



Fourth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

41 Elizabeth II

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



VOL. XLII No. 24 - 1:30 p.m., THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 1993

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, March 11, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this Chamber on a matter of privilege, and I am raising this matter at the first opportunity and occasion in which I have to raise this matter after some information was drawn to my attention this morning.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter and after I complete my comments, I will be following my comments with a substantive motion in this Chamber.

Mr. Speaker, we in this House, in order to discharge our duties, often ask questions to provide information not only to ourselves but to the public. The information we receive from the government and ministers is crucial to our roles as parliamentarians.

There is much confusion in the community regarding health care. The strategy of the government is to blame those who are asking the questions. One of the areas of greatest concerns in health care is the area of services provided to children. Part of the problem is the government has not outlined to the public what is happening in children's services.

In the fall, the government announced the consolidation of children's services to Children's Hospital. At the same time it seemed that a portion of children's services would remain at St. Boniface Hospital and some surgery would remain at community hospitals. That was changed with no public announcement, and it was decided that all services requiring hospitalization would be moved to Children's Hospital.

Next, without formal announcement, the government also decided that children's surgery would be moved from community hospitals to Children's Hospital. It was not made clear whether day patient surgery would also be consolidated.

We received calls in our office, and I personally received calls from parents and doctors. We received calls because these same parents had

phoned the minister's office and had been told one thing, and they phoned the deputy minister's office and the head of health care reform and were told another thing.

On March 3, I very specifically asked the minister, and I will quote, Mr. Speaker from Hansard whether: ". . . outpatient surgery for children will also be consolidated at the Health Sciences Centre? What is it? Will outpatient surgery also be consolidated or not?"

That very same day the minister replied to me, after much verbiage, and I quote, the minister said: ". . . but outpatient services will continue in most, if not all, of the locations currently, including St. Boniface, Victoria—"

The answer was clear. I did not have to ask it again, because the minister had given me a precise answer. I sent copies of these answers, Mr. Speaker, to people in the community. Our job was done, or so I thought.

On March 4, the next day, less than 24 hours after the minister had made those statements in the House, a senior departmental official in the minister's office sent a letter to the community hospitals dated March 4, for Tim Duprey, Executive Director, Hospitals and Winnipeg Community Health Services saying, and I quote: The transfer of all surgical patients, in- and outpatients zero to 14 years of age, who are presently admitted to St. Boniface Hospital and the Winnipeg community hospitals, will be admitted to Children's Hospital.

That is what the minister's official said the very next day. The official said that.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said one thing and it is clear he had already made a different decision. This is an indication of what is wrong with health care reform. It is not the only example, but I am sure that for me since I have been Health critic it is clearly the most blatant example. The minister thinks he is pulling one over the public and over members of this House by his cute answers in the House, but he does not do anyone a service when he misleads us in this House. More importantly, what are the parents and the patients to say? What are they to know when the minister does that?

Now, Mr. Speaker, this morning in my office I received a letter from a doctor, and I want to quote from this letter. This is when the matter was brought to my attention, and I will quote. It is from Dr. Stranc from the Victoria General Hospital. Quote, earlier this week, I received the Hansard extract of March 3 in which Mr. Don Orchard, the Minister of Health, states: "Sir, inpatient services are consolidated to the Children's Hospital. That means admissions of children to hospital beds, but outpatient services will continue in most, if not all, of the locations currently, including St. Boniface, Victoria—" Yesterday, I received a copy of a letter dated March 4 from Tim Duprey, executive director, in which he said, quote, the transfer of all surgical patients who are presently admitted to St. Boniface Hospital and the Winnipeg community hospitals will be admitted to the Children's Hospital. This directive seems to contradict the minister's statement of the previous day. It leaves us, the providers of health care, in a state of confusion. I would be grateful if you would raise this matter in the House to finally clarify whether outpatient surgery on children will be permitted in the community hospitals.

* (1335)

Mr. Speaker, I must establish a prima-facie case. The minister very specifically answered a very specific question when he knew his department had adopted a different course of action, unless in the subsequent 18 hours somehow the minister and his department had reached a different conclusion. By reading the letter, it is clear they had not.

Prima facie—the minister said one thing in this House and his official sent out a letter saying 100 percent opposite, different. He said outpatient surgery would remain at the community hospitals when his own department had already decided, and himself, that it would be shifted to Health Sciences Centre.

Mr. Speaker, it was not fair. It is not fair to the public. It is indicative of the problems happening in health reform. He ought to do more than apologize. He ought to clarify and set the record straight.

I move, seconded by the member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) be requested to apologize to the House for providing false information to the House on March 3, 1993. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, Beauchesne's tells us that,

of course, a matter of privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively as a constituent part of the high court of Parliament and by members of each House individually.

Mr. Speaker, we are also told that a question of privilege ought rarely to come up in our Legislature, should be dealt with with a motion. I acknowledge that the member has provided a motion. We are also forewarned that a genuine question of privilege is a most serious matter and should be taken seriously by the House.

Mr. Speaker, those issues met, I would say that the prima-facie case has not been established by the member opposite. Indeed, we are told within our Rules that has to be established. Furthermore, under Section 31.(1), we are told, "A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege."

Mr. Speaker, I submit that is exactly—as I listened to the argument put forward by the member, it seems to be exactly what has happened in this case.

Mr. Speaker, because the member in my view has failed to establish a prima-facie case, I would submit that the motion that he has put is out of order and should not be considered by the House at this time.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I share with the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) in terms of the concerns one has as an opposition member when we put forward a question and we anticipate that the answer will be forthright and deal with the question that has been asked of the minister. In fact, when a minister makes a statement we assume that what he is telling us is correct.

As the member for Kildonan has pointed out, this has not been the case. The concern I have is that if we see this as a matter of privilege, then it is a question of how many matters of privilege could we have when there are numbers of different pieces of information that come across our desks that imply that the facts the minister might have given today or yesterday might not necessarily be in keeping with some information that I get tomorrow.

That is where I have a bit of a problem with the matter of privilege even though I agree with what the member for Kildonan is saying in terms of the frustration. As an MLA, you want to have the correspondence, you want to know what the minister is telling you, but Beauchesne's is fairly

clear when it says answers to the questions should be as brief as possible and deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

Well, debate over facts, Mr. Speaker, I believe is what the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) and the government House leader—and I am sure if the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) were to stand up, he would give another side of the story. I sympathize with the member for Kildonan, because I too have had that frustration and I think a good number of opposition members have had that very same frustration.

I would suggest to you that in fact this quite possibly might have been a question for Question Period. I am not too sure, given the serious nature of a matter of privilege, that it would qualify for a matter of privilege, but would suggest to you that you take it under advisement and come back to the House, because it is an important ruling as it will have an effect on other potential matters of privilege.

* (1340)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, indeed, the government House leader is correct. There are some facts which are not in dispute. The member has obviously raised this matter at the first available opportunity. He received correspondence from a doctor this morning, pointing to the clear evidence that the minister did not only mislead the House, but also misled members of the public and particularly health care professionals who are trying to deal with the types of decisions that this minister and this government is making under the guise of health care reform on a daily basis. That aspect of the matter of privilege has clearly been satisfied.

Your job, Mr. Speaker, is to determine whether there is a prima-facie case. I would refer you to the clear indication in Beauchesne's that a question of privilege is partly a matter of fact, and I think the facts are clear. The minister did mislead the House and partly of law in this case, in particular the law of contempt of Parliament. I would argue that what we are dealing with here is not a dispute over the facts. That indeed is clearly referenced in Beauchesne's as not constituting a matter of privilege and indeed we have many Speakers' rulings. I will not quote them extensively, but I have researched today a number of Speakers' rulings that have clearly established that fact, including a number of rulings of your own over the last number of years.

Mr. Speaker, this goes beyond that. We have a case here where the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) does not have to answer questions. In fact, I know the Minister of Health exercises his right not to answer questions in Question Period on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, we are not dealing here with a confusion in terms of the policy. Very clearly the government has developed a policy in this regard. What we are dealing with is a situation where the minister, for whatever purpose, in this House is making statements in response to a very specific question, very specific statements that are very clearly intended to deliberately mislead members of this House and members of the public.

That is why this is not a dispute over the facts. The facts are clear. The minister misled the House. The key decision, Mr. Speaker, I think you have to make is the degree to which this does indeed represent contempt of parliament. In doing so, one obviously has to look at the context and the fact that this is not the first time that members of this side of the House have expressed concern about the inability of this minister to provide those kind of direct answers, not just to us but to health care professionals, about exactly what is happening with this so-called process of health care reform.

Mr. Speaker, when you have such clear evidence between the minister on the one hand and the minister's own department and doctors, patients and members of the public on the other hand, I would suggest there is only one conclusion that you can reach. Indeed the minister is showing contempt to this House, to health care professionals and to members of the public. I would suggest that means, indeed, there is a prima-facie case of privilege and this minister should be asked to apologize to this House and members of the public for showing that contempt.

* (1345)

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank all honourable members for their input into this matter. Indeed, a matter of privilege is a very serious matter.

The honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) has presented a motion to the House. I will, as I have done in the past, take this matter under advisement. I will peruse all the remarks that have been put on the record here today, and I will come back to the House with a ruling.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Ann Ozunko, Alex Ozunko, Linda Stannard and others, requesting the government of Manitoba consider taking the necessary steps to reform the Pharmacare system to maintain the comprehensive and universal nature and to implement the use of a health "smart card."

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Heather McIvor, Tamara Walsh, Lynn Bengert and others, requesting that the government of Manitoba consider reviewing the state of Highway 391 with a view towards improving the condition and safety of the road.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report 1991-92 of Manitoba Industry, Trade and Tourism and the Fitness and Sport Directorates.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Third Quarter Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation for the period ending December, 1992.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery, where we have with us this afternoon, from the Grant Park High School, twenty-five Grade 9 students, under the direction of Mr. Richard Dooley. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray).

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

* (1350)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Consolidation of Health Services Minister's Clarification

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I spoke with some parents of children, who get surgery at some of the community hospitals, this morning and they are still not sure what is happening with respect to outpatient services.

Can the minister tell me how he can reconcile his statements of March 3 in this Chamber when he told this House that "... outpatient services will continue in most, if not all, of the locations currently, including St. Boniface, Victoria—", with that of his official Tim Duprey, executive director, the very next day when this official said: The transfer of all surgical patients

who are presently admitted at St. Boniface Hospital and the Winnipeg community hospitals will be admitted to the Children's Hospital.

How does he reconcile those two statements, Mr. Speaker, that in Hansard and that of his official?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, with very little difficulty in fact, Sir, because, as I have indicated in answers to my honourable friend in the House, that the consolidation of inpatient pediatric services will be consolidated from the respective community hospitals and St. Boniface to the Children's Hospital for the provision of inpatient services.

Sir, that will be accomplished by several initiatives which have recently been completed. I will share these with my honourable friend because I know that he wishes to have full information provided to all Manitobans.

One of the initiatives that we have undertaken in order to accommodate this shift is, for instance, Sir, to upgrade a fifth operating theatre at the Children's Hospital at the Health Sciences Centre complex. That will allow us, with the additional operating time dedicated to the existing four surgical suites, to accommodate all inpatient surgical needs in the city of Winnipeg at one facility.

I know that this is a confounding process for my honourable friend because he was not part of government when Children's Hospital was envisioned, but this has been the entire planning thrust since 1975, to consolidate pediatric services for children to a centre of excellence, namely the Children's Hospital.

Sir, that process will happen. In the attempt to make that process happen, Dr. Aggie Bishop who is the head of pediatric services at the Children's Hospital is in consultation with surgeons giving pediatric services to assure that they have admitting privileges. In the instance of the surgeon referred to, that individual has, as I understand it, admitting privileges in both Victoria and the Health Sciences Centre.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question. I will ask it again.

For the parents, the patients and the surgeons, is outpatient surgery to be consolidated from the community hospitals to Children's Hospital as per the letter of his official, or is it not, as per the

minister's own comments in this House, March 3? [interjection]

Mr. Orchard: My honourable friends over there say, it is simple, and Mr. Speaker, I will deal with that later.

Mr. Speaker, let me give my honourable friends some sense of the kind of service provision we are talking about in terms of surgery cases 1991-92, which is the last full year that we have statistics available.

Children's Hospital provided surgical procedures, both inpatient and day surgery—6,571 cases out of a total of 8,731. Right now, without the consolidation from St. Boniface, Victoria, Grace, Concordia, Seven Oaks and Misericordia, the Health Sciences Centre, Children's Hospital provides 75 percent of the day surgery and 70 percent, rough figures, of the current inpatient services.

To provide, Sir, those consolidations, we are opening six of the 11 beds which have never been opened since Children's Hospital was commissioned, in order to accommodate the additional inpatient services.

Now, that is the first transition of service from inpatient surgery in those community hospitals to Children's. Currently, we do 75 percent of day surgery at Children's Hospital. Over time, I believe that there will be a natural flow of the balance, but the issue, Sir, is the inpatient services which are being consolidated with full accommodation of children, families and the professionals delivering those services.

* (1355)

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, is it any wonder that parents and children are concerned, given that answer?

Mr. Speaker, I ask for a third time, given that his own official said that this will take place April 1, 1993, will the minister tell us, will outpatient surgery presently performed at the community hospital be transferred to Children's Hospital as per his own official's letter and contrary to what he said in this Chamber on March 3.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what the letter says, acute care services will be provided at the Children's Hospital.

