3, the symbolic significance of the action that we are taking here gives wide latitude for us to have an important debate, discussion about the importance of this particular tree, which is a very important tree to Manitoba, as my colleague, the member for Charleswood, the former Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst), pointed out.

Mr. Speaker, surely honourable members, knowing that we face some very important questions about trees and forestry in this coming year, we have one of our major industries and major companies, Repap, appearing before the Clean Environment Commission this summer to determine how they will harvest a number of these trees. Could honourable members not have chosen to speak about that and in a context with the importance of the industry to Manitoba? They ask us every day, Mr. Speaker—I am going to slide off the path just a little bit, but I will bring it right back on again.

They asked today about jobs, jobs, jobs; what are we doing about the unemployed? The forest industry employs 10,000 to 12,000 people. The forest industry is responsible for 10,000 jobs. Are we going to get that concern, Mr. Speaker, when we examine Repap's request to double their production in Manitoba? Are we going to have the concern about jobs? I want the legitimate concern about our environment, I want the legitimate concern about the health of our forestry industry to be expressed, but I do not want the official opposition simply to be going after Repap because they think it is a popular thing to do, to attack a large company.

* (1540)

This is not an opportunity, on Bill 3, to enter into a debate about what we are doing symbolically here for the forestry industry, what we are doing symbolically for every tree in this province but indeed to ask the ministry, to ask the government what we are doing to ensure the long-term health of our forestry industry in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I have attempted to indicate—and I am very grateful for the opportunity that my colleague, the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation (Mrs. Mitchelson), has provided us to enable me to speak about the forestry industry in the province of Manitoba, to be able to speak about this particular tree, Mr. Speaker. I thank honourable members for it.

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, I intended to speak on another major bill, The Mental Health Act, but the minister—(interjection)—well, of course we will be calling it next no doubt. I think that having joined in the debate on this particular bill, I will probably wait and prepare myself even further in greater depth for The Mental Health Act, and I was prepared for it this time.

I intended to speak my full 40 minutes on The Mental Health Act, as it is, because there are pressing problems in that area in rural Manitoba, certainly in my constituency that people have brought to my attention.

This bill, Bill 3, dealing with the symbol, the white spruce as our official Manitoba symbol, is certainly one that I do want to speak on as having been a former Minister of Natural Resources. I know that the current Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) speaks with some pride of ownership when he talks about this because, just as farmers love the animals that they keep on their farms, people involved in natural resources tend to take a great deal of pride in seeing the development of our natural resources, our forestry resources, wildlife and so on.

It becomes a very close attachment, and I can sense that great pride in the voice of the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) as he spoke on this bill with such enthusiasm and with such great vigour. I have not seen that in his speeches in this House for many years, and it is on rare occasions that he rises above the normal debate in the House to eloquently address the issues. I have to say that at times he did get off the track a bit. Actually I think he went in the ditch a few times and he had trouble getting out, particularly when he talked about the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

I think he digressed to the point where he felt truly sorry that the Speaker had to bring him to order, and I think we all heard his genuine comments on that point. The fact is, the member for Swan River has raised a number of issues in this House on various occasions dealing with agriculture, also with rural development, and I felt it was not fair for the minister, a long-time veteran of this House, to be talking about a new MLA in this House in that way.

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

As a matter of fact, we have constantly raised issues in this House dealing with agriculture, because we feel that it is an extremely critical industry for our province and one that we feel is threatened at this time. The sugar beet industry has been referred to, Mr. Acting Speaker, by many speakers here. I do not know how they got into the sugar beet, except for the roots I guess, tied it into the white spruce, but they did refer to that in their speech on the white spruce.

I will not get that far off the track when I am speaking on this bill. I do want to make some serious comments about the whole issue of having a provincial tree as a symbol of our province and the importance of that particular tree both economically and socially in the development of our province, the importance to various communities, historically and at the present time, to our province.

The white spruce is a dominant tree throughout our province, one that I think we have to continue to put emphasis on in terms of reforestation. I am proud that while we were in government we had undertaken some extensive initiatives in this area.

We had, through agreements with the major forestry companies, obviously ensured that reforestation was taking place, but we also undertook it independently from those companies to ensure that we were replacing our trees in an accelerated way from what was happening in the past, as we have seen throughout the world the depletion of our forestry resources in many ways, in many countries, deliberately. So we attempted, with the federal government, to make this a priority and signed a federal-provincial forestry agreement of some \$35 million over a five-year period, and there were some extensions to that agreement as well. This ensured that there were resources allocated to this area to protect the white spruce and other major trees with a major economic impact on our province for future generations.

The minister referred to the harvesting of second-generation trees that were planted 65 years ago, and that kind of foresight is now bearing fruits, Mr. Acting Speaker. Of course, we have to do the same thing to protect our forestry resources for our children and grandchildren.

I wondered that, while people were talking about the importance of tree farming and so on, there is the irony that we go to all of these lots in the urban areas for Christmas trees. Most of the Christmas trees there are from out of province, out of the country. Some of them are white spruce, but many of them are not—fir, Douglas fir, and certainly white pine fir—(interjection)—Yes, they do have—the tops make good Christmas trees, you see, and when they are very young they use them. Yes, the minister is questioning me, Mr. Acting Speaker, about my reference to Douglas fir as a Christmas tree. The fact is, many of these are imported, if we can use the term, from British Columbia, from other areas of the country and from the United States.

We have beautiful Christmas trees in our own province, grown right here. I think that, with the white spruce now being our official symbol, we should in the next year encourage people to plant white spruce, not just for the sake of establishing tree farms, but Christmas tree farms; encourage people with some promotion to buy a local tree, rather than one that comes from outside the country; and encourage people to commemorate the white spruce through using it as a Christmas tree this year. That would be one way to attach another whole meaning and celebration to the white spruce being designated as a major symbol of our province and raise the profile of the white spruce in the minds of all Manitobas.

I would encourage the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to pick up on this suggestion and encourage people to purchase or cut a white spruce grown in our province and replant trees to replace it. Every time one is removed, at least two should be replacements to ensure that there will be more trees rather than fewer in our province. By promoting the use of the white spruce for Christmas trees, Mr. Acting Speaker, we would not in the same breath be promoting the destruction of our forests. Contrary to that, we would be encouraging people to replant at least two trees for every one that they cut down, but do promote the idea of the white spruce in our province as a Christmas tree.

I also want to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we have in government and in opposition felt that the protection of our forest resources was of paramount importance. We feel that in this whole Repap debate; many times the government ministers choose to twist the position that the opposition has taken with regard to the Repap issue. The fact is that what we are concerned about is the protection of our forestry resources such as the white spruce and, at the same time, ensuring that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is taken to task for not negotiating a good deal on behalf of the taxpayers of Manitoba in the protection of the white spruce and other species. I think that is one of the major concerns that we have in the whole debate.

* (1550)

We know that the Minister of Finance was snookered in his discussion. He was so anxious to get rid of the forestry complex up at The Pas that he did not ensure that all of the areas were covered in an adequate way to protect the public interest. The forest resources was one area and, of course, what we got or did not get for the whole complex was the other major issue. So those are the two: the environmental issue and the protection of our forestry resources, and the lack of financial package attached to the sale.

So we will encourage the government to use this designation of the white spruce as an official symbol of the Province of Manitoba as a springboard to move forward in further forestry resources in development and agreements with the federal government. We want to see this act that is taking place being given the appropriate publicity.

We know that the ministers will undoubtedly want to have a news conference unveiling the white spruce—or has that been done? I did not see it. I would like to see at that time pamphlets distributed through the schools and a great deal of information distributed, and from this enthusiasm created over the designation of the white spruce as a provincial symbol, in fact, perhaps the unveiling of a major federal-provincial agreement on reforestation that will see the proliferation of white spruce throughout this province as a result of this designation.

So this can, in fact, be a very useful point in our history, this designation which was so long overdue. This can be a springboard for economic development through a major reforestation agreement. I know the Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) is going to get on side in that regard, the

Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) are going to go to their colleagues, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), the Minister of Culture and Heritage (Mrs. Mitchelson) who has introduced this bill, to in fact negotiate with vigour with the federal government a major expansion in reforestation in this province.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, you are undoubtedly very aware of the fact that this government and the federal government have failed dismally when it comes to negotiating agreements in this province for economic development. Now, we know that there are very few of those that have been renegotiated when we had so many.

