



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

40 Elizabeth II

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



VOL. XL No. 48 - 1:30 p.m., WEDNESDAY, MAY 22, 1991



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

LIB - Liberal; ND - New Democrat; PC - Progressive Conservative

NAME	CONSTITUENCY	PARTY
ALCOCK, Reg	Osborne	LIB
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	ND
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	ND
CARR, James	Crescentwood	LIB
CARSTAIRS, Sharon	River Heights	LIB
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	ND
CHEEMA, Gulzar	The Maples	LIB
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	ND
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	ND
DOER, Gary	Concordia	ND
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	PC
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	PC
DUCHARME, Gerry, Hon.	Riel	PC
EDWARDS, Paul	St. James	LIB
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	PC
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	PC
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	ND
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	ND
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	PC
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	PC
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	ND
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	LIB
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	PC
HARPER, Elijah	Rupertsland	ND
HELWER, Edward R.	Gimli	PC
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	ND
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	LIB
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	ND
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	PC
MALLOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	ND
MANNES, Clayton, Hon.	Morris	PC
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	ND
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	ND
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	PC
REID, Daryl	Transcona	ND
REIMER, Jack	Niakwa	PC
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	PC
ROCAN, Denis, Hon.	Gladstone	PC
ROSE, Bob	Turtle Mountain	PC
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	ND
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	PC
STORIE, Jerry	Flin Flon	ND
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	PC
VODREY, Rosemary	Fort Garry	PC
WASYLYCIA-LEIS, Judy	St. Johns	ND
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	ND

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 22, 1991

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has adopted certain resolutions, directs me to report the same and asks leave to sit again.

I move, seconded by the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the interpretation booth, where we have with us today Theresa Ducharme and a group of people representing the People in Equal Participation.

I would also like to draw the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon 10 visitors from South Dakota. They are under the direction of Kim Janisch.

Also this afternoon, from the Sisler High School we have twenty-five Grade 11 students. They are under the direction of Bill Harler. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

Also this afternoon, from the Hartney School we have thirty Grades 11 and 12 students. They are under the direction of Jack Forsythe. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Downey).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Manitoba Telephone System Long-Distance Competition

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

In 1983, 1984 and 1985 the New Democratic government, along with many citizens in the province of Manitoba, fought a grass-roots campaign to fight for a made-in-Canada telecommunication policy and to stop the then application from CNCP for competition in long distance which had resulted in the United States of there being major increases in local rates in the American market system, where this system was changed years ago.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, lately we see the provincial government slowly but surely moving in the competitive area. Its brief before the CRTC committee meetings in Winnipeg stated that they, in fact, endorsed the principle of competition and saw no reason to prevent the introduction of competition on long-distance services, which is really the unscrambling of the telecommunications omelette in this province.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister is: What advice did he have from his Telephone System about the effects of long-distance competition? What action is his government taking to preserve the made-in-Canada telecommunication policy in this province?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister responsible for the administration of The Manitoba Telephone Act): Mr. Speaker, clearly what is going on in Canada is a made-in-Canada telephone policy. The recent application by Unitel to CRTC to supply long-distance competition in seven provinces of the country—Manitoba not included at this time—is an application that is desirable by the citizens of the country of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member that our approach to the hearing here in the province of Manitoba was, we are not opposed to competition provided it is open, fair, on a level playing field and

maintains the contribution to local service that is traditionally in place for telephone long-distance rates, to keep the local rates low and affordable for all Manitobans.

We are taking the position of standing up for Manitobans, give them all the services they want at affordable rates and give them the luxury of a choice of services which they want and which, I want to tell the members of this House, is strongly supported by the vast majority of people who came to those hearings, including the Consumers' Association of Manitoba and the Consumers' Association of Canada.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would table a document in the House today which is a submission to the MTS Board of Directors by the former chief executive officer outlining that the annual revenues that are at stake if competition does succeed in the province is \$156 million, that many jobs could potentially be impacted. Long-term goals, i.e., rural telephone services, could be negatively impacted. Employment could be negatively impacted. The majority of MTS customers would experience higher local rates.

I would ask the minister: Given the information that was prepared by his own Telephone System, is it the ideology of the Conservative government that is driving us to Americanize our telecommunication system, or is it on the basis of the best interest of Manitobans for fair and decent telecommunication systems in the province of Manitoba?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, for exactly the reasons the member gave, we requested and stated in our submission that all long-distance carriers must contribute to local service at the existing rate of contribution—at the existing rate. The degree of subsidy, if you want to use that word, will be maintained in the future regardless of who the carrier is. We were adamant in that position and that covers off all the bases that the member mentioned from anybody in MTS.

I want to tell the member that in the last three years we reduced long-distance rates by some 50 percent. Yet the total revenue coming in from long distance has actually increased, showing the pent-up demand to use the service. We have reduced rates and increased revenues. We were demanding that the contribution remain the same regardless of who the carrier is.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I would again quote the document which recommends strongly against competition in the long-distance area. It says, we should have the provincial government, "Put Mr. Rogers on the defensive. Make it the constant and consistent message that nine out of ten Canadians are going to be asked to bankroll his corporate strategy. Explain that when he reaches into the phone companies' long distance purse, he will be picking the ordinary users' pocket."

That is the advice that this minister and this government received for their own Telephone System, the experts in the telecommunication system.

I would ask the minister where he thinks he can go different than the total American system which is double the local rates as the long-distance rates have gone down?

*(1340)

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, long-distance rates have come down for users of Manitoba because we have applied for those reductions. We have applied for those reductions because we were forced to in some sense because, in matter of fact, competition is already occurring in Canada, because when Bell Canada lowers their rates calling into the province, if we do not lower our rates going out, we lose some business.

We have been reducing rates, but, Mr. Speaker, the rate of use of the system escalated, so that the total revenue coming in has actually increased. We have a made-in-Canada policy, and it will protect the local rates because we are demanding that the contribution remain as is at present for any carriers in the future, whether it be Telecom Canada or any other supplier of long-distance service. We covered all the bases for a made-in-Canada telecommunications policy.

Pines Project Funding Cancellation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Today a stop-work order was placed on Rotary Pines since the zoning agreement which is almost two years old has not been signed and the developer did not have the proper zoning variance.

Since the City of Winnipeg has effectively terminated this project on that site, will the Minister of Housing immediately cancel project development funding for the Rotary Pines?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, if the City of Winnipeg—and I stress that “if”—has terminated development rights on that site, obviously the project will not go ahead.

Seniors RentalStart Program Funding Reallocation

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is also for the Minister of Housing.

Will the Minister of Housing now do the right thing and reallocate \$4.7 million to one or more of the other Seniors RentalStart applicants, Neepawa Elks, Flin Flon Rotary, Transcona Legion or Charleswood-Tuxedo Lions?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, we have been through those issues time and time and time again. I will be happy to go through them again with the member during the Estimates process.

Niverville Application

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Will the Minister of Housing explain to this House how the decision was made to fund the Niverville seniors applicant when all the other applicants were told there was no money left in that funding portfolio, and since the minister is quoted and his staff are quoted as saying, there was only one other applicant, Mr. Roy Lev? How did Niverville find out the money was there?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Housing): Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to think that the member for Burrows is opposed to senior citizens' development projects.

Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated previously, I will be happy to go through every single project with the member during the Estimates process.

Manitoba Telephone System Oz Pedde Salary

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, when the Premier came to office three years ago, he promised an open and honest government, and we all looked forward to that.

In light of that commitment on the part of the Premier, would he now provide us with a clear example of that open and honest government and tell the people of the province of Manitoba, the owners of the Manitoba Telephone System, what

the president of the Manitoba Telephone System will be paid?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the president of the Manitoba Telephone System is being paid a compensation, a salary that is within the range that has been set by the Crown Corporations Council, as was recommended by the former minister of the Telephone System, and I have some quotes on the record. The member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), when he was minister, said that adequate compensation ought to be provided for those heads of Crown corporations.

Yesterday, when I was asked the question in the hallway, I had to determine whether or not there were any confidentiality requirements within the agreement that was signed by the president and the Manitoba Telephone System. I have since determined that there were no such confidentiality agreements contained, and so I am happy to say that he is being paid the same salary as is being paid the president of Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation, which is \$150,000.

* (1345)

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, we have heard over and over again from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) that these are tough economic times which would warrant very low or no increases to vast numbers of civil servants in the Province of Manitoba.

Can the First Minister of this province explain why the new president of MTS will get 15.4 percent more than the past president of MTS?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that the new president of MTS is getting less money than he was getting in the private sector, even at the \$150,000. He is taking a reduction in salary in recognition of these difficult economic times.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, we are, in fact, funding a position. We are not funding, presumably, just individuals. Almost every single member of this House has taken a drop in income to become a member of this House. Either this individual wants this job or he does not.

What led to this First Minister giving a 15.4 percent increase when his Finance minister is telling everybody 2 percent or zero?

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, that is why it is quite obvious that the member has never been involved in the private sector. There is a range for every job

and every job within any—even within the government, our deputy ministers are not all paid exactly the same money. It depends on qualifications and their competitive advantage for the position.

This is an individual who was being paid considerably more in the private sector and therefore began at that point in the range which is the same point in the range as the president of the Manitoba Telephone System. There is a range for the position. He is getting a salary within that range. It is exactly the same salary as is being paid the president of MPIC, and that is exactly what it is, which is less than what he was being paid in the private sector.

4-H Clubs Programs Funding

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, in last month's budget, 4-H clubs across this province were devastated by the government's decision to remove the services immediately and completely of all program assistants in this province and withdraw all of the services—some 39 individuals involved.

There was no preplanning and no preplanning amongst the staff to decide who was going to pick up this work, just a callous and arbitrary decision by this minister with no consultation with the public or with the people involved. It came at the worst possible time, at a time when 4-H clubs were in the middle of preparing for their rallies and for their achievement nights across this province.

Can the Minister of Agriculture justify to this House how he could recommend such a callous decision, particularly recommending such a decision be made at a most critical time in the 4-H year for 4-H clubs across this province?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the 4-H program is very good for rural Manitoba and the youth of rural Manitoba. Years ago, there were about 10,000 4-H members. The program was delivered by people hired by this department. The ag reps and the home economists deliver the program in conjunction with leaders.

Right now we are down to 5,000 4-H members. We have about 2,000 leaders, so volunteerism is still very active. We have a lot of leaders for the number of students who are in 4-H, and the staff, the ag reps and the home economists can deliver that program. The assistants who were hired were deemed to be unnecessary in the future in order to

deliver that program, that the existing staff in the Department of Agriculture and the volunteerism of the leaders can and will deliver that program.

I acknowledge that it hit at a critical time. We have offered back to the staff to hire additional people to see us through this cycle which ends in May and June of this year, so that we can get on with delivering the program as it used to be, by volunteers working with the Department of Agriculture staff.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that over 600 concerned rural Manitobans have signed petitions—and I wish to table a copy of those petitions here today. These are 4-H members, parents and concerned citizens, leaders who are involved in the 4-H movement from Ste. Rose, Rorketon, Ste. Amélie, Eddystone, Alonsa, Waterhen, Ashern, McCreary and other lakeshore communities where 4-H clubs exist at the present time.

Will the minister reconsider this ill-conceived decision that was put in place immediately to do away with the 4-H program assistance and begin immediately to undo the tremendous damage that he has caused to the 4-H movement in this province by way of his arbitrary decision?

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, we are maintaining services to 4-H through some \$75,000 a year for conferences for leaders and for students. We are supporting 4-H members through 4-H camps through an additional \$20,000 a year, and I will tell the member we are looking at other techniques by which we can continue to support the actual students in 4-H in some other fashion in the future, so we are contributing directly to those students being involved.

* (1350)

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the 4-H movement promotes the development of active, healthy young people with positive ideals of citizenship who become, many of them, the leaders of tomorrow, I would ask the minister how he could violate so completely the 4-H pledge which is a pledge to clear thinking, to greater loyalty, to greater service? Where does he find any of those ideals in this decision that this minister made?

Mr. Findlay: I want to remind the member very clearly that 4-H program delivery has not been interrupted one iota. It has not been interrupted. The staff of the Department of Agriculture are still

there delivering the program—some nine full-time staff, plus 39 ag reps, plus some 18 home economists, plus all the leaders who are out there. That is the program delivery theme, and that is still in place and being done.

The 4-H cleanup of the highways has just been done for another year, supported by the Department of Highways, so the program delivery of 4-H has not been interrupted one iota. We have saved some costs, and in the future we will do some additional things to directly assist 4-H members in the 4-H program.

CFB Shilo Future Status

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Premier.

On May 6, I raised the concern in this House about the possible closure of Shilo. I raised it at that time with the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) because there are over 1,000 jobs involved. Now apparently Shilo has been identified as one of seven bases that might be closed.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the Premier met with the Honourable Joe Clark on May 11, the Minister of Federal-Provincial Affairs, and I wonder, therefore, if the Premier can advise the House whether he raised the issue with the Honourable Joe Clark and whether he received any assurances from Mr. Clark regarding the future of the base.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I raised it as one of many areas of concern to the province of Manitoba of areas that we felt, in terms of fairness of treatment, that the federal government ought to be giving consideration to.

Mr. Leonard Evans: I thank the Premier for that information.

CFB Shilo All-Party Committee

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): I wonder if the Premier and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, in particular, would be prepared to take action now to get ahead of this question, to organize the community and to organize an all-party delegation, including municipal officials, to go to Ottawa to do whatever we can to lobby about the future of the base, to get ahead of the issue rather than reacting after a negative announcement.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, certainly

representatives from our department have been in contact with federal representatives and with representatives out at the base. I have drafted a letter to the honourable federal minister responsible, Marcel Masse. Certainly we will be taking all initiatives to ensure that there are no detrimental effects to the base at Shilo and, clearly, it is a priority.

We also see that our federal counterparts are obviously involved. I see quotes from the member of Parliament for the area who has brought the issue up with his federal counterparts and is receiving assurances that there will be no detrimental impacts. Clearly, I do concur with the member that we will be proactive. We will be putting forth Manitoba's concerns and making sure that they are well represented.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether I heard all of the honourable minister's answer because of some other noise in the House. I gather the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism does have some information on this.

I asked the minister specifically if he is prepared to organize a delegation at the appropriate time to ensure that the Shilo base remains intact in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, if at the appropriate time we deem that it is necessary, we will certainly undertake to do that.

* (1355)

Core Area Initiative Renewal

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the Minister of Urban Affairs.

We need a road map or to play 20 questions to figure out this government's position on renewal of the Core Area Initiative. First the minister tells us that the subject would be on last Friday's agenda. Now we find out that it was not on the agenda. It was only given a very cursory conversation by the three parties involved.

Last week the minister told us he was interested in renewal. Today we learn that he is not interested in the renewal. Will he make some sense out of the confusion and give us a straight answer? Is this government in favour of renewal of the Core Area Initiative or is it not?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Mr. Speaker, perhaps my eyesight is failing me. I did not recognize the honourable member for

Crescentwood at the meeting last Friday when I met with the mayor and the Honourable Jake Epp.

The question deals with what happens after the current Core Area Initiative agreement expires and what happens to many of the vital programs that are necessary for the core area of the city of Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, we are working diligently toward that end to determine, in fact, what can be done, given the limited resources that all levels of government have in this country, what we can do and what are the highest priorities with which to deal. We are pursuing that goal.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, we understand that it takes three willing partners to come up with a deal. We in this House can only question the Minister of Urban Affairs responsible to the government of Manitoba.

Would the minister please tell the House what his priorities are for renewal of the tripartite arrangement for the inner city of Winnipeg. Is it an Urban Native Strategy? Is it housing? Is it north Main Street? Could he please give us a clue what position he is taking to the table?

Mr. Ernst: Mr. Speaker, there are a host of issues that are of concern to the people of the inner city of Winnipeg. There are a host of concerns that we as a government are attempting to pursue. Until we determine what level of support is going to be available to pursue these options and then have to prioritize those, I do not wish to offer priorities at this point until we can see what is available totally and what we can deal with in the overall context of a tripartite agreement.

Core Area Initiative Urban Native Issues

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, with a final supplementary to the Minister responsible for Northern and Native Affairs, we have heard this government talk about an Urban Native Strategy now for a number of years, only lip service, no action—zero.

Has the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs had any discussion with his counterparts at the city or at the federal government to make sure that urban Native issues are a part of any renewal of the Core Area Agreement?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Provincial Parks Beach Patrols

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, this past long weekend thousands of Manitobans travelled to our provincial parks to enjoy the outdoors. However, because of this government's cutbacks in Natural Resources, services which Manitobans have taken for granted for years have been slashed.

My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. With thousands of people and children using our parks and beaches, how can this minister justify the elimination of services such as beach patrol and other park services which supply safety and service in our parks and beaches?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I can firstly inform honourable members of the House that visitation to the provincial parks this past long weekend was just about double what it was last year. I further would like to compliment the general public because, although the weekend sometimes presents problems for my staff in terms of rowdiness in the parks, that was not the case. We had, in fact, a very acceptable level of activity throughout our park system.

Mr. Speaker, the honourable member makes reference to a particular reduction of service, and that is in the beach patrols. Members may recall, and I want to be somewhat cautious, because a former Premier, former Leader of the party, is taking my department to court on the issue, but it was an inquest decision that pointed out that having beach patrols on our many large swimming areas in the natural state could, in effect, contribute to a false sense of security inasmuch as that they were not lifeguards. Other jurisdictions have experienced the same thing.

It was a policy decision not to have beach patrols in our park system, other than in the one specific area, densely used area, of Grand Beach and at Falcon, Mr. Speaker.

* (1400)

Department of Natural Resources Field Survey Layoffs

Mr. Cliff Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, 56 field survey people in Water Resources were informed that they would be laid off for 13 weeks from December 27 to April 1.

I want to ask this minister: Who will perform the duties that these 56 survey people carried on during the winter months? Who will perform these duties?

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the honourable member to consider carefully the level of capital available for construction with respect to water services department. He will note that their reduction is substantial over the years. Ten years ago, it was still in the realm of \$12 million to \$14 million. The last few years, it is running in the realm of \$3 million. This year it is \$2 million. It is obvious that there is not the level of work being carried out.