Let us not forget, while my honourable friend the new critic for the New Democrats was standing up

and posing as wisdom, he made this statement, and I will give you the date that it was made, CKND TV, February 16, 1993. Here is a direct quote from the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak): The government has not been up-front in terms of its bed closures and has not been clear—[interjection] Well, I hope he is still clapping when I finish, Sir—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Orchard: Oh, now they are going to drown me out.

The member for Kildonan went on to say: —has not been clear as to the fact that St. Boniface Hospital will completely close to children—Mr. Speaker, including emergency services, which would have endangered children with that kind of false statement out there as fact.

And, Sir, that is what we have been correcting in the last three to four weeks. If anybody owes an apology to the people of Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Canadian Economy Manitoba Decline

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance often complains that the opposition picks out one economic statistic without looking at the whole economic picture. I have analyzed Manitoba's economic performance between 1988, when this government took office, and 1992 and compared it with the rest of the nation. In so doing, I studied 14 economic indicators. Almost without exception we see Manitoba failing to keep pace with the rest of the nation, and as a result Manitoba today accounts for a smaller proportion of Canadian economic activity than in 1988 when this government assumed office. Whether we look at population, gross domestic product, employment, labour force, retail sales, housing starts, investment and so on, we see Manitoba as a smaller percentage of national totals.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Finance is very straightforward. Why has Manitoba declined to become less significant in the national economy? Why are we shrinking relative to the Canadian economy?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): The simple answer, Mr. Speaker, is, thank God we came to power in '88 and salvaged this province from the taxation policies of the members opposite.

I do not have to remind the member that his government, indeed his colleagues the ministers of Finance through the '80s ripped away, from disposable income, \$800 million from the people of this province.

Of course, what the Conference Board is saying now in terms of '93 is, it expects Manitoba disposable income to increase by \$204 for every man, woman and child in the province after adjusting for inflation—fifth best among the provinces and the best outside of Atlantic Canada, would result in \$224 million in take-home pay. The Manitoba 1993 increase is nearly three times the '71 increase for Canada as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, our policies are working. We are saying the taxpayer can do better with disposable income left in their pocket as compared to the government ripping it away like the NDP did throughout most of the '80s and destroying the economy in doing so.

* (1400)

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, I would like to share this information with the Minister of Finance, therefore, I would table this report: The Economic Decline Under The Filmon Conservative Government 1988-1992. I also have copies for members of the House, for any other member who may wish to study the figures and look at the facts for himself.

This is my question, Mr. Speaker. If the minister would look at the very last page, for example, and see information on Total Construction Work Performed, you will note that Manitoba now accounts for a much smaller percentage of the Canadian total than we did when this government took office. That is true for almost all of these statistics that we have, Mr. Speaker.

My question is straightforward to the minister then. Why have we slipped, for instance, in total construction work performed? Why do we have a smaller percentage of total construction activity in Manitoba today? I have counted it up. Then we did—

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

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, all I can say is, thank goodness the members of this House are subjected to the professorial views of the member for Brandon East once a year, and thank goodness he is not in

the classroom every day because of the inane information that he presents, couched, of course, in a very selective way as he likes to look at certain areas in factoring out so many of the years. I have looked at his analysis before, and I am sure the basic foundation and methodologies have not changed over the period of time.

Mr. Speaker, all I can say at this particular point in time is that we will continue to stay the course. The reality is there are budgets coming down, I understand, over the next week or two in other provinces, some of them governed by Liberals, some governed by NDP. I will be looking very carefully to the results that they put into place on the expenditure side, on the taxation side, and also the supporting economic information that the member is trying to share with us today.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to debate this, but these are official Stats Canada figures. There are 14 basic economic indicators which are used by most economists in measuring the performance of the economy. So they are straightforward facts.

My question is: Is this minister—surely he is prepared to accept some of the responsibility for Manitoba's poor economic performance. I know we can talk about the recession and globalization of federal policies but, surely, this minister has to acknowledge that his government's policies of cut back—

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

Mr. Manness: Well, Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the responsibility. I can say one thing. I feel badly that the forecast that we brought down in last year's budget did not come to be, to the extent that I accepted forecasts that came from outside of the jurisdiction. I feel badly about that.

I also say that on the good side, I take some consolation for the two-year period, and this again is the Conference Board of Canada, '93 and '94, Manitoba real disposable income per capita is expected to increase by \$544. This implies Manitobans will have an additional \$600 million in income after taxes and inflation to spend in the Manitoba economy to boost economic growth. I say, this will be the third largest aggregate dollar increase behind Quebec and Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, our approach is working as compared to the approach of the members opposite

which is one, tax more and second, continue to spend and take the deficit to a larger number which of course is increased taxes for the years coming. Our approach is better, because I look around Canada today and most people and most provinces of all political stripes are following the same approach.

Personal Care Homes Quality of Health Care

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Twenty-five RNs at the Central Park Lodge on Poseidon Bay had their jobs terminated today. They will be replaced with less-qualified staff. The personal care home owner is Trizec, a real estate giant. It seems that the action of the Central Park Lodge is sending a very destructive message to the health care professionals.

Can the Minister of Health tell this House whether he has been advised of this situation and what he has done to rectify this very serious problem in our health care area?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am not familiar with the circumstance my honourable friend brings to my attention. I will attempt to get as much information around the circumstance and provide him with full information.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, the question is that the personal care homes are being run by some of the private owners, but the Department of Health has the responsibility to set certain standards and a certain code of ethics.

We are simply asking the minister to make sure that procedures are put in place so that these health care professionals are protected and also, the quality of care should not suffer at the expense of certain personal care home procedures.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I accept my honourable friend's motivation in posing the question. My honourable friend shares a concern that we share on this side of the House that we maintain quality health care.

I am prepared to share with my honourable friend whatever circumstance exists around the decision that he alleges has been made at Central Park Lodge and give him the investigation, if any, that we have done to date.

Mr. Cheema: Mr. Speaker, we have received many calls on some of the communications, and we have been very careful not to alarm the health care professionals.

Government Funding

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (The Maples): My question is: What procedures are put in place to make sure that the government funds, which are being appropriated to the personal care home, are being used for the health of Manitobans?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, in terms of personal care home provision, we have consultants and ministry staff who visit personal care homes, for instance, to ensure that standards that have been set by government are being met.

Certainly, we have had a role in some instances over the last number of years where we have had to investigate complaints about circumstances involving inappropriate care, or inappropriate treatment of patients by not only staff, but other residents, and attempt to work with the facilities to assure that, in all circumstances, the quality of care and the safety of patient care is maintained.

I cannot offer to my friend any more detail without further specifics other than what my honourable friend shared with me.

Overseas Students University Differential Fees

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, overseas students in Manitoba make a gross contribution to the Manitoba economy each year of \$24.5 million, based upon the fees that they pay and their living expenses. If we subtract from that the support that Manitoba offers to every university student, then we still have a net contribution to Manitoba of more than \$10 million a year.

My question is for the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism. I want to ask him: What advice did he offer to the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) when she proposed to introduce differential fees and put at risk what are essentially export dollars?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Mr. Speaker, I believe that Manitoba universities are the only universities that do not have a differential fee in terms of foreign students. Every other university across Canada has such a fee. When we had done a comparison

of the number of foreign students coming to Manitoba with what is happening in other jurisdictions, we did not find that there was any correlation to a lower fee.

Therefore, in terms of the issue of the fairness across Canada, the same standards across Canada and the contribution to our education system, it made a great deal of sense to do the same in Manitoba as is happening across Canada, recognizing that we still expect to get at least the same number of students here to Manitoba because of the high quality of education that we offer here in this province.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I think the minister will find that the University of Saskatchewan does not have differential fees, although the one at Regina does. I think he will also find that the number of students at Manitoba universities is, in fact, declining.

I want to ask the same minister to confirm that where differential fees have been introduced in other jurisdictions and where studies on such have been concluded, in particular Ontario, what they have found is that you lose at least a third and up to a half of the overseas students immediately.

If we assume in Manitoba that we lose a third, a conservative estimate, this would lead to an immediate yearly loss of \$3.6 million to the Manitoba economy for the purpose of raising \$1.6 million in additional fees.

I want to ask the minister: Why is he prepared to forgo such revenue under the present economic circumstances?

Mr. Stefanson: The simple answer, Mr. Speaker, is because we will not be forgoing the revenue referred to by the honourable member. The information we have is that does not occur in terms of the comparisons to other provinces.

We expect that there will be the same level of foreign students participating in our universities. Because of the standards that we offer in this province, because of the ethnic communities that do exist here that have contacts back to those countries, because of the graduates that we have from our universities and our alumni associations throughout other parts of the world, we will maintain the same number of students.

Therefore, in terms of a net benefit to the economy of Manitoba, we will, in fact, be ahead and these

students will be contributing more to the cost of education.

As we all know, the cost of our universities—the taxpayers of our province pay some 80 percent towards the cost of the education at the universities. Foreign students will now be making a contribution to obtaining an education here in Manitoba.

* (1410)

Ms. Friesen: Then I invite the minister to table the studies that he has, and I want to ask him to, in fact, recommend to his government that they delay this decision until they have reconsidered the long-term implications of the loss of these students.

Mr. Stefanson: We will not be delaying the decision. It has been part of the announcements made by the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey). I have already outlined why the decision was made.

From all of the information we have in terms of what is happening within Canada, in terms of fairness within Manitoba, in terms of fairness within Canada and in terms of our ability to attract foreign students, in terms of the confidence that we have in our own ethnic communities to promote our province, to attract students to Manitoba, in terms of the confidence we have in former University of Manitoba graduates who are in other parts of the world to promote our universities, we will maintain the same level that we currently have, Mr. Speaker.

Transportation Industry Employment Government Action Plan

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Manitoba's history and economic structure was built on a transportation base. Today we learned that Standard Aero is eliminating 21 jobs. From 1989 to date Manitoba has lost approximately 5,000 transportation jobs.

The Department of Education estimates that in rail jobs alone we will lose another 1,700 jobs.

My question is for the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Driedger). What action plan does the Minister of Transportation and his department have to stop the hemorrhaging of well-paid, high-skilled jobs out of the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention to the member that Manitoba is not unique and standing by itself in terms of the changes that are taking place in the transportation industry.

We know that there is downsizing taking place within the rail industry. We know the problems that the air industry is facing, and in our meetings that we basically have been holding with officials from these companies we have asked for fair consideration so we do not get treated differently from other provinces.

However, the member asked, what have we done? Our Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) in his five budgets that he has brought down has tried to help create an environment that is conducive to investment here, and we are trying to use that kind of an approach to have people come back and invest here.

We promote this kind of an idea with the companies that are involved. We say, this is a good place to do business. Our tax structure is good. This is a good place to try and create employment.

Rail Line Abandonment Manitoba Employment Impact

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): My question is for the same minister. Will the Minister of Transportation indicate to the House the policy of his government on the recommendation of the NTA Review Commission that will allow railways to abandon rail service without demonstrating a financial loss or the absence of public need? What will be the impact upon Manitoba communities and the jobs in this province?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): The day before yesterday the commission tabled its report, which is two major documents. I gave the indication to members in the House yesterday that we had made our submission in August, a very substantive document that addressed all the transportation problems and issues that we thought were involved in the National Transportation Act.

Mr. Speaker, the member is starting to pick certain things out of that report, which is a very substantive document. There are some positive things in there. There are some negative things in there. We are doing a very precise assessment.

It is my understanding that the federal Minister of Transport, Mr. Corbeil is referring this study to the transportation committee to take submissions and to review and make a recommendation back some time in June. We intend to do a full assessment of

that report and make our submission to the standing committee on transportation.

Mr. Reid: Mr. Speaker, it is pretty simple. There are only 55 recommendations there. I am sure the minister should have had the opportunity to read them by now.

CN Rail Privatization Manitoba Impact

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Given that Manitoba still has a few CN jobs left, what is the position of this government with respect to the review commission recommendations to privatize CN Rail? What will be the impact upon the province of Manitoba if CN Rail is privatized, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Speaker, the day before yesterday I made a public statement to the effect that I, at first blush, was opposed to the suggestion of privatization because we do not know what that impact would be. There are many things to be considered in terms of, when we talk of privatization, the Canadian content in there which is now at 73 percent according to law, whether that can drop down to 51 percent. There are so many aspects of that whole report.

The member, I do not know whether he has read the whole report because it is two substantial documents. We are going through that because some of the recommendations that we brought forward to the commission have been addressed in terms of the safety issues and railways and airlines. Some of the ones that we brought forward have been accepted, others have not. We are reviewing that, and we will be putting forward a document which I will then table in the House before we present it to the standing committee on transportation.

Headingley Jail Safety Compliance

Mr. Paul Edwards (St. James): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for workplace health and safety.

Back on March 22, 1988, an improvement order was issued to Headingley Jail requiring that range bars be put in place, reinstalled for the protection of guards. The province did not comply with that at that time and only complied in November of 1988, after I had raised it in the House with the minister and two extensions had been granted.

Mr. Speaker, after that arduous process to get compliance back in 1988, I was significantly surprised to learn that yet again Headingley Jail administration wants to remove these safety bars and in fact issued a direct memo, dated March 27, 1992, which has subsequently been acted upon, indicating the range bars should be removed.