Well, the Minister of Highways is a little sensitive, if I may digress for a moment, about these agreements because he failed to renegotiate the Churchill agreement and the transportation agreements, all in this package of where the forestry agreement took place under ERDA, the umbrella agreement. Of course, we had a major forestry agreement under that for protection of such species as the white spruce which we are designating here today, but we also had many other agreements. This minister has been unable, in cabinet, to swing the members over to supporting the issue of Churchill and transportation in his area, so he wants me to stay away from that whole area of agreements, because it is a sensitive matter, but I want the members of the government who are sitting here today and yourself, Mr. Acting Speaker, to be aware that we in the opposition would encourage this government to in fact conclude a major agreement with the federal government.

They had said only a few years ago that they were going to designate a forestry department. Now, I think there is some arm of a department that was designated federally, but it is clear that it has not received the priority that it needs to receive in this country and throughout the world, and we can lead by example in this province with a further investment in our future in terms of clean air, the environment and future resources.

Some 65 years, 50 years from now, when these trees can be harvested, these white spruce throughout this province, we truly will remember back to this day when the designation of the white spruce took place and we were members of this Legislature at that time. The Minister of Highways (Mr. Driedger) was sitting right in that chair at that time, part of history in the making, while this tree was

being designated. It led to all of this great development across the province and, as a result, Manitoba became one of the great forestry provinces of this country.

Now we have that opportunity. That challenge lies before us, and we will see whether this government fumbles the ball on this one, Mr. Acting Speaker, as they have done in so many different areas over the last three years and no doubt will do over the next year or two or whatever they are given by the people of this province before they are finally laid to rest in a humane way.

Before that does take place, there is an opportunity for action, and I cannot help but referencing the Minister of Northern Affairs, and Rural Development (Mr. Downey) saying that, well, you had six years, when he was talking about the former New Democratic Party, you had six years to do it. He is now at three years, and he has only three more years left and he no longer can say this. As a matter of fact, as I said the other day, it is pretty shaky ground to be saying it after three years, that he has had an opportunity to put forward a major initiative on forestry to ensure, even in preparation for this designation of the white spruce, that there was a major initiative launched ahead of time so that the ministers could stand up in this House and say, look what we have done with the white spruce in this province over the last three years.

That is one of the reasons why we, at this time, are designating the white spruce as a symbol, not the major reason because, of course, it has had a major presence in this province throughout history, but a major initiative that they could have pointed to to make this designation so much more legitimate by this government, but no, they failed in that. They did not have the foresight and the planning to do that. They missed that opportunity, but it is not too late. This is one of the beauties of the situation with this issue. They can now rectify the situation and in fact put forward that major initiative.

I want to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I grew up on a farm in the Interlake and had very close attachment to the white spruce as a child. I climbed many trees and got a lot of this sticky gum all over my hands and cut the branches and built houses in the wintertime out of spruce branches. It was a great time, but I have always felt an attachment to the white spruce, and I am very pleased that the government has now seen fit to recognize the

importance of that tree to our province, to our economy and to our people.

I will support the government in this bill in this regard, not take issue with their choice and hope that they will do much more in the years ahead to promote the development of initiatives that will see the proliferation of the white spruce throughout our province in the years ahead. I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this historic occasion on this important matter, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Committee Changes

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the member for Portage (Mr. Connery) for the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey); and the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) for the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

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

* * *

*(1600)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): As previously agreed, this bill shall remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen).

Bill 5—The Mental Health Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): On the proposed motion of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), Bill 5, The Mental Health Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé mentale, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylcia-Leis).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is there a will to have this stand? Is it the will for this bill to remain standing? Agreed?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Agreed. This bill shall remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns.

Bill 6—The Mines and Minerals and Consequential Amendments Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld), Bill 6, The Mines and Minerals Act (Loi sur les mines et les minéraux et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes). Shall this bill remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): This bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas.

Bill 8—The Vital Statistics Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), Bill 8, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Shall this bill remain standing? Stand? This bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington.

Bill 12—The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Bill 12, The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I ask that it remain standing in the member's name and I have some comments on the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is it agreed to let the bill stand in the name of the honourable member for Kildonan?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Ashton: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker. I must admit I was somewhat disappointed on the bills we just passed through that government members, who have had the opportunity to address a number of the issues obviously prior to us in our caucus, have not chosen to participate in the debate

at this particular point in time, including on this particular bill.

I did listen yesterday to the inspiring speech by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) and indeed I believe that we can truthfully say that the member is an honorary tree hugger, and I am sure he will take that as a compliment—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please; order, please. I must interrupt the honourable member. Our rules state that debate must be directly relevant to the question under consideration.

The question under consideration is the principle of Bill 12, The Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims Practices Amendment Act.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Acting Speaker, you are quite correct in terms of our rules, and I do apologize if I was complimenting the Minister of Natural Resources on his speech. I promise it will not happen again, but I was really just responding, as we often do in introductory remarks, to some of the general tenor of debate on all bills.

I will make my remarks relevant to this bill. I have taken the opportunity to review the bill, and I am aware, obviously, of the implications of it. It is a bill that keeps, in terms of the tradition of the last number of years, a number of changes in terms of small claims practices.

I recall we had a bill from the same Attorney General just previously that we debated and it resulted in a number of changes. I want to indicate that from our side in terms of our caucus we have had the opportunity to have at least a preliminary discussion on this particular bill and we can see some merit in a number of the proposals in this particular bill.

Because I believe that we all have a stake in making sure that the Small Claims Court, if you like, is an effective level of court action in this province because I think all of us in this Chamber, whether we are lawyers or not—and I am not a lawyer—Mr. Acting Speaker, and I do not mean this as a comment that in any way might be seen as being a pejorative comment on lawyers.

Lawyers serve a useful role in society and the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) especially serves a very useful role in the society, and I do not mean any comments in the negative sense towards the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik) who also is a

lawyer, or the many lawyers who have served in this House.

But I do believe one of the difficulties we run into with our legal system is the fact that it is very much dependent on lawyers and, by extension, one's ability to have access to proper procedures and, indeed, may I use the bigger term of justice, is once again also dependent on the number of people having access to lawyers. I want to say, Mr. Acting Speaker, that I recognize the important role of legal aid. Legal aid does fill the gap for many people, who, for financial reasons, do not have the ability to pursue legal action. In no way, shape or form does legal aid provide access to all forms of court action, particularly civil action.

I have had a number of people in my own constituency approach me in just recent weeks, recent months, pointing to the difficulties that many people face because of their lack of access to lawyers either for financial reasons or for reasons of geographic access.

I look at the situation in Thompson, for example, where there are a limited number of law firms. A number of people that I have spoken to have not been able to obtain representation on civil suits because of the fact that lawyers in those firms represent other parties to the civil suit, and those individuals have had to go outside of the community to get legal assistance. What has happened has been a question of convenience, has been very inconvenient for the people involved, but it has also been very costly.

I had an individual approach me back in the fall, who had a particular problem, a civil matter, and my own opinion as a nonlawyer, I felt that he had a very legitimate case, but, Mr. Acting Speaker, what happened essentially as a result of his trying to obtain lawyers in the constituency that I represent was the fact there was nobody available. He felt it was just not worth pursuing, what in many other ways would have been a very, very legitimate court action. That is a case of lack of geographic access.

I had another case involving a woman in a matter related to a domestic dispute, essentially related to separation. She approached me; she had attempted to obtain legal aid, had been referred to a number of lawyers in Thompson, and was told essentially that she should deal directly with the lawyers in the community. She once again was unable to obtain counsel in this very important matter. In fact, one of the people involved in the

lawsuit was directly connected to one of the law firms. The other law firm was also representing this particular individual.

I raise this, Mr. Acting Speaker, because we see on an almost daily basis the fact that equal access to the law does not exist in this province, and it is because of those types of barriers that I mentioned, financial or geographic barriers. I want to juxtapose that with what the end result becomes. You, Mr. Acting Speaker, may have a legitimate case, a civil case against someone else. There may be another individual who has an equally just case. If you have the financial resources to pursue that case, you are able to pursue it through the courts, and if you have a case that is upheld by the court, you are able to obtain, if it is a civil action, some sort of award related to that particular matter. The other individual may have the identical case but will lack the financial resources, will not be covered by legal aid, particularly in terms of civil matters, and what will they do? They will decide not to proceed with the legal action because of the lack of financial resources.

* (1610)

Now people will say, I am sure, that we are dealing with civil matters; we are not dealing with criminal matters; and that essentially there may be a different level to which we should guarantee equal access under the law, whether it be in terms of criminal vis-a-vis civil cases. But the bottom line is, I believe, that we have become increasingly subject to litigation in society as a whole, and that people who would never have thought of ever approaching a lawyer are often forced to do so on a fairly regular basis because of civil action.