We have tried, although that department did contribute substantially to the overall reduction in my department, but in the staggered layoffs that the member refers to, we at least provide nine months of work for as many people as we can under the circumstances.

Mr. Cliff Evans: With these layoffs from December until April, can the minister tell this House what effects these layoffs will have on the Washow Bay Project in the Interlake?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Speaker, the honourable member knows that I do not avoid answering any of these questions, but these are the kinds of specific questions that really are suitable for discussion in the more informal atmosphere of Estimates debates. I would remind the honourable member that it is my understanding my Estimates are coming right up behind the ones that we are currently considering, the Minister of Northern Affairs' (Mr. Downey). I would be happy to answer this and any other question with respect to specific projects.

Department of Energy and Mines American Purchases

Mr. George Hlckes (Point Douglas): Earlier this session it took a press conference by two of my colleagues to convince the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) to stop using American post offices to mail government mail. Now the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) has authorized purchases of equipment in North Dakota rather than from a Manitoba firm.

Does the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism approve of this policy, and if he does, how does this policy help our slumping economy?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I am not so sure that

the honourable member was correct in his preamble in terms of suggesting that the Minister of Energy and Mines authorized that particular purchase that he refers to, but I certainly would stand here proud in terms of the record of our government in terms of promoting the economy of Manitoba.

Government Departments American Purchases

Mr. George Hlckes (Point Douglas): To the same minister, how many other departments are now purchasing items from the United States rather than in Manitoba?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, none that I am aware of at this particular point in time, and if the honourable member has some specific information that he is aware of that he is prepared to share, I would be more than pleased to receive it.

Conawapa Dam Project American Tenders

Mr. George Hlckes (Point Douglas): To the Minister of Energy and Mines, how much of the \$5-plus billion of that Conawapa project does the minister expect to go for equipment manufactured in the United States?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I may tell the member for Point Douglas that construction will not start until about 1994, and not a single tender has been let. It is far too early to tell who will get those tenders and where they will be issued.

Employment Programs Government Initiatives

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism as well.

The Conference Board has been predicting for some time that Manitoba would be last out of the recession. Today the Conference Board indicated that we would certainly be last out of the recession. In fact, we have seen a continuing slide in our economic performance, and the Conference Board now is predicting almost doubling the decline over its original predictions.

My question is to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. The Conference Board is predicting

a further 10,000 jobs lost in the province of Manitoba.

My question is: Where is this minister going to tell people in Manitoba they can find employment after the next year?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, as seems to be the pattern all too often, I have to correct the member for Flin Flon in terms of his preamble. They are the party that continually put up their hands and called 10 out of 10, and 10 out of 10, as a result of Conference Board of Canada publications some time ago.

Now that same Conference Board, once again, does not show Manitoba as being tenth out of 10. It shows us, I believe, being tied for about sixth. It shows a province like British Columbia now being behind Manitoba. It shows a province like Ontario being tied with Manitoba, Saskatchewan being tied with Manitoba. While Manitoba's position relative to the rest of Canada has improved, once again we see the usual doom and gloom from the honourable member for Flin Flon.

Social Assistance Budget Allocation

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, the minister is looking very far into his crystal ball. In 1991, it is going to be the worst performance in the country. Not only is unemployment going to continue to increase, but the retail trade is going to continue to decline.

My question is to the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance this year is budgeting \$30 million in welfare. Given an additional 10,000 people unemployed in the province of Manitoba, how much is the province going to budget additionally for welfare payments in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I will, just in answer, correct some figures that the member has put on the record. The increase in the budget was \$30 million to \$279 million. With that base of facts, I am prepared then to listen to the next question.

Mr. Storie: My apologies to the Minister of Finance. The increase was \$30 million. The only growth industry in the province is people being unemployed and going onto welfare.

My question is, contrary to the budget's predictions, this minister's budget predictions of a

month and a half ago, the economy continues to slide. How much additional money is this minister going to budget for welfare payments in the province of Manitoba because there is no economy in the province?

Mr. Manness: I cannot help but recall the Minister of Finance from Ontario. One of his first assertions, one of his first public presentations, was that the increase in the unemployment rolls in Ontario had jumped by a quarter of a million people in a short period of time. As I look at the numbers—the forecast, by the way, of the Conference Board, which is one of the seven forecasters that we use, shows for instance that agriculture still has a significant impact on the economic growth in this province.

I say to members that this crop is off to a good start. It is too soon to predict it being in the bin, but the reality is, I expect that these numbers will do nothing but improve over the course of the next year.

Again, as the member, my colleague, has pointed out, the company that we share sixth place with includes the province of Ontario, a manufacturing—as far as growth potential—Ontario, another large manufacturing province just as ourselves.

Urban Native Strategy Government Position

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Well, we are pleased that at long last the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs has begun consultations with the City of Winnipeg and the Government of Canada on an Urban Native Strategy.

Can the minister tell us with whom he has held his discussions from the Government of Canada and from the City of Winnipeg, and what position did he take to the table on behalf of this government?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous administration, we place the urban Native situation of this province as a very important priority, and I have indicated the support for work in that area by funds put in the last two budgets as it relates to the Urban Native Strategy. Meetings have been held with the Native leadership in Winnipeg. They have been held with the City of Winnipeg, and they have been held with the federal government.

* (1410)

Progress Report

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Can the minister report progress as a result of those consultations? How much money is the Province of Manitoba prepared to put into its Urban Native Strategy? What is the timetable that is being launched by the government, and when can we expect some formal announcements?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Native Affairs): Again, there are many questions there, and those kinds of detailed questions would be more appropriately asked at Estimates time which are now before the Legislature. We sat last night. That would have been an opportunity for questions of that nature.

I further add, Mr. Speaker, that the numbers he refers to, I believe, were something like \$200,000 in each of the first two budgets that were presented by this government in the Urban Native Strategy of which we have seen some progress, not as much as we would have liked. As I said, we are working with the Native leadership and with the municipal council of Winnipeg and the federal government to try and bring forward some of the solutions that are necessary to improve the lifestyles of the urban Native population.

Urban Native Strategy Government Commitment

Mr. James Carr (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, my final supplementary question is for the Premier.

We seem to have a number of negotiations going on here. We have the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs talking to Native leadership, the Government of Canada and the City of Winnipeg. We have the Minister of Urban Affairs talking to the City of Winnipeg and the Government of Canada about urban Native issues.

Can the Premier tell us, what is the policy of his government? How does he plan to renew any kind of tripartite arrangement? How much is his government prepared to commit to the process?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as always, we will be working co-operatively. There are many ministers involved with the various federal-provincial-municipal negotiations that take place. When we meet with the Urban Affairs committee of cabinet, it has several ministers involved. When we have the official delegation with the City of Winnipeg, there are often ministers from

various departments who have an interest in common with the city on particular projects or initiatives at the moment. Similarly, when we are negotiating with the federal government, we will often have a committee of four or five ministers involved in the negotiations as they may cover a whole range of issues. That is why there would be more than one minister involved.

We will work co-operatively amongst our various departments and disciplines and with the two levels of government to attempt to arrive at a strategy that fills and serves the needs of the urban Native population in Winnipeg, because we believe it is an area that has long been neglected by the previous administration and deserves our care and attention.

The Pas, Manitoba Carrot River Bridge Replacement

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Highways.

As the minister is aware, a consultant's report has condemned the Carrot River bridge in The Pas. The bridge is now closed to the public. Since the bridge is the only link between The Pas district farmers, trappers and many other groups in the land in the Saskeram area, I want to ask this minister when his department will be announcing plans to replace or reconstruct the bridges recommended in the report that he has had for several weeks now?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, let me first of all indicate to the member that the bridge across the Carrot River is not provincial responsibility. It is the responsibility of the Local Government District of Consol. However, yesterday, I had the privilege, together with the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs and the Minister of Natural Resources, to meet with the council and discuss the report that has come forward which basically recommends that the bridge not be used. I believe it is my understanding that the council who has the authority over the bridge is closing that bridge.

Mr. Lathlin: Since the bridge meets the design guidelines for the Rural Municipal Bridge Assistance Program, Mr. Speaker, and the reconstruction of the bridge is the most economical solution, as the report suggests, why does this minister not make reconstruction of the bridge a top priority?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, five years ago, when that bridge was built—and the previous

administration helped with the funding of it at the time, which was an unprecedented type of funding that took place—over \$300,000 was spent. Now the bridge is condemned and closed. It is for that reason that we had consultants—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister, to finish his response.

Mr. Driedger: Based on the problems that were developing with that bridge, my department agreed to cost-share a consultant's study on it, and that study came forward and recommended that the bridge not be used. It is not the jurisdiction of the provincial government to construct a bridge. However, we have talked, together with my colleagues, with the council. They will be requesting a further consultant's study to see whether some interim measure can be undertaken to see whether something can be done to salvage a very, very poorly constructed project.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, my final question is again to the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

I have asked a lot of questions in this Chamber, since I have come here, about the North. Does the minister accept the need for replacement of the bridge, or is he going to say a flat no again to the people of The Pas?

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed in that kind of a question, because the member should be well aware that we have just finished doing a brand new construction of a bridge at Bakers Narrows.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable minister, to finish his response.

Mr. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, however, I want to indicate to the member that I do not deny the fact that there is a need for the bridge. The only problem there is is that it is not within the provincial jurisdiction to build it. However, we will continue to consult with the council out there, together with my colleagues, to see whether we can help alleviate a big problem out there.

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

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my left where

we have with us this afternoon, Mr. Mark Minenko, the former member for Seven Oaks.

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

Nonpolitical Statements

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Mr. Speaker, do I have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek have leave to make a nonpolitical statement?

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. McAlpine: Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to be able to rise today to recognize the success of a number of young people who have made a commitment of their time and talent becoming better students and serving their communities.

Mr. Speaker, Sturgeon Creek Regional Secondary School has, over a number of years, been a leader in development of youth and especially of the students of whom I speak today.

Recently, at a national cheerleading competition in Edmonton, our own Sturgeon Creek cheerleaders placed second in this competition. I share with you the students who have successfully achieved this great task. Their names are Linda Laser, Melanie Quennell, Elana Wiggins, Katie Wiggins, Pam Redmond, Sherry Fuller, Laurie McKechnie, Candy Muzylouski, Amber Hayden, Joy Latell, Stacey Dowse, Shelley Ross, Marianne Manness, Shannon Chartrand, Cheri Keller, Judy Lawrence, Holly Turton, Patti O'Brien, Bobbie McLean. The advisers and staff who assisted with this competition were Ruth Hallonquist, Marilyn Bayrak, Ellen Jensen, Marny Barnes and Kim Vigilance.

I would also ask all members in the House to help me to congratulate all members of Sturgeon Creek Regional Secondary School who have been able to achieve this greatness along with the staff.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to recognize two other former students of Sturgeon Creek Regional Secondary School, who have achieved outstanding academic achievements here among 29 graduating students at the University of Manitoba, who will be recognized when they receive the university gold medal at the University of Manitoba's spring convocation. University gold medals are awarded for highest academic standing in an undergraduate

degree program. The required minimum grade point average is at least 3.3 out of a possible 4.

I would like the members here to help me congratulate Vaughn Timothy Betz, a former student of Sturgeon Creek Regional Secondary School, and Bernadette Josephine Demong, also a student of Sturgeon Creek.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): May I have leave for a brief nonpolitical statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable minister have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? (Agreed)

Mr. Findlay: Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise at this occasion to pay tribute to a couple of young Manitobans, Trevor Kidd from Dugald and Pat Falloon from Foxwarren, Manitoba, who are members of the Memorial Cup champions Spokane Chiefs, who won the Memorial Cup this past weekend. Those two young individuals from Manitoba are the only two members on the team from Manitoba.

Both of those members played on the world junior championship team for Canada a few months ago in Saskatoon.

I would like to pay tribute to those two young Manitobans, one from my present constituency, one from my former constituency. I wish them well in their future careers in hockey.

* (1420)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like you to call the Bills under Debate on Second Readings, beginning with Bill 38, followed by Bill 43, and then followed by the bills in order starting at the top of the page, that being Bills 5, 6, 8, 12 and moving down to Bill 45.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable government House leader.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 38—The Wildlife Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), Bill 38, The Wildlife Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la conservation de la faune, standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

Stand? Is there leave that this matter remain standing? Leave? Agreed.

Bill 43—The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), Bill 43, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les accidents du travail, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this bill, the first of two Workers Compensation Amendment Acts. Although it is listed as number (2), it is the first one to have been introduced in this House.

We will soon, as the Order Paper has indicated, be dealing with another bill, this being the more straightforward bill. I want to indicate from the start this bill is really in keeping with the practice of this House, the tradition of this House, of periodically updating the benefits going to injured workers and their families to reflect the increased cost of living.

I want to indicate on this particular bill, Mr. Speaker, that we certainly support the principle as we did the previous bill, as we did the many bills that were brought in by our ministers. On this particular bill, we will certainly support it in principle.

In terms of the bill that will be coming up, and I do not intend to anticipate the debate on that, but I do want to indicate that there may very well be a different story. My understanding of the other bills is that this is the minor bill, that the other bill, while it may have some positive factors to it, will not include a number of items that we would like to see in terms of changes and will bring in some changes that we will consider negative.

As I indicated, I will not be addressing that in my comments today, Mr. Speaker, but I did want to make it clear to those who might perhaps be confused by the existence of the two bills on the Order Paper, which one of those bills we are going to be supporting and which one we will be having concerns about.

I might also add, Mr. Speaker, that it is my understanding that the subsequent bill we will be dealing with will include indexing on a permanent basis for benefits to injured workers and their families. We will not have to have bills such as this

in the future. I wanted to mention that, because I believe that is the route we should be going.

I am speaking in the context of this bill, Mr. Speaker, because this bill really is an ad hoc approach. I am not saying it has not been the approach in the past. It, indeed, has been the approach in the past. There has not been indexing on a fixed basis. I think that is unfortunate, because indeed we should be dealing with that on a regular basis.

In fact, it was interesting to note just only a few days ago, a tribute was paid to a widow in this province who had been fighting back since 1947 originally, fought through the Douglas Campbell period and the Duff Roblin period for indexation of widows' benefits.

It is very interesting to reflect on the fact that at the time that she started this fight with members of the Legislature, there had been people who had received widows' benefits going back to 1923, who, in the year 1947 when she began her fight, had not received any increase in benefits. They were told at that time that this was the insurance principle. The insurance principle, Mr. Speaker, was that one received benefits based on the amount of the benefit in that particular year, but that there would not be any indexation.

That may indeed have been the principles in terms of insurance to some extent, but we all know the world in which we live in. This particular pioneer in this area pointed out the major difference in the cost of living between 1923 and 1947 when she began the fight. We have seen over the years how that has increased even more dramatically. This past year alone we have seen cost-of-living increases of 6.1 percent and 6.2 percent on an annualized basis, particularly since the beginning of this year with the introduction of the GST.

Without indexation, what we see is that people fall further and further behind. That is not something that I think any government can allow to happen, whether it be in this area or other areas. I do not want to get into a debate on other areas, but I would point, for example, to the concerns that we have expressed on the 55-Plus program. The principle of indexation has been taken away in that particular area and that affects individuals, vulnerable individuals, seniors in that particular case who are going to have their benefits reduced over what they might have been and should have been if the

government had followed through on the program that was announced in 1986, 1987, which was clearly indexed.

I find it somewhat inconsistent that we are dealing, in this particular case, with something I agree with, indexation of Workers Compensation benefits, but we are not dealing with in other areas, in particular the 55-Plus program. There are other examples in government where individuals, relying on fixed incomes, are not receiving those types of increases. We have even seen, in terms of social allowances that, while the government initially talked about having a cost-of-living increase, we have in fact seen quite the opposite when one looks at the changes that have been brought in, reductions in benefits for employable individuals outside of municipal areas, for students, et cetera.

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

So not only are we seeing in other areas the fact that people are not having indexed benefits, we are in fact in some cases seeing that they are being reduced. They are being reduced over what the same individual would have received in a previous year, and while we are certainly in difficult times—and we saw a further example of that today with the release of the Conference Board figures—the latest projections which show that we have a worsened projection in Manitoba.

While nobody disputes that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the real question has to be asked: Who should be bearing the burden? We do not believe it should be people on fixed incomes, whether it be injured workers and their families; or survivor benefits paid to widows and orphaned children; whether it be in terms of family allowance recipients, social allowance recipients; whether it be in terms of the seniors, as my colleague the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) has so eloquently pointed to in Question Period after Question Period.

The real question has to be, if there is going to be a burden—and in difficult economic times there most certainly is a burden to be paid—the bottom line is that we must make sure that it is not at the expense of those who can least afford that type of burden.

I want to say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that while we certainly agree with the principle, in this one particular case, not the principle followed in the other examples I mentioned, it does not go far enough. I

look to the upcoming bill to deal with the clear inadequacies of a single bill that deals only with beneficial, because there are a number of areas that need to be included as well.

One thing we need is an increase in the rate on which benefits are calculated that has not been increased in recent years. What I am finding is that many people, particularly in my constituency, in northern communities, many industrial workers are finding that they face a severe drop in income when they go on compensation because much of their income is not counted toward calculation of the benefits.

So it is no good just to index benefits if you do not index the ceiling as well. If you do not reflect the fact that the cost of living has increased and salaries have been increased as part of that, and that the bottom line is you need to move both up. Because, if you do not, what you do is you end up with some individuals benefitting from indexing, but many not benefitting from the indexing.

* (1430)

I do not think it is fair, in a world of 5 percent and 6 percent inflation not to have those levels increased to a more realistic level, and I will point to the example of many people in my community, miners. Believe you me, Madam Deputy Speaker, having had the opportunity to work briefly underground at Inco, and work in other areas of the plant at Inco, people often misunderstand the type of work that people do and the salaries that they are paid, because a lot of times people react to the salaries and bonuses that miners receive and do not look at the still somewhat dangerous conditions—they are less dangerous than they were a number of years ago. They do not look at other factors, including the degree of physical and mental effort that is involved.

As I said, I have the greatest respect for people who have made mining their life's work, and I worked with many individuals at Inco, who were classic examples, who did receive a fair amount of remuneration in terms of their basic salary and bonuses, but who worked very, very hard for that.