My question for the minister is: Why has Headingley Jail administration now again ordered the removal of these range bars in direct contravention of the original Workplace Safety and Health order?

Hon. Darren Praznlk (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, if the department is in violation of any part of Workplace Safety and Health that will be dealt with, but I am not aware of a decision to remove the range bars, nor have I had a report or complaint coming up through the normal system of complaints with Workplace Safety and Health.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, that answer surprises me and disturbs me, more so from the perspective of the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) than the minister of Workplace Safety and Health.

Did the Minister of Justice not consult with the minister of Workplace Safety and Health or seek the direction of his department before he contemplated removing range bars in direct contravention of an order of the Workplace Safety and Health Division?

Mr. Praznlk: Mr. Speaker, as the member for St. James may or may not be aware, specific orders of the department deal with a particular situation. If there was some change in the use or operation of that facility which would then change the basis on which the order was issued, that would not necessarily be a violation of either a previous order or regulations under The Workplace Safety and Health Act.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, will the minister of Workplace Safety and Health at least commit today to immediately taking this up with his colleague the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae)?—given the Minister of Justice's comments back in 1988 that, quote, this government has decided not to quibble or quarrel with Workplace Safety and Health or with the union involved at Headingley. We will move quickly, and we have done that. I can tell the member that range bars will be installed by November 1, 1988.

Will the minister of Workplace Safety and Health immediately take this up with his colleague the

Minister of Justice who does not seem to understand—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I just say this to the member for St. James. In the operation of any government facility, there are decisions that are made by the administrators who are in charge of those areas. They change programming. They change the way in which the particular area operates. They have responsibility as administrators to ensure that they are complying with the appropriate legislation and regulations. I am sure that the Minister of Justice and staff in the Ministry of Justice will ensure that they are in fact in compliance with the appropriate regulation.

* (1420)

Street Youth Service Funding

Ms. Marianne Cerlill (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, the other day I raised a serious issue of homeless youth and violence and health risks that are associated. The Minister of Family Services said that they would work actively with groups that they do fund to try and assist in any way that they could provide the service through existing organizations.

I would like to ask the Minister for Family Services: How many children and youth are homeless and on the run and living off the streets in Manitoba? What services does this government fund that are similar to the SKY project that address the special needs of those youth?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, yes, the member started to ask some questions about this program the other day, and I indicated that there are a number of organizations that do receive funding from other levels of government and when that funding runs out sometimes they come to the provincial government to ask us to provide funding for them. I had indicated that we have been able to assist some groups in the past and we would, in the case of this program, work through existing organizations such as Children's Home of Winnipeg, through the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency to try and provide these services for the youth of the inner city.

A good example of what we were able to do, if you will recall your colleagues were asking last year about funding for Pritchard Place. By working with

the officials from Pritchard Place and the Winnipeg agency and other funders in Winnipeg, we have been able to stabilize their situation. I would hope that with the existing agencies that we would be able to provide the services for those youth.

Ms. Cerlill: I think it is clear, Mr. Speaker, that this province is not provincially funding any programs for street youth.

My question for the same minister is: Can the minister compare the costs of funding a program such as the Street Kids and Youth program that is going to help young people avoid street life and prostitution and compare that with the cost of treating someone with HIV or, in fact, full-blown AIDS?

Mr. Gillehammer: Mr. Speaker, the member is asking for detail on health-related issues which I am sure she can pose to the Minister of Health during the Estimates process.

I would indicate that we do fund the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency and organizations such as Children's Home and some of the other treatment centres that work with many of these youth. A number of the individuals that the member is asking about are children who are in foster homes at one point in time or in the treatment centres. Some of them leave on their own volition and then come back into the system where they are provided with the assistance that they need by those existing organizations.

Ms. Cerlill: Mr. Speaker, does this minister understand that the kids who are living off the street and are turning to prostitution, have been through the institutions? They are no longer turning to those institutions.

What services are going to remain in this city and in this province to reach out to those kids, kids that still are under the legal responsibility of this minister's department?

Mr. Gillehammer: Mr. Speaker, the existing organizations that were there a number of years ago are still there today to work with these children. I have indicated that they have been in the care of the agency. Many of them have been in private treatment centres, in foster homes, in group homes.

I recognize that there is a certain small segment of those children that come into care that do not remain in care. They leave of their own volition and re-enter the system at some time later.

We will work with the existing institutions to provide the services that those children require. We are not in a position to provide new programming that is going to meet the needs of every one of those children, but I would say to you that those institutions that are presently there can go a long way to provide that assistance.

Public Child Care Centres Smoking Policy

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, it is well known that smoking and secondhand smoke cause cancer, and that every year thousands of Canadians die from lung cancer due to smoking and secondhand smoke. Estimated deaths from lung cancer in Manitoba in 1992 were 410 men and 220 women. Between 80 to 90 percent of these deaths were caused by smoking. This contributes to the cost of health care and to the loss of employment and indeed to life itself.

Can the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) tell the House what the current policy is regarding smoking in publicly funded child care centres?

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, the boards of the daycare centres are in a position to make policy in reference to those facilities. I think you will find, in many of the daycare centres, that they have a no-smoking policy, and they come under the guidance of the board that is elected to govern those institutions.

Mr. Martindale: I am surprised that this is left up to the individual daycares and their boards, since smoking in public places is prohibited under an act that applies to the whole province of Manitoba. Daycares are publicly funded, and they are public spaces.

What is the policy regarding smoking by parents in family daycare homes? Is the minister concerned that this policy exposes children in many licensed family daycare homes to secondhand smoke, a proven health hazard? In fact—

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

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, many of the things that go on in the homes of Manitoba, of course, is the business of those people who live there.

In reference to daycare homes, we have some of the highest trained professional daycare providers

in the country. We are very proud of the standard of care that daycare givers give, both in the institutions and in the homes, and the decisions about smoking in homes is left up to that provider.

Mr. Martindale: Will the minister change the regulations and require that family daycare homes be nonsmoking as a condition of being granted a licence, in order to protect the current and future health of children, a change which would be endorsed by the Manitoba Child Care Association and the Manitoba Family Daycare Association?

This is public money which is being used to subsidize—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, we certainly will review the situation as I have indicated in a number of letters that we have had recently. At the present time, we have no plans to change that, but we will review the situation. We are meeting with the daycare providers and the unions that are involved with the daycare workers in the very near future.

Video Lottery Terminals Social Costs

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for Lotteries.

The government has side-stepped the issue of gambling, Mr. Speaker, in trying to address it through rural economic development where we have clearly seen a change in government policy. I want to ask the minister a question with respect to the cost of gambling. We have had individuals in rural Manitoba where there has been some suggestion, where there has been suicides. I have heard stories where children have fallen asleep at the side while parents have played the VLT machines.

My question to the minister is: Can she indicate to this House what work this department is doing in terms of tracking the social cost of this government's greed to get additional revenues through VLT funding?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Foundation Act): Mr. Speaker, as I announced at the beginning of this fiscal year, we are

endeavouring or have undertaken a study on gaming in the province of Manitoba. We are anticipating that study will be completed in the very near future, and we will deal with the issue of problem gambling as a result of what we learn from an internationally renowned consultant who has had great experience in dealing with those who have compulsive gambling problems.

* (1430)

Moratorium on Expansion

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, will the minister agree today to put a moratorium on the expansion of VLTs until we know what the social costs of gambling are? That would be the responsible thing to do. I ask the minister to be responsible and to put a moratorium on VLT expansion.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Foundation Act): Mr. Speaker, I have already made some announcements on the opening of the new entertainment facilities in the city of Winnipeg. We have made announcements on the expansion of VLTs into city of Winnipeg hotels come this fall.

I am slightly puzzled on what the Liberal policy might be on expansion of gambling, because I have in my possession a letter from the now Leader of the Liberal Party asking us to expand video lottery terminals into legions and veterans' clubs and we have other members of the Liberal Party asking us to stop expansion. So maybe they should try to get their act together, Mr. Speaker.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, Debate on Second Readings, would you call the bills in this order, please, Bills 5, 8, 3 and then starting at the beginning of the order and continuing down the page.

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Northern Affairs Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 5 (The Northern Affairs

Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les affaires du Nord), standing in the name of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am rising to put some comments on the record today on Bill 5, The Northern Affairs Amendment Act.

As the members of the House know, I am not a resident of a northern community in Manitoba. I have, on numerous occasions, had the opportunity to visit northern communities in the province of Manitoba, as a matter of fact perhaps more times than some of the members of the government benches, both front and back—excuse me, upper. At any rate, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do have a couple of major concerns with The Northern Affairs Amendment Act as we read it now and would like to share them with the government.

Again, as I have stated in my other comments on other bills this session, while the amendments may appear—and they certainly are being presented by the government as minor amendments, they are being presented as amendments to bring the act to reflect more current policy and current practice. Madam Deputy Speaker, as in the case with The Oil and Gas Amendments Act and The Endangered Species Act, upon closer reading it would appear to us that there are some major things that are going on in these amendments that require further clarification.

As I have stated in my discussions on these other two bills, I would hope that the government would respond to our concerns during second reading so that we can continue a debate and a dialogue back and forth, knowing exactly what the minister and the government have in mind. Failing that, we of course will assume that the public hearing process will provide the answers to our concerns.

According to the amendments as they have been presented by the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), one of the major areas of change is going to be that the renewals of Crown land permits that are located in and around communities in the northern part of the province would automatically be approved without consultation with the northern communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister, in his address to the House on December 9 when he presented this bill, stated that the process of consulting with Northern Affairs communities on initial dispositions only is well understood and accepted. The inclusion of this amendment "... is to establish the existing process in legislation."

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is causing us a fair bit of concern, because under the existing act the minister shall consult with a community council or the local committee of the incorporated community council regarding the disposition of Crown land permits located in a community or within eight kilometres of the community boundary. This to us makes a great deal of sense, because the disposition of Crown lands can and does have a major impact on the lives and the surroundings of many of these northern communities.

We believe that this amendment, if we are accurate in our reading of this amendment, is a mistake.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Northern Affairs): What!

Ms. Barrett: I will repeat for the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey). We believe that this amendment to this section is a mistake, this particular clause.

The original intention of The Northern Affairs Act was meant to shift decision-making powers from the government to local people, and that decision-making shift from the government to the local community is seen in the current act whereby changes to Crown land disposition are shared with and are done after consultation with the local communities affected. There is the eight-kilometre boundary range that is currently in place.

Now, the concerns that I have, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the amendment would remove that local community consultation process from the act and would mean that the Crown, the government, can dispose of or make changes to the disposition of those Crown lands without community consultation, that only the original disposition would be done after consultation, and any future dispositions, changes, reapplications or renewals of permits would not need to go to community councils.

One of the important principles that is being put in jeopardy by this change is local control. This government has talked ad nauseam about choice, about the difficult choices and decisions that have

to be made by governments and organizations. They have also talked at great length about sharing those difficult decisions with other groups, organizations and agencies in this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this sharing of the load in virtually every other context has meant an offloading of expense to a lower division of government—offloading of social assistance costs to the City of Winnipeg, offloading of policing costs to rural municipalities, offloading of school expenditures and requirements to local school boards and local communities.

In every single one of these cases, the responsibility has been offloaded, not the resources that would enable communities to implement those responsibilities.

This is what the government talks about when they talk about giving local communities choice. It is an attempt on the part of the government to offload their own legislated, statutorily determined responsibilities in an attempt to put the political backlash onto another organization or another level of government.

Parenthetically, we on this side of the House believe that strategy is not only morally bankrupt but will prove to be politically bankrupt as well. End of parenthetical comment.

This amendment to The Northern Affairs Act sort of puts that whole concept on its ear. What it does is it gives the government a much larger degree of power and control over the disposition of Crown lands than it had originally, according to our reading of this legislation.

This is something that is not a progressive step but a regressive step for a number of reasons. It would appear that this amendment, this change, will circumvent the original intention of the act which was to give northern communities a voice in the decisions that directly affect them.

It is very clear to anyone who has spent any time at all or even travelled through the northern part of this province that Crown lands are a major component of the physical surroundings to virtually every northern community in this province, that the disposition of the permits to organizations and bodies and corporations of those Crown lands plays a vital role in the political ecology, the physical ecology and the social ecology of these communities. It is not a small change, Madam Deputy Speaker, to take away any kind of local

control or local consultation from these communities in this regard.

* (1440)

The minister, again in December when he was discussing this legislation, says that consultations on renewals of Crown land permits are "inefficient and expensive." Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, much of what the government does as a legitimate part of its function could be considered inefficient and expensive if you are talking only in terms of cost, money out and money back.

For example, the highway system in the province of Manitoba is seen by virtually every resident in this province and, certainly, by all the levels of government, as a vital infrastructure component to our ability to function as a province. Now we do not expect the Department of Highways and Transportation to run a department that, when you compare the costs of running the Department of Highways and Transportation with the potential revenue sources, direct revenue sources to that department through licensing and permits, et cetera, those figures to balance.

We know as a community that the provision of the highway system in this province is never going to be economically viable on that straight kind of comparison of costs to revenues, but we do almost without thinking recognize the importance that highways and a good highway transportation system play in our province in enabling the residents of Manitoba to communicate, to move from one part of the province to another. We realize the importance of a highway system in enabling goods and services to move from one part of our province to another. This is an example, Madam Deputy Speaker, of a service and a component of our government that we all expect to be provided without a definite or specific directly attributable benefit to us. We know that the costs need to be born and that the benefits, if it is properly structured, will outweigh those costs.