I know that anyone who is involved in business will, I am sure, attest to that. I am sure there are many people who have faced law suits in business, big or small. It really does not matter the size of the business because we are in a world in which things are changing. We are in a world in which, unfortunately, the traditions of a handshake sealing a deal often are not sufficient enough to prevent disputes over contracts, for example, when we find increasingly that people are either in court because of disputes over contracts, verbal or written, or else they attempt to avoid those very disputes.

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

I would say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is an unfortunate set of circumstances, but that is the

reality of the world we live in. In fact, I do not think anyone has really conducted a study in terms of the degree to which we have had lawsuits, we have had actions in court, or even negotiations between legal representatives of various parties, but I would suspect that if one was to conduct some research into this particular matter, one would find very simply that over the last number of years the degree of litigation, the degree of involvement of lawyers in matters, whether they be commercial or other civil matters, has increased rather dramatically.

I would say that it is one of the major areas where we do not have, truthfully, equal access under the law in terms of civil action. I want to say that because the whole concept behind the Small Claims Court is to deal at least in some way, shape or form with that problem. The intent of the small claims system is to allow people who have claims below a certain level to be able to deal with these claims expeditiously. It is a great concept in theory, and I would say that it is one of the better aspects to our legal system, one aspect that has really opened up the whole legal system to many people who would have no access otherwise.

But there are flaws in that system. We are in the situation, obviously, and it is part of the whole concept of Small Claims Court that essentially decisions that are made by the Small Claims Court are not final and are not binding in the sense that they can be appealed. What is happening currently is the fact that, if people do not attend in the court on a particular case, a defendant, for example, in a civil action or an action related to ownership of property or wills and estates or a family matter, can lose the case, all they need to do is, by leave of the court, to appeal it.

The bottom line, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that I do not know if this act attempts to deal with that, and I would say to the Attorney General that we certainly are interested in the proposals because at the bottom line an individual could appeal a decision currently, the former case, even if they did not attend in court and lost as a result. Now, if they did not attend in the court and lost the case as a result, they can only appeal the decision by leave of the court. That is an important change, and I recognize it. It places far greater onus on the plaintiff and the defendant in a particular Small Claims Court to attend, to give some seriousness, some importance, to the proceedings, because at the current time, as I indicated, if one does not attend,

it is rather a routine matter to be able to appeal that particular decision.

I believe, if the Small Claims Court is to have any validity, is to have any effect, the bottom line has to be, there has to be an onus on both sides of a court case to attend the hearing in that court. Otherwise, I believe it is a contempt of the court, a contempt of the small claims procedure, and allows, in many cases, people to essentially try and bump up the decision in the court to the court level itself, and for a particular reason. Strategically, a defendant, for example, in a case, can bump up a matter to a higher level, in terms of the court itself, outside of the realm of the Small Claims Court.

Of course, what happens when one enters the realm of dealing with a matter before the Court of Queen's Bench? One ends up in a whole series, Madam Deputy Speaker, of procedures that cost a considerable amount of money in legal fees—legal fees, by the way, which cannot all be recouped by a plaintiff or a defendant, regardless of the award or lack of award of legal fees by the court. I refer, of course, to examination for discovery, a procedure by which all the details are brought forward by interview of witnesses and potential witnesses by the lawyers involved. While I am not aware of exactly the cost that that can involve, I am sure that those in this Chamber who are members of the legal profession can attest that it is a considerable cost. It is a considerable cost; it can run into the thousands of dollars per day, thousands of dollars per day that will not be recouped by either parties to the full extent.

There are other procedures as well, following that, in terms of pretrial discovery. I recently spoke to an individual, a friend of mine, who is involved in a lawsuit that has been carrying on now for five years, a fairly major lawsuit involving damages. I would say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that if he did not have at least some financial resources, he would not have been able to continue to this point, to this level. He has had to expend a significant amount of money in terms of legal fees. Once again, in discussing his case—and I do not mean to comment of the specific individual or specific case—it is very obvious, to my mind, that he has a legitimate case, certainly to be brought before the courts.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that another individual, who did not have the financial resources, would not be able to deal with those sorts of areas.

I want to say that this bill, as I read it, will move in a number of different directions. I mentioned the one area. The bill also deals with some other changes which excludes certain actions from inclusions in the Small Claims Court, including the ownership of property, wills, estates, family matters and civil proceedings such as defamation. I think, from our side, we would appreciate the opportunity to further review this and consult with members of the public and indeed with members of the legal profession who I am sure will provide us significant advice on this particular provision.

I want to say that, not in any way, shape or form to say that is not necessarily the direction in which we should move. I recognize that certain actions, Mr. Speaker, have had greater success, shall we say, in terms of the Small Claims Court in the sense that certain actions have proven to be far more appropriate for the Small Claims Court than other actions.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that in part the changes to the appeal process may help in terms of that, and I want to see—and I know our critic, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) will be very interested in seeing the statistics, the situation that is out there currently in terms of a number of the areas that the Attorney General is proposing to exclude from Small Claims action. If indeed there have not been a significant number of cases or there have been significant difficulties when those cases have been brought forward, I suppose there might be some merit in terms of dealing with those at a different level of court.

* (1620)

I want to ensure and I know our caucus wants to ensure that people who might otherwise currently have the right to proceed, as I said with the ownership of property, wills and estates, family matters and civil proceedings, will still have that opportunity, because the Small Claims Court should not be overly restricted to certain particular types of actions, Mr. Speaker. The intent really was to democratize the court system, the court structure in this country to provide a greater degree of access and equality.

While some might suggest that those are not the prime concerns in Small Claims Court, if even one individual who might currently have the opportunity to access the Small Claims Court, whether it be in regard to some of the items I have mentioned which are going to be excluded by the minister,

defamation, for example, or wills and estates or ownership of property—if even one individual might have received justice through the Small Claims procedure and who currently will not be able to obtain that justice because of the expense of court action at a higher level, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is it not in the best interest of public policy to allow that procedure to continue? I ask that as a rhetorical question at this point, because this is a bill that we have had only a brief opportunity to review.

This is, as I mentioned earlier, day 18 of the current legislative session. It is early in the session. I anticipate that we will be here for some time as the government develops its agenda, or should I say, develops an agenda. I made comments earlier before on what we perceive as being a basic lack of an agenda, certainly legislatively, but we obviously will be here for a considerable amount of time this session. I do not anticipate it to be as short a session as last time.

We are also dealing with some different bills this time, Mr. Speaker, this being a case in point. In the previous session we dealt with a number of bills that had been considered in a revised form prior to that in previous sessions. We dealt with bills that had been dealt with in a conceptual way through public consultation and public discussions for a fairly significant amount of time.

The bill that we are dealing with here I do not believe has been subject to that type of consultation, certainly not with members of the general public. The Attorney General may have consulted with some members of the legal profession. I am not suggesting that has not taken place, but we saw even last session and in previous sessions that there were many bills that we had assumed or had thought were obvious in terms of being put out in public consultation, and either had been put out for a very limited public consultation or had been put out for public consultation where the recommendations of the members of the public who came forward and made proposals regarding those bills were ignored. We do not want to see that happen on any of these particular bills, including Bill 5.

I would say that relatively speaking—and I mentioned earlier about one of the bills which I thought did not have really the significant import, Bill 3, in comparison to the other five bills that we are dealing with currently on the government's very limited agenda. I would not suggest that this bill is

as significant as The Mental Health Amendment Act, and I say that in the sense that The Mental Health Amendment Act does deal with a number of changes, not necessarily overly controversial, but some fairly significant changes.

I would obviously suggest that Bill 12 is not as significant probably as The Mines and Minerals and Consequential Amendments Act which deals with a major overhaul of that particular act.

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is this bill, however, certainly in comparison to two of the other bills, does have a number of significant public-policy decisions that have to be made by members of this Legislature. I would suggest that this is one particular bill where all members of the Legislature should take time to review it.

I recognize that theoretically on bills, we should all be reviewing every bill that is before this Legislature in great detail, but I recognize -(interjection)- Well, I recognize the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) probably does. He made reference earlier to sleepless nights. I am sure he has many a sleepless night reading the next bills up on the Order Paper for the following day to make sure that he is fully aware of what is going to be happening, and I take by his comments on Bill 3 earlier, that he was doing his homework. He may have lost some sleep on developing his speech for that particular bill, and I give him credit. -(interjection)-

Well, it is a Statute of Law Amendments bill, Mr. Speaker, that probably creates the greatest degree of lack of sleep for the member and I recognize that. I recognize also that while he may not exactly lay awake at night in terms of this particular bill, it may indeed be on his mind. It may indeed be one of the items that he is considering in terms of balancing the busy Legislative agenda.