The problem with the Workers Compensation system is that much of that income has not been reflected, certainly in recent years, because of that ceiling. That is why I am saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, that we have to increase the ceiling in terms of earnings as well as increase the basis of

the pensions and other payments going to individuals who are on workers compensation.

I might add as well, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is some 10 years now since I did work underground at Inco. I have seen the impact it has had on the people I worked with. At this particular time—and I hope the member from Portage (Mr. Connery) would listen. I realize he may not have had the experience of working underground, but if he was to talk to the people who have worked underground, and even compare 10 years—(interjection)—I asked the member—he says he has been underground, I said if he worked underground.

I have been underground since on a number of occasions. I had the opportunity to work underground, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I was raising the experience, and also the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) may not have had that experience as well, of people I worked with 10 years ago and where they are today.

The bottom line is that many of them are no longer working underground. I would say out of the crew that I worked with, nearly 50 percent have, at some point in time, either been on compensation for a fairly lengthy period of several months or are permanently on compensation at this point in time. I look back on those individuals, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the tremendous burden that they have faced, personally, physically, medically, over these past number of years, and also financially.

I point to the fact that the benefits we are dealing with here really have not reflected, for those individuals, the type of earning that they were faced with before. That is one of the weaknesses of this approach of simply indexing the benefits without looking at the overall ceiling on which those benefits are calculated. It has had a tremendous burden on those individuals.

I am not saying, Madam Deputy Speaker, that workers compensation can protect all individuals in terms of their earning power, but I do believe that we need a higher base from which to deal with those earnings. I just ask people to look at the burden it has had on those individuals. I point to my own experience. I also worked surface at Inco, and I know that there are a number of people on surface who have gone through a similar situation, although it has been more accentuated underground for a number of reasons: Because of the greater danger that is involved; the greater physical exertion

involved; and also because underground traditionally has received a higher degree of remuneration because of the bonus system, which has not been fully reflected by the Workers Compensation Board in terms of workers compensation paid to those individuals.

That is my experience. As I said, I worked briefly underground. There are many people who worked a lot longer than I have, and I am not making myself out to be a career miner by any stretch of the imagination. I had the fortune of working underground with those individuals. I must say, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I considered it to be probably the best education that I could ever have received. No matter what schooling I have received, I learned as much if not more from working with individuals such as I did underground and elsewhere at Inco, in terms of understanding the work that they put in, the pride that many people take in their work, given the chance, and the consequences, too, of a hazardous environment, of an environment in which injuries are still unfortunately not uncommon, an environment under which individuals often find they are unable to work the full 30-35 years that many other individuals would expect to put into the work force.

Many people I have known, who worked underground, have been lucky to get 20 years or 25 years. We are a long way away from a pension system that allows, as it does in some other countries, for early retirement for particularly hazardous industries, for industries where people do face physical consequences far greater than in other industries. We are a long way from that.

I know one of the bigger issues in Thompson, in terms of negotiations with Inco, has been to get early retirement, to get a 25 years and out arrangement in the contract that would reflect the fact that, unfortunately, many people, after they have worked for a considerable period of time, are unable to work in a similar sort of occupation for physical reasons, whether it be from White Hands or back problems or specific injuries.

I want to point to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because in a lot of cases this is another one of the weaknesses in terms of the kind of benefits that are paid to injured workers and their families. The weakness is the fact that it does not reflect the full degree of occupational-related conditions and limitations that may indeed be a contributing factor

in conjunction with other congenital conditions. It does not reflect the overall impact of that.

I am concerned about that, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I know there have been some reports that there may be changes in terms of Workers Compensation that would downplay even further the consideration of those contributing factors that lead to disabilities, that lead to people being unable to continue their employment. I am concerned about that. We will deal with that in the subsequent bill, but the key thing I am pointing to here is the situation many people find themselves in, something that is not adequately dealt with by simply indexing the awards.

I point, for example—I go back to my own personal experience again—to individuals who have been subsequently assigned to what is often called "light duty." My experience and the experience of many people who have been in that sort of situation is that there is no such thing as light duty. There may be lighter duty, but you run into the difficulty in which even the most basic task—a lot of times lighter duty is considered janitorial work—requires a fair amount of exertion. You have individuals who have major back problems, who have major problems in terms of leg conditions, other problems, White Hands, et cetera. They still cannot fully function in the workplace under a light duty environment, and that is not reflected in the type of benefits that people are dealt with and the kind of pressures they are placed on.

Another problem that arises, Madam Deputy Speaker, is in terms of rehabilitation. We have a situation whereby we have a rehabilitation program, in fact it was brought in largely by the New Democratic Party government in response to a number of reports that indicated where the weaknesses were in the area of rehabilitation, but there are still weaknesses.

There are people who are being forced, and I can point to a specific case. Someone in my own constituency was basically forced to relocate to Winnipeg for a training program, took the training program, was unable to find employment with that training program and, unless that individual was able to obtain a franchise which would have cost him \$50,000—\$50,000 he did not have—he moved back to Thompson, tried to obtain work in Thompson through this training program he had received and now is being pressured on a continuous basis to obtain work that does not exist.

This once again is not dealt with by this type of carte blanche improvement in terms of benefits, because this individual is being threatened in terms of the loss of the benefits he receives. It is a very unfortunate situation because that individual was placed in the training program by Workers Compensation after being told that it was only essentially a temporary measure, and that they would look at something else more significant. One example.

I can point to many other case examples that point to the weakness of current legislation in terms of Workers Compensation, individuals who have had two and three and four medical reports who are unable to obtain compensation, unable to have their claims recognized because one doctor has that medical opinion, contrary to those three or four doctors.

Recommendations were made by the Legislative Review Committee that would have dealt with that, a number of recommendations, but I do not see this, once again, in this particular bill dealing with some of the fundamental difficulties in terms of Workers Compensation.

There are many other weaknesses. I find on an almost daily basis, I have individuals who are coming to me with those problems dealing specifically with benefits. I spoke to an individual who has been on compensation for many years, who now lives in British Columbia, a good friend of mine recently returned to Thompson for the first time in five years.

* (1440)

He is in the situation where currently under the benefit structure that exists, he is having his CPP benefits taken off his compensation. He said, well, that may be fairly reasonable in terms of that, but he also has a dependent child and the supplementary benefits. I hope the minister will look into this because I really believe that this is a very legitimate situation. The supplementary benefits are being withdrawn, are being taken off his Workers Compensation benefits. The supplementary benefits are for a dependent child, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I can understand shifting of income in terms of CPP. That is built into the act, but in terms of supplementary benefits—and I hope the minister responsible for Labour will look into this because I do believe that the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik),

the Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board could deal with this in terms of legislation. Even with this bill, I would say that it would not cost the Workers Compensation Board very much money. It is a rather unique sort of situation in the sense that many people receiving CPP do not, obviously, have dependent children.

My view is that this is, once again, the type of situation that has not been dealt with in this particular bill. I hope the Minister responsible for Workers Compensation will listen carefully to my comments, if at all, and address some of these concerns. This, by the way, could be dealt with as part of this bill. It does not even have to wait for the omnibus bill because it is a specific case in terms of benefits, a specific example. I am prepared to provide the minister with examples of that.

I know the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) will be outlining some specific examples that he has run into related to benefits, related to pension plan contributions that he has run into in dealing with constituents in his area. I know the member for Transcona deals on a regular basis with Workers Compensation claims. It is a very important concern in the constituency of Transcona, many railway workers, many other individuals. I really hope the minister will listen to those types of concerns.

I indicated before the example of an individual who is receiving CPP and finds that not only is his CPP deducted from his Workers Compensation benefits, but also the supplementary CPP allowance for a dependant child is being deducted as well. That individual is not questioning the deduction of CPP—

An Honourable Member: Currently?

Mr. Ashton: Currently, and I hope that the minister will include this in terms of either this bill or omnibus pension.

An Honourable Member: That is not the case currently. That should not be the case currently.

Mr. Ashton: That is indeed happening. I am prepared to share the name of the individual and some of the details on it, this individual I had spoken to this weekend. He expressed specific concerns, and I appreciate the—because a lot of these issues are not political issues. A lot of these issues are not partisan issues. A lot of these issues are strictly a matter of getting some sense into a system that is trying to do its best.

The Workers Compensation system indeed has many dedicated employees but, at times, can be strangled by red tape, by archaic legislation and regulations that can often avoid giving the kind of fair treatment that individuals want.

I want to say that in the 10 years that I have been a member of this Legislature dealing with individuals, in the last several years in which I have been Workers Compensation critic for the New Democratic Party, I have never seen such frustration as the frustration expressed by individuals who are fighting compensation-related issues.

I am sure that many other individuals in this House on all sides have to deal with that level of frustration. When I say level of frustration, I am talking about an immense sense of hopelessness and helplessness in many cases. I have had individuals come to me who have been told by virtually everyone, the worker's advisor, their own doctor—I had a case just recently of a woman. I read through the documentary evidence. To my mind, there was no question that she was entitled to workers compensation but she was denied at the appeal level, the review level.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am sure there are many others in this House in the same set of circumstances, many other members of the Legislature dealing with constituents on a regular basis. The sad part is that too often our agenda in terms of Workers Compensation is driven by larger contexts, contexts of rates—I notice the minister has included that in terms of his current review—the context of the bottom line.

How can you say to someone who has run into this type of what they feel is injustice, how can you look them straight in the eyes and say that, well, we have to look at budgetary concerns? We have to have more competitive rates. How can you introduce such a bottom line when the interests of injured workers and their families are involved? That is what I am arguing, and I will be arguing on this bill and other bills.

I am not saying the Workers Compensation Board should not have a financial plan. I am definitely not saying that the Workers Compensation Board should not cost out the impact of policy changes. One of the weaknesses not only of this government or the previous government, but all governments,

has been a tendency to make changes without accurately estimating the cost.

I am not saying not to make those changes. What I am saying is that the Compensation Board has to be looking at its future in that sense. It should not be on the one hand trying to artificially lower rates, or on the other hand bring in policy changes that lead to significant increases in benefits that are not costed in, in terms of the rates.

All governments have been guilty of that to a greater or lesser extent. The Lyon government froze rates artificially. Even in the Pawley government, of which I was a member, rates did increase fairly significantly but probably not as much as they needed to, first of all, to compensate for the artificially low rates during the Lyon period and, second of all, pay for some of the new programs and benefits, the rehabilitation program, many other programs. That is the weakness of all governments. What I am saying is the solution to that is proper costing, proper planning, not artificially cutting off individual workers compensation recipients.

I look at this bill and I do see some encouragement in that in a world in which there are some tough times, in a province in which this Conservative government has been looking at singling out certain groups, whether it be seniors on 55-Plus, or social allowance recipients, where either freezes or decreases—the one principle of this bill that I am glad to see is the fact that they are continuing with a process of indexing on a more or less regular basis.

That is positive, and I will reiterate for the minister the bottom line that we will support the government when it does that. But let not this government take our position on this bill as indicating that we will be providing similar support for other changes, because we are hearing all sorts of proposals that are being discussed in terms of workers compensation that, not only do not go far enough to improve workers compensation, but could in our opinion severely restrict the benefits going to injured workers and their families.

Shifts—the minister has announced this in terms of the gross-net formulation. I have taken the time to check on the impact that might have. That might wipe out for many workers the increased benefits they will be receiving as a result of this bill. Individuals may be sitting down, Madam Deputy

Speaker, calculating how much they think they are going to get in a way of an increase to compensate for the cost of living, but I can tell you that the same principle that is being espoused by the minister has introduced—some individuals on a lower level of benefits will receive the increased benefits, and certainly I would support that.

Many individuals on as low as a \$14,000-a-year level, not high level in terms of income, in terms of compensation, will receive decreased benefits. By my calculations we will see decreases of as much as \$2,000 and \$3,000 for individuals in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 and \$35,000 bracket. That indeed is the case, that is the income level of many of the people in the mining industry, many industrial areas. It is not a high income any more. It is not an exorbitant income. Those individuals are going to be faced with a \$2,000 or \$3,000 cut if changes are made of this nature. That is far greater in the way of a cut than the minister is bringing in in terms of this indexing, because the benefit to someone who is indexed, Madam Deputy Speaker, is probably going to be less than the changes that we are going to see here. The net result of changing the formula on which income is calculated is going to leave people worse off.

* (1450)

We will never support any Conservative government that brings in an item of legislation, that brings in changes to Workers Compensation that will result in decreased benefits for injured workers and their families. We will not support that principle. I do say that I recognize that the government has at least had the courtesy of separating out this particular bill to allow for a more speedy passage. That is because, I think, they know they are going to have a great deal of opposition on certain provisions on the type of changes that they have already announced that they will be making to Workers Compensation in this session of the Legislature. They know that if there are going to be rollbacks in benefits to injured workers and their families, if there are going to be cuts to those injured workers, what we will be doing is we will be fighting those cuts in this Legislature.

We will not in any way, shape or form support a bill that, regardless of whatever positive features it may have, results in losses to injured workers. It would have placed workers compensation recipients in a very difficult position, and our caucus, because if they had included the principle of this bill

in the overall bill we would have been faced with a positive principle that would have been drowned out by the more negative principles that we have seen as being announced by the minister as being in consideration in terms of that bill.

Given the current situation of the session, as we stand here today, May 22, as we are still very early on in terms of this session. This is the 48th day of this particular session. We could, indeed, be here, dare I say—certainly we are here well into June, Madam Deputy Speaker, we could be here end of July. From my experience in this Legislature, we could be here into August. We could be here until September, and this would have resulted in this particular benefit being delayed into July and August and September, when the intent of this minister is to increase the pensions effective July 1.

I want to say that we may be here a considerable period of time, and knowing the ability of this government to bring in bills that it feels are noncontroversial and turn out to be rather major, and we will see in terms of The City of Winnipeg Act on boundaries and, indeed, The Workers Compensation Act and a number of other bills, we may be here; but I want to indicate to the minister and to the government that long before the session ends, whenever that may be, long before the July 1 deadline that the minister is seeking for this indexation of pension benefits, we will pass this through.

I want to indicate even further that we are prepared to have this bill go to committee on an expedited basis. In fact, I would say that we are prepared to pass this within a matter of days. The only reason that we are not in a position to pass it today, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that there are many other items of business. There are going to be a number of bills introduced tomorrow and Friday. The member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) will be speaking on this particular bill probably right after myself. We have other members of our caucus who also wish to address that, but I want to suggest to the minister that we could possibly be looking at passing this bill as early as next week and, certainly, no later than the week after.

We want to make sure the minister has plenty of time not only to have the bill passed so that it is implemented on a particular date, but to be able to alert Workers Compensation to increase the benefits. I realize July 1 is the target date, but I assume the minister would like to have some

leeway, some time, to be able to make sure that those benefits are passed on immediately, that the payroll staff at Workers Compensation will do it.

I want to indicate that on this particular bill, there will be absolute co-operation from our side, and we have no intention of speaking beyond this bill beyond perhaps the next week or so. In fact, if we did not have other items of business Thursday and Friday, we probably could even finish the debate on that as early as this week. Since there is some time available, I think we may see that passed next Thursday or Friday.

So I want to deal with the basic points in summary, Madam Deputy Speaker. First of all is the fact we have no problem with the basic principle of the bill in the sense of indexing benefits. We would go further and, in terms of the upcoming bill, we would ask the minister to ensure that there is long-term indexation of benefits on a statutory basis, on a permanent basis and, I might add, indexation reflects the full increase in the cost of living, not a formula that provides partial indexation.

We feel that if inflation is 6 percent, that injured workers should receive an increase of their Workers Compensation benefits of 6 percent. Businesses that are paying the rates are passing on price increases of that 6 percent. By definition, that is inflation. Consumers are paying the extra 6 percent. We feel that injured workers should be treated in exactly that same way. So I want to indicate, we want to go further.

Beyond that, beyond the ad hoc indexation, beyond the complete indexation of benefits that we want to see on a statutory basis, I want to stress once again that we would like to see improvements in terms of the ceiling levels for workers that also indexes the formula, if you like, on which benefits are calculated. We want to ensure also that formula is not tampered with in such a way that individuals will receive significant cuts in benefits that will more than balance out this particular level.

I will finish by saying that we will be giving the Workers Compensation bills, the two of the bills, in this session full and complete scrutiny. We have scrutinized this particular bill. We see no problems with it. We will pass this one expeditiously but there will be, I am sure, from what we understand on upcoming legislation, a full and extensive debate, because we are very concerned about some of the directions the minister has been taken in.

I still hold out some hope that the minister will show an open mind on this, will listen to the concerns that have already been expressed by injured workers and their families, been expressed by the labour movement and progressive employers, because it is not a case of strictly management versus union in many cases. The bottom line is those concerns have already been expressed, and I would hope that the minister would consider taking some time and effort to properly consult on proposed changes of any kind.

I realize there has been a full discussion process the last number of years, but what we are concerned about is a cherry picking, if you like, picking certain items out of the legislative review committee process that has taken place over the last number of years, produced many excellent recommendations. We do not want to see certain items selected, certain items rejected, and other items brought in which were not part of the recommendations of that committee.

By the way, most of those recommendations were unanimous, the employer representative, the employee representative and the neutral chair in that particular case. In fact, one of those individuals, Tom Farrell, now works for the Department of Labour, as a former constituent of mine, and provided very excellent approach to that.

There is a lot that can be done in Workers Compensation to improve the system. Those individuals are facing the frustration on a daily basis of dealing with an archaic system. Members of the Legislature are dealing with those cases on a regular basis, cases that involve real people having real and serious problems. I believe if we put aside some of the bottom line concerns, if we look at this in just a straight human dimension, if we recognize in many cases their problems can only be solved by changes in legislation, we can develop a far more humane Workers Compensation system that will not increase rates dramatically for businesses but will provide far greater benefits and protection to injured workers and their families, surviving benefits for spouses and surviving children, because those are the people who rely on us as legislators to come up with a fair system.

I mentioned before, the woman who in 1947 started a 20-year fight to get indexation of benefits. It is that tradition we are continuing today. I salute her, and I salute the efforts and the many people she worked with, many widows who gathered together

in that time, in 1947. I hope in 1991 we can effectively finish at least the one element of their battle by permanently indexing in legislation benefits, something this bill does not, unfortunately, do but, Madam Deputy Speaker, a bill that goes one step towards doing that.