I would suggest, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the concerns that are raised by this minister's comments that consultations on renewals are inefficient and expensive are in the same category as saying that highways do not pay for themselves in a direct line item so, therefore, we should cut out the expenditures on highways. The act, we believe, was originally intended so that local councils and locally elected community groups could conduct the

business of Crown permits, would have a major say in Crown permit applications and renewals.

According to a brief prepared by the Department of Northern Affairs in 1983, Madam Deputy Speaker, the act was intended to shift important decisions to the local council or committee, with only technical assistance being supplied by the Department of Northern Affairs, technical assistance to enable the local councils and communities to make the decisions that are most relevant and important to them. This, 10 years ago, was the clear intent of the act as promulgated by the previous New Democratic Party government. The act intended local councils to conduct the majority of consultations with government there to assist them in that process. The government was not ever intended to be the major player in this process.

Another intention of The Northern Affairs Act, Madam Deputy Speaker, was that individuals and elected representatives in their northern communities would initiate proposals to the review and approval stage. Again, this is real local control. This is not the current government's offloading of responsibilities with no concomitant offloading of resources. The intention of The Northern Affairs Act, in this context, was to provide real, concrete control over the lands surrounding their boundaries to local communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what this amendment will do is remove that local control from communities. It will mean that the provincial government, with its less-than-exemplary commitment to the preservation and protection of Crown lands, to renew or provide for permits to any organization, association or group they choose to without consulting with the local community—a Crown land permit could have been issued 10 years ago, after consultation with a local community. The permit comes up for renewal. Who is to say what local changes might have taken place in that community or in the surrounding environs in that 10 years that might have a major impact on whether that permit should be renewed or not?

According to our reading of this amendment there is nothing that states there shall be consultation with the local community. The Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) has retaken the power. The Minister of Northern Affairs has consolidated and centralized power in his department that should not be there. Again, Madam Deputy Speaker, we worry

and we are concerned about the rationale and the philosophical underpinnings of this decision.

The question I have, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this regard as well is: Are there any environmental concerns regarding the usage and occupation of Crown lands near communities? What assurances do communities have that they will remain where they currently are free from exploitation? What assurances do those communities have that they will remain free from exploitation?

Madam Deputy Speaker, our knowledge and understanding of the negative impacts of much of our actions on the environment is increasing exponentially. Things that were seen to be acceptable 10 years ago or five years ago are now being seen to be ecologically and environmentally unacceptable.

This amendment does not recognize that, Madam Deputy Speaker. It does not say that environmental impacts should be done when Crown land licences are being renewed or an application for their renewal is being undertaken. There is no environmental recognition in these amendments.

Another concern with this is there is no guarantee that the minister, if the minister is dead set on maintaining control or retaking control over these permits in his own department, there is no guarantee in this legislation that he or she, whoever the minister might be, will undertake to look at the environmental impact on these permits. That is a very major concern that we have, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Another question on this is: Is there a process in place, either currently or in these amendments, whereby northern communities could challenge the automatic renewal of a permit for Crown lands if they felt that the occupation or usage of those Crown lands within the community boundaries was harmful to their community?

For example, was it going to harm their environment? Was it going to harm the local ecology? Was it going to have a negative impact on their wildlife, on their health facilities, on their ability to have clean drinking water, on their community planning, on their whole entire way of life? No, Madam Deputy Speaker, according to these amendments, there is no provision for local input into that permit-granting process, number one; and, number two, once the permit has been reissued,

there is no process for a community to make an appeal of that decision.

* (1450)

The members of the northern communities in this province have had first-hand experience of the unwillingness of this government to take their concerns seriously. We have seen cutbacks to programs in the Natural Resources area. We have seen cutbacks to programs in health care service delivery. We have seen cutbacks to social service program delivery. We have seen cutbacks to policing. We have seen cutbacks to Highways and Transportation. We have seen all of these cutbacks which have an inordinately negative impact on our northern communities.

We have no security, either historically or in these amendments, to give us any kind of comfort that these environmental, these quality-of-life issues will be looked at by this minister or any other minister of this government in the future.

I guess, Madam Deputy Speaker, again to just conclude on this section of the act and the concerns that we have is that Manitoba is almost unique, I think, in Canada as a province in that over 60 percent of the population, and it is growing larger everyday, lives within half an hour or 45 minutes of the boundaries of the city of Winnipeg. The rest of the population lives in smaller urban centres such as Thompson, The Pas, Brandon, Dauphin, Steinbach, Winkler, Teulon.

It is important that the legislation and the regulations implementing legislation on the part of the government recognize this imbalance in the population distribution in our province, that it recognize this imbalance by making sure in every single one of its pieces of legislation that the needs and the rights and the services for northerners and for rural people in this province are protected.

With a population that is as skewed as the population of Manitoba is, it is vital that people who live outside the Perimeter, or within 45 minutes of the Perimeter, it is important that people who live outside that ring feel comfortable that their government is looking after and allowing them an input into issues that concern them greatly.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these amendments do not in our view allow for that support and that understanding on the part of the government for these issues and concerns. It is taking control away from local communities. It is putting it into the hands

of a government that has never shown its commitment to the people of northern Manitoba. It is taking the responsibility and the power to make these important decisions away from the people who are most closely affected by them. It is giving it to not only the minister, but to the minister's staff, who are overworked, who, in July and August this summer, will be working only four days a week instead of five.

All of these things make us very uneasy that the legitimate concerns, the legitimate views of these local communities in northern Manitoba will not be addressed, that the only concerns that will be addressed are the concerns of the people and the organizations that have the minister's ear. Those people and organizations are not the local communities in northern Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is one other area I would like to touch on in these amendments. The third element that the minister was attempting to address when he tabled this legislation was to make some changes regarding obsolete language in the legislation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, we have no quarrel with the concept of rendering language in legislation modern and reflective of current thinking as far as language is concerned. We are delighted to see the concept of gender-neutral language being at least addressed in a minimal way by the government in these amendments.

However, there are maybe two or three sections and subsections that have changes to "obsolete" language, i.e., rendering the subsections gender neutral in their language. There are 14 sections where gender-neutral language is not rendered obsolete by these amendments.

I cannot understand why the government would have made the attempt in a couple of instances to change his to his or her and then not made those changes in 14 other sections.

I would like to briefly list the sections that still have gender-biased language in them. No. 1 is the powers of the minister. Well, yes, the current minister is a man. That is not necessarily always going to be the case. The legislation should reflect the possibility of a change, not only in gender, but other changes that might very well take place as well. The current section says, in addition to his other powers, rights, duties, et cetera, the minister may assist, and then, as he deems appropriate, et

cetera. I mean, in this one section, there are two or three allusions to gender-biased language.

Another section is again dealing with the minister acquiring real property, allowing the minister to perform any of his powers, rights, privileges, et cetera. Again, what would have been so difficult about perusing this piece of legislation when you have already stated that you want to eliminate some of the obsolete language in this legislation.

The minister, another section has powers that in his opinion are required. Nothing further need be stated about that. Whenever the approval of the minister is required before giving his approval, the minister may do X, Y and Z. Again, a simple change.

There is another area where it is not dealing with the minister, but with a person who is appointed to conduct an inquiry under a certain subsection of this act may require any person to appear before him and give evidence on oath and for that purpose he has the same power, et cetera. So we are not only talking about the minister being referred to only as in the relation to one gender, but another person who has powers under this act, a power of inquiry is also referred to only as he.

The minister has powers regarding payments from funds, and in this section the requisition shall be signed by the minister or a person designated by him. Yet, again, the minister is referred only as a him. Again, the minister invests a surplus, but obviously according to the act only the minister can do this only if the minister is a he.

The local committees can be established, Madam Deputy Speaker, to assist the minister, i.e., him, and act in a consultative capacity to him. Community councils will be continued as he deems necessary.

* (1500)

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is another category of people who are referred to in this act who are still referred to by only one gender and that is employees. Now, granted, many government employees, particularly I would think in the Department of Natural Resources and Northern Affairs, are male, but not by any manner or means all of them. One would hope that this current government will do something in actions rather than just words to ensure that gender balance becomes a reality in the actual workplace of this government, as well as in the legislation.

Finally, there are several sections that talk about employees in the context of he, his employment, him. Again, only male pronouns are used in these sections.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would seriously hope that the minister will take both of these general comments and concerns into account, and I would expect to see a series of amendments when we come to public hearings that will make the rest of the sections of this act nonsexist, gender neutral in their language. I do not understand why it did not happen before. I think I have some suggestions as to why this has happened, but I will leave those to another day.

With those comments, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will conclude my discussion of Bill 5. Thank you.

Bill 8—The Insurance Amendment Act

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

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

* * *

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Deputy Speaker, the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes) asked me to peruse Hansard, and, after perusing Hansard, I would like to sincerely apologize to the House and to the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) for some very inappropriate statements that I put on the record.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable member for St. Norbert for those comments.

* * *

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to put a few remarks on the record about Bill 8, The Insurance Amendment Act, which is, even within the context of the limited agenda of this particular government, a relatively small bill. It is one which has yet to go to committee, and we have yet to hear the opinions of both the insurance industry and of the many customers and clients of that particular industry throughout both urban and rural Manitoba.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it is perhaps within the range of context of a housekeeping bill, although I am sure the minister herself—and in fact I would join her in this—would suggest that that is not the best use of the word "housekeeping," but it is one that has, as the minister said, three principles.

One of these is to reduce the potential time delays, particularly in the area of crop and hail insurance. I understand, Madam Deputy Speaker, from speaking to those who are from rural Manitoba in our caucus and those who particularly are in touch with farmers, that these changes are ones which are likely to find a welcome audience in parts of the province. So I think those particular amendments, the timing of those, the attempt to be very clear about the time at which the insurance will be taken and recorded, are ones which are useful.

The second principle that the minister enunciated was that some of the changes that she is suggesting in this act are ones which have been due for some time, particularly those which relate to the use of new technologies, particularly fax machines. Here again, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think it is worthwhile, I am sure, for all ministers to look at their legislation that is part of their departmental responsibilities and to see whether there is the opportunity to update those bills in the context of the new technologies which are available through much, but not all, of our province.

So, in principle, the tightening up and the changing of the wording of those particular sections are probably quite helpful. However, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think there are some times where we will have to be concerned about that. I am not suggesting a blanket licence there, because one of the areas I think that the Free Trade Agreement and increasingly the North American Free Trade Agreement will touch is the very rapid transfer of goods and services, particularly financial services such as insurance, the transfer of those very quickly across international borders.

There are some concerns there, Madam Deputy Speaker, in principle, not particularly related to this bill, but in principle, some concerns about the questions of employment in Manitoba, particularly rural employment and employment especially in insurance, goods and service industries.

We have seen some of the results of those changes that are happening across our country and internationally in the recent loss of over 80 jobs with

the enRoute technology changes in Air Canada in Winnipeg, the ability to transfer those jobs very quickly to Montreal and possibly out of the country. It has been a very rapid change and one which I think we have to be greatly concerned about.

It is one of the areas that we have indicated time and time again that we have concerns about in the current Free Trade Agreement and one where we see certain companies, the multinationals largely based in the United States, who have pressed particularly for free trade agreements, largely for the purposes of financial services and service industries, things which can be transmitted very quickly and across international boundaries and which are, partly because of the technological change and partly because of the increasing reluctance and inability under some of the free trade agreements of governments to regulate those kinds of industries.

Again, in principle, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think we have to be very careful about changes that we make in that area. I look forward to some of the comments of industry people, not just on the specifics of this bill which, as I say, at the moment are not a direct cause of concern but the willingness of governments, the willingness of Conservative governments in particular to accommodate with great powers multinational corporations who are involved in these new technologies and which are able to supersede national boundaries, able to supersede national communities and, I would argue, to supersede the powers and abilities of Legislatures such as this to address the legitimate needs, social and economic needs, of our own people.

A third area that the minister has underlined in this particular bill is an area of language. She has argued in her introduction to this bill that she has brought some changes in language with a view to making the language clearer and plainer. I would like to congratulate the minister on this. I think the changes that she has brought are indeed simpler.

I know that the minister has a particular concern for language and the correct use of English and that she has put this into practice in this bill. It is simpler. It is clearer in the sections that she has changed. I wish she had been able to convince some of her colleagues, particularly those who deal with some of the very complex bills such as the oil and gas bill for example, to take the same approach. I congratulate her for that, and I think it is very

appropriate for a Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs to see this as part of her role in protecting consumers.

* (1510)

Another area that minister has underlined is that again in terms of technology she wants to eliminate some of the sections of this bill or wording of this bill which might have been inappropriate or made it impossible to use under certain types of new printing technologies. So rather than, for example, use red ink, she says that we are going to use bold print or we are going to go boldly. I think perhaps she means into the future.

I think if this is acceptable to the industry, if it is clear to the consumer, if it protects the interests of Manitobans, then I think that too will be perfectly acceptable, but one can only wish that this government would go boldly in other areas.

One can only wish that this government read the letters that I get every day and the phone calls I get every day from people who see no future for themselves in this province, people who have had jobs for much of their lives, and now at the age of 50 or 52 find themselves unemployed and looking at a lifetime now of unemployment just staring them in the face, or that they would listen to young people in this province who are facing an unemployment rate as high as that of the island of Montreal, as high as that of parts of Newfoundland, an unemployment rate for young people which is growing.