You know, I would say that most members of this House would have to admit, given the pressures of constituency, given the pressures in terms of obviously members of the cabinet, in terms of their cabinet responsibilities, in terms of the pressures of other members of this House, whether it be government backbenchers or opposition members, in terms of other areas, including critic areas, that we have gone to the point where we have not all followed the bills as completely as we should.

We have allowed the cabinet ministers and the critics to essentially assume a new role. It is not really part of the parliamentary tradition in a

historical sense, but a new role in the sense that they now have become arbiters in terms of discussions and negotiations. They could play a key role in recommending or not recommending a proceeding on a bill and will play a key role in the final bill in terms of amendments for example, Mr. Speaker.

I look at Bill 12 as an obvious example. The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has brought in this bill and our critic will be engaging in discussion. I am not saying that is a negative process. What I am suggesting, however, is that we should all take the time, particularly on a matter such as this, which probably will have more of a direct import on many of our constituents on a daily basis, that we should take the time to read through the bill and provide our own different and particular perspective.

This is one particular bill, I can indicate, that I will be personally taking to my constituents, including some of the people I referenced earlier, who have been having difficulties with the court system. I will be asking them whether they feel this will make the court system more accessible or less accessible, and I say that because I believe all members of this Legislature should be doing that on this particular bill.

I do not mean in any way to once again take away from the role of ministers and critics, but quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we are in the position where we are, I think as all members of the Legislature, subject to increasing pressures. We have to remember that despite our roles in our constituencies, we also have to be legislators.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that quite frankly my No. 1 role is in terms of my own constituency, my own community of Thompson. I make no bones about that. I have indicated that is my priority.

My role as a legislator also is something that I intend to pursue. That is why I want to indicate that I am speaking on this particular bill because, while our critic may provide more detailed comments than I can provide on this, because it is his critic area, he is also a member of the legal profession and has probably had some direct exposure to Small Claims Court. My exposure is through communications with constituents.

The bottom line is that we are essentially in the position, Mr. Speaker, I think, many of us not being experts on each and every bill, but one of the great things about the parliamentary process is that we have several opportunities to be able to give forth our comments. We are dealing now with second

reading, which traditionally deals with the principle of the bill, and that is why I have not dealt with the specific amendments being proposed by this bill. That is more appropriate in the committee of the Legislature, when we reach that stage, and also we deal of course on the bill as a whole once again at report stage and third reading.

I think we also have to recognize the fact that we do need some time to be able to proceed properly through the various steps. I know we have had on other bills some questions about granting leave to try and speed up the considerations, I think on all bills. We have a minimum amount of notice, Mr. Speaker, that is required so that we can act properly in terms of performing our duties as members of this Legislature. This bill is an obvious example.

It was released fairly recently. Many people have not had the opportunity to peruse it fully. I think that any member of the Legislature listening right now would have to admit, quite frankly most members would have to admit, that they have not had the chance to read this bill through in complete detail.

Mr. Speaker, we do need that opportunity. We also need a second stage, and that is through a consultation. We have had many examples in our parliamentary system here in Manitoba, which is unique in the sense that we have public hearings, the only province that has public hearings on a regular basis, that is mandated by our rules on everything ranging from the smallest of bills to the Constitution itself. That is something I think we all owe a fair degree of attention to, the public input.

I can indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I want the opportunity to be able to take this particular bill to people in my constituency. I want to indicate to the Attorney General (Mr. McCrae) that we may indeed on our side have amendments. I may indeed be talking to our critic and looking at possible amendments because, as I said before, while in terms of the principle of reforming Small Claims Court, I do not think anyone in this House can be critical of it.

This could potentially move in two separate directions. There are restrictions in this bill that are attached that restrict the type of court action that can currently be taken to Small Claims Court. On the other hand, there is a more stringent appeal mechanism put in place that prevents people from essentially by-passing.

Our position at the current point in time, subject to that very important degree of consultation with

members of the public, is that we wish to deal with those specific principles, and we wish to have the opportunity to consider whether we are going to fully support the bill at committee or that we will be looking at opposing certain sections or possibly bringing in amendments. In fact, I want to indicate that we very possibly may be bringing in amendments from our original perusal of this bill.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have been able to participate in debate on this particular bill. I would encourage members to deal with the particular principles. To the member for Portage (Mr. Connery), if he is back to reality yet, I would encourage him to read this bill. I think that he will find that there are some important policy decisions that have to be made.

I am making this speech in all seriousness in the hopes that the member of the Legislature for Portage, amongst all others, especially amongst all others, will look at this particular bill. I am not sure the degree to which he is involved in terms of input with his own party at this point in time, but I assume he still is attending caucus meetings. He may wish to raise it there, Mr. Speaker. He may wish to raise concerns on this particular bill in this Legislature. I give him that full due and credit and assume that he will do that. I do not question anything else. I believe that he, having been a member of the Legislature the last number of years, will understand.

* (1630)

I hope he will understand that when a member of this Legislature arises to give his or her input on a bill, particularly when the input relates directly, as I have tried to do in this particular debate, to the specific principles of the bill and, for the member for Portage, if he has not had the opportunity to peruse the bill, I am sure he will find that I refer to the two basic principles in the bill.

An Honourable Member: The number of the bill and the name of the bill.

Mr. Ashton: Oh, I have referred to a lot more than the number of the bill and the name of the bill, for the member for Portage (Mr. Connery), who seems to have a selective hearing problem, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to matters like this.

If the minister wants me to reiterate for the fourth time what the principles of this bill are, if he is not aware of that, I can tell him that one thing this bill does, and this is directly to the member for Portage,

in case he did not have the opportunity to hear all of my remarks, one of the specific principles is that this bill specifically excludes certain actions from inclusion in Small Claims Court.

In case the member for Portage was not aware, these include ownership of property, wills and estates, family matters and some civil proceedings such as defamation. That is fairly significant, as I said. We want to peruse, I will conclude on that section by saying, we want to conclude, we want to deal with this by determining whether this is going to unfairly limit the access of people to those particular provisions.

Once again, to the member, in case he was not able to hear all my comments, the act also seeks to change the rules on appeal. In the former case, a current case, an individual can appeal a decision even if they did not attend in court and lost as a result. Now it has been suggested that if they did not attend and lost the case, they can only appeal a decision by way of leave of the court, a principle that we on the surface feel is a positive move, Mr. Speaker.

You know, we are often criticized in the opposition for not giving credit where credit is due, Mr. Speaker, and I think it is part and parcel of the adversarial nature of the parliamentary system. We have a Legislature based on parties. We each espouse various different points of view, and I would suggest that that is positive, that is healthy. That is one of the reasons why the parliamentary system, to my mind, is the best system of democracy. I really believe that.

You know, that does not stop us from also giving credit where credit is due and, as much as at times it may appear that members of the opposition are not willing to give that credit, I will say right now on public record that to the degree to which the Small Claims Court can be democratized, I mentioned that one of those principles is being espoused, this bill certainly does appear on the surface to move in that direction. I will give credit to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae). Obviously, I would be critical if there is any attempt to limit the access to the procedures available in the Court of Queen's Bench Small Claims section.

I know, Mr. Speaker, and I have talked to former members of the Legislature, there has been a shift over the years toward a more adversarial system. I recently had the opportunity to talk to a former member of the Legislature from the 1950s and

1960s who remarked that it is probably the most significant change that has taken place in this Legislature, a move that initially took place in the 1970s. I am not saying that in itself is necessarily unhealthy. I believe in Question Period, but one of the key roles, obviously, is to have an exchange of questions and answers and discussion and ideas about where the province should be proceeding. I think it is part of our system to expect that there should be some criticism of a government if it is not living up to the needs of the province of Manitoba.

We are into debate on other bills, particularly a bill such as this which I would classify as essentially a nonpartisan bill. I do not believe that this bill in any way, shape or form could ever have been described as having been part of the Conservative election platform any more than it would have been a similar bill brought in by an NDP minister which could have been described as having been part of an NDP platform or with the Liberals. This is not final offer selection where we are dealing with major issues of principles, differing views of principles. It is not, and I anticipate here the type of debate we might see in the future on The City of Winnipeg Act, Mr. Speaker, if there is an attempt to reduce the size of City Council. This is more the type of bill where there is an attempt to modify in a modest way the functioning of a court, an institution that has been in place for a period of time.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the bottom line is we will give credit where credit is due, but I would hope that our suggestions and our concerns will be taken into account by the minister and the government. I want to say that because we had the unique opportunity in Manitoba to experience a minority government between 1988 and 1990, and on bills such as this—we had a very similar bill which brought in reform—one of the more positive things that I found was the fact that opposition members were in the position of being able to directly influence the end result of a bill.