Thank you once again, and thanks to members of the Legislature for listening to the concerns of injured workers and their families on this very important issue.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

* (1500)

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 43, The Workers Compensation Amendment Act (2). The speaker prior to myself, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), has raised many good and valid points concerning this bill and other amendments that should have been included with this bill and many other issues that relate to The Workers Compensation Act, the deficiencies that are in the act as it exists presently.

I have many concerns dealing with workers compensation because, I must say, the bulk of my workload as an MLA in my constituency of Transcona is workers compensation related. That causes me great concern because there are people who are injured on the job through no fault of their own and who have had to suffer as a result of deficiencies in The Workers Compensation Act. It is not only these workers, Mr. Speaker, who have suffered, but their families as well because they have been negatively impacted upon the income for the family as a result of these policies of Workers Compensation.

The bill itself, Bill 43, goes somewhat towards improvement of the position for these injured workers and their families. Of course, it raises the level of income for them on average approximately 9.5 percent. This rate has not been raised for a number of years, Mr. Speaker, and in no way compensates for the cost of living that these families have had to endure over the years due to their level of income being frozen.

That is unfortunate because the costs for these families has continued to escalate and they have no recourse other than to cut back on the things immediately within their control and that is food. Their other expenses remain uncontrollable. Their utilities continue to increase and escalate with the

cost of living, and these people of course have had to cut back on areas such as food, as I just mentioned.

The purchasing power of these families of course, while their wages are frozen over this period of time, puts them in an awkward position. They have to make very difficult decisions on what they are going to cut back on. Of course, the family suffers through these difficult times. In most cases it is the breadwinner of the family who has been injured on the job, and most of the cases that I have dealt with in my constituency of Transcona, have been the sole source of income for the families. These families have had their incomes frozen at the levels that do not meet the needs of the family, Mr. Speaker.

This bill will assist in some way, and as the previous speaker has indicated, we are pleased that there is some direction change here that will allow for this increase and will allow for the quick passage of this bill so that these families can receive what they are entitled to and what should have been received a long time ago.

The previous speaker also talked about cases of light duty. In my previous employment, before having the honour and privilege of coming to this House to represent the people of Transcona, I was aware of a great many cases involving Workers Compensation with my previous employer. Of course, there were many occasions there where light duty came into discussion. A lot of these employees, once they were injured, were contacted by the company and were requested to return to work on light duty. A lot of these people of course did not at the time choose to go through their doctor's advice, and did return.

On several occasions that I am aware of these people re-injured themselves and of course placed themselves in greater jeopardy, and therefore their families as well. These people would return to work and would sort nuts and bolts or do other office-related duties. Of course, after a short period of time, conditions of the workplace dictating, these employees would then be requested through the management structure of the company to return to more normal or more active duties, quite often against the good wishes or advice of their doctors.

This is one of the problems I have with people returning for light duties. This is one of the areas that the Workers Compensation Board has to be

very diligent in ensuring that these people are protected and their health is in no way jeopardized.

We have seen, through the constituency office in Transcona where we deal with a great number of Workers Compensation-related cases, long-term disability people, partial and permanent disability people coming into the office, complaining about the Workers Compensation Board pressuring them to return to work. These people, of course—and I am going to in a few moments get to a couple of cases and speak very specifically about them—are put in a position where their benefits are going to be terminated unless they actively go out and seek work. -(interjection)- and that, Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the honourable member for Portage is saying, is that these people have, through the advice of their physicians and in most cases specialists, been consulting on a regular basis, and many of them have gone through surgery, back surgery, which is a very serious operation. Even these types of people are being pressured to return to the workplace prior to their full recovery which would enable them to either go for retraining -(interjection)- they are, I can assure you because I have the records right here on this desk right now. -(interjection)- Come and read it.

Mr. Speaker, the member for Portage (Mr. Connery), of course, used to be the Minister responsible for the Workers Compensation Board, and he takes some exception to the remarks that I am making here. I offer to the minister that if he was still the minister I would allow him to read the files on these people who would verify the statements I am making here in this House today. Of course, maybe he is somewhat sensitive, since he was the minister and that there were no major changes undertaken at that time while he was minister.

There is usually room for improvement in most programs and the member for Portage has stated that he has made some improvements to the program while he was there. There may have been some changes, I will give him credit for that, but unfortunately they did not go far enough to rectifying the major problems that still exist in the Workers Compensation area to this day.

We have specific situations, Mr. Speaker, where the Workers Compensation Board doctors, their so-called specialists, are in a position where they are able to override the expert medical statements that are being made by specialists in the specific field where the injured workers are seeking

attention. Quite often, we have had to battle with the Workers Compensation Board and ask the specific expertise that these Workers Compensation Board doctors have that would allow them to override the decisions and the statements made by the specialists, particularly back specialists. Where an injured worker's doctor has recommended specific types of treatment or periods of time for recovery, the Workers Compensation Board has questioned the advice and the consultation that these specialists have given to the injured workers.

Quite often, when we are dealing with Workers Compensation and we communicate with the office, which unfortunately is a centralized office, it makes it difficult for the people in the community to communicate with that office on a personal basis. We seek outfiles after receiving permission from the people seeking our advice and assistance in the community, and we have to wait several days and sometimes weeks, Mr. Speaker, before we are able to retrieve any information from the files, even though we have clearance for that information. That is unfortunate because these people, of course, by the time they call us, are usually in a very desperate situation because they have had their source of income terminated by the Workers Compensation Board, without prior consultation I might add.

I talked a minute ago about the centralization of the offices. The Workers Compensation Board, of course, is located in the central area of Winnipeg, but if you happen to be an injured worker and you wish to communicate in person with that office, you have to find some way of making your own way down to that office.

*(1510)

I think, personally speaking, from what I have seen in my own community, it might be more advantageous if there were community-based offices that will allow people to access the Workers Compensation Board so they can deal directly on a face-to-face basis with the people who work in these offices.

I should, of course, also recognize that in the Compensation Board there are a great number of people who perform a very excellent service. I have dealt with a great number of people who have been very co-operative but, unfortunately, through the deficiencies of the system, they are unable to assist me in the manner in which they would like and which I would like to see. Therefore, I would say that,

through the majority of the employees on the Workers Compensation Board, this process has evolved through no fault of their own.

In this Bill 43, where we are talking about changes to The Workers Compensation Act, there are improvements in the monies that are paid to the injured workers. It is unfortunate that the strong need to index the Workers Compensation benefits was not recognized a long time ago. Right now we see a system that allows the level of incomes to be eroded for these workers and their families.

I think it is important, and I draw it to the minister's attention, that we should bring changes to The Workers Compensation Act that will allow for indexation of the benefits. I hope that the minister will move in that direction. The injured workers and their families in this province will also be pleased, if the minister does move in that direction to index.

The minister indicates that there may be some changes coming in that direction and, if they are good changes, then I can assure the minister that we will look towards supporting any programs that will assist the workers in this area.

An Honourable Member: You just endorsed the bill there, Daryl.

Mr. Reid: No, I did not endorse the bill carte blanche. I do not do things like that. We will look at all facets of the bill. -(interjection)- No, we would not do that.

There are several areas, and I will talk more specifically now about the cases, very difficult cases, in the constituency of Transcona that I have had to deal with over the last seven or eight months that I have been in office.

In one particular case, the Workers Compensation Board had made arrangements for an individual to achieve retraining, made allowances, made contact with an employer, and set up the process where the injured worker could return to an alternate employment for retraining. This injured worker returned to this job with the restrictions that were agreed to. During the course of this time, the worker returning to the new job and the employer had struck an agreement. The agreement was that the two parties would exchange, by gentlemen's agreement, pieces of equipment that each had in their possession, which each owned and no longer had a use for. These parties had no agreement in writing. They agreed to exchange these within a short period of time with

no monies being exchanged, because the two items were deemed to have similar value.

What we have seen since is that the equipment that was exchanged—one party since sold a piece of their equipment to pay a portion of their MPIC time payment, and the other party then decided that they did not want to go ahead with the exchanges of items, after they had already taken place and was mutually agreed to, and asked for the original piece of equipment back. That was the employer who asked for the equipment back. The employer then contacted the Workers Compensation Board who, in turn, questioned the two parties that were involved.

In the meantime, the employer withheld salaries from the individual who was working for him that had been arranged for by Workers Compensation. The employer, upon withholding salaries, of course, created some animosity between himself and the employee. The employee then contacted the Workers Compensation Board who, in their own discretion, decided that the employer was in the right and that they should withhold the monies there. That is when one of my constituents, the employee, decided he was going to contact me to find out if this was proper action and was within the mandate of the Workers Compensation Board.

The Workers Compensation Board, after contact with us, is still adamant that they are correct in their position. We have made communications with the minister responsible, and we hope that he will resolve this.

The Workers Compensation Board has indicated they are going to withhold the fees that they would normally pay the employer, and they would deduct it from the wages that the employee would normally be making. This, I believe, Mr. Speaker, is a civil matter and should be best dealt with through Small Claims Court or through other courts. The Workers Compensation Board should in no way be involved in matters of civil litigation.

I hope that the minister, when his officials bring this to his attention, will deal with this matter swiftly because this individual is now having his level of income impacted negatively. It is going to affect his family and the way he is able to provide for his family.

I have another case in the community of Transcona, a Workers Compensation case, where the individual was working with the major employer

in the community of Transcona, had sustained a back injury and had been off under a doctor's care and was collecting Workers Compensation benefits. This employee, of course under the doctor's care, eventually went for back surgery and was in the process of recovering from his back surgery. Being the industrious individual that he was, he decided to seek out retraining and did not wait for the Workers Compensation Board to approach him that would allow him to return to a more normal or more active work life. He communicated with Workers Compensation and expressed his interest in returning and going through the retraining process, because he would have been unable to return to his normal employment. Then the individual waited many months, did not receive a response from the Workers Compensation Board and decided to seek out retraining on his own initiative.

He applied to the University of Winnipeg to enter a business computing course. The individual was successful in entering the course and has proceeded through one year and a half of retraining. In the meantime, during that year and a half, the person involved had received correspondence from Workers Compensation indicating that he was eligible for retraining and that they were going to pursue retraining for him. This individual decided he was going to contact Workers Compensation to make them aware that he had already started retraining and had received several credits towards his degree already.

That is where the argument came in, Mr. Speaker, because it put the individual in a position where he would like to recover the monies that he felt were due and owing to him since he had, through his own initiative, started retraining and felt that the Workers Compensation Board should have, in some way, been responsible for paying the normal costs that would have been involved.

The individual contacted Workers Compensation with this request and was, of course, rejected. They felt that his time that he had spent at university was not time that was spent to the best advantage of the Workers Compensation Board and, of course, they balked at paying him for that period of time. When that happened, the constituent approached my office and spoke with me about this matter and asked me to get personally involved so that we may resolve this issue.

During that period of time, we have had meetings with the supervisor of vocational rehabilitation for

Workers Compensation. Although the meetings were somewhat heated and nonco-operative from Workers Compensation's point of view, we did come to an understanding at the conclusion of the meeting that we would contact the University of Winnipeg and let them determine whether or not the retraining that was undertaken by the individual was an adequate process and would be considered normal for anyone attending university.

We received information back from the University of Winnipeg, from the director of business computing, that stated that the speed or the progress of the individual through the university retraining program was adequate. It would be in the individual's best interest that if he continued at that rate of progress, he would conclude his retraining within the specified period of time that the Workers Compensation Board had laid out. He could expect to be reasonably assured of being successful through the retraining process, and that he would come out of that with a degree that would allow him to move towards early reintegration into the workplace.

*(1520)

We are awaiting a response from the Workers Compensation Board at this time. The Compensation Board—they were somewhat reluctant to listen to the advice that others were giving to them. They appear to have a bunker mentality about them, that when there are any problems in there, that only they know best on how to solve these problems. That is unfortunate because I do not think these people, nor anyone for that matter, have all of the answers.

We, at that time, requested from the WCB that they listen to reason. This individual had attempted, through his personal efforts, to try and save the WCB money by entering a retraining program at the earliest opportune date instead of waiting another six to eight months that the individual would have had to wait had he waited for the WCB to take the initiative to enter him in a retraining program. I think that is a waste of taxpayers' dollars, Mr. Speaker, and it is unfortunate the WCB decided to take that direction.

The constituent of whom I am talking, of course, Mr. Speaker, is still continuing through the retraining program and will, hopefully, be successful, and I am sure will be successful in achieving his degree at the end of the retraining period. Of course, there is an opportunity and there have been some thoughts

towards re-employment for this individual, and he has been watching the job market to ensure that the job opportunities will be there for him. I take my hat off to this individual for the efforts that he has made and the initiative that he has taken. That is one of the cases where I think that the Workers Compensation Board should be pleased that individuals do take that initiative and do not wait for the department to take the necessary steps.

I have no problem, Mr. Speaker, with the honourable member for Portage (Mr. Connery) reading any statements that I made about Workers Compensation because, as I have indicated to him earlier in my comments, I have the facts here in front of me and, had he been the minister, of course, I would be quite willing to share these with him. Unfortunately though for him, I have opted to share these facts with the new minister, and hopefully the new minister will take the necessary steps to solve these problems.

There are other cases in the community, Mr. Speaker, and I could talk, I am sure, hours on the number of cases that I have had to deal with in the community. In one other particular case, the individual was working at a manufacturing plant in the eastern portion of the city and had been injured on the job, had gone on Workers Compensation benefits and, of course, during that period of time, had been approached by the employer and the Workers Compensation Board to return to work on light duty. The individual, after returning to work after a short period of time, was reinjured on the job. Now this put the person in greater jeopardy as far as his health is concerned. This person has since gone for back surgery, very serious back surgery, I might add. I have had the pleasure of working with this person for a number of months. Not only did he have back surgery, but he required specialized equipment, which we were successful in locating for the individual and that he was able to utilize.

Unfortunately, this person was back and forth between the Workers Compensation Board and reintegration into the work force to his regular employment. Then after a period of time, he could no longer walk, Mr. Speaker, because of the back problem, even after surgery. He had difficulty standing on his feet for a long period of time. This individual should have been given the opportunity to retrain and, to the best of my knowledge, never was given the opportunity to retrain. The Compensation Board, of course, gave him a great deal of difficulty,

being that he was a long-term compensation case, much as I have seen with many of the other compensation cases in the community of Transcona.

It seems to be the long-term cases that the WCB is very intent on eradicating. From my experience, I have seen this to be so. This individual, of course, now is in a position where he is fearful of even having his elected representatives involved to assist in resolving this matter, for fear of having his benefits terminated. It is unfortunate it has progressed to this point because these people should not have the fear of the system that is there and is supposed to be working for them and on their behalf.

In one other matter, one other case, the individual was working at another employer and the employer, through the course of her employment, was injured on the job. She had a finger that was cut off. This person went through a very traumatic process of recovery.

Not all people recover from their injuries and not all injuries are purely physical. There are psychological periods of recovery as well. This person to whom I am referring had difficulty psychologically recovering from her injury and was cut off from her benefits by WCB. She had to seek the assistance of my office to allow her to be put back on a program that would allow her to retrain but to have continuance, continuity of income.

It is unfortunate these people have to seek out the assistance of their elected representatives to help them resolve matters to deal with a system that was supposed to be in place to assist them in the first place. There seems to be an underlying suspicion between the injured workers and the WCB and the employers and the WCB, and that has been my experience through my years of working. One party does not seem to trust the other. The employers, of course, through very valid reasons, want the employees to return to work. The employees do not want to return to work until their recovery is full and complete and with just cause. I agree with that.

Workers Compensation should be in the middle there to mediate the two and to ensure the recovery is complete and that the employer does not pressure these employees, in any way, to return to normal employment.

* (1530)

There are many, many other areas with respect to Workers Compensation cases that we can refer

to. It is unfortunate that we have progressed to the point where we have to call upon the minister to bring in some changes to The Workers Compensation Act to improve it on behalf of the injured workers of this province.

As we have indicated earlier, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) as well as myself in my previous remarks, the fees that are paid to the injured workers are going to be increased and we congratulate the minister for that. It should have maybe happened a bit sooner than what it has. We also call upon the minister to ensure that there is indexation of the benefits in the future and that the minister will bring that back to the House in his next piece of legislation, I believe due to come to the House some time within the next week or so.

It talks in Bill 43 about changes and when they are due to come into effect and that by passage of this bill and when it is fixed by proclamation due to take effect on July 1 of this year—the honourable member for Thompson has indicated, and I concur with the statement of the honourable member for Thompson, that with the changes that are proposed in this act we will support the changes that are indicated in this bill, and with the comments I have put on the record here today pertaining to the deficiencies that still exist in the Workers Compensation system, that those compensation deficiencies will be erased. Of course, the indexation is a major one because—(interjection)— I will have to get my dictionary out for that one, Mr. Speaker. Maybe after 21 years of experience in the House, I will learn all these big words. I only come from a normal working family, though.

An Honourable Member: I do not think you have to worry, Daryl. You just worry about the next year or so.

Mr. Reid: Well, the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, like to joke about my time that I will have in this House. Of course, I can assure them that I will do everything in my power to ensure that I remain here for a long time.

Transcona is a very strong, very tight-knit family community, Mr. Speaker, and I like to think of myself as a family person and represent the interests of the family community.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, New Democrats have always indicated, and have always gone on record as stating that they are interested in the programs that will support the families in this province, like

Workers Compensation, that will go a long way towards supporting the programs that the families need.

Of course, the communities like Hartney—the members in the gallery are from Hartney—that they, too, have needs for the same social programs that we have been striving to bring changes and improvements to in this province, and a lot of them the New Democratic Party has initiated in this province and this country. I hope that the members opposite will recognize that and, when they have their opportunity to stand up and speak, they will put those statements on record supporting the programs that we have initiated. I am not holding my breath on that, Mr. Speaker, of course, because I know the philosophy of the party opposite.

The Workers Compensation Board, Mr. Speaker, in my dealings with them over the seven or eight months that I have been in office, have caused a great deal of frustration in trying to deal with the concerns of the injured people that bring their cases to our attention. When we contact the Workers Compensation, they are very pleasing to talk to on the phone and they are very helpful in the beginning; and they tell us about having to locate the files; and then they put us on hold; and then they say they cannot locate the file so they will take a message; and then we wait a couple of days and we do not get a return phone call from them, in some cases; so we call back and they still cannot locate the file because it is on somebody's desk somewhere else, in another department in another building. This creates frustrations with the people who are trying to resolve this through my office, my constituency assistant, and myself who deal with these matters on a regular basis.