If they listen to those people, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think they would want to tread boldly there too. The absence of any initiative for youth unemployment I think is one of the most tragic things that I have seen happen to this province in many, many years. To listen to those students in high school, many of them now who are coming back to try and improve their grade 12 marks, staying in university longer and longer in order to improve their jobs to compete for an increasingly narrow segment of employment in Manitoba, it is a tragic loss of young people's ambition and enthusiasm. It is a tragic loss to Manitoba, a great wastage that is happening every day across the province, hours and hours of potential labour and work that is being lost, experienced labour.

People who have given 30 years of their lives to this province and who are now no longer given the opportunity to put that expertise and that experience to work, either in training young people in an

expanded apprenticeship system or indeed in terms of their own productive labour, the work of their own hands.

There is nothing that this government is doing about that. There are no bold steps in the area of unemployment. There are not even any bold steps in looking at the magnitude of the conditions which are facing people, not only in my riding, but right across the province.

How can we stand here and listen to those voices from young Manitoba, those voices who have never had a job, and many of them now 25, 26 years old, often with reasonable educations, high school graduations, one or two years of either community college, and increasingly graduates so-called of these private training institutions and for whom there is no work.

Other countries, other jurisdictions are indeed looking at the issue of youth unemployment. This is an issue which is concerning people around the world, but it seems to me that this government, first of all has no understanding of the magnitude of the problem that they are facing, and indeed are creating in this province.

By turning a blind eye, by turning their backs on those young people who will never find a job under their conditions, they are in fact creating a potential future for Manitobans which is very, very serious, and other governments around the world recognize this.

You look at governments in Germany, you look at governments in England, you look at what the Clinton administration is doing in the United States, and every single one of them knows the danger of continued youth unemployment. They are seeing those rising crime rates. They are seeing the increasing violence of young people, but this government does not.

It does not listen—[interjection] Is the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) suggesting—[interjection] I would not want to put the comment of the Minister of Agriculture on record, that is up to him, but it does seem to me that it was one of those typical *ad hominem* or *ad feminam* arguments that are often used by the other side in answering questions in the House, not usually furthering debate, but, often, I think, ones that people often resort to, and I guess we all do it or are all tempted to do it on occasion. Perhaps it is best not done in this particular House or this particular setting.

I was talking, Madam Deputy Speaker, about the minister, who I think has reason in many cases to be proud of sections of this bill, and I was congratulating her on certain areas of it and picking up her language of going boldly into—I do not think she says the future, but certainly a government which is acting boldly—and expressing my frustration, my concern, my lament, I think, that this government has not chosen to address boldly one of the issues which I think is the most tragic, most dramatic issue which is facing most jurisdictions around the world. I was suggesting that other jurisdictions are addressing this, and there is an opportunity here for this government whose children and grandchildren they know and I know are facing a very, very difficult future.

There is an opportunity for them to address this, to look at some of the programs which are being put into place in other parts of the world, the youth unemployment program, for example, in Australia. Australia faces a very similar situation to parts of Canada, and Australia in fact has argued that this is the emergency of their decade.

What they have done is to address, is to create an emergency youth employment program, one that they hope will touch at least a third of their unemployed youth which will provide both training and jobs. It is an initiative which I commend Prime Minister Keating on, a Labour Prime Minister, for recognizing that this is one of the most vital issues that has to be faced. I believe that he has addressed it in an appropriate way by combining education, by combining training and the provision of jobs and particularly expanding training on the job and expanding the apprenticeship system in Australia.

In France, Madam Deputy Speaker, they have taken a similar approach. Again, another social democratic government has said, what are the issues that are facing us at this time? Where must we tread boldly? They looked at the conditions they were facing in France, and President Mitterand in particular saw the two issues of employment for the worker over the age of 50 and employment for those people who have never been in the labour force as the two crucial elements facing France.

Given the rise of right-wing nationalism, some would call it facism, given the rise of that type of ideology, their actions on the streets, the social issues that they are bringing to the fore, not just in France but in other parts of Europe as well, again, I

think that this is an important strategy, and it was one which, within a relatively short period of time had considerable success, and, again, it combined education and job placement. The two crucial areas that Australia and France and, in a different way, Germany have also chosen as the route to go boldly into their future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, from this government, I think we have in March 1993, with an unemployment rate that is growing, a picture of stagnation and economic decline in this province. We have an absolutely small agenda of legislation and a government which cannot bring itself to bring in a budget. I do not know what they are waiting for.

I would think one element that is at issue here is that this is a government which has fired about 1,500 civil servants, which has created such demoralization amongst its own employees that they are no longer prepared to tell the government the truth. They have got their heads down. You are losing the confidence of your civil servants, and when you do that, you are in real trouble because they are your eyes and ears, and you will be alone.

* (1520)

Any government which engages in that kind of wholesale dismissal of its civil servants will have a price to pay. I think one of the prices we are paying, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the delay in the budget, the lack of initiative in this government and its ability to prepare programs, the inability of the government to, in fact, negotiate a labour force development agreement.

We have seen three, four years of delay on that particular agreement, a strategy which may not be a panacea for all the ills of Manitoba. It certainly will not be. In fact, it has some . . . [inaudible]

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Friesen: . . . provincially, federally . . . [inaudible] on the Civil Service, I think, which has confidence in this government is one of the difficulties we have.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I am having great difficulty hearing the individual who was recognized to speak on this bill.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was trying to put some remarks on the record as to my understanding of why this government has so many difficulties in bringing forth legislation and why

it is having some difficulties in bringing forth its budget at the appropriate time.

I think one of the difficulties is that they have fired a great number of civil servants and created a great deal of disarray amongst those who are left, losing the confidence of the very people who should be their eyes and ears on this province.

This is a government which is presiding over the decline of Manitoba. My colleague the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) has presented today a series of tables representing the economic arguments which show the net loss of people in Manitoba, and, of course, we face a government across the way which is stepping boldly, as the minister said, to increase that situation, to add more people to the unemployment rolls, essentially to send them on a very short route to the welfare rolls.

This is a government which opens the door for you, smiles broadly, have a nice day, they say, and off they send you to the unemployment lines, a very short step away from the welfare rolls. That is the bold step that this government is taking. They are adding to the unemployment crisis that we have in Manitoba, and it seems to me that those are the kinds of bold steps which certainly the people who write to me and who phone me do not welcome. They recognize what in itself this government policy is doing to the economic conditions and social conditions of life in this province.

In a way, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a double crunch that is happening here. It is happening in the city of Winnipeg, and it is happening throughout Manitoba. These are the bold steps that are affecting the people of this province because, on the one hand, unemployment is increasing and in part, yes, there is a global recession. In part, yes, it is largely due to some of the specific policies pursued by the federal government that have exacerbated the economic crises that did exist internationally. Yes, all of that.

But the particular policies of this government have made Manitoba suffer extraordinarily within the context of other provinces, and those are the kinds of tables and studies which my colleague has tabled, and I hope that the government will take them to heart and they will re-examine with the few civil servants left to them the kind of economic positions which they have taken and the way in which they have contributed to unemployment in this province.

I suggested, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there were two things happening here. One of them is the unemployment to which this government is adding, and the second thing is that the policies of this government and the policies of their allies in City Hall are in fact to add a second stab in the back or a stab in the belly to the people of Manitoba, because what they are doing is deliberately taking away the public sector. They are taking away the very institutions that those people who are unemployed and who face a lifetime on welfare who face no jobs, they are taking away that very area of public institutions when people need the most.

It is that double slam which I think makes people so resentful and so angry at what this government is doing. They are taking away the libraries, the affordable public transport system, the inner city recreation, medicare, Pharmacare, eating away at all of those areas which we thought and which we had built as public institutions, institutions which we could all share whether we were rich or poor, the public sector that we built.

You may never be able to equalize income amongst Manitobans. You may never be able, and you have no interest of course in redistributing income at all. What you have done is in fact take away that public sphere that people could have participated in on an equal basis. It is a double whammy. It is the great unfairness of it all, and it is in effect the kind of structure that this government is creating for the people of Manitoba.

So, yes, Madam Deputy Speaker, they are stepping boldly. There are some pieces of legislation here, some sections of this particular bill of plain language, the adoption of some new elements of timing and the introduction of language which takes into account new types of technology.

All of those I think are reasonably straightforward, although, as always, I am not an expert in this area, and I always look forward to hearing the presentations that are made at committee and very much value the legislative system of Manitoba which does enable that public participation and input into every bill.

With that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I think I will close. I believe that other people will be speaking on this bill later and I look forward to comments of all members of the House.

Bill 3—The Oil and Gas and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 3 (The Oil and Gas and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi concernant le pétrole et le gaz naturel et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois), standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Bill 2—The Endangered Species Amendment Act

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

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

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

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

An Honourable Members: Stand.

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

* (1530)

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

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 11 (The Regional Waste Management Authorities, The Municipal Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi concernant les offices régionaux de gestion des

déchets, modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois), standing in the name of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Bill 12—The International Trusts Act

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

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Bill 13—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act

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

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to be able to speak on this bill.

I want to talk about this bill in the context, obviously the changes it proposes to the Manitoba government's support of the Crocus Fund, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Act being the enabling act which brings in to statute the establishment of this particular fund.

I want to talk about the entire concept of employee ownership, Madam Deputy Speaker, because I think it is important that we as members of the Legislature discuss I think this particular fund and the particular potential that is available in this type of ownership of an alternate ownership structure which builds upon some of the principles of the financial business world, the corporate structures, but it goes beyond that and establishes some

unique dimensions, some unique features. It has a great deal of possibility for this province.

Let us start from the economic context we find ourselves in, Madam Deputy Speaker. I want to commend the previous speaker, the member for Wolsley (Ms. Friesen), on outlining the economic circumstances we are in. This is particularly relevant when we are discussing the whole question of this particular fund and the whole concept of alternative ownership.

I point to the situation we are in, Madam Deputy Speaker, as very effectively outlined by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), our Finance critic, in the document that was tabled in the House earlier, entitled "The Economic Decline of Manitoba Under The Filmon Conservative Government 1988-1992." This document is similar to some of the other analyses the member for Brandon East has conducted in terms of the economic situation of the province.

I noticed the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) earlier today said that the only thing he was pleased with was that the member was here and not teaching this in the university context. Indeed, I do not blame the Minister of Finance for stating that, because I am sure the Minister of Finance does not want people who are studying economics to see how dismal the record of this government has been and how bankrupt this government has been in terms of economic policy.

Let us face the reality. What we are dealing with in Manitoba is not strictly a result of the international recession or the national recession, Madam Deputy Speaker. If that was the case, one would expect that there would be an averaging out of the economic indicators, that Manitoba might not perhaps be the best or the worst. There might be an averaging out of those economic indicators.

Madam Deputy Speaker, look at this document in terms of the various different indicators that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) has analyzed, and you know there is no requirement to look selectively at statistics. Whether one looks at population or economic growth or employment or the unemployment rate or labour force statistics or the average weekly earnings, the retail sales, housing starts, manufacturing shipments, manufacturing employment, farm cash receipts, investment, building permits or the value of total

construction work, Manitoba is not first or second. It is not third. [interjection]

Well, we are first maybe in decline, Madam Deputy Speaker—first maybe in decline, but there is a very clear trend in evidence. What is happening—and I quipped this from my seat earlier, I think the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) should have entitled this, using the title of the movie that was put out by Walt Disney. I think that is appropriate, given some of the Disneyland analyses we have had from members opposite. He could have called this, Honey, I Shrank the Province, because that is what the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has done.

The Premier in four years basically, going into five now, almost to the fifth anniversary of the election—in fact, we were into the election campaign five years ago—in that short period of time, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Premier has indeed shrunk this province in comparison to other provinces across the country. One can see it in terms of Manitoba as a percent of Canada in population; we have declined from 4.18 percent in 1988 to 4.00 percent in 1992. We have seen it in regard to Manitoba as a percent of Canada gross domestic product; we shrunk from 3.64 percent to 3.62 percent. Manitoba as a percent of Canada in terms of employment; we have shrunk from 4.03 percent to 3.95 percent.

We have seen it in terms of a whole series of other statistics. The labour force, we have shrunk from 4.03 percent to 3.88 percent. In terms of average weekly earnings, industrial composite index, Manitoba as a percent of Canada shrunk from 91.60 percent in 1988 to 88.84 percent in 1992. Retail sales, Manitoba as a percent of Canada has shrunk from 3.49 percent to 3.45 percent. In housing starts, Manitoba as a percent of Canada has shrunk from 2.45 percent in 1988 to 1.37 percent in 1992. Manufacturing shipments—that is the only area where we have not shrunk, Madam Deputy Speaker. We remained static at 2.25 percent of the rest of Canada. Manufacturing employment, however, we have dropped from 2.99 percent in 1988 to 2.87 percent in 1992. Farm cash receipts, we have dropped from 9.34 percent in 1988 to 8.95 percent in 1992, Manitoba as a percent of Canada once again.