I realize it was difficult for ministers and, by the way, there were faults in that process in the sense that an opposition member could walk in to a committee hearing, bring in a change, an amendment, with no notice, without giving the government the fullest opportunity to review that particular decision, consult with its caucus and also to come up with perhaps a suggested compromise wording. I found, though, that if perhaps we could have dealt with that within the rules of having some

sort of notice, it was a very positive system. We saw some significant amendments on bills such as this that were brought in by members of the Legislature, by opposition members.

I think it also contributed, shall I say, to a different attitude on both sides of the House. I would say that on bills where there was no partisan, real bottom line to it, what we saw was the interesting combination of ministers who perhaps were not as—I hate to use this word, I am not trying to use it in a directly pejorative sense—but did not have the arrogance of the majority view. I think all governments to a certain extent tend, to a greater or lesser degree, to develop a certain level of arrogance that comes from the fact that you have the power. It is a difficult decision one has to make is the extent to which one pursues that power. Oppositions also are in a different situation, and they obviously have to make the decision to the degree to which they are adversarial on a particular issue as well.

There was, I believe, between 1988 and 1990, a unique situation on legislation. Whatever faults may have existed in other areas in terms of having a minority government, I will say that one of the more positive features, certainly one that I felt existed having sat in this Legislature when we had a two-party system, later a third party, but when we always had a minority government, one of the more positive features of that type of situation was that on nonpartisan bills there was an attempt to deal with the substance perhaps more than there is in a majority situation.

I would note for the record we had a very strong debate on such issues as final offer selection. I am not saying on the issues that counted, that we felt important, that there was not a strong debate. I do not think anyone can accuse certainly our party of having backed down on any of those sorts of debates. I am sure all members who were sitting at that time remember the strong debates we had and the end result showing that directly the oppositions can have impact. I would say to the government now, because in a minority situation I would say the ball is much more in the oppositions' court in terms of bills, because in a minority situation we had as an opposition the opportunity to control what was going to happen in committee.

We knew that, but we had to make the decision of how far we pushed that control. We had to make that sort of decision, and we were also faced with some other ramifications ministers, such as the

member for Portage (Mr. Connery), did in one particular case, when we were able to pass an amendment dealing with firefighters, threatened to drop the bill unless that amendment was not proceeded with, and we were faced with a difficult situation.

So there are always actions, there are always counteractions that can be taken, but I would say that in that minority situation on bills such as this we, as opposition members, reacted responsibly, as responsibly as possible under those circumstances, recognizing that perhaps in a minority situation paradoxically the opposition certainly on a combined basis had as much power if not more power than the government.

* (1640)

Well, I am saying to the government, now that the ball is in their court, and I say that specifically to the government House leader (Mr. Manness) because I believe this government has to make some decisions on where it proceeds in terms of this Legislature, whether it be on bills such as this, and I know the government House leader is pleased that I have referred these comments specifically to this. I am not doing this on a personal basis, Mr. Speaker, involving any actions of the government House leader and to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who might be tempted to involve in that sort of debate, I am not. I am saying to the government House leader, in his very important role as government House leader in terms of dealing with the business of this Legislature, that that government House leader I believe will obtain a far better result for the people of this province if he can step back—and I said this word before and I will use it again—from the arrogance of power.

That all governments, Mr. Speaker, and some might suggest that some have this attribute more than others—I think those of us on this side have suggested that this government—and I am saying that, well, once again we are getting into personalities on the Tory side and I will not stoop to personalities, and he references the previous government House leader. I think if the member compares what happened he will find that what the current government House leader has done in terms of moving away from consensus in this Chamber goes far beyond anything that has occurred by any other House leader in the past. I find that is unfortunate because I do not believe that is in keeping with the normal approach of the minister.

I put it down perhaps to the pressures this government is facing at the current time. I recognize they are making tough decisions on a daily basis. I think we all do, Mr. Speaker, but I want to suggest to them that on bills such as this particular bill the best way to proceed is through a general consensus approach.

When we have issues of principle, fine, let us have our fights on those issues of principle. When we are in Question Period, when we have to recognize, we are going to have an adversarial atmosphere, I would say, and we certainly recognize that. But when we are dealing with bills, apart from the issues that are matters of significant principle, when we are dealing with bills such as this, that quite frankly are not going to make that much of a difference in terms of electoral politics, are not going to make that much of a difference in terms of partisan politics in this Legislature, these are matters of public policy that all governments attempt to deal with. These are the types of bills where consensus, co-operation and a willingness on the part of the government to at least listen to the opposition, I think, are fairly important.

In conclusion, I want to indicate that we will indeed be referencing this bill in upcoming debate. We do ask for the time, as we are asking on the other bills, to be able to consult. We are contributing towards the debate now in an initial sense. We wish there were more bills, Mr. Speaker. We wish there was more of an agenda. Well, to the degree to which the government is going to put forward an agenda, if any, on bills such as this, we will participate in the debate.

I give notice to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) that he should anticipate some fairly detailed discussions from our critic and from other members on a number of the items that we do possibly have concerns with. I would hope that the minister—I am not suggesting he is not willing to do this, but to the minister, I would ask that that minister take the opportunity to encourage input, particularly on this type of bill. We often have briefings from ministers, Mr. Speaker. I think, in this particular case, what would be most useful would be a dialogue not just with opposition critics but any interested members of the Legislature, a dialogue that might also be extended to some other aspects of the operations of this House. A dialogue that, unfortunately, has all too often suffered from that arrogance of power that I referenced earlier. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the members of the House would wish to call the time five o'clock and move into private members' hour.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, we have put up a significant number of speakers. If the government does not have anybody wishing to participate in the debates, I suppose we could move into private members' hour, but we are quite willing to give leave—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Is there leave of the House to call it five o'clock? It is agreed? Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for private members' hour.

SECOND READINGS—PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 32—The Mount Carmel Clinic Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 32, standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycla-Leis). Stand.

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 22—The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act

Mr. Speaker: Bill 22, standing in the name of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Mr. Carr), The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la Régie de l'énergie du Manitoba.

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that Bill 22, The Manitoba Energy Authority Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la Régie de l'énergie du Manitoba, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Carr: It is my pleasure to introduce this bill. I suppose it is only coincidence, but I think a happy one that the first private members' resolution before us in private members' hour and the first bill both

deal with the issue of energy and energy conservation and the management of Manitoba's energy resources, symbolically important and I think important in a practical way too as we look at the challenges which face us moving into the 21st Century.

At a time when we are all looking at ways of saving money, we hear every day in this House calls to spend money. Then the response from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and other members of the Treasury bench is, all the opposition wants to do is spend at a time when resources are limited.

We are giving the government some positive ideas, Mr. Speaker, on ways in which funds can be saved. We gave a reason to the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld), we gave an idea to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro today in Question Period, when we detailed the expenditures required by Manitoba Hydro in advance of the environmental approvals of the Conawapa project.

Now, some \$110 million will be spent by the Crown corporation before environmental approvals are in place, in addition to the \$80 million which are scheduled in the contract that Manitoba Hydro has signed with Ontario Hydro. So we are saying to the government, here is an opportunity not to spend \$110 million, and here through this deal we are giving the government another positive idea of ways in which it can save money. We look at the entire apparatus which surrounds decision making in the energy field.

Let us just count what they are. We have the cabinet. We have Treasury Board. We have the minister responsible for Energy, for Manitoba Hydro. We have the board of Manitoba Hydro. We have the Manitoba Energy Authority. We have the Crown Corporations Council. We have the Public Utilities Board for rate approvals. That, Mr. Speaker, is a lot of approval, a lot of intermingling of bureaucratic organization and structure.

The argument that we are going to put forward today is not all of them are necessary. One which is not necessary is the Manitoba Energy Authority. The way that we can detail whether or not the Manitoba Energy Authority is required or not is to have a look at its mandate.

As I was going through the annual reports over the last several years, I noticed that the mandate of the Manitoba Energy Authority is the responsibility to formulate and carry out energy policies designed

to assure a continuing and adequate supply of energy in the province; to alleviate the effects of any energy shortage that may occur in the province; to promote the establishment, development and operation within the province of industries and undertakings that are by their nature energy dependent.

Well, what is the mandate of the Department of Energy and Mines? We take this right from the Energy Planning Division, contained within the minister's Estimates. The mandate of the department is to monitor and assess energy matters having implications for the cost, supply and use of energy within the province, to assess anticipated and emerging energy issues within a strategic planning process and to recommend policy and program options for cost effective energy sourcing and use.

In order to try to determine the difference between the mandate of the Manitoba Energy Authority and the mandate of the Department of Energy and Mines is like debating the number of angels who dance on the head of a pin. There is no difference in the mandate. Therefore we ask the question, why is it there?