I hope that the minister listens to the remarks that have been made and have been put on record, that there has to be a process change here that will allow for the speedy access to the information that we are seeking so that we can resolve these matters in a way that will allow us to assist the constituents, these injured workers in the greatest possible speed, Mr. Speaker.

I am hopeful that when the minister introduces his next bill, as I indicated earlier, sometime in the next week, that these changes will be in there. I ask the minister in the strongest terms to ensure that indexation will be part of the program that will allow for the benefits to be improved.

I have indicated earlier that the bill—I support the contents of this bill. Although there are deficiencies in it, we will do what is in our power to ensure that this bill receives speedy passage, so that the injured workers and their families in the province of Manitoba will receive the benefits to which they are entitled.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks, and I thank the House for the opportunity to put my statement on record.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Mental Health Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable 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. Wasylycia-Leis).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Point of Order

Mr. Edward Connery (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would ask you, what is the dress code for members of this Legislature? Do Bermuda shorts constitute part of the dress code for this Legislature?

Mr. Speaker, put it on the record that the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) is in the Legislature in Bermuda shorts. I thought there was an appropriate dress code for this Legislature. I would ask if that is the appropriate dress code.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

On the point of order raised, I would remind the honourable member that the dress code for the Assembly requires that male MLAs wear a tie and a jacket and that the female MLAs wear a corresponding type of attire.

On the point of order raised, I will take this matter up with the honourable member for Radisson. I would like to thank the honourable member for Portage la Prairie.

An Honourable Member: Sorry, Mr. Speaker, I missed your last—

Mr. Speaker: I said I would take this matter up with the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

* * *

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 5, The Mental Health Act.

An Honourable Member: Mr. Speaker, Bill 5 was just stood.

An Honourable Member: She is leaving it standing but she is speaking to it.

* (1540)

Ms. Cerilli: I am leaving it standing in the member for St. Johns' (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) name and I speak to the bill.

Mr. Speaker, it is issues like are raised in Bill 5 that have provoked me to run to seek office and have, I think, politicized me to a large extent. Bill 5 deals with the rights of members of our society and of our community who are often adversely affected by the institutionalization and the nature of many things that are taken for granted in our community.

I want to address a number of issues which are affected under this bill which deal with mental health, the taboos of mental health, the way that the sickness model, the institutionalized model for dealing with issues related to mental health is taken for granted and used by many provinces and countries across the world. I will also deal with many issues related to the principle of the bill, even though the bill is dealing with patient rights with respect to their ability to appeal treatment.

I would say that there is a long way to go and that Bill 5 may take some small steps to encouraging that the mental health system, which is there to protect patients, actually does that. In fact, some of the things that I will allude to will show that in many respects treatment and situations that people are put into or subjected to when they are said to be treated for health problems are in fact put in situations where their mental health is jeopardized further, and those who are said to be helping them are actually not helping them at all, but further hindering their ability to take care of themselves, have power and control over their own life.

Mr. Speaker, mental health is an area that is not separate, I think, from anyone's everyday life. All of us have to deal with these issues on an ongoing basis. The stress of living in the world today affects

everybody. One of the things that affects everybody is the notion that this government bases a lot of its policy on. It is a notion that in our society you have to compete.

I would say that a lot of the policy and things that we take for granted in our society actually are of great danger to our mental health, that a lot of the competition, the isolation, the striving for material possessions, the attitude that you have to push yourself and make good in this world are what contribute to mental health problems, not just for people who are institutionalized, but I think for all of us.

One of the problems that we have currently is, a lot of that is not even questioned. There is the attitude that there are certain people who are sick and there are certain people who are well. There is some notion that the people who are sick are going to be taken care of by those who are well, and the people who are often victims of the culture that we live in are seen as sick. They are often blamed for their disadvantage, their position, and rather than being offered the kind of caring and compassion that they need to become more healthy or to cope, they are often put into institutions and treated in such a way that they are in fact going to be worse off.

I can give some examples of that, areas of patients' rights that this bill does not deal with. The whole area of when someone is going to be admitted to a psychiatric institution, the way that they are dehumanized and depersonalized. For example, people are not allowed to wear their own clothing. They are not allowed to be responsible for deciding when they should eat, when they should be able to set their own daily schedule in that way.

Also, they might be put into situations where even if they are voluntarily admitted, they will not be allowed to maintain authority over their own bank account. All of these are areas that legislation, such as Bill 5, could have dealt with, but it did not.

Other problems are with the way the institutionalized or sickness model of mental health relies on labels for mental health, further dehumanizes and depersonalizes individuals who are involved in the system. For example, people then become known as psychotic or schizophrenic and, unfortunately, are no longer dealt with as a person living in a social system, but they are simply seen as their illness is labelled. I would say that a

lot of this contributes to the powerlessness and ill health that many of these people then experience.

Another issue that this bill does not deal with that it could have is the whole issue of the use of electroshock treatments and the prescription drugs in many psychiatric institutions. A number of the ways that treatment is administered, particularly when you combine it with the fact that it is done often without the person's consent, I would say is inhumane.

I would hope that in the future we would see legislation where some of these practices become illegal or become no longer practices that are used in our caregiving institutions or caregiving organizations for people suffering problems. The whole issue of prescription drug addiction is another serious mental health issue and oftentimes when people are labelled, as I said earlier, with having a mental illness, they are prescribed quantities of drugs where even some psychiatrists would say that there has been no scientific proof that the drugs are actually helping, but what they do is they keep the individuals quiet and easier to control. This is another area that raises concerns about the rights of these people who are confined to these health institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the other problem is with the rights of patients to have a clear explanation of what the drugs and the combination of drugs and the side effects of those combinations of drugs are actually doing to their health, not only their mental health, but their physical health. This is a whole area where we are asked to simply trust the authorities and we see in many cases where there has not been research to show that even the authorities are prescribing medication where they know what the effects are.

As I said, oftentimes what happens is they end up having what I think is a dangerous amount of power over individuals who become victimized by the mental health system. With respect to Bill 5, that would be my caution to the bill, is that we have to be very careful about how much more power we are giving to people, professionals in the mental health field, doctors, psychiatrists, who, I would say, have too much power over people who oftentimes are victimized by the system as it functions today.

Bill 5, again, would give one physician the ability to apply to a medical officer in charge of a psychiatric facility for an involuntary psychiatric assessment of a person. I would suggest that there needs to be

careful criteria that would go along with that kind of legislation or with that kind of authority.

* (1550)

I would also suggest that when you combine that with having the police under this legislation given the authority to what would become an arrest of someone who is refusing to voluntarily submit themselves to an assessment—a lot of psychiatric assessments, we do not even know if they are, in fact, assessing in, for example, a culturally sensitive way. We do know that they often require that people have drastic changes to their ability to have authority control over their whole life, so to give the kind of authority that this bill does to not only a psychiatric institution and to individual authorities in that institution, I would suggest that we are going to be very careful how it is used.

On the one hand, there may be situations that would warrant it, but on the other hand, it could allow for the mistreatment and the misuse of authority in a number of situations that would not warrant this kind of treatment. I am very cautious or very concerned about putting legislation that allows for police to be involved in involuntary psychiatric assessments.

The other area that this bill deals with that is very sensitive is the whole area of having parental involvement or family involvement in the authorization of psychiatric care for people. The reason that this is a concern is we know that people often experience problems because of early childhood trauma, early childhood family experiences. What often happens is the very people who are said to be giving care to individuals are the people who have victimized that person in the past.

We have to be careful when we are formulating legislation, and we have to be careful with the system that exists now that gives, particularly in the area of children, parents unquestioned authority and rights to determine the care that people in their family, their children, have. We have to be careful that there is not more of an ability for family members who are concerned about what people suffering mental health conditions know about their family.

One of the things that is currently starting to be talked about more is familial abuse. We know that a number of people who end up in psychiatric institutions have a history of abuse and violence within their family. The reason that I am raising this

is it could be those very people who were the perpetrators of that violence who are then wanting the person to be institutionalized. That person could be seen as a family member who, because it is a parent or a grandparent or another relative, would be given a lot of authority simply because they have that role. It would be taken for granted that they are going to have the best interests of their family member in mind, but oftentimes they are simply wanting that person to not be able to voice their concerns or, as we say, to break the silence of the secrets in the family.

With my experience in the school system, I saw many situations of this where, for example, there was an adolescent who had attempted to take some pills and could be seen as an attempted suicide. When that person was taken to the hospital, the caregiver, the health professional who took the person to the hospital was not able to have a report on what the psychiatrist or the doctors found but, in fact, that information was reserved for the family member. In this situation, it was the family members who had caused the trauma and had caused the problem in the first place. We have children who are running away from home, but it is that very home, the parents, who are then called on and given the authority to decide what should happen to that young person.

I just had another call today that dealt with the same issue. How can we deal with the problem of parents being given authority to make decisions on behalf of the children when it is those same parents who are victimizing the children? I do not know if Bill 5 would deal specifically with that issue, because there is the attitude that in our culture and in our society who better to care for children than parents, but we all know with the incidence of abuse that is being talked about more that we have to be very careful now.

I understand that it is a challenge for us as legislators to develop legislation that is not going to either jeopardize the rights of parents or jeopardize the ability of society as a whole to ensure that children are being protected.

As I understand it, Bill 5 is trying to deal with specifically the appeal of a patient when they are given a specific treatment and that there is a concern with the time that there is a decision being made that we need to have a patient with not only the ability to appeal if they are given a specific

treatment, but where they have a chance to appeal if they are to be given medication or treatment at all.

The bill says that those kinds of things will happen within three weeks, but I would say that to be detained in an institution even for three weeks is still a long time, and that there can be a lot of suffering in those three weeks. So I understand that Bill 5 is an attempt to deal with some of these situations, but I would say that it is not far enough or is not going far enough.

Section 5 is saying that there must be—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1600)

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I understand that we are not supposed to be looking at separate sections of the bill when we are debating the bill. I would like to remind the honourable member.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised, I would remind the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), it is the principle of the bill before the House. I would ask the honourable member to keep her remarks relevant to the said bill.

* * *

Ms. Cerilli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will conclude by saying that Bill 5 may be a step in the right direction as an attempt to begin to consider that patients in institutions have rights and that they be considered as people and not simply as patients and not simply as someone with what we would call an illness and that we would start to look at the entire model for mental health institutions and begin to move to a truly community-based model so that people with mental health problems will be, in fact, cared for in a humane and dignified way rather than, as often happens, that they are subdued with drugs and other treatment and simply pushed off out of society, out of concern.

I look forward to the committee hearings when we will have members active on mental health issues come forward and propose amendments. I have talked with a few individuals who will be proposing amendments to this bill, and I would encourage the government to pay close attention and to seriously consider how this bill could be improved. Thank you.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): I would like to leave the bill standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns, but to speak on Bill 5, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has already been granted to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to speak on health issues to the House, particularly those relating to mental health.

The bill before us, Bill 5, is not a major undertaking of this government. There are a number of minor revisions, and I think when you actually come to look at it this is quite surprising since at the beginning of this session this bill was trumpeted by the government as one of its major undertakings and for a long time seemed to be the only item of business that the government had after the crucial issue of the symbols of Manitoba.

There are important segments, I think, of The Mental Health Act which have not been touched upon and which still concern the families of people who are suffering from mental illnesses and the support groups and the patients who have had to confront daily the issues that this particular bill addresses.

For example, some of the voluntary admission provisions have led to difficulties in the past. The sections which deal with the criminally insane also have given rise to some concern in the community over the years, but neither of these are addressed by this particular set of amendments.

So the bill is largely one of minor amendments, some of which will be of benefit, I think, to mental health patients and their families, and we will be pleased to support some of those amendments, but much of it, I think, will produce disappointment in the community at large, particularly for the professionals who spend their lives dealing in the institutions and in such community-based health facilities as we have in Manitoba and also again with the families who support and continue to deal with the issues of mental health on a daily basis.

For Manitobans in general, Mr. Speaker, I think the fundamental reform we look for in the mental health system of Manitoba is not here. We were looking for some fundamental reforms in legislation that have not taken place and that do not seem to be addressed by this government at all. We see no change, for example here in this set of amendments,

in the attitude towards mental health and the treatment of mental illnesses by Manitobans. We see no initiatives to move to a community-based health service, which I think has been much requested.

Many deputations, many organizations have looked at different aspects of community-based health services across Canada and in certain parts of the United States, and this is the kind of system, the kind of support service that people are asking for in Manitoba. They would look in vain for any kind of shift in government thinking to that aspect of treatment and that aspect of community responsibility for the mental health and social system which would produce that or which would support that in Manitoba.

Bill 5, like many of its predecessors, is based on the assumption that institutional care is the exclusive model for Manitoba in its approach to mental health and to mental incapacity. It is that, Mr. Speaker, which I think is the greatest disappointment of this bill, that it makes no attempt to move away from that sense of institutional care.

There are alternatives. In our election campaign, and in the policies of the New Democratic Party, we have talked in the last few years about moving towards a working definition of health, such as is used by the World Health Organization, and it is one that frequently has been mentioned in the House on other issues: Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease.

Again, Mr. Speaker, in the context of this bill we see a set of basic assumptions which look at mental health issues as disease issues and issues which can only be treated in institutions. There is no doubt that institutional care can provide some of the answers and does serve some of the needs of some patients and some aspects of mental health and mental incapacity. It does provide the possibility of diagnosis from a variety of mental health specialists. It does provide some of the primary care, in some cases the restraint and protection that are necessary for patients. It does provide the continuous nursing care which cannot always be provided in the home and which is absolutely essential for the long-term treatment of a patient. It provides the continuous care I think that families are increasingly unable to provide, particularly for seniors who are suffering from long-term disabilities of mental elements.

We recognize then, Mr. Speaker, that institutions can provide some things. We do not assume that they can provide everything, and that they are the basis for a mental health system. We would like to see a mental health care system which encompasses other elements of compassion, ones that look at the role that the family itself can play, the small-scale family setting, not necessarily the individual's own family, but the small-scale care that can be provided in different types of institutions.

We think, too, that the connection with a wider community, not just the institutional community of a hospital, which can often become a very dependent, a very all-encompassing environment for a patient—we would like to ensure that mental health patients have the opportunity at some point to be transferred into the general community to make those connections with a wider world which sometimes can seem, if they do not have those connections, very frightening and make their transition to recovery very difficult. So that connection with the wider community during the treatment period in a small-scale, family setting is something that we would very much like to see in mental health reforms.

The connection with normalcy, with "normal" however and whoever defines that these days, I think is something that ought to be considered part of the mental health care and mental health setting of a Manitoba system. It is something that becomes increasingly difficult as a patient is kept in an institution two years, three years, 10 years, that the transition to the outside world eventually becomes impossible.

* (1610)

So that connection from the beginning with the variety and with the "normal" context of the broader world, I think, is important. Long-term care, I do not think, is the total solution for any patient, and it is one that we would like to see, for most people, being phased out over the long term in Manitoba.

We support, Mr. Speaker, a broader network of community health services. We think that these can provide the accessibility, particularly in northern Manitoba, particularly in rural areas where access to mental health professionals, to social workers, therapists, to diagnosticians, is not at the moment equally available.

So a broad network of community health services enable us to use the wide range of professional

expertise and also enable us to provide crisis care which, I think, is an important element of health care and one which is very sporadically available in parts of the province. The mobile units that are there in some areas of jurisdictions are not there for all of Manitoba, so that aspect of accessibility, equality of condition, equality of access to equal treatment is something that we would like to see, and we believe that this can be achieved through developing a network of community health services.

I do not know how many members of the Legislature were present at the meeting before Christmas that the Mental Health Association organized in the Legislature to prepare members for the last set of Estimates. There were a number of quite moving speeches, I think, that were given by family members there who had experienced difficulties within their families. I remember somebody from The Pas speaking about the difficulties of short-term care, of the difficulty of emergency care on the weekend in The Pas, and of people from within the city who found that emergency care for young people is very limited within Winnipeg and that it is totally within a hospital situation.

Those people who come from rural areas find that—and in fact, I remember one of them speaking on this. As they brought their son continually into Winnipeg for treatment in the institutions of Winnipeg, they found that his friends dropped away and that, gradually, a young man who had a social network, a network of peers which is very important to young people, found that he was becoming increasingly isolated. The very treatment in the city, which should have enabled him to live a much more productive and happy life, was gradually being denied to him by the distance he had to travel for even basic care.

So that sense, I think, of providing equitable, equal and caring service to all Manitobans is something that we have to be mindful of and that we looked for with disappointment from this bill, that there is no change in that sense of the broader aspects of community service.

I would have hoped that the ministers and the deputy ministers who were present at that meeting would have taken to heart some of the information that was presented to them by the community mental health association and incorporated some elements of that in this particular bill and enabled us

to see some new policy directions from this government.

The mental health elements of community clinics have been made available in Saskatchewan over quite a long period of time now, 20 or 30 years. We see them developing in Quebec over the last five years as community clinics have begun to develop there. We also see a very important new initiative in the Yukon where the NDP government in the Yukon is developing community clinics that will deal with mental health elements in a particularly culturally sensitive manner. I think that is an important lesson for Manitobans to learn as well, and I see very little of that sense of recognition of the diversity of cultures and attitudes towards mental illness and attitudes towards the family encompassed in this particular bill.

So again I look upon it with some disappointment and wish that the government had taken account of the kinds of new developments and new policies that are being offered, for example, in the Yukon.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the NDP believes, unlike the government, that health is much more than the absence of pain, and we base our understanding of health not just on the World Health Organization definition of health, but on a fundamental understanding that family, community, education and economic well-being are the necessary requisites of a healthy life.

So I am disappointed, Mr. Speaker, that this bill offers no new policy developments which would make that connection for Manitobans between the broader social and economic context and the development of mental illness and mental incapacity.