In terms of investment we have dropped from 3.08 percent in 1988 to 2.79 percent of the overall investment in Canada. Another decline under this government. Manitoba as a percent of Canada

building permits have dropped from 2.27 percent to 2.01 percent, and the total construction work performed has dropped in 1988 from 3.54 percent, that being the percent which Manitoba constitutes the Canadian total, to 2.83 percent.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a pretty dismal record. This is not, as I had mentioned before, these are not strictly the absolute statistics. These are the comparative statistics, because I think governments, to be fair, should be judged comparatively. They should not be judged strictly in terms of absolute numbers. We all recognize there is an international recession, and there has been a national recession. In fact, in many ways the Conservative government nationally through its policies led us into the recession a lot earlier than most other industrial countries were in the recession.

So the bottom line is that there is indeed a recession, but if we were holding our own in a recession, those statistics I read earlier would either have shown that we have continued to be the same percent of the country or would indeed, perhaps, as some indicators, shown an increase. Those are the comparative statistics. These show that Manitoba is doing worse than other provinces in those scores because in—[interjection] The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) says does that make me happy. No, it does not. It shows that we are not living up to our potential in this province.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): What does make you happy? You tell us.

Mr. Ashton: The Minister of Health says what does make me happy. What would make me happy in this particular case is if we showed some signs in this province that we were going to be doing better, that we are going to be getting out of the recession. [interjection] The Deputy Premier talks from his seat as he indeed does about debt. I mean, this government inherits a \$52-million surplus and ends up—well, Madam Deputy Speaker, it was confirmed by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). They should maybe discuss that.

They now are looking at the highest deficit in the history of the province. Oh, I notice there was no howling that time. They know that is true.

The minister the other day talked about credit cards. They have the credit card now, the Province of Manitoba credit card. They have been running up those slips, and they have been lecturing us in

the House about the previous NDP government. The highest level of deficit left by the previous NDP government was \$592 million. They are looking at \$700 million.

Perhaps the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) was not aware of this when he ran. Perhaps he would like to ask the question to his own members before he gets up and turns to these types of issues and ask them what their cumulative deficit has been from 1988 to 1993. How much have they run up the debt of the province in that period of time? [interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, is it not interesting, the Minister of Environment starts, well, how much of that is the interest on your debt? It is interesting, the finger pointing. I raise this to point out to this government by its own definition, and I remember the minister of cultural affairs, and I have quoted this in the House, said in 1988, she said, the one thing you can count on is that we are not going to have a higher deficit. We are going to reduce the deficit.

Reduce the deficit? As I said, we are looking at a \$700-million deficit in this province. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has admitted as much. You know, it is interesting, because over the period of time they have been in, we are doing worse economically, but we are also doing worse fiscally in this province. The more they apply their so-called economic philosophy, the more they are digging this province into the hole in terms of the economic performance and in terms of the fiscal performance. Those are the facts.

* (1540)

The Minister of Finance, on the one hand—[interjection] Indeed, the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) says, where are my ideas. That is one of the reasons I am speaking on this bill, because there are alternatives. There are things that the provincial government could be doing to promote economic development and not the kind of failed economic policies we have seen, the policies that have led us in virtually every indicator to perform worse than the Canadian average.

Indeed, to the member for Portage, I will be outlining in my speech today a number of them. That is why I am speaking on this. Indeed, I believe there is a lot of potential in this province if we can work co-operatively. I am speaking on this particular bill because this is one small example

where co-operation can make a difference. It is only the beginning of the type of co-operation that is going to be necessary for us to get out of the hole that we are in in this province. [interjection]

Well, you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) says the hole that we dug this province into. He has been in government for five years. What is the cumulative value of the increase that they have attached to the debt while the economy has been going downhill? What is the cut in services that has taken place?

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Conservatives—[interjection] Well, I hear the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) speaking from his seat. Perhaps he is trying to answer that question that we still have not got an answer for earlier today. If that is the case, I look forward to hearing the answer.

But, let us face it, the policies of this government have left us worse off than in 1988 economically with fewer services and a higher deficit. No one can dispute that fact. We are worse off on every score, not just absolutely—as I said, it would be unfair just to compare absolutely. Comparatively, we are failing in this province. When I say we, I mean the provincial government, but we all collectively share as residents of this province in the failure that we are looking at economically. After five years, this government has clearly shown that it is not only bankrupt financially, but it is bankrupt economically and bankrupt in terms of ideas.

As I said, there are alternatives that we could be looking at. The bottom line is, Madam Deputy Speaker, one small example of this has been in terms of the Crocus Fund, because this is the kind of co-operative approach that has been tried in other provinces, in Quebec, for example. The fund in Quebec, the solidarity fund, has been in existence for many years. It is not a new concept. The previous government had introduced a very similar concept, in fact, basically the same sort of concept with different capitalization, but it had introduced it in its budget in 1987-88. So this is not a new initiative in that sense, but it is a welcome initiative. It is a co-operative initiative.

Let us look at what it is aimed at doing. It is aimed at keeping capital within Manitoba. It is aimed at keeping Manitobans' savings in this province, invested in this province. It is aimed at keeping it

here creating jobs in this province. It is not the only type of mechanism that does that.

I go back to the original Autopac debates when there were really two arguments on Autopac in the original days. People may have forgotten some of those debates. One of the arguments was obviously that there would be lower rates, and that has been borne out by the practice of Autopac. [interjection] Well, relatively speaking.

One of the reasons I am concerned about what has been happening currently is the fact that the government is not dealing with some of the structural problems in the system, particularly the fault/no-fault aspects that are leading to a rapid escalation of rates related specifically to the increased amount of litigation related to personal injury claims.

An Honourable Member: Actually, litigation is not up but the costs are.

Mr. Ashton: Well, costs are up, that is what I am saying. I realize that is what is happening, and I thank the minister for that clarification, and I realize what is happening. What is happening is that the awards that are coming in are significantly greater than they were a number of years ago. That has been predicted, Madam Deputy Speaker, since the mid-1980s. In fact, if one goes back to the Kopstein report, it is specifically identified as one of the major challenges facing Autopac, and I hope it will be dealt with.

I do not want to get into that debate, Madam Deputy Speaker, not that I do not look forward to having a debate with the minister at some other time, and I know we have it on an ongoing basis. That is the cost end of it.

The other argument for Autopac—and it was an argument I remember the former member for Inkster, Sid Green, was particularly vocal about at the time—was that it keeps funds in Manitoba, the funds collected by the insurance company, keeps them in Manitoba, provides a capital pool that is of significant benefit to this province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have always believed that one of the reasons the Lyon government, when it looked at privatizing Autopac in the late 1970s, besides the fact that there would have been a major uproar from Manitobans on the rate side—one of the main reasons they kept it is that I think even they, with the benefit of hindsight, having opposed

Autopac when it was first brought in, recognized that it would be a substantial loss to Manitoba.

If one went to the national and multinational insurance companies, if one went to the previous flows of capital that took place, one would end up in the position where once again you would have money flowing outside of Manitoba. So the retention of our savings collectively in this province, in Manitoba, is an important part of other aspects of government policy, and I would suggest in this particular case is key in this particular bill.

This bill essentially, Madam Deputy Speaker, attempts to ensure there is adequate support to the Crocus Fund in its initial stages, to ensure that it can establish itself and provide that kind of source of investment that it has a great deal of potential to do. A good example, good model of a co-operative approach—government with, in this case, the Manitoba Federation of Labour—and a shared goal, the goal of investing in our province.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to suggest that there are many other areas that we could be looking at doing this, and many other sources of revenue, I think, would be more appropriately put to use in this province. I go back to the video lottery terminal debate, and then I have some difficulty, and I look to members opposite from rural constituencies, from northern constituencies. I have some difficulty when I go, for example, as I did to the hotel in Ilford recently and I saw the big banner that was put out originally by the Lotteries Foundation, saying Video Lottery Terminals, and it says right underneath that proceeds will go to rural economic development.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the difficulty I have is, it is not that some of the proceeds are not going to rural development. The difficulty I have is that much of it is now going to go into general revenues, and that is not what the original intent was. I understand there is some debate over what the experience has been, and there is some suggestion that the video lottery funds were more than were anticipated. But I think that when people go in there, they have a sense that they are putting their money into something, and it is going for a good cause. I hate to say it, a lot of people are just into gambling for gambling's sake, but there are a lot of people that it does make a difference for them. I am sure a lot of people would not gamble in the same sense if they felt it was going for private profit—[interjection]

We have been asking for updated figures in terms of what percentage is going into rural development, but the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) knows that a significant part of it is now headed for general revenues, according to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness).

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage la Prairie): I am not privy to that, Steve. You better take it out.

Mr. Ashton: The member for Portage is not privy to that. I hope he will ask it. He has better opportunities than I do. I have the opportunity in the House, but he is part of the same caucus. I say this as someone from a rural northern area, a northern seat where a significant amount of money is being raised from video lottery terminals. There are all the hotels in Thompson, and the small hotel in Ilford is raising a significant amount of money in that community, but none of it is going into that community.

I will give you an example at Ilford. Money is going into that community from Ilford and York Landing and Split Lake, particularly when the winter road opened and people from the other communities were able to go in and gamble on VLTs. Ilford has a population of 130. It has no all-weather road. It has very little employment, a very high level of unemployment, and it particularly has had limited job opportunities with the cutbacks that have taken place with CN over the years in terms of maintenance.

The bottom line is that money could be better spent in a community like Ilford or surrounding communities on economic development projects. I throw that out as an example, because I think that is important. We cannot just talk about, well, let us have a policy of economic development. The obvious question is where the funds are going to come from. I think VLTs should be used—[interjection]

The member talks in terms of REDI applications. A number of communities are looking very seriously at the REDI applications. I am not saying that funds are not being dispersed, but the bottom line is that is not going to be anywhere close to the percentage of money that is being raised. We are looking at \$30 million from rural communities, and I have talked to people I know who work for Lotteries, and they are astounded by the amount of revenue they are bringing in, astounded in small rural communities. Quite frankly, I am astounded too when I hear the

degree. I have talked to hotel owners. Of course, they only collect a very small portion of it. I think that is important to place on the public record.

The bottom line is, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a lot of money being raised from video lottery funds. I go back to the original purpose. Why not put it into economic development? I will go one step further. I am not just talking about short-term job creation programs. We can get into that debate at another time. I think there is a role in remote northern communities, particularly for young people. Where there is a high degree of unemployment, there often is a role for having some degree of job creation on a short-term basis to give people exposure to the workforce, to give them some sense that there is something else beyond the high degree of unemployment. [interjection]

Well, the member says in terms of the Green Team. What is happening is a lot of communities are not able to really access that type of employment because of the criteria of the program. I think we have established, despite our differences, that when it comes to young people, with the high degree of unemployment in the North, we have a unique situation.

* (1550)

In most other areas, there are more young people employed than those over the age of 25 in the workforce, more in the workforce. What happens in remote northern communities is the reverse. You will find in some northern communities where 80 percent of those over the age of 25 are in the workforce, but 40 percent of those under the age of 25 are in the workforce, a much smaller number, the reason being that there is not a service sector.

We do not have in a lot of remote communities the McDonald's, the Burger Kings, the restaurants, the retail stores that do provide a significant amount of employment in more developed communities. You will see the difference even between Thompson, which is just developing that level of service sector, and more established communities like The Pas, for example, which have more opportunities available for young people.

What happens is people work at McDonald's. They work at Burger King, et cetera. They work in the retail store. They earn the income; they then go and spend it. There is a high degree of consumption, and that creates spinoffs. The

bottom line is there is a role for that kind of short-term employment program.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let us take it one step further. The bottom line is we do have a significant number of economic development agencies, community development corporations established in the North, Community Futures, for example, and in rural areas. Community Futures has a fairly limited budget, provides business assistance, but is not in a position of providing significant venture capital. That is not the purpose of the Community Futures corporations or set-up. There are other agencies. I look to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) in terms of CDF. The Minister of Northern Affairs knows, of course, that CDF provides loans to northerners within the prescribed area at a reduced rate compared to other banks, but it is loans again. There is not a potential for venture capital.

There is actually reduced potential overall. A number of the federal programs that had existed previously are no longer in place. The bottom line, Madam Deputy Speaker, is something that I think is confirmed by virtually everyone I talk to, that there are a lot of good ideas in a lot of rural and northern communities that go nowhere because the commercial banks will not touch them. That is particularly the case in a lot of rural communities. Banks just will not lend in certain communities, particularly the case up north.

Not only that, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is often not the venture equity capital available to invest in those types of projects. There are many examples of projects that have worked where the funding has been available. I think that one of the important things that has to be done is to recognize that even in the most difficult of circumstances, rural and northern communities often have excellent ideas.

I find, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is amazing. I talk to people in remote communities with virtually no retail service sector at all, but people have ideas. They know that their community needs a variety of services. I know in Split Lake, for example, they are currently looking and hoping that perhaps with some of the funds now available because of the settlement of the Northern Flood Agreement, they will be able to put up a mall, put up a proper gas bar, put up a restaurant.

You know, a lot of people may not be aware of this, but many remote northern communities have no services at all, apart from a northern store. Many northern communities do not have a restaurant, a coffee shop or a hotel, or any retail stores of any significance. A lot of the money that goes into those northern communities ends up flowing to the nearest regional centre, and in the case of the regional centres, even to Winnipeg. That is the problem for many rural communities, as well, even with more development, a retail sector. It is tough for rural communities to compete with the malls in the city of Winnipeg, and I am not just talking in the context of Sunday shopping today. I am just talking in a general sense. Money does flow out of those communities.