Let us look at the level of operations of the Manitoba Energy Authority and see who is on the board.

* (1650)

The board of the Manitoba Energy Authority consists of—and it has changed only slightly since the annual report, because Mr. Ransom is no longer the chairman of Manitoba Hydro—A. Brian Ransom, chairman. The chairman is now John McCallum.

John McCallum, in addition to being the chairman of the Manitoba Energy Authority, is also the chairman of Manitoba Hydro. When I asked him, Mr. Speaker, in committee how the relationship was between the chairman of Manitoba Hydro and the chairman of the Manitoba Energy Authority, and whether he had to look in the mirror to determine the effectiveness of their relationship—the same individual is both the chairman of the Manitoba Energy Authority and the chairman of Manitoba Hydro—he said that the relationship with himself was not so bad these days. Who else is on the board of the Manitoba Energy Authority?

An Honourable Member: I do not know. Who else?

Mr. Carr: The vice-chairman, the former president and chief executive officer of Manitoba Hydro. R. B. Brennan, the President and Chief Executive Officer, Manitoba Hydro; Ian Haugh, Deputy Minister, Manitoba Energy and Mines; Hugh Eliasson, Deputy Minister of Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism; and Charles E. Curtis, a fine public servant, Chief Executive Officer, the Manitoba Energy Authority, and Deputy Minister, Manitoba Finance.

Mr. Speaker, what we have proven in only a very few minutes is the mandate of the Manitoba Energy Authority is complementary, it is the same, it is competitive, it is redundant with the authority of the ministry of Energy and Mines. You know what, I have a sneaking suspicion that the government may be on our wavelength here, but we will find out no doubt in due course.

Not only is the mandate the same, but the people are the same, Mr. Speaker. The chairman of Hydro is the chairman of the Energy Authority. Deputy ministers of government sit on the Energy Authority. Its mandate is redundant. Why do we need the Manitoba Energy Authority? It is not as if the Manitoba Energy Authority is free either, as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) knows probably all too well.

In 1990 the grants received by the Manitoba Energy Authority were in excess of \$2 million.

An Honourable Member: Yes, but much of it went to Dow Corning?

Mr. Carr: That is true. Much of it went into Dow Corning. The Minister of Finance wants to have a game of question and answer. How about in 1989 when it was \$1.7 million? No answer from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). In 1988, well, it looks like there was a deficit in 1988, simply a coincidence of the electoral cycle.

My point is made that it costs money to set up a separate bureaucracy, a separate organization. Presumably, the directors are spending important time, including deputy ministers of government departments, including the chief executive officer of Manitoba Hydro—we do not need the Manitoba Energy Authority. Its mandate is well covered by Manitoba Hydro and the Department of Energy and Mines where these decisions should be taken anyway.

Why should the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) not have his hands very close to public

policy on the issue of attracting businesses to Manitoba that are energy intensive? Why is the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) not intimately involved? Does the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism have to consult the Manitoba Energy Authority when he wants to look at ways of marketing the energy potential of our province? I do not think so.

Here we have an example of something that, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, makes sense and saves money. The arguments are out there. I hope that this is —(interjection)— The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) says that the pith and substance of this resolution does his heart good. Well, it is going to do his pocketbook good, too.

I take that to mean that the government is going to support this resolution as a way of making sense and saving money at the same time. The arguments are there for everyone to see. I hope that members of all sides of the House will see this as an opportunity for government to show leadership by consolidating, by rationalizing, through common sense save money and, therefore, make better public policy for the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 23—Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Second reading public bill, Bill 23, Manitoba Intercultural Council Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil interculturel du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux). Stand.

Bill 27—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: Second reading public bill, Bill 27, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie, standing in the name of the honourable member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs). Stand.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 3—Midwifery

Mr. Speaker: Resolution 3, Midwifery, standing in the name of the honourable member for The Maples.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that the Resolution 3

WHEREAS many women are dissatisfied with modern maternity care, feeling alienated from the childbirth process; and

WHEREAS midwifery gives recognition to the autonomy and individuality of each pregnant mother; and

WHEREAS midwifery fosters active participation of women in pregnancy and the birthing process and offers continuity of care from prenatal through to post-partum stages; and

WHEREAS for low-risk cases, midwives provide a safe alternative to physician deliveries; and

WHEREAS women determined to utilize non-traditional methods of childbirth will seek care from an alternative caregiver; and

WHEREAS midwives are central to child care in many cultures and would improve the culture-sensitive nature of health care in Manitoba; and

WHEREAS many rural and northern communities cannot attract physicians resulting in a serious lack of basic health care, including prenatal, obstetrical and post-partum care; and

WHEREAS there is a chronic over-crowding in obstetrical wards in Winnipeg hospitals.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to consider introducing legislation to legalize midwifery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Minister of Health to consider directing his department to formulate standards under which midwives can function in the province; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Minister of Health to consider directing his department to establish a professional training program for midwives to provide the expertise necessary to perform deliveries safely.

Motion presented.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to bring this resolution in front of this House. I would urge all the members of the House, most specifically the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), to adopt this motion because it is very timely and the Minister of Health and the present administration had communicated in the past they were interested in legalizing midwifery in Manitoba. The previous administration, the NDP administration, in 1985, also expressed an intention to legalize midwifery.

Mr. Speaker, the wording of my resolution does satisfy the definition set by the World Health Organization which states: A midwife is trained to give the necessary care and advice to women during pregnancy, labour and the postnatal period, to conduct normal deliveries on her own responsibility and to care for the newly born infant. At all times, she must be able to recognize the warning signs of abnormal or potentially abnormal conditions which necessitate referral to a physician and to carry out emergency measures in the absence of medical help.

* (1700)

That, in a nutshell, does explain what is in my resolution and I want to go over a few things. Why I think it is very important that we should legalize midwifery in Canada, and to start with in Manitoba, is because Canada is one of the few countries in the western world where midwifery is not legalized, and the question comes, what were the reasons and why are the governments hesitant to move in this direction?

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

To be fair to the other provinces, even the Ontario government, in 1988, expressed the intention to move in that direction. Yes, and there have been two pilot projects, one at Vancouver General Hospital and one at McMaster University, and they have been successful to some extent.

There has been a number of studies done, and one of them was an original study. It is called the Ottawa-Carlton Study. This study clearly indicated why there is importance for the midwife in Canada. It was done within the profession which may have objection to the midwife, the physicians, but surprisingly, the findings on the other hand were very positive. Most of the physicians felt that it would be worthwhile to explore that possibility because even some of the family physicians do not see more than four to five deliveries per year and

they always have a co-ordination with the nursing staff, so they said maybe this will be one of the ways to continue to provide the delivery services and also have the best possible way of providing the prenatal, postnatal care.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is not a secret that the many professional organizations, including the general public at large, have expressed the intentions that they are really fed up with some of the technical interventions which are sometimes not necessary in the normal deliveries, and they have expressed their intentions, but the governments have really not moved because there was opposition from the other organization, and there was not a consensus, but I think it is about time that something must be done.

I want to go into some of the history. In 1979 there was a Social Planning Council of Winnipeg which established the Task Force of Maternal and Child Health. They made the recommendation, and the task force report was at least in 1981, but they did not make any specific directions. However, in 1984, the then Minister of Health, the Honourable Larry Desjardins, made recommendations, and he made a commitment that they would move towards legalizing midwifery in Manitoba. As I have already pointed out, the Ontario ministry of Health also expressed their intention to move in that direction. With the change in the recent government, I do not think they have changed their policy, and they will be moving in that direction.

I think the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and the members of this House know the situation very clearly as to what is happening in Manitoba. We have a few hospitals where there is overcrowding, and some of the hospitals are empty. I think it does not make sense that you have overcrowding in one hospital and the other place, like within a radius of one kilometre, you have a problem.

I do not want to deviate from my topic here, but most of the hospitals do have birthing rooms, and that is one of the necessities of midwifery, so that the people can deliver in human or normal circumstances, and families can be there. Most of the Winnipeg hospitals do have a birthing room, but some of the rural communities do not have birthing rooms and that does impose some difficulties. I think though they are minor things and can be sorted out.

Other questions that are going to come eventually—who will be really responsible, who will pay for these things, and where will we get trained

individuals who will provide these services? Asking a legal question, I think the ministry of Health has established a committee where the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the nurses' organization and the other interested parties have taken part. I was told that their board was due anytime, so I am sure they will make some recommendation of how to solve that problem.

The second question which is very important is how to set up the program to train midwives and make sure that we have a universal program across this country. I think that it will be difficult to have each and every province have a program. I think if Manitoba could take an initial stand and incorporate with other provinces we will have a place where we can train midwives for the other parts of the country.