The second area that I would like to deal with, Mr. Speaker, is then this aspect of the broader social and economic context of health issues, and particularly mental health issues. The most important element it seems to me, and I think to my party, is that any approach to comprehensive health care must recognize that poverty, poor housing, inadequate diet, poor education and an inability to alter one's conditions, whether they are conditions of living or conditions of working, are ones that are absolutely basic to any understanding of the health concerns of Manitobans.

We do not have to look very far to look at the increasing poverty that is affecting Manitobans. Manitoba has the third highest level of child poverty

in the country. By 1986, the minimum wage workers, Mr. Speaker, could only earn 46 percent of the poverty line income.

I think we are seeing an increasing poverty in the inner city of Winnipeg. I know certainly if the calls from my constituents are any indication of what is happening across the inner city, that people are finding it extremely difficult to make ends meet, even by the second or third week of the month, that people who are unemployed and are facing long-term unemployment now, I think are beginning to be very fearful of the future of their families and their children.

The link between poverty and mental health, the link between poverty and physical health is very clear. It is very clear through any of the United Nations bulletins that you would want to look at on this. It is very clearly documented for Third World countries. It seems to me that the government should take note of that and that it should recognize that, in some cases, in terms of housing conditions, of health conditions, in parts of Manitoba we are looking at things which are close to Third World conditions.

An Honourable Member: Third World in our midst, Sister Mac called it.

Ms. Friesen: Yes, and I think it has become worse in the last two years, certainly since Sister Mac's time.

For mental health, Mr. Speaker, I think the links are even more obvious. The link between stress and the many illnesses that come from stress has been increasingly documented by health care workers and health researchers. It is not that long ago, perhaps the late 1950s, early 1960s since Dr. Hans Selye did the very basic work on the relationship between stress and physical illness at the University of Montreal.

Since then, I think it has become almost a cliché of health care practice to look at the kind of stresses and the ranking of stresses that individuals do face in their daily lives. If you face crowded conditions, if you are trying to bring up a family in rental conditions where welfare will only pay under \$300, your landlord then puts up the rent, you are forced to make a move, you are forced to change schools for your children, you are forced to find that the rate of \$1.10 per bus trip, a new accommodation sometimes in the middle of winter.

* (1620)

The kind of stress that that involves as you walk from house to house with three children in the middle of winter—as I know that one of my constituents did this winter to try and find new accommodation because the welfare rates would not accommodate her and her children—the kind of stress that woman faced, I think, in the long term, if not the short term, is going to result in serious illness, and it is something that I do not see any recognition of in this bill, any recognition of the relationship between poverty, housing and the health care of Manitobans.

For those Manitobans who are employed, I think if you look at the kind of research that is done by Workplace Safety and Health people, the opportunity to work in a safe working environment, the opportunity to work in an environment over which you have some control is very important to the level of mental health that you are able to maintain. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that our trade unions, the Manitoba Federation of Labour and the Occupational Health Centre have done a great deal over the last number of years, the last five or six years in particular, to ensure that Manitoba workers have those opportunities and are made aware of their rights in the workplace to a clean working environment, to a safe working environment and to one where they have some control over the nature of the job that they do.

Again, Mr. Speaker, Bill 5 does not look at the nature of the relationship between work and the kind of health care that Manitobans can and should be able to enjoy. For those Manitobans who are unemployed, increasingly thousands and thousands of Manitobans who are out of jobs, we are looking at numerous communities in Manitoba, not just in the North but increasingly in southern Manitoba in those fringe communities where people have worked for the CNR perhaps for generations and who are now facing the layoffs as the federal government begins to offload its so-called budget crisis onto the backs of working Manitobans.

We are now finding communities in southern Manitoba where there is 75 percent unemployment. Does the government not believe there is a connection between that 75 percent of a community which is unemployed and the kind of physical and mental health conditions that are going to be found in those communities over this generation and the next generation? Stress, poor conditions, the inability to look forward to a future with a job is

something which, I think, is increasingly affecting hundreds of our people.

You do not just have to look at the CNR workers who have been laid off or the people who have been laid off in Portage la Prairie or in Brandon, but many of you will have heard this in the last few weeks from students who have found it difficult to find a job, in fact impossible in many cases. I can imagine that there is not a member of this Legislature who has not had a call from either the families of students or students themselves who have found that the cutbacks in the federal government, the cutbacks in the provincial government, the inabilities of the universities to fund increasingly the summer research that they had done have led to the difficulties of students not being able to find jobs.

I am not even here, Mr. Speaker, talking about high school students who have always depended upon jobs. I am looking also at university students who have been calling my office facing eight and 10 letters of rejection every day, people who have B.A.s, B.Sc.s, and many other aspects of public service to their credit and yet are unable to find jobs.

I think they are beginning to experience in a short space of time and on a very small scale—because I do not think I would want to compare that to the long-term unemployment that is facing many of our industrial workers—but they are beginning to face the kind of rejection by society which leads to mental health difficulties—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have left?

Mr. Speaker: Nineteen minutes.

Ms. Friesen: I find myself looking at this bill, Mr. Speaker, with some disappointment that the broader connections between the social conditions and mental health have not been made yet by this government.

In this particular bill, we find that there are a number of elements which, I think, will help patients and their families. Some of them, in fact, do respond to some of the questions which have been raised over the last few years by a number of the groups concerned with mental health conditions.

There are some areas that I think will be acceptable to the general community, and I look forward to the debate in committee hearing. I look forward to the questions and the contributions that are going to be made by the various groups to

improve this bill, because I do think there are ways in which the bill can be improved. I do think there are some ways in which our mental health proposals, treatment and policies can be improved.

One of the areas I think I would like to see the government look at is the assessment by a single physician, and I notice that this particular set of amendments does not specify which kind of physician. It could be a dermatologist. It could be somebody with an expertise and a training which is very distant from that of psychiatry. So I would like the government to have another look at that and perhaps to specify the kind of physician who should be involved in the diagnosis and commitment, in particular the involuntary commitment, of people to long-term care.

I know that we have a shortage of psychiatrists in Manitoba. This has been a problem for a long time. I think I would like to have seen this addressed in the bill. I do not think the way to get around that shortage is to allow a wide range of physicians to involuntarily commit, on the voice of one physician, people for the long term. I do think we should be looking at other solutions.

I think one way that we might be able to do this is to involve other health care professionals to look, for example, at psychiatric social workers, to look at the possibility of using psychologists and to have in that sense both the doctor and another professional, people who are not involved in the same kind of professional organizations and who can evaluate from a variety of positions the competence and the required treatment for a particular individual. So I would like the government to have another look at that, and I look forward to some comments on that from the general public at the time.

I think to some extent the amendments also are losing sight of the role of the family unit. The references are frequently to one individual, to a guardian, to the nearest relative, to a whole list of people in descending order of closeness to the person. I think I would like to see some opportunity for physicians to refer to the family unit.

Now, the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) has made a very good point, that in some cases it is the family unit itself which is responsible for some of the difficulties that the patient is facing. So it clearly is not in the interest of every patient that the family unit as a whole be involved, but it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that it would be in the interest of some

families and of patients that we do include that family unit, not just the individuals, but the family as a whole being brought together to consider the interest of one of its members.

I am concerned, too, by the fact that this particular bill does not bring forward a list of patient's rights, and I do think there is an opportunity for that. I hope that people will be addressing this in the committee stage. I think particularly where you are involved in committing people for the long term, or even the short term, to institutions perhaps against their will, that it is important that we do be quite specific about the kind of rights that a patient and a patient's family have under these conditions.

Some examples would be useful, I think, to include for the physicians or the health care professionals who are involved in this particular stage of diagnosis and commitment—it would be useful I think to refer to examples, such as shock treatments and experimental treatments, which the patient should have the right to specifically refuse. Not all patients will necessarily want to do that, I recognize that, but by specifying such types of treatment it might be, in fact, a flag to them to at least consider the kind of treatments which are being offered to them.

I think patients ought to be offered the right within this set of amendments to consider a treatment in the least restrictive environment, whether within the hospital itself or within the broader community and to know that there are, and should be, other options available to them. They should be enabled, and know that they have the right, Mr. Speaker, to wear their own clothing and to a kind of privacy which sometimes in large institutions is lost sight of.

(Mr. Jack Penner, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)
* (1630)

They should have the right not to do work, which can be, again in large institutions, not to do the work which should be done by paid employees.

They should, particularly in Manitoba, have the right to an interpreter. I think that is an important thing that we should be aware of in this particular province at this time both for northern Manitobans and for newly arrived people within the city.

I think also that we should look at this bill and look at the principle of review of patients' cases. I do, of course, know that in most institutions, patients' cases are reviewed on a daily basis, sometimes on an hourly basis in emergency situations. In the

longer-term institutions, I think there should be something which ensures that the patients have the right to that and to build into the legislation a recognition that the right to consistent and constant review of their case is something which is there. Particularly for those people who have been involuntarily committed, I think it would be a safeguard for both the patient, family, physicians and the health care professionals involved.

We are also asking the police to carry quite a heavy burden in some cases, particularly in areas where health care professionals are not available. So we find that the police are asked to be the first agent of response. They are sometimes asked to make very quick decisions. It is always a part of their job, but they are asked to make very quick decisions on the long-term interests of a particular patient.

This may be unavoidable in some areas. It may be unavoidable under some conditions, but I think we should recognize that the police have very little training in this area. If we are, under this set of amendments, to give them those kinds of powers and to enact it in legislation, we should ensure that parallel to this goes some kind of training, greater training than they have at the moment, in the recognition and the diagnosis, and I think particularly a recognition of their own limitations in these particular cases, limitations which would be common to all of us.

I think also as I mentioned too in my introduction, I would like the government to look at the cultural elements of mental health. There are different cultural attitudes to mental health, both to what can be looked after by the family, what should be looked after by the family, in the context of some cultures.

I particularly applaud the government of the Yukon and its attempt to deal with all health care issues from a culturally sensitive perspective. I would like to see that kind of reform be approached in Manitoba as well.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, I look for some changes, some amendments to this bill in the reading at second and third reading. I look for some interesting comments from a variety of community groups who have concerns about this bill. I hope that they will appear before us.

We have come a long way in Manitoba in the treatment of mental health from the early times of European settlement, relatively recent in Manitoba

history. Certainly, in the 19th Century, the treatment of mental health and mental incapacity was very limited, certainly was based largely on fear, a fear of the person involved, a fear of the difficulties, often insurmountable difficulties, that they made for the families.

I remember reading in my own historical studies of the Peace River country in the 1930s, and one of the reports of the Mounted Police in that area. They were, of course, the major representation of government in that area. One of the jobs that they feared, disliked, and hated the most was, in fact, dealing with people who had become mentally ill over the long winters, particularly women who were left with many children.

As Peace River country was being cleared, it meant that many of the men were away logging or working in industrial camps. The women would be left alone, isolated, with a large number of children and very few resources. Many of them found the pressure difficult, and the job of the Mounted Police was often to go in, in the spring, and to provide some kind of rescue and to draw these women out, often to find accommodation for the children as well. It was one of the most heartbreaking, I think, of duties that the Mounties felt that they had to perform.

We have come a long way, I think, even from the 1930s, from that sense of dealing with mental health in Manitoba. We have come at least to a position where we look upon the possibility of treatment. We look upon it in the best sense as short term, and we do see long-term care as very much the last resort in mental treatment.

Our diagnostic procedures have much improved. Many of these have come, of course, with the development of psychology, something which was a product of both World Wars, developed in many cases for selection of officers, for selection of certain types of regiments, but ones which were developed after both the First World War and the Second World War into new disciplines, new approaches to mental health and to the therapy that was possible, and the rehabilitation of people who have suffered greatly. I think much of those rehabilitation efforts came out of the work that was done after both World Wars.

In the 1960s we have also developed many new drugs, ones which sometimes can be abused, but which, in many cases, have made it possible for the kind of community health based care that we are talking about on this side of the House, drugs which

can be used both for short-term treatment and also for long-term rehabilitation of people who in earlier years would have had to spend much of their lives in long-term care.

I want to conclude, Mr. Acting Speaker, by emphasizing again the general, I think, approach that we would have to mental health issues on this side of the House and to suggest to the government that there is a very direct relationship between economic, social issues, the deterioration of economic and social conditions in Manitoba and the kind of health care issues that we are going to increasingly see both in the North and in the inner city of Winnipeg.

We have in Manitoba, Mr. Acting Speaker, soaring unemployment; a massive, I think, and a growing welfare class. We have children who are too hungry to learn. We have a tragedy, I think, which is unfolding before our eyes, and we have a government which cuts off the grants to the City of Winnipeg education authorities, which cuts off the grants to the 55-Plus seniors, which cuts the grants to education in the North, which cuts the grants to ACCESS students. The most important element of education and the opportunity to understand one's illness, to have access to ways to change it, are being denied, I think, to most Manitobans.

I want to draw the government's attention to the relationship between its social policy and the kind of physical and mental stress that is going to develop in Manitoba over this generation. We know that mental health, particularly, affects not just this generation, but it also affects the life cycle of the family. It affects future generations as well. I think the kind of social policies which we are seeing from this government are ones which, I believe, are clearly ideologically bound. Ones, which in many ways, are created by a comparable government at the federal level. They are creating, it seems to me, disastrous conditions for the people of the inner city and northern Manitoba.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): As previously agreed, the matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis). Agreed? Agreed.

Bill 6—The Mines and Minerals and Consequential Amendments Act

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Penner): On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of

Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld), Bill 6 (The Mines and Minerals and Consequential Amendments 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).

* (1640)

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Acting Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to speak to this bill. Before I do, I would like to acknowledge and thank the minister for all the effort and time that he has shared with us as critics. He has gone beyond the call of duty to assist us in better understanding this bill. It is a very lengthy bill. In fact, he even had his staff give us a briefing and also spreadsheets, which for me was very helpful. I am sure my colleagues would state the same.

On that note, I would like to have the time to speak to this bill, which we have discussed within our party and caucus. It has a lot of merit to it. It has taken 60 years since any revisions have taken place. It is time for a new bill to come out. There are a lot of positive steps in this bill. In principle, we will be supporting this bill. We might have to take a closer look and scrutinize some of the fine points of it.

One of the important parts of this bill, Mr. Acting Speaker, is to incorporate the regulations into statutes, which is very, very important. As you know, regulations can be changed with Order-in-Council. That could take place every day, every week, at the whim of the government, and a statute cannot. With the introduction of this bill, it should improve mining activities and exploration and also the lifestyles of miners in the mining communities.

Later, I will have the opportunity to address principles of sustainable development which is recommended by the Premier's Round Table. That will take a bit of time because it is a major step, and it will have a lot of influence on communities and sceneries, especially in northern Manitoba.

One of the areas where our party and I have some concern is in the area we talk about sustainable development. We talk about rehabilitation, and yet we only have three inspectors in Manitoba.

If you are aware and have worked in any of the undergrounds or any open pits in the mines in northern Manitoba, it is very dangerous and you have to constantly make sure that it is properly inspected and it is safe for the workers to go under

everyday. When you have shafts where individuals go down in a cage, it has to be regularly inspected because you have guides along your shaft and that is at least twice a week you have inspectors go down those shafts and inspect them.

A lot of times it is the cage tenders of those mines who will go down and, Mr. Acting Speaker, I speak from experience. I was a cage tender quite a few years ago and I know what the duties entail. When you go down into a mine shaft when you are a cage tender, you take the workers down, you haul the materials up and down and a lot of times you go as fast as—the hoist tender will have gauges where they cannot exceed certain speed limits. When you are going down, you cause such a vibration and those guides that are bolted in sometimes come loose and some will break off. It is very dangerous if not inspected properly. That is my whole point.

With three inspectors and with the mines that we have and also with the rehabilitation processes, I am sure it would be added responsibility to the three inspectors we have in Manitoba. I do not feel that will be an adequate number for safety's sake and to ensure that companies and exploration outfits are following the rules that will be set out by this government, which are excellent rules.

When you have exploration going on in various parts of the wilderness, you have what you call bore holes. They drill into the ground and bring out the core and that is how you can tell if there are any minerals in the ground. If you have spent time in the wilderness trampling through the woods, a lot of times you will run into or over these core pieces which are just left lying in the bushes and stuff like that. If we are going to have a serious rehabilitation program, those three inspectors will be awful, awful busy. I cannot see how they will be able to handle all the extra load so I would encourage -(interjection)-

The member for Portage says he knows one inspector personally, and I am sure if you spoke to that member and if you discussed with that individual the added responsibilities that will be added to their duties, you will find that the time they will give to it will be very limited because right now they are full-time employees and they have their hands full, you know.

I am not disagreeing with the concept of this bill. I am just encouraging the government to take a serious look at maybe increasing the number of

inspectors so that the whole process could be increased and that the people will be able to do a proper inspection once the exploration companies leave the area. Because we do not need messes and cores lying all over.

Also, the other part of this bill that is very encouraging is the establishment of a mining board. If it is handled properly, it will consist of three individuals who are independent of the departments. Those three individuals will bring a lot of experience to that board, whether they are engineers or miners or prospectors, they will be able to share a lot of first-hand experience and should enable the government to utilize that form of experience. I hope to see that there are some active long-time prospectors who will be included as part of that three-person board, because they are the ones who really started the activity of mining for us in Manitoba and all over the world.

Those prospectors who braved the cold, the mosquitoes and the muskeg and stuff that they had to find their way through, they are the ones who found the ore for us to establish mines. In any mining community we know that it has generated great wealth for individuals who are employed there, and also for the provinces for, like through the taxation system, and also has encouraged individuals to set up businesses. So a mine in any community, wherever it may be, stimulates the economy and creates a lot of employment opportunities. A miner's life, Mr. Acting Speaker, is not an easy one, you know. It is very difficult and a lot of times the individual will go to a mining community, say, for a span of a year or two and end up spending his whole life in that community.

Also, we talk about licensing the prospectors. We can go right back to history—right back to, well, the old western days when they had the prospectors who used to pack up their meal and go off into the hills and sometimes you would never see them for a whole year, and come down for their grub stake and then go back again. -(interjection)- Yes, and you get the ravens squawking at you, that is right. That is about the only company a lot of them have, you know. It is a very lonely and very hard life.

* (1650)

What I am a little concerned about here is the licensing of these prospectors. Some of these individuals have limited education, and a lot of them do not really like a lot of paperwork. I would encourage the minister, if there is any way of

developing assistance for some of the prospectors that would like to have someone help them fill out the forms and the paperwork and stuff like that that is required for them to be licensed.