So money from VLT revenue is a good potential source, Madam Deputy Speaker, to be put into Venture Capital in rural and northern communities, allowing business people, both individually or community-based businesses, because in many aboriginal communities the vehicle of choice is not so much necessarily the individual business, although in some cases it is, but is often the community-based business. The bottom line is a lot of potential in terms of that. I mentioned VLTs. I will mention another area as well, and this goes back to late in the 1980s in terms of Limestone revenue. Limestone is producing a significant profit for the people of Manitoba. That was confirmed in committee the other night by Manitoba Hydro.

In effect, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) asked the question—I find it ironic because I know at the time the minister was fairly critical of the Limestone start-up and the NSP power sale as the then-Energy critic for the NDP. I think it is to his credit that he asked the question, and I think knowing full well that Limestone has worked out.

I think one of the reasons the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has been in this House as long as he has is because he is able to admit at times where he was not just right. It is easy to, in hindsight, say, I told you so, but even on the other score to admit when he was wrong. The evidence has shown that his analysis and the analysis of the then-Leader of the Opposition, the current Premier (Mr. Filmon), was wrong when it came to Limestone and the NSP power sale. Well, that was—

An Honourable Member: Lemonstone.

Mr. Ashton: Limestone. Well, I do not want to talk about the Liberals. [interjection] Let us talk about the Liberals, no. Let us talk about the Liberals, Madam Deputy Speaker, because when it came to Limestone they said that Limestone would cost \$4 billion. What was the projected cost at the time? It was under \$3 billion. What was the final cost? Was it \$3 billion? Was it two and a half? Two? One and a half? No, it was \$1.45 billion.

An Honourable Member: It was 1.7.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Deputy Speaker, 1.45.

An Honourable Member: Madam Deputy Speaker, 1.7.

Mr. Ashton: No. The latest figures for— [interjection] No, no, Madam Deputy Speaker. For the Liberal member, and I know his intention has been focused elsewhere, and I—

An Honourable Member: What about Elijah?

Mr. Ashton: In a nonpartisan way, I wish him well. Well, more than that, I hope he beats Dorothy Dobbie if he does get elected, or I hope somebody does, Madam Deputy Speaker. But, anyway, that is another point.

The point is in Manitoba Hydro, if the member had been in committee the other night, it was confirmed the actual final cost is now 1.45. [interjection] Well, the member says he will debate that. It was not \$4 billion, so I am afraid that the Liberals missed the mark by a considerable amount.

The thing is, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we had had, God forbid, a Liberal government at the time and Limestone had not been developed, just imagine what the ratepayers in Manitoba would be facing right now, today, in terms of hydro rates, just imagine.

The cost-benefit ratio of Limestone was 2.1 to one projected. The final cost-benefit ratio was 2.1 to one. So I think it should be noted for the record, and it would be tempting to say I told you so. So, in fact, given the circumstances, I will say I told you so. I remember the debates when the NDP said this was the proper management and fiscal and economic decision, and I am proud to be able to stand here today and say that was exactly the case.

An Honourable Member: Under budget and ahead of schedule.

Mr. Ashton: Under budget and ahead of schedule. I mean, that is an accomplishment. Apparently, for

the record, 2 percent [interjection] We are dealing with that, the one who has a great deal of experience here, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), in terms of the contracting industry.

The statistics show, Madam Deputy Speaker, that 2 percent of projects are completed under budget and under time. The Manitoba NDP put us in the top 2 percent. I want to say—

An Honourable Member: In closing.

Mr. Ashton: I know the member wishes to speak on this particular bill. Do not worry, you will have the opportunity. [interjection] Not on this bill, on another bill.

I want to say that those are some of the ideas that I think we can look at in terms of source of economic development. I think in terms of Limestone we could look at putting some of the revenues generated from our northern resource, particularly, back in the northern communities, from our water, from our northern water, to put it back into some of those communities that have suffered high degrees of unemployment, social problems and environmental damage because of previous dams. That is what we need—the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) here, the minister responsible for the cancellation of Conawapa, talks about northerners, talks about northern economic development.

* (1600)

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

The northerners-do-not-know-how-to-vote-right minister ought not to lecture who has done a lot for the North and who has not, but that is another issue.

The bottom line in finishing debate on this bill is, the Crocus Fund is only one example of the type of approach we need in this province about harnessing our own resources. [interjection] The Minister of Northern Affairs should know this was brought in by Eugene Kostyra in 1988. This was not his idea, but of course he would not know that.

The bottom line is, there are a lot of things that can be done. As I said, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we put forward ideas on these kinds of bills, because I think it is really important that we sit down and we look at our economic strategy in this province. The solution to our economic problems is not, as was documented by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), the failed policies of this government, of cutbacks, of looking

for scapegoats, and relying on the same tired old rhetoric they have been peddling in this province for the last five years.

The future of this province is going to depend on co-operative ventures such as the Crocus Fund. It is going to depend on harnessing revenues from such sources as VLTs for rural economic development. It comes from harnessing revenues from such developments as Limestone for the economic development of this province. It comes from taking what we have, our resource base, and the capital that we have in this province and the human capital working co-operatively to develop this province. That is the alternate type of vision that I think not only our party is espousing, but many other Manitobans.

I find it interesting, as I complete my remarks here, that today apart from—and I will give some members credit for listening in terms of these positive suggestions. I mean, I think that is important. Obviously, there are some political differences we have. It is unfortunate that some still on that side refuse even to listen in terms of positive suggestions. That is I think a mistake. I think it shows—[interjection] Maybe if the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey) would have listened, there were a number of suggestions I made, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to make them in terms of economic development in this province.

That is what we need, Mr. Speaker, yes, some political debate, but also some specific ideas on where we are going. There is a lot more we can do in this province with a co-operative approach to economic development.

We in the NDP will be raising our suggestions throughout the session on this and other bills to ensure that if the government—[interjection] If not the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Downey), perhaps some of the newer members. The member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) I will give credit to for listening. [interjection] Well, I am not praising him. I have visited his constituency, and I know he likes to express his opinions. Some people agree with him and some people do not. I respect that. I respect someone who expresses his opinions. I was not praising him. I did indicate that he was listening to the speech. That is all, Mr. Speaker. That is all that I ask, and any of us ask, that there is some effort to listen, and I give him credit certainly in comparison to the Minister of Northern Affairs, but, anyway, that is another story.

We need a new economic approach in this province, and this government should listen not just to us, but to the many others who are proposing them.

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

Bill 14—The Personal Property Security and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Bill 14, The Personal Property Security and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi concernant les sûretés relatives aux biens personnels et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 15—The Boxing and Wrestling Commission Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), Bill 15, The Boxing and Wrestling Commission Act; Loi sur la Commission de la boxe et de la lutte, standing in the name of the honourable member for the Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 16—The Public Schools Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. Vodrey), Bill 16, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, standing in the name of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

House Business

Mr. Speaker: Are we proceeding with second reading of Bill 9? No, okay.

The honourable acting government House leader, what are your intentions, sir?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I think if you canvass the House, there may be a will to call it six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? No. Okay. Is it the will of the House to call it five o'clock? [agreed]

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Child and Family Services Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), Bill 200, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille, standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), who has seven minutes remaining.

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Also standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Speaker, I thought I might—[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Alcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to take a few minutes just to put a few remarks on the record on this particular bill. It is an attempt, I think, by the opposition to undo some of the damage that they did when the original bill came before the House, and it is an attempt by the NDP to rewrite history and to try to get on the right side of a very important public issue. From that perspective, I suspect that I can support this bill or I can encourage the House to adopt this bill, because it does address a fundamentally important issue in this province, and that is the empowerment of children.

We had a debate in this House. I unfortunately ran out of time and was not able to speak on the bill that was before the House, although I was involved somewhat in the discussions that took place in

bringing the bill before the House. The government did something that I think on the face of it was a good thing. They attempted to put into legislation some protection for those in this community who are perhaps the most unempowered, those who cannot vote, those who have no voice of their own in this Chamber—the children of Manitoba. They attempted to put in place a mechanism whereby the interests of children would be paramount in some office in government that would have the responsibility solely for acting on behalf of children.

We supported that intention at that time, but we noted that the way the government was organizing it, by having it report through the minister, who had already been seriously discredited in the community and has shown complete contempt for the children in families with these problems, we noted that having this very important responsibility reporting to someone who was so completely insensitive to the needs of children was wrong, that we had to have that office reporting to this Chamber, to the public of this province so that there would be none of the kind of exercise, or perhaps shall we say, lack of exercise of the responsibilities of the department that we have seen from this particular minister and frankly that we have in the past at times seen from other ministers, not only in this government. The fact is that the interests of children takes second place to the interests of adults. That is a fact that we have seen exhibited by governments over and over again.

I can recall experiences back when I was in the department, with the previous government, where if it came to a conflict between a particular interest of theirs and the rights or the interests of a child, that the previous government would not act to protect children. They needed to be called into account. I think I can attest to, and I am prepared to at some point if I get a chance, maybe before I leave this Chamber I might speak at greater length about some of the actions of the previous government around the protection of the rights of prisoners and the spouses of prisoners and how if a person held an NDP card they were allowed to undertake some abuses and they were not checked and they were not disciplined.

* (1610)

In this particular case what we want to talk about is how we protect the interests of children in this province and how we hold ourselves accountable to an authority that is beyond this Chamber. The way

we do that is to empower somebody to give them the resources to investigate when there are serious concerns and report to this Chamber, not to report to the very person who is responsible for the abuse in the first place.

When we made that case in the last session of this House, it was the New Democratic Party that refused to support us. It was the New Democratic Party that stood up and said, oh, no, let us just get this bill through because we want to support this minister the way we want to support this minister every time he takes a major decision. It is only now after they have had time to reflect on their actions that they have come forward with this bill. [interjection] No, that is exactly the way it happened.

The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) says that is not the way it happened. Well, he is wrong, and if he sat in this House he would remember the words of the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), who chastised us for attempting to hold it up.

In fact, at that time they were quite willing to support this minister, but all of a sudden they have had a conversion. All of a sudden they now believe that perhaps we were right in the first place. It is a little late, but, you know, conversion has to be accepted whenever it occurs.

So I am prepared to support the intention of this bill, and I would like to ask and urge the government, the minister, the members of the Treasury bench to stop and reflect on what is really intended here, and that is simply an attempt to give to the people charged with protecting the rights of children the same right we give to the public accounts of this province and to the Ombudsman of this province.

The Auditor comes to this Chamber, the Ombudsman comes to this Chamber, and surely those people who are charged with protecting and investigating our actions relative to children should receive no less respect than those other two.

We say, when it is an issue that affects us, when it affects an adult, when we go before the Ombudsman, that in order to ensure the independence of that office that they report to this Chamber. We should do the same for the Child Advocate. That is all we are asking for in this bill, and I would like to see this House adopt it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: As previously agreed, this matter will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and the

honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Bill 203—The Health Care Records Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), Bill 203, The Health Care Records Act; Loi sur les dossiers médicaux, standing in the name of the honourable member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 205—The Ombudsman Amendment Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman, standing in the name of the honourable member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this very good amendment, which I think could easily be supported by all three parties, is to expand the authority of the Ombudsman to investigate complaints within the education system. That would include complaints by children or teachers or administrators or trustees, or indeed it could be complaints about teachers or complaints about administrators or complaints about trustees.

Why is this necessary? Well, first of all it is necessary because the Ombudsman currently does not have jurisdiction to investigate these kinds of complaints, so that is an obvious rationale for this bill.

Secondly, there are very limited avenues now for anyone within the educational system to complain. For example, if a parent thinks that a child has been wrongly treated or unfairly treated, the parent has recourse to talk to the teacher and to take their concern to the principal and, if still not satisfied, to go to the administration, and indeed to the school trustees.

I suppose the ultimate avenue of appeal would be to the minister himself or herself. However, what

usually happens is that the minister says, I am sorry, I cannot interfere in a matter because it is the responsibility of a local school board; therefore it is in their jurisdiction; and would refer it back to the school division to investigate.

In fact, I have been involved with complaints from parents where an individual contacted the minister's office. I, myself, have phoned the minister's office and talked to staff and knew what the response of the minister was, and namely it was to refer the matter back to the local school division. So I know from personal experience that this is what happens.

A parent or a teacher or a principal or anyone in the system, of course, can take a concern to a trustee or a superintendent that would suggest that they take it close to the top of the administrative structure and the political structure of the local school division, but of course it is much more difficult then to get redress for the problem.

Why is that? Because the parent or teacher or anyone with a complaint, of course they have the right to go to the board. They may correspond with a board and may appear as a delegation and have a brief to the board. Then what happens? Well, the board then delegates responsibility to the administration to investigate. Perhaps the board designates the superintendent to investigate, and the superintendent in turn may delegate that investigation to a deputy or assistant superintendent or someone down the line. Then the report goes back up the administrative ladder to the board. I would suspect that in the vast majority of cases, the administration would report to the board in a way that was favourable to the administration. I would not suggest that there would be a cover-up, but there may be damage control.

The administration may have a self-interest in protecting a teacher or protecting a principal or protecting a school or a reputation or whatever, and so an organization investigating itself is not a very fair way of doing it. In fact, one could say there is a lack of objectivity, and there is a perception that there is a lack of justice. Not only must justice be done, but justice must be seen to be done. This is an aphorism that we usually hear in connection with the courts, but I think that this could apply to anything and any jurisdiction and any organization, that not only must justice be done but justice must be seen to be done. I think this is as true in the education system as it is in the courts.