I think that ultimately by establishing the program it will give a choice. I think choice is very important in all aspects of life and especially the birthing process is a natural process, and individuals should be given a choice. The guidelines will make it very clear that in the case where we are talking about a normal pregnancy and the normal delivery, and if there are difficulties, there is always a backup system, and that can be used.

I just want to point out to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) that the program in Manitoba has to be very unique. We cannot have a model based on the European model where you could be in a major centre within 10 minutes. In Manitoba, with its geographical distribution, in the northern and remote communities, it may not be possible. So we will have a different form of system. I am sure the committees who are looking after the issue will be addressing that.

The other issue could be solved which will be very helpful for the Native communities, because it is no secret that some of the communities are unable to attract physicians and, therefore, it is very difficult for them to provide obstetrical care on the reserves and sometimes they have to transport pregnant women either to Winnipeg or to other centres. It is very expensive, and it is very inconvenient for the family. I think to have midwifery in Manitoba will solve that problem, because I think the Native culture was the last culture which was forced to abandon the midwifery too. I think it will go a long way to restore that culture, especially the Native health care in Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think I have put my remarks dealing with the aims and objectives and the

previous politics which were involved in the midwifery and the present government's position. I would not be taking too much time now, and I would request all the members of this House to support my resolution, because it is not about a single political party as I expressed. The other political parties have expressed their intentions, and the various organizations have expressed their intentions. The previous Minister of Health has tried and the present Minister of Health is also making a move into this direction. I hope to see a positive response from members of this House.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to commence my remarks on this resolution put forward by my honourable friend, the member for Kildonan—The Maples (Mr. Cheema), pardon me. I keep saying that, and I apologize to my honourable friend. I want to thank him for bringing the resolution to the House, because the resolution is one that has been subject of discussion in the past, well, I suppose, year and a half, two years, and is an issue that has some considerable interest in the medical community and an issue of importance to women in Manitoba. I thank him for bringing the resolution to the House.

* (1710)

There is only one thing that I want to do in terms of—just some minor corrections. If we were collaborating jointly on the wording in the resolution, there are a couple of minor changes I would make. I will propose those at the closing of my remarks. I think it would make the resolution completely supportable.

I do not want to—and I am not saying this in a critical fashion. When my honourable friend indicates that many women are dissatisfied with modern birthing, there is growing dissatisfaction. But I think leaving the impression that many women, i.e., possibly even the majority, are dissatisfied with the current system in Manitoba, may not be fair to the professional providing that care.

What I would have rephrased it is that in Manitoba and indeed in North America, there is a growing concern by women that the birthing process has become a bit too much of high-tech adventurism and away from the natural process that childbirth has been for centuries and centuries. I would offer that small change to my honourable friend if we were jointly crafting this resolution.

In one other portion of the resolution, it indicated a chronic overcrowding in obstetrical wards in

Winnipeg. Really, that circumstance is confined to one obstetrical ward, namely, St. Boniface Hospital. Victoria, Misericordia, Health Sciences Centre and Grace Hospitals are not overcrowded in the same condition, and, indeed, my honourable friend did recognize that in his remarks. Furthermore, Mr. Acting Speaker, we have a task force with the Health Advisory Network examining just exactly that circumstance, because I participated some number of months ago at Grace Hospital, for instance, in the ribbon cutting and opening of their family birthing rooms, a very innovative, very progressive addition to Grace Hospital's service to women who are giving birth to children, just a very delightful renovation that they made to their hospital reflecting the change in women's attitudes towards the birthing process. I would make that correction on the chronic overcrowding. It exists in one hospital and has for several years now.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think it might be appropriate to deal with the process to date of the issue of midwifery in the province of Manitoba. Going back, 1988, one of the first issues I dealt with was the issue of midwifery, as focused upon by the Status of Women report on midwifery in Manitoba, which made some pretty strong suggestions to government that we ought to get on with the provision of midwifery as a service to women in Manitoba. That report was received by government, and, in all fairness, the report was a reasonable report done with considerable effort by the Status of Women. I think we owe them some thanks for actually bringing that report forward and it becoming a springboard for subsequent action by government.

There was one criticism that was made of the report in that it did not have, Mr. Acting Speaker, professional input in its crafting. That caused a concern to two professional associations in particular, the professional nurses of Manitoba and the physicians of Manitoba. In expressing that concern of both those associations, the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses and the College of Physicians and Surgeons agreed to a request by myself and by government to undertake a joint study into the issue of midwifery, its applicability and how it might become part of the Manitoba health care system.

I think that is a first, I believe, certainly in Manitoba, and maybe a first in Canada, where the professional association of nursing and the College

of Physicians and Surgeons, as the professional bodies representing those two levels of health care professionals, got together in a joint effort to provide government with some analytical principles to guide decision making.

I have received that report, Mr. Acting Speaker, and it is my intention to have that report widely circulated for comment from my honourable friend, who proposed this resolution from the unofficial opposition, the Status of Women and others who are deeply interested in the issue of midwifery.

This issue was important to another group of women who have, maybe not until recently, received that great a deal of recognition, and that of course is the immigrant women of Manitoba. Their association is very deeply interested in the issue of midwifery. We have sought their advice on the issue and intend to continue to seek the advice of the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba, because many members of the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba come from countries wherein the practice of midwifery is a very accepted birthing practice.

Their advice, their thoughts on how we can implement midwifery as part of the Manitoba health care context will indeed be valued, as you can well appreciate, Mr. Acting Speaker, given their experience in their respective homelands.

Now, I want to indicate that we are prepared to take the report which recommends midwifery and how it might be introduced to the Manitoba health care system, distribute that report widely, and receive feedback and comment through a working group which we hope will be broad in its representation and include a lot of women's groups who are interested in the issue of midwifery, so that they can synthesize their respective observations on the joint report presented the government by MARN and the CPS, and from there develop appropriate policies by which we might be able to make midwifery a safe and affordable birthing process of choice for women of Manitoba.

I only offer one caution to my honourable friends, and I know that this is a caution that certainly the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) I do not think will disagree with. I think everyone who approaches the issue of midwifery approaches it from the standpoint that it is probably a lower cost, service delivery alternative within the health care context. Certainly that is one that we would like to see, or that is an implementation of policy and program that we

would like to see, to provide safe, more effective and hopefully more economic process of birthing for the women of Manitoba.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

I would hope that we are not challenged with a report which sees midwifery become a process which is an add-on in cost to the health care system. That possibility exists, Mr. Speaker, because—let me be very direct—there is a certain amount of turf protection amongst the professionals involved in birthing and traditionally any infringement on the traditional role of a given professional group has been resisted. If we end up in a system where we are simply paralleling the existing system with supervision, et cetera, that may not achieve the economics that midwifery can represent to the health care system of Manitoba and to the women of Manitoba.

So that is a caution that I offer in bringing forward information and thoughts on the process of midwifery and its introduction to the Manitoba health care system, because if done properly, I feel that midwifery can become a health care alternative in Manitoba by which everyone wins, the women who wish to choose midwives as their assistants in birth, professional choice and indeed the taxpayers of Manitoba who fund the health care system. This can indeed be a win-win situation for all involved.

Mr. Speaker, I again say congratulations to my honourable friend, the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), in bringing this resolution forward.

I also want and would be remiss if I did not thank the members of the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses and the College of Physicians and Surgeons who jointly developed the Report on the Future Role of Midwifery in Manitoba, which will serve as the basis for the wider consultation that we intend to undertake in this calendar year, hopefully, with some recommended policy decisions to deal with educational requirements, professional certification, role and ability to deliver service within the health care system in what environment, be it the hospital or other environment, and indeed to come to grips with any potential liability issues that may surround the professional discipline of midwifery and its introduction to the Manitoba health care system.

* (1720)

Also, I think a number of other people do deserve thanks, for instance, those responsible in the Status

of Women of Manitoba, because really their work prior to 1988 acted, as I have said earlier, as a springboard to developing the Report on the Future Role of Midwifery in Manitoba.

I anticipate good and open discussion by all those individuals interested in midwifery and its place in the Manitoba health care system. I thank them in advance for their anticipated full participation in the working group and in providing advice to government around the report that will very, very soon be circulated. I am led to believe that the report will be circulated very, very soon, only completion of printing is holding up the distribution of the report.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that I indicated earlier that I had just a few changes that I would make to this resolution, which I think make it absolutely supportable by all members of the House, I would propose the following motion, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer), that the resolution be amended by deleting all the words following the word "and" where it appears at the end of the seventh WHEREAS and adding thereafter:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House do congratulate the government for its course of action to date on the issue of midwifery; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this House do congratulate the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses for their joint efforts to develop "Report on the Future Role of Midwifery in Manitoba"; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the government use the above referenced report as the basis for wider community consultation and the basis for guidance in the formation of policy on the issue of midwifery.