I am not totally against licensing of prospectors because I think it is very encouraging. If you let anyone roam through the wilderness not really knowing what they are doing or not knowing what it is to survive out in the wilderness, it could be very dangerous to a lot of individuals. Also, on the other hand, I am concerned of the rugged individuals that would have to sit down and articulate whatever will be on those forms. I think it is very important that there is something in place to assist them in that area.

What I find very encouraging, also in this bill, is the separation of minerals and quarry minerals. Also, the increase of charges for quarries that will be used—the money that is generated from that will be used to rehabilitate quarries. There are quarries that have been abandoned and left vacant in Manitoba. Some of them have become snake pits and homes for snakes. I think that we could—I think it is somewhere in and around Inwood I think it is, where they go collect garter snakes every year from the quarry pits.

We can even take that a step further. I hope that whoever is in charge of rehabilitating the quarries will take into consideration what has happened in Victoria. Butchart Gardens was once a rock quarry, and yet if you go there, it is one of the most beautiful places in all of Canada. You could never imagine that all it was was a rock quarry at one time, and it was a family that started planting a few flowers here, a few flowers there. Other people got interested and now you have people from all over the world that travel to Victoria.

In fact, a few years ago, I took my mother on a little trip, and as far as she had ever been was Winnipeg. We rented a car and then we drove through the Rockies and spent a little bit of time in Vancouver. Then we went to Victoria and she saw all those flowers, and at that time I tried to explain to her that that was once a rock quarry and there were individuals that built it into what it is now. She was so amazed.

I am sure some of the rock quarries that we have in Manitoba could be turned into miniature gardens, and also make them very attractive for our tourist industry and visitors to come to Manitoba.

One part of this bill, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have problems with that ties directly into the quarry minerals is that Manitoba Hydro is exempt from the levy for rehabilitation. Who is going to oversee and govern Manitoba Hydro to ensure that they rehabilitate the ground and stuff that they remove from the quarry? It does not state in this bill. I think that is one area that we should look at seriously and maybe put an amendment to make sure that the government or whoever will be responsible ensures that the proper rehabilitation takes place, because I do not think anyone should be exempt from the whole rehabilitation process, which leads me into a very interesting concept, the whole rehabilitation process of open pits, mines and mining communities.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

I can give you an example that I saw first hand in the community of Sherridon, which was a thriving gold mine at one time. Right now, you could go to Sherridon and you still see the tailings sitting on the ground. I know we did not have rehabilitation programs in place at that time, but now with the introduction of this bill we will have. I hope the minister will fly up to Sherridon and see if there is a possibility of removing some of those tailings and the leachings, which are flowing into the beautiful lakes around Sherridon. One of the thriving industries of Sherridon is your tourist industry with your fly-in tourists and the Americans who come in to go fishing and enjoy the outdoors.

Also, Mr. Speaker, when we have communities that are affected, or one-industry communities, we also have the potential of communities closing down. Part of the rehabilitation of those mines—we could also look at rehabilitation of some of the communities where, if there was some kind of equity in place for individuals who have invested their whole life savings and also have toiled for years underground and in the mines—and some are very hazardous to a person's health—and have invested so much time and money, once that mine closes down, there is no equity insurance for those individuals. They in turn lose their homes. They lose their businesses, and they do not even have enough to start in another chosen community or wherever they want to go. If there was some form of equity insurance which could be in place and cost-shared, possibly by the workers, the company and possibly the government to ensure that individuals, whatever they have invested in their

homes, in their businesses, even if that investment could be returned for that individual to start over somewhere else, that would be a major step.

I know of one individual I will not name by name, who was a thriving entrepreneur in northern Manitoba. It was in the community of Lynn Lake and that person, when I was a younger man, when I was working in the mines and stuff, had businesses in the North. He had a newspaper business; he was the mayor of that community and well respected and very well thought of. Now, right to this day, that individual has lost everything because of the closure of a one-industry town.

The only way that individual is surviving is that he is caretaker of an apartment block here in Winnipeg. That is a sad thing to see where people have had faith in the community and in the mines, and now they have lost their dream. If we could even set up a small fund or some form of insurance, I would encourage that.

The other area that I find that is lacking and should be seriously addressed is your penalty clause for corporations or companies that do not meet their rehabilitation plan. It is set at \$100,000. That is a very low fine, when you talk about rehabilitation of a mine or an open pit. That one example that I gave you of the community of Sherridon alone, it has been estimated that it would cost anywhere from \$20 million to \$30 million to rehabilitate that community. Compared to a \$100,000 fine, that would be getting off pretty easy.

I know, in discussions with the minister, he mentioned that every day that company would get a \$2,000 fine for every day that it has not met their rehabilitation process, but I think if we could up the maximum fine, and that would possibly discourage individuals—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) will have 19 minutes remaining.

* (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 16—Educational Programs

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I am sorry if you are tired of me, but—I move, seconded by the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen),

WHEREAS hundreds of Manitobans have been successfully trained through ACCESS programs at the university and community college level; and

WHEREAS ACCESS programs provide educational opportunities to aboriginal, inner city, northern and new Canadians who would not otherwise receive a post-secondary education; and

WHEREAS funding for new entrants to ACCESS programs has been frozen and funding for students already in these programs is uncertain; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has gone back on its commitment to contribute to the building of a home for the Winnipeg Education Centre, thereby giving up \$500,000 in federal funding.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba call on the provincial government to consider guaranteeing full long-term funding to ACCESS programs; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the provincial government to consider reinstating its financial commitment to a new Winnipeg Education Centre.

Motion presented.

Mr. Hickes: It gives me pleasure to speak to this resolution, and I hope we have the support of the House on this resolution. I think it is very important at this stage of the life of Canada that we deal with and address aboriginal concerns and issues today and not wait for tomorrow. We have waited over a hundred years for some of these issues to be dealt with by previous governments, provincially and federally, and I think it is high time that we as legislators and as leaders in our communities seriously address and enhance the opportunities for aboriginals and visible minorities in Canada.

We have seen the cutbacks of some of the programs that were in place and utilized by a lot of aboriginal people that was the progress toward aboriginal self-government. We hear and we talk about aboriginal self-government from almost every individual. We hear that daily and constantly. Even the Prime Minister of Canada has stated the support of aboriginal self-government.

Aboriginal self-government is only a word. It is only a word unless you have means and measures in place in order for aboriginal people to have the skills to administer and deliver self-government. The education opportunities, the health programs, the justice system have failed in many ways the aboriginals of Manitoba and of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the time is right to enhance and to expand the positive programs that we had. The benefits we achieved from those programs in the past and in the future should be expanded, not cut back. We see the examples of ACCESS programs like BUNTEP, which is a teacher training program. It is an excellent program, and there are many aboriginal people who got their teaching certificates from that program and now are teaching in northern Manitoba and right across Manitoba. If you have an aboriginal person graduate from one of those programs and go back into the community and work with your own people, that is a goal that we have as aboriginal individuals. Someday we will realize that to the fullest extent, where we will have more aboriginal medical doctors, more aboriginal dentists and also aboriginal engineers.

This year, Mr. Speaker, there will be the first aboriginal engineering graduate and I hope it will not be the last. If those programs, the funds are not committed and the supports are not in place, that person could eventually be the only and last engineering graduate of the ACCESS program.

We know, when we hear the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) mention today about a bridge that is required in a community of The Pas, of Carrot River Valley, when you hear the request from the community of Cross Lake, they need a new bridge, and you hear Norway House, we need a new bridge, hopefully that one graduate we have this year will be one of the engineers who will be working on those bridges in aboriginal communities. So, Mr. Speaker, the young aboriginal people who are growing up in those communities will have another excellent role model to, hopefully, choose their lifestyle around.

I think it is very important that we encourage the building of the Winnipeg Education Centre. The Winnipeg Education Centre was a vital tool for visible minorities and aboriginals who leave the reserve communities and move to bigger centres and to Winnipeg to further their education, and also in order for those individuals to share their new-gained knowledge with their own. It is much

easier for individuals when you have one of your own dealing with you. A lot of times, what happens is there is a language barrier. For instance, if you go to see a doctor, and the doctor has a language that is foreign to you, or is not your first language, with the medical terminology you would have a difficult time understanding what the doctor is going to do for you.

Could you imagine that, Mr. Speaker, how scary that must be when you do not know what a medical doctor is going to do to you because you do not understand what is wrong with you? If you have an aboriginal doctor, for example, who is practising out of, say a community like Cross Lake, which any member in this House can go up to, and you will hear every individual, even the little ones, speak their own language right to this day. The elders in that community are not that fluent in the English language. You can imagine how scary it is for those individuals when they are trying to grasp the terminology and the meaning of the medical field and what that doctor is trying to describe to them what their ailment is. Also, a lot of times through miscommunications and not understanding, it is very difficult to follow to the "t" a doctor's instructions.

That is why it is very important that we promote and support, and I hope that we have the support of the House in this, and to show that we have committed our support by letting this resolution pass. It is only to the betterment of all Manitobans. Even with some of your remote northern communities, it is very difficult to get doctors and dentists and stuff to practise in those communities. If you concentrate on the people who are from that area, I am sure one time or another we all wish to return to our own home communities eventually. I know I do, and some day I will.

* (1710)

A lot of the aboriginals I know and speak to have the same aspirations and the same wishes, because they are comfortable with that sort of a lifestyle. I have nothing against big cities and southern communities, but I feel much more comfortable when I am in my own home community in the North. I have experienced the fishing, the hunting, and the friendships, and the openness of small communities. At times, I strive for that. Some day I will go back. Just like I know a lot of our graduates, if we put the proper funding into place and encourage the promotion of these ACCESS programs, a lot of these individuals will return back

to their own home communities to practise their own chosen careers.

Even as we speak, Mr. Speaker, I realize that the financial restraints we face here in Manitoba are very difficult. I am not condemning the government for so-called lack of funding or cutbacks in some of these programs, because a lot of them were cost-shared with the federal government. The provincial government has kept up, in a lot of the cases, their share of the funding; but it is the federal government that has cut back on theirs.

So what I say, Mr. Speaker, is the government take the lead and negotiate with Ottawa. We heard and read the statement of the Prime Minister which stated very, very clearly. He said: Today I am pleased to announce that we are increasing the budget of that program by \$320 million.

What he is talking about is aboriginal post-secondary education. Well, I say to the government, call the Prime Minister for us aboriginal people and visible minorities that need these ACCESS programs and negotiate on our behalf to get and reinstate those funds that were cut off. There is \$320 million here for Canada. As far as I know, Manitoba is part of Canada. Get our fair share so we can continue with these vital programs. We talk about self-government. This is self-government that we are talking about today. That is the tool to self-government. That is the whole key. How can you have self-government if you do not have your people educated to deliver the programs? You cannot. It is an impossible task.

So if we are serious about promoting and assisting aboriginal people toward the goal of self-government, please pick up the phone or write a letter and get our fair share in Manitoba, so we also can share the aspirations of self-government here in Manitoba, so we can also have those careers for our children that are coming up. If they choose to be a doctor, let them be a doctor. If they choose to be a dentist, let them be a dentist. Coming from a lot of the remote communities and some of the reserves and stuff like that in northern Manitoba, the educational opportunities are limited in your science and your chemistry courses and stuff like that, so you need these ACCESS programs in order to upgrade the individuals to be accepted by these university programs. That is the only way it is going to work. That is the only way it has worked in the past.

We talk about leadership among the aboriginal people. If you will look around you, just in Manitoba alone, look at the leaders we have in Manitoba. The chiefs in most of the communities that we have now in Manitoba are university-educated individuals. That is why we see progress in aboriginal causes and aboriginal concerns. If you did a survey, Mr. Speaker, you will see where at least 90 percent to 99 percent of those individuals received their university education through these ACCESS programs that we want to see increased and enhanced for all aboriginals. So we need these programs.

Also, if you will go back in the past, if you look back in the past, Mr. Speaker, where a lot of the individuals who were elected as community leaders and chiefs were the elderly, respected, and they are still elderly and respected, but were very limited in their educational opportunities. A lot of them went to residential school, and as soon as they reached 16, they quit because they were away from home and the loneliness and whatever. So they did not have the opportunity that our leaders have today.

You will see such a drastic difference, say, if you go back 30 years and look at aboriginal communities and the aspirations aboriginals have today. It is such a drastic, drastic difference, with even your communities further developed and enhanced because we have aboriginal leaders that are well educated and have the negotiating skills. Mr. Speaker, they do not go into a room and the government says: We will give you this, we will give you that, for this or that. Thank you and that is it. That is not the case today.

We have our leaders go in and they negotiate with governments. They sit down, they hash things back and forth, and they come to a compromise which is suitable for both parties in most of the cases. That is because the leaders we have today have had the opportunity for decent and good education opportunities, and I have to repeat again, Mr. Speaker, a lot of those leaders got their education through these ACCESS programs.

For instance, there is one individual that—these are excellent programs—I know personally that is now a dentist and is practising in northern Manitoba. That individual came from Shamattawa, and Shamattawa is one of the communities that will require and need government assistance and will thrive eventually. But that individual went through the ACCESS program and is now working with his

own people, and that means a lot to the elderly people because they understand exactly what the procedure and the process will be and they have a much more comforting feeling by one of your own working with you.

Also, we cannot exclude the role models that we need for visible minorities, especially the aboriginal people. We need more and more role models, and through these ACCESS programs we are getting them, which is encouraging some of the younger children to stay in school longer. Hopefully, they will eventually become the doctors and dentists and the engineers.

The Winnipeg Education Centre I must mention again, Mr. Speaker. It is very important to establish a training centre that is central to the people, that is located centrally and easy for people to access because a lot of the times you do not have the money and stuff to travel to Red River Community College or various programs.

Also, with the Winnipeg Education Centre, it has a lot of support systems built in, and those support systems—a lot of them are personal supports, monetary supports, and a lot of them are just counselling services which are very important and are a key element to the success of our post-secondary education for visible minorities and our aboriginal people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) for putting this very important resolution before the House, and I can assure him of our complete support for his resolution because it is a resolution which speaks eloquently to the needs of those who live within our inner city, those who live in northern and remote communities, those who have counted upon the ACCESS program to give them an educational experience that was not before available to them.

I think it is important to look at the profile of a, if you will, typical ACCESS student. Very often the ACCESS student is an individual who has not found success in the traditional educational programming. They may have not found success because they were aboriginal and they felt somehow excluded. Certainly those of us who taught aboriginal children in the '60s and the '70s knew of that painful experience for many of them as they felt that classrooms were racist, classrooms did not involve

them, they found themselves isolated in cafeterias and indeed isolated in classrooms.

I have even experienced, as a teacher, a fellow teacher who passed out only old books to aboriginal students, and when I questioned her on why she was passing out old books to aboriginal students, she said, oh, well, they will only destroy them anyway.

That kind of attitude is why we have experienced a lack of success rate with so many of our aboriginal young people. It is not only aboriginal young people who have benefitted from ACCESS programs; it has also been a program which has attracted itself to individuals who dropped out of school for other reasons.

* (1720)

Many children, particularly children who have lived in the inner city, do not have the support networks that we consider automatic for our children. It always comes as a shock to me, because there are always so many magazines and newspapers in my home, that many children grow up without any newspapers, without any magazines, without political discussions around your dining room table. Political discussions do not take place anyway, anywhere, but they do not take place around the dining room table because, quite frankly, there is no dining room table.

More importantly, they do not have the support network within the home experience which encourages them to go on and pursue their education. Often that support system is not there because, in turn, their own parents did not benefit from an educational experience.

I remember when my daughter, Jennie, was going to Grade 1 and someone stopped her on the street, and they said, oh, you are off to Grade 1, you are going to learn to read, and Jennie said, in my family, do I have a choice? That, I think, is the experience of an environment which encourages the educational experience.

These children are often in a home situation where many of their parents, if not entirely illiterate, are functionally illiterate—do not have a reading, writing, vocabulary of Grade 9. That network of encouraging them to stay within the normal pattern of education has not been there for them.

In other cases, these young people have dropped out because they were forced to go into the work force. The family simply did not have enough

dollars to allow them to continue in school. So, having earned a few dollars, having established themselves, they have chosen to go back into an ACCESS program.

Another group of individuals who have found themselves in ACCESS programs over the years are single-parent mothers. Those are young women who, at 15 or 16, found themselves raising a child, found themselves isolated entirely from a community that did not accept what that young person was going through, did not afford that young person the opportunity for expression within the regular school system.

Tragically, we saw an example of that just last week when a principal in this community decided that he would call in a young woman and question whether she had the ability, whether she would have the time, whether she would have the responsibility to act as a student council president and also be pregnant at the same time—quite outside of his responsibilities as a principal. One wonders how welcome that young woman feels today at that school. That is the kind of thing, and that is the kind of experience that ACCESS programs have eliminated.

Everybody comes from a different life experience. Everybody has had to struggle to get there. Everybody wants to succeed, but many of them, regrettably, go in with a sense of, will I be able to make it? There is nothing more frustrating as a teacher, Mr. Speaker, than to deal with a child who day after day after day says to you, I cannot. I cannot do it. In my classroom several years ago, just before I went into politics, I used to charge them a nickel for every time they would say, I cannot. They could say, I am having trouble, but they could not say, I cannot. At the end of the year we took all their nickels, and I added quite a few more, and we had a party; because in that year they had discovered that cannot is not a word with which one approaches education. If you do not say, I will try, if you do not say, gee, I need some help, do you think you could help me through this difficulty, then you will absorb an attitude that you cannot do it, that you will not succeed.

ACCESS programs have directed themselves specifically to that kind of child, that kind of adult, who has experienced something different than so many of our children within the school system. The Winnipeg Education Centre has become for those

people more than just a building, more than just a place.

The member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) pointed out the support network that is there, the counselling network which is there. It is even more than that, because it is the sharing of experiences together that two or three or four young people sitting around, having a coffee together, can literally feed on one another. When your experience seems to be tough and you cannot overcome it, you can sit and talk with somebody else who has had an even tougher experience than you. That helps you to say, well, gee, if she can stay in this program, if she can strive to succeed then, darn it all, so can I. So there is their own support network of students within the system.

That is why the new Winnipeg Education Centre was such a beacon of hope to so many involved in the ACCESS programs. Not just for them, because many of the people that I met with last year were not going to be in the Winnipeg Education Centre by the time the new building was built, but they wanted that centre for those that would come along after them, because they knew what benefits they had achieved, and they wanted to extend that benefit and that capacity to other people.

So it was very sad when the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) decided that they would not invest their financial commitment, and I think it is critical to listen to what he had to say. He said, we have to make choices. That is a wonderful phrase that the government of the day uses to cut programs. Every time they make a choice, every example of choices they have made in Family Service budgets, in Health care budgets, in Education budgets have all been to the vulnerable. They have all been to those least able to help themselves. When they cut to education in the regular public school system, where do you see the cuts impacting? On special needs children. When you see them cutting programs within the post-secondary level, you see them cutting programs like ACCESS. The answer in Estimates that the Minister of Education gave to me was, well, the federal government is cutting out its contribution.

Mr. Speaker, because the federal government is acting in an inhumane way does not mean that the provincial government has to follow suit. There is an opportunity to do things differently. There is an opportunity to recognize the problems that we have in our community. The Winnipeg 2000 group has

recognized that by 1995, 20 percent of those entering the work force will be aboriginal peoples. At the same time they have recognized that aboriginal peoples, whether they live in the city of Winnipeg or elsewhere in the province, have the lowest graduation rate from high school. All of us know that those who enter the work force without a minimum of a high school graduation are going to find themselves with very low paying jobs if they are able to obtain jobs at all.

If our aboriginal peoples are to take their rightful place in the world, if they are to have jobs which give them opportunities which can in fact give them a life experience they can then transmit to their children, then they have to have an experience that allows them to obtain an education.

The same can be true of single-parent mothers. If one looks at the statistics, it is no accident that women live, in terms of men, well below the poverty line and the ones who live at the lowest end are those who are single-parent mothers. The only opportunity for them to get out of the traditional live on welfare, the traditional lack of opportunity is for them to be able to benefit from programs like the ACCESS program.

* (1730)

Yet, not only is it the dollars going to ACCESS that have been cut, so too has been funding that help to support these individuals. The cuts to the High School Bursary program have impacted on some of these students who are still completing their high school diploma because they have now been told they will no longer get a high school bursary, something which they were given automatically on proof of attendance of class has now disappeared.

I spoke of one woman, 22 years old, 19-month-old child, has been going to upgrading, has been trying to complete her high school diploma, because of the actions in two different government departments, will now find herself with \$70 less a month than she used to have. The result is this young woman has to seriously consider dropping out of her program because she cannot afford the transportation. She was paying for her transportation back and forth to class from the monies she was obtaining from the high school bursary. Those monies have been taken from her. That is the group that we are dealing with when we talk about a government not adequately funding ACCESS programs.

We are talking about those who did not get the opportunity when they were the age of many of the children of many of our members. We take those opportunities for granted. We monitor their development and growth. We go to parent-teacher interviews. We ask questions about the system. We ask how they are reading. We ask how their numerical skills are. We ask how their growth is progressing. What if we were parents who did not know the questions to ask?

What if we were children who, because of sexual abuse or physical abuse, had been separated from our parents? What if we were children who decided that we had no choice but to leave home at 16? The whole support network for these people, through no fault of their own, is not there, and that support network is what ACCESS programming is all about. ACCESS programming makes it possible for people who left school, perhaps with a Grade 8, to say, I can be a social worker, I can be a doctor, I can be a teacher, I can work within my community to benefit others in that community.

It is tragic that this government has determined that the Winnipeg Education Centre is not a necessity, that this government has determined that ACCESS programming must be cut because their federal Tory cousins said that was the way to go. Well, it is not the way to go, it is a backward step, and the people who will be harmed will be all of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and address this particular resolution.

Mr. Speaker, let me state clearly for the record, this government supports ACCESS programs. Let me state for the record that we have done our levelheaded best to increase funding in this area over the years since we have been in government. We have tried to maintain a level of programming that, although it is not sufficient certainly in the terms as expressed by the presenter of this resolution, the member for Point Douglas, nevertheless we understand the value of ACCESS programs.

Mr. Speaker, I do not pretend to be a student of education in the North, although I can indicate to members of the House the opportunities I have had in visiting northern communities and reserves, not too many times, but certainly on a couple occasions. I remember well one particular visit to Norway House, at which time I made a presentation—a few of us, I think there were two or three of us from this

side of the House; we were in opposition then—to the community.

Mr. Speaker, when I realized—our presentation was short, the opportunity for the community to come forward and make presentation and comment was such that what was very apparent to me was the tremendous pride that the community had in a relatively new school. Most of the people in attendance that night were, I would say, the elders of the community. They looked around at this facility which was relatively new, and I could sense the feeling of pride because, of course, this was education, this represented in the minds of some, and I would think of all, an opportunity for the future.

The issue that night, as I recall, was education. It was not finance, it was not constitutional issues of the day, it was not other issues that we sometimes think important in this Legislature. No, the issue was education.

The issue was tremendous pride in the facility, and yet the issue was also a disappointment in the quality of education. I listened very carefully to those members of the community particularly, again as I say, the elders and the parents of students who had gone through the system. Their great remorse at how it was that there could be an education system in this province which denied their students, after they had achieved Grade 12 status and had a piece of paper, a diploma, how it was that there had to be so much remedial work done after it before that same student could find her way into post-secondary education because that represented the gates of opportunity and fulfillment.

I had at that time, a first time I might say, an impression of why it is there are different standards and how it was the government of the day, because I can remember fully well the debates I used to have with Maureen Hemphill in this House, the government of the day said, the important thing in education was graduation certificates. They did not say it in that term, but that is what they meant, the percent of students who, once they have started school, complete it and have a diploma to show for it.

I can still fully remember the hurt of the people in the community who, once their students and their children had this diploma, had the realization that they had to take another two or three years remedial work before they could start another post-secondary course.

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

My point as an outsider then and my point, my observation, is that there have been tremendous improvements in facilities through the North. There have been tremendous improvements in facilities in all of rural Manitoba over the last 20 years. Nobody can deny that.

Now equality of education must be addressed because, in my view, at the high school, at the junior high and the secondary level, that is still our crucial problem in education. That is not a put down on people, our educators. That is not a put down on our government. That is not a put-down on our Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach).

The reality is today my students, three of them who have just come through high school, in my view have not been sufficiently challenged, but let us set that aside for another time.

The member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) says, let everybody—let them be what they want to be. If you want to be doctors, you want it, fine. You want to be dentists, fine.

I say to the member, regrettably this is impossible for not only the students of the North, but many other people in this province. Yes, if you have the basic educational skills, the society should make sure that you have an opportunity to enter those programs on a similar level. I accept that. But I can tell the member there are plenty of rural people, constituents of mine, who do not have the opportunities so easily as he would want for specifically residents and students of the North.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I think I am going to have to read into the record again, particularly in response to the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mrs. Carstairs), and I understand the sincerity of the member who has brought forward the resolution, but I think it is very important that it not be forgotten what the provincial government has done with respect to ACCESS programs, and why it is that we have had to make the choices we have, and why it is that we have been unable to carry the additional load that has been gifted to us by the federal government.

* (1740)

The ACCESS programs were formerly funded under the Northern Development Agreement with the federal government. The NDA, the Northern Development Agreement, resulted in eight years of cost sharing and was preceded by other cost-sharing agreements. This 60-40 arrangement

with the federal government ended on March 31, 1990. Actual revenues for the ACCESS and BUNTEP programs under the Northern Development Agreement were \$4,327,900 in '89-90, \$5,622,000 in '88-89, \$5.58 million in '87-88.

In 1990-91 the province recovered \$4.441 million from the federal government. In 1991-92 the province is expecting to recover only \$2.77 million to cover the Status Indian students only. My point, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that when particularly the Leader of the Liberal Party stands in her place and suggests the provincial government is reducing its support of ACCESS programs, I know she knows better. I know the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) knows better, because it is not true.

Of course, we made all the expenditures up front and receivables and recoverables came in on the revenue side. The action, the federal government action, has put the province in a very difficult position. Last year, when the NDA expired and the federal government refused to continue to fund the ACCESS programs at their previous level, the Manitoba government did step in. In fact, we put an extra \$2.6 million into these programs to cover off part of the federal shortfall and to ensure that the students already enrolled would be able to continue. In fact, this 23 percent increase in provincial funding allowed 250 new students to enroll in such programs in '90-91.

Mr. Acting Speaker, my point is this: If the provincial government last year had not stepped in to the tune of \$2.5 million, there would not have been new entrants in the level of 250. The government of the day made a deliberate decision for a portion of time while negotiations were going on, very hot and heavy negotiations. This minister right here, for instance, made a special trip at least once, if not twice, to Ottawa and there were subsequent meetings in Winnipeg with respect to trying to maintain the federal government portion of funding.

We said that we would put the extra funding into place for one year to try and convince the federal government to maintain their commitment, but we also promised ourselves that, if the federal government did not provide their funding, we would not carry it beyond '90-91 because we did not have the fiscal capacity to do it. I am talking about their share of the funding.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that is exactly what happened. The federal government decided that

they would not commit to '91-92, so we were forced then to re-evaluate and to prioritize so we could continue to provide the best possible opportunities to the students who were enrolled. Now we all know that the attitude of, particularly, the Liberals and, to some extent, the NDP to almost everything is to dump more money in regardless of the results.

I would like to mention some of the results of the NDP Limestone Training programs which many are so proud of and you heard this yesterday in Estimates, but I think it bears repeating. From April 1, 1985, to March 31, 1990, the Limestone Training and Employment Agency and the northern training and employment agency—and I know the member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) is very keenly aware of the activities of the employment authority—had 1,005 students in apprenticeship or related courses. As of February '91, journeymen trained were 31 carpenters, two welders and one millwright. Clearly, 34 journeymen out of 1,005 students is not a good average.

I would also like to mention some of the costs associated with the NDP training. These are the total costs for three of the programs under Limestone for April 1, 1985, to March 31, 1991, and the average cost per graduate. The electrical-electronic program total cost \$3,509,000, per graduate \$101,000; Civil Technology total cost \$4.45 million, per graduate \$151,000; NGAP engineering program to date \$3.7 million. As yet there have been no graduates.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in our Strategic Plan which the minister had the pleasure of releasing about three weeks ago, a northern education strategy is outlined. In consultation with northern communities, industry and aboriginal people, this strategy will be developed to identify and respond to the education and training needs of people living in northern Manitoba; provide education and training programs in northern areas through distance education technologies and networks at regional centres; enhance education and training program accessibility; co-ordinate training activities in relation to the Conawapa hydro-electric project.

The member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) also spoke of the Winnipeg Education Centre. Indeed, this has been a more successful program. We want to make sure that we still have programs. To build a new building and then have no programming would be silly, but that is probably what some would have us do. The province has maintained its

commitment to continue programming at the Winnipeg Education Centre and not throw it away as some would have us do. In fact, a costing study showed that the most cost-effective solution for the Winnipeg Education Centre was to stay at the present location.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to move an amendment and it would read as this:

THAT the resolution be amended by striking all the words after the second "WHEREAS" and replacing them with the following:

The Manitoba government has maintained its commitment to the ACCESS programs in 1991-92, even though the federal government has cut back its commitment; and

WHEREAS the Manitoba government contributed an additional \$2.6 million to the ACCESS-BUNTEP-New Careers programs in 1990-91 to cover the federal government's offloading; and

WHEREAS the Department of Education and Training, in consultation with northern communities, industry and aboriginal people will be developing a Northern Education Strategy as outlined in the department's Strategic Plan.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba do congratulate this government for its commitment to ensuring that the ACCESS programs graduate well-trained individuals; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly do congratulate this government for its commitment to consult with northern communities, industry and aboriginal people to develop a Northern Education Strategy.

Motion presented.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Point of Order

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I would like to address the inaccurate information that has been before this House on the Limestone Training and Employment Agency—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member, I am sure, is aware of the fact that you may not use a point of order to use as a debate, because what the honourable member is referring to is clearly a dispute over the facts. The honourable member for Point Douglas does not have a point of order.

* * *

* (1750)

Mr. Hickes: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to speak on this amendment because it shows how serious this government is about aboriginal education, aboriginal opportunities. They are not serious about it.

We heard the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) state, we had our money, we increased our money, but it is the federal government. I agreed with the Minister of Finance. What we said and was an announcement, was only a few short weeks ago, the Prime Minister announced \$320 million for aboriginal post-secondary education. That this government is serious about post-secondary education and helping the aboriginal people, which we have been asking for, for how long? Then pick up the phone to the Prime Minister and get our fair share in Manitoba. That is all we are asking for. We are not asking for new monies from the Province of Manitoba. We are asking for the dollars that the Prime Minister has committed to aboriginals across Canada. That is what we are asking for.

Furthermore, when we talk about aboriginal opportunities and aboriginal career goals and aspirations, we keep hearing Limestone Training and Employment Agency, which is tied right into post-secondary education for aboriginal people. We hear that there is X number of people who have dropped out, failed or whatever. Mr. Speaker, I will table here today the actual figures that are accurate according to Limestone Training and Employment Agency that I obtained from them.

It states right here the first Level I that was ever delivered was 51 trainees in Level I, 40 completed. So where do they get the figure of six graduating? We have different levels, and the total number forming and upgrading, the completion rate is 80.6 percent. Levels I to IV, completion rate: 69.2 percent. Where are they getting their figures from, Mr. Speaker, I wonder? Levels I to IV graduation rate upon completion—those are the ones who passed their level: 69.5 percent. Where are they getting their numbers? The total number of courses delivered was 218; total number of trainees is 2,172; completion is 1,591, for a completion rate of 73.2 percent. I do not know where they are getting their 30 percent and 40 percent from. This is directly from the agency themselves. That is in their files. If the government would care to call up the agency

that is in their hands, maybe they would get accurate information.

Mr. Speaker, Level I, five courses, 63 trainees. Completed 45, graduated 37; failed eight. Eight failed. Where are they getting their figures? Level IV, which is a journeyman's status: seven trainees, seven completed. That is 100 percent. Where are they getting their figures? I would like to table this so at least the minister, whoever would like to question, the Limestone Training program has accurate figures to go on.

Mr. Speaker, to this amendment, I think it is not serving the aboriginal people and the visible minorities who have sacrificed and worked and left their home communities, left their families, and worked hard and sacrificed to graduate, to congratulate the government and pat themselves on the back. If you get our fair share of that \$320 million from Ottawa, I will gladly go over there and pat you on the back. If you get our fair share, we will even pass this, if you like.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the government would choose to make this form of amendment to a very serious resolution that was in place to enhance the opportunities of visible minorities and aboriginal people. It was not a token resolution. It was in all seriousness, in all earnest, and it is a much needed resolution to ensure that we, as aboriginals, have an opportunity to benefit our communities and our people. To bring forward this amendment to that resolution makes a mockery of the seriousness of aspirations of aboriginals and visible minorities.

It is a shame. I think we have to get serious about some of these resolutions that are before the House, that are a betterment for all of Manitoba and deal with them in—well, I do not know about honesty, but a more sensitive nature. What they hear with this resolution, the Manitoba government contributed an additional \$2.6 million for the ACCESS programs. That is fine, but how about the following year? Now if you could find \$2.6 million in 1990-91, surely you can find an additional \$2.6 million in 1991-92.

I would not congratulate myself for cutting out a program that hurts people in need and shifts the money to private sector training programs which very, very few aboriginals and visible minorities will be involved in. That is a given, we all understand that. The Winnipeg Education Centre, Mr. Speaker, there were \$500 million that was committed by the federal government if the province would have

kicked in their share. If you have an opportunity to purchase a whole pie and only pay half, why not? It benefits people.

With those kinds of training programs that we mentioned earlier, it is not only aboriginal, it is the visible minorities that would have utilized the Winnipeg Education Centre. It is right in the heart of Winnipeg, right downtown where you do not have to worry about having to purchase a car or taxi fare or bus fare to get to. The reason they chose the inner city core area is so that people could bring their families, their children and they, in turn, will be proud of what their parents are trying to accomplish, and that will encourage those children in furthering their educational opportunities.

I have heard mentioned before, and I believe in all earnest, that if you train one individual, you do not train one generation, you train two generations; because that individual will also have time and the skills and knowledge to help their children with their homework and also to give them the encouragement to continue in school. They see their parents when they are 30, 40 years old having to return to go back and they say, hey wait, maybe I had better stay in school here, because I do not want to go through life working from job to job and then maybe having to return.

The Finance minister mentioned earlier about the opportunities of education in northern Manitoba. He is right. We need those science labs and the chemistry courses and stuff in northern Manitoba in the schools, but we do not have them. When we get them in place, then we will have completed the education aspirations of northern individuals so they can go directly from graduating from Grade 12 to university courses to be doctors and dentists and stuff. Until we have that properly in place, you need something to fill that vacuum. That is what these ACCESS programs have always done. They have always made that gap from community education

opportunities to universities and to community colleges. You need that, and that has been ongoing for the last decade.

Now what do we do? We wipe it all out and then, if we try and get it going again, say in four or five years, 10 years from now, we have to reinvent the wheel again? Where do we start from? The continuity has been lost, and who is going to suffer? There will be a whole gap of individuals that are left right in the middle and it will be too late to continue on to become tradespeople, to become our doctors, lawyers that we aboriginals need in our communities and as role models. We strive for that and this resolution, and the government's unwillingness to pass this resolution has made a step backward.

We are not asking for new dollars. We are not asking for more provincial dollars. What we are saying to the government is, your Conservative cousins in Ottawa, pick up the phone that was supposed to appear magically, pick it up and call them. We need your help. Pick it up. -(interjection)- It might be a 1-800 number, it might not cost too much, but at least make the effort to get our fair share of that \$320,000,000 that the Prime Minister has promised all aboriginals of Canada.

The seriousness of that too, Mr. Speaker, is our whole justice system toward aboriginals which, through the ACCESS programs, a lot of them could be plugged in to university training programs, and hopefully we will have more lawyers and doctors and dentists because, without the ACCESS programs in place, the aboriginal—

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

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Wednesday, May 22, 1991

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