Mr. Speaker, I believe this amendment vastly improves the good efforts of my honourable friend from the constituency of The Maples, the Health critic for the second opposition party (Mr. Cheema), and makes this resolution one that can be supported this afternoon and passed unanimously by all members of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable minister's amendment is in order.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, first let me say I very much want to participate in this discussion, what is turning into

more and more a debate on a very important matter. I want to offer my congratulations to the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) for presenting the House with this resolution, but I also do at the same time want to express some very deep regret at the amendment proposed by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and question indeed whether—I do not question your ruling, Mr. Speaker, but I question the sincerity of the amendment put forward by the minister and wonder if in fact if it is in order in terms of the serious nature in which this resolution has been presented to this Chamber.

It is, in my opinion, another self-serving motion on the part of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Time and time again serious resolutions brought to this House have been amended, Mr. Speaker, in what we consider to be a very frivolous self-serving manner, one that attempts to disregard the serious content of resolutions presented by members on this side of the House. -(interjection)-

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: This opportunity, available to private members, to present resolutions is a time for us to bring forward serious concerns for serious debate and for advancing policy and action in that direction, in the direction intended by the resolution and by the mover of that resolution.

It is not helpful to the process, nor does it respect the right of individual members in this House, when the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) time and time again comes forward with amendments to those resolutions which entirely gut the intent and the statement of action attached to those resolutions.

Mr. Speaker, I was going to offer some congratulations to the Minister of Health and to this government for the work that they have begun on this issue.

Mr. Orchard: You can.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I will still do that although I am becoming more and more reluctant to do so.

Mr. Speaker, this debate, this discussion, this resolution is not about ignoring the work of those who have fought for change in the area of maternity health care. No one on this side of the House underestimates or disregards the importance of the work done by the College of Physicians and Surgeons, or the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, and the work that they have done in the last number of months addressing this

very important issue, with the report anticipated anytime now.

Mr. Speaker, too often over the last number of years, we have seen the process of committees appointed, consultation struck, task forces presented, hearings conducted, recommendations forwarded, and no action forthcoming. If there was any area that has been studied at great length over the last number of years, and if there is any area that does not require some immediate action than midwifery, then I do not know what that area of action would be.

This is a serious and increasingly urgent matter before the Manitoba provincial Legislature. It is an important issue to women if we are at all serious about the right to choose in reproductive health matters. It is a very serious matter for families who are concerned about involvement in the birthing process, and bonding and the development of relations from an early age.

* (1730)

It is a critical issue for northern, aboriginal, rural and immigrant women who often feel these days that our system of maternity health care is less than adequate in terms of meeting their needs.

Mr. Speaker, I appeal to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) on this issue. If we are serious about cost-saving exercises, and serious about health care reform that meets the challenges of the next decade and beyond, then an issue like midwifery must be addressed in a serious way, on an urgent basis, and in every forum possible, available to the members of this Assembly and to the broader community.

Before I address the substance of this motion, let me put on record some congratulations. As I have already done, but I will do so again, I congratulate the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema) for bringing forward this resolution. Of course, I commend the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) for initiating a dialogue involving the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses for addressing this matter and presenting a report to his government and, presumably, to this Assembly.

But, in offering all of those congratulations, we must not be remiss to single out and congratulate those who really pioneered initiatives in this area. The Minister of Health has mentioned the work by the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of

Women. I want to add to that list of congratulations the long struggle by the Manitoba Homebirth Network which has been working at this issue for years, which has presented recommendations to this minister, which has presented petitions and letters, and raised concerns time and time again.

To all of those groups that have worked so long and so hard in the background for meaningful change in the area of maternity health care, we salute those efforts.

Mr. Speaker, in thanking those organizations, let us not forget that they have consulted, and they have considered, and they have presented reports going back a number of years. So, for the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) today to stand up in this House and disregard the substance of the motion before us, which calls for action, and call for this House to instead commend the government and to recommend this House use the report of the groups involved in the present consultation, is to miss the point, and it is to disregard the need for consideration of this matter.

It ignores the fact that this government is once again years behind the work it was called upon to do. Let us not forget that the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women presented a substantive, major, serious report back in September of 1988, a report entitled *Midwifery: Recommendations to the Manitoba Government*.

So for the minister now to disregard all of that work and suggest that we in this House must stop our discussions and wait yet again for months and more years to pass before action is forthcoming is, in our view, making a mockery of the process and a mockery of our legislative process.

Mr. Speaker, in addressing the substance of this issue, we should first and foremost recall that Canada is the only developed country among the 210 nations who are members of the World Health Organization, which has no program, no policies for the education or licensing of midwives. That leaves Canada as one of eight countries that does not legislate or legally recognize midwives. Keep in mind that the other seven countries that we are talking about are all Third World countries, so that leaves no excuse for a country like Canada to drag so far behind, to lag so far behind all the other major countries in the world in terms of a basic issue like maternity health care.

What that has meant for Canada and for Manitoba is a system that is becoming increasingly a

patchwork of policy responses to the issues of maternity health care and midwifery. Of course, Mr. Speaker, it would have been ideal for the federal government to provide the leadership on this issue, to address this gap in health care policy and to provide some national standards and incentive to provincial governments for moving in this area.

It should not come as a surprise to any of us that that has not happened under the present administration of the Mulroney government or in fact the previous Liberal administration, but that is no excuse for not acting now. I think a debate like this certainly helps us to focus in on the need to call upon the federal government to provide that kind of leadership, but at the same time that can be no excuse for not acting now in Manitoba, in this province, in response to the needs expressed by women, by families, by aboriginal communities, by northern and remote parts of this province.

For too long midwifery has been dismissed in terms of a number of myths that must be dispelled. They have been dispelled to some extent by the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema), and I hope that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is clearly considering the thoughts, the documentation that has been already gathered when addressing this issue, so that we do not have to reinvent the wheel and do not have to start from scratch in terms of putting in place a meaningful midwifery policy.

Some provinces are acting. They provide now some leadership to Manitoba. At the top of that list of provincial leadership, of course, is the new Ontario NDP government, who has, as recently as the beginning of this month, brought in legislation, made it law, for midwives to practise independently in that province. That, I think, Mr. Speaker, should dispel any myths, any notions, that it is not possible to act and act now. The way has been cleared; the example has been shown. It is now time for Manitoba to act. The process put in place by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is not one that we will dismiss as irrelevant. We think it is important. We think that the dialogue is important. We believe that their recommendations are important, but based on preliminary reports, we have reason to be concerned that that report will be very limited, that the recommendations will be only addressing this issue in a very partial way.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot move to the issue of lay midwifery overnight. That is recognized by members on this side of the House, but we can

begin now to put in place the necessary steps to get to the point where midwifery is recognized and remunerated as a health care profession in the province of Manitoba. We should not now be putting in place procedures and changes that eliminate that as an option.

* (1740)

One of the myths that has been perpetuated by many groups and individuals is that the lay midwife is not trained, is not qualified, is not equipped to handle all of the issues pertaining to maternity health care. None of the studies that have come forward to date have suggested that lay midwives be licensed in the province of Manitoba without the necessary qualifications and training and education.

In that context, the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women, in its report of September 1988, made a very significant recommendation that must be taken into consideration by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and all members of this House. That, Mr. Speaker, is a recommendation that states that midwifery training initiative be established in Manitoba and such an initiative should be dual entry, including both a direct-entry program and a post-basic registered nursing specialization, and they go on. I do not need to elaborate. I hope the minister has indeed read this report.

All of that is to say that all parties, all participants, all players in this field recognize the need for a trained, qualified midwife. The question is, do we stop at the Minister of Health's proposal

-(interjection)- First, yes, congratulating himself in this House, but in addition to that, at a proposal that is likely to recommend and a report that is likely to recommend, as noted in the Free Press on March 22, only permitting nurse midwives to perform low-risk deliveries in hospitals without a doctor being present, although one would have to be within call.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, many ministers are asking, are we ready for the pass? To that extent, I am hoping that we will in fact have a vote. I will quickly move an amendment to the amendment.

I move, seconded by the member for The Maples (Mr. Cheema),

THAT the amendment be amended by the first BE IT RESOLVED being deleted and change the first word of the second BE IT RESOLVED with the word THEREFORE.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., and the Chair not having enough time to rule on the amendment as proposed by the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), I will take that matter under advisement. When this issue is again before the House, I will have a ruling for the House.

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Tuesday, April 9, 1991

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