Of course, the most common example is the police. When there is a complaint against the police, and if the police conduct an internal investigation, we have a situation where the police investigate the police. Then the public, if they do not get the kind of report or response or recommendation that someone be punished, then they say, well, no wonder we had a situation where the police were investigating the police. Why would we expect it to be any different, or why would we expect it to be fair? That is why we have organizations like the Law Enforcement Review Agency. We have external agencies with civilians on them to investigate the police, and this is the way it should be. Similarly, I think, the same argument can be made in a school division that there should be a third party, an independent body to investigate complaints.

The Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) and her department have talked about educational reform, and for 17 months there has been a study of The Public Schools Act. I think there are good reasons why there should be a review of public education in Manitoba. Just one area that I think needs to be reformed, and it may not even be covered under The Education Act, but an area that needs improvement is the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

I am a parent with two children in Winnipeg School Division No. 1, and I have been very involved in their education both at home and in the school.

I have been on the Ralph Brown parent council, the English-Ukrainian bilingual parents committee at Ralph Brown School, the parent council at Isaac Newton School, the parent council at Sisler High School, and I was asked to be a representative by Sisler parents at the Sisler-Rosser advisory council, and I was asked by the Isaac Newton parent council to be on the St. John's advisory council.

In fact, I went to a meeting of parents, and they did not know who I was. I was a little bit chagrined, but it was rather interesting because they asked me if I would let my name stand as president. I said, well, I would like to be president of this organization, but as the MLA for Burrows I think it would be inappropriate, so I declined to be elected president. However, I was listing all those organizations to show my involvement as a parent. In fact, my wife has been on all the parent councils that I named, and in many ways has been more involved than I have because she has probably gone to more

meetings than I have, and has also been treasurer of the parents council—[interjection]

* (1620)

Well, the minister asks about Immaculate Heart. I was at a—sorry, the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer); I did not really intend to promote him so quickly. [interjection] He does not want it; he is a very smart man. He asks about a school in Burrows constituency. Well, I had the pleasure of attending a tea there a few weeks ago. I am always happy to go to a tea at any school and raise my profile with the people in the constituency of Burrows, regardless of whether it is a separate school or a public school. They were happy to see me; they even let me present a plaque honouring the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate. So I think they were happy to see me; they sent me a nice thank-you letter for presenting this plaque.

I think there are occasions that all of us would recognize as nonpolitical, and certainly when you go as an MLA to an event in your constituency, they do not expect you to make political remarks at every occasion. It would not be appropriate to make political remarks on every occasion. They know that I am a member of the NDP caucus. They know what our party's position is on funding to separate schools—[interjection] And they love me anyway, as the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) said. I thought people were very friendly and very welcoming. It may have been the first time they had a New Democrat at their tea, but that did not bother me at all. They may have invited me because I am a minister. In fact, I invited myself, but they extended the invitation in any case. They were very gracious.

Getting back to the need for educational reform. If one reads letters to the editor of daily newspapers, and if you read articles in papers like the Globe and Mail and elsewhere about education and even op-ed articles in papers like the Free Press, you would assume that there is a huge interest in our society about education and the need for educational reform. Indeed, there is some interest, but what I find quite surprising and disappointing is that this interest is not reflected at the local schools, at least not the ones that I have been involved in. It is surprising and it is disappointing, but one would think that, given the level of public concern, there would be many, many more parents attending parent-teacher interviews and parent-council meetings.

The best parent-council meetings that I ever went to were at Ralph Brown School, and I do not think there were ever more than 20 parents at an average parent-council meeting. In the last year, I have been at many parent-council meetings where there were five to 10 parents in attendance. Probably the most disappointing attendance has been at the high school where I go to a parent-council meeting, and there are at least a thousand students and frequently only 5 to 10 parents at a parent-council meeting.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Urban Affairs): Get back to the topic.

Mr. Martindale: Well, the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Ernst) would like me to get back on the topic. I think it is relevant to The Ombudsman Act to talk about involvement of parents in schools, because what we are talking about is empowerment of people in the system to have investigations done by an independent third party, namely the Ombudsman.

If the educational system can only investigate itself, then why should people get involved? Why should people complain? What recourse do they have? Well, I suppose the only recourse they have is that once every three years they can turf out trustees if they are unhappy with the educational system that they have. So that is a democratic right that people have and they can exercise that right and they do exercise that right although, unfortunately, the voter turnout in places like Winnipeg School Division No. 1 is very low.

In the civic election three years ago the voter turnout in places—well, I think the average in Winnipeg was about 30 percent. [interjection] Thirty-seven percent? In places like the north end there were areas where I think the turnout was about 23 percent. So probably people are not coming out just to vote for trustees or just to vote for councillors. They are probably indicating on their ballot who they want for both those offices. So probably the percentage vote was very similar for school trustees and for city councillors.

Of course, we all know that that changed dramatically last fall, mainly because of a contested civic election. I suppose some of that could have been attributed to very heavy television advertising by the successful mayoralty candidate, who spent I believe in the range of \$175,000 buying the election. That, of course, resulted in a very high voter turnout

and generated a great deal of interest. [interjection] Of course I did not vote for the mayor of Winnipeg.

Getting back to the point that I was trying to make about the need for educational reform, one of the things that we need to do is involve parents much more in the educational system. Why? Because currently there seems to be a lack of concern. Now I suppose that could be because parents assume that the school board and the school are doing a good job. On the other hand, it could be that parents are intimidated, and I think that is very true when the parents have less education than the teachers. It is hard for many parents to talk to teachers. Perhaps they feel inadequate. Perhaps they feel embarrassed by their own lack of education, and so they do not get involved in the school.

I think there are some solutions that we should be looking at when talking about educational reform. One suggestion would be to make schools more parent friendly. I know that this was certainly the case at Isaac Newton School when they had a community improvement committee, and I was part of that community improvement committee for a couple of years when they were deciding how to spend money from the Core Area Initiative.

So when the parent council met, it was always around supertime and they would order in food. So we had pizza. We had Chinese food. We had Ukrainian food. Every meeting we tried different kinds of food, and that seemed to guarantee a good attendance. So, that was a good idea. I do not know who paid for it and how it was paid for, but it certainly had a very positive effect on attendance, which subsequently has greatly suffered since the community improvement project is over and the food is over too.

This reminds me that at the official opening ceremony of the community improvements, at the official dedication, there were representatives from the three levels of government, and I was allowed to participate as the MLA for Burrows. However, I am getting the signal, so I will not elaborate on that.

I think, secondly, we need a partnership between parents and teachers. We need more community involvement. To their credit, Winnipeg School Division No. 1 trustees are drafting new policies in a number of areas. One of those areas has to do with community-based decision making and school-based decision making. What they want is more parental involvement, and I commend them for

that. I think the new policy will go a long way towards providing that.

The final point I would like to make is that the education of parents is tied to the education of children. What happens when parents go back to school? Well, one of the very positive effects is that the marks of their children improve. Perhaps it is because they see the parents studying, and so the children study more.

In Burrows constituency we have a very high illiteracy rate, so we need to get many more adults back into the school system. Fortunately, we have programs like the Open Doors Adult Literacy Program, and I am on their advisory committee. They have been doing some very exciting things. The students in that program wrote their own book, and the stories in that book are wonderful stories. Some of them are poignant; some of them are sad; some of them are happy. But it is upgrading the education of their students and encouraging them to get more education to improve themselves. I believe that will have a positive effect on their children.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, we hope that all parties will support Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act. Thank you.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to add my comments on Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act, that was introduced by my colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). I think this is an important piece of legislation, because it will, as my colleague for Burrows has indicated, effectively give a voice to those now in our communities that do not have a voice to allow them to adjudicate or have some form of referee process put in place, so that they can air their concerns and have their issues or their concerns addressed by an independent party.

This is something that, in my estimation, should have taken place some time ago, something that has been lacking within the education system. I know that the Ombudsman has played a significant role in this province as they attempt to assist the people in the province that have had dealings with various government departments or agencies where they have not received an answer or a satisfactory answer, Mr. Speaker. So the Ombudsman has played a role in that.

* (1630)

In cases that I have dealt with, in particular with the Workers Compensation department under the Minister of Labour (Mr. Praznik), I know that there are individuals even within my own community that have had to utilize the services of the Ombudsman to assist them in determining whether or not their arguments that they have used in putting forward their case on their concerns are indeed accurate.

Of course, the Ombudsman has to also act in an advisory capacity as well. I know that one individual in particular had been battling with the Workers Compensation Board for a considerable period of time, in fact, years. In that sense the agency had continually told him that they would not pay any benefits to him for an injury he had sustained in his workplace. He had battled the agency and gone through the complete appeal process to no avail, and the agency was steadfast in their refusal to accept his claim.

He had gone through the other processes that were available to him, and eventually—and this has happened recently—he has gone to the Ombudsman. It is my understanding that the individual has had his case accepted by the Ombudsman, and the Ombudsman has written to the Workers Compensation Board asking them to review the matter and to take the necessary steps to comply with the legislation that is in place, something that, it was obvious by the letters that I have seen, the Workers Compensation Board had not done to that point over the period of years.

I know, in my own dealings with the Ombudsman, Mr. Speaker, and I have had some dealings through the Ombudsman's office, not a lot, but occasionally I have to, as the MLA for my community, make use of the services of the Ombudsman. In particular, I have a plant within my community that has, I believe, been creating health concern problems for the residents of my community.

I have attempted, as the MLA for Transcona, on many, many occasions over the last two and a half years to have the Department of Environment play an advocacy role in representing the needs and the interests of the residents of my community. The Department of Environment, of course, did not want to play that role, and they can still continue to take the position that they are not interested in playing that role as acting as an advocate on behalf of the residents of my community with respect to plant emissions.

In that sense, we have had to go to the Department of Environment and ask to see some of their files. Now, while we have been granted access to some of the files, we were not granted access to all of the files.

(Mr. Bob Rose, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Through the freedom of information process, there is also an appeal mechanism that would allow myself or members of the public the opportunity to go through the Ombudsman's office. The Ombudsman then would appoint one of their investigators, upon a written request to them, to go to the department, the government agency that is involved and to investigate the matter.

If in their determination there is information that is on the files to which access was not granted, then the Ombudsman can come forward with a recommendation indicating that access to that file information that was denied should be granted.

In my case, where I put forward the Freedom of Information request, the Ombudsman investigated, found that there were grounds, after their investigation, indicating that I should be given access to that file information and had communicated that to me. So in that sense, I was then given the opportunity to have an appeal mechanism that was there and available to me to allow me to have some recourse for something that had been previously denied to me by the Department of Environment.

Now, it is my understanding, Mr. Acting Speaker, that this particular piece of legislation, Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act, as I said earlier, something that is lacking within this province. There are other departments that fall under the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman in this province and give the people of the province the opportunity to have some recourse, some appeal, but it is my understanding that the Ombudsman has absolutely no power to investigate matters raised by the public in dealing with school boards.

It is unfortunate that that is the case, because school boards and school trustees, themselves as individuals, of course, are elected by residents of the community and, in that sense, they should be responsible to and representative of the residents that elect them.

It has been my experience, since I was elected in 1990, and I have had constituents come to me and raise concerns with me about their inability to

access certain information within school boards and, in particular, school board budgets. Now it is my understanding that school trustees are not subject to The Ombudsman Act, so, of course, they did not have the appeal mechanism there for them.

So the residents came to me and they asked me to take part in the process to assist them in trying to achieve the information that they desired, the information that they needed to come to a decision on whether or not the actions being done by the school trustees were indeed valid and, of course, representative of what the community needs were.

Now the residents communicated with the school trustees in person. They made presentation to the school board meetings. They wrote to the school board. They wrote to the administration of the school division, but they were denied access to the budget information they were seeking, Mr. Acting Speaker. Now they had found that they had no appeal mechanism, and they could not get the detailed budget information that they wanted. So they approached me as the MLA for the community.

I took their concerns and brought them to this House during the Estimates debate for the Department of Education. Now in my questions of the Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) I put the case of the residents to the minister. What the minister indicated to me is a matter of record through Hansard, but the gist of the conversation went that the minister did not have the authority to impose his will upon the school trustees. In other words, he could not force them to release the detailed information that the residents wanted.

The minister says that the school trustees have an obligation to the community and that the trustees must release him some information, but they do not have to release all of the information, and that the residents had wanted some precise detailed information upon some of the spending practices of trustees in the division for my community. So I gave that information back to my constituents. They went back to the school board, and then they found that the school board was still stubborn in their position. It would not release the information.

Had this act been in place, The Ombudsman Amendment Act, the residents in this case would then have been able to write to the Ombudsman and have brought that matter to that department's attention. That department, the Ombudsman's department, then would have investigated the

matter and then would have advised my constituents on the decision by the Ombudsman's office. That appeal process or that appeal mechanism was not available to the people.

So the residents were left without recourse in this matter, Mr. Acting Speaker, and that is why I think that this piece of legislation is important as it would give that appeal mechanism not only to the residents of the community, but to the children, the teachers, the administrators, to the community at large to give them that appeal mechanism that is currently not available to them.

I often hear comments in this House here, and members opposite say quite often that they want to have some constructive suggestions brought forward to them and hopefully members would quit being negative or just critical for the sake of criticism. I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, that this is a constructive piece of legislation that is brought forward by my colleague the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak). I hope that the members opposite would seriously consider supporting this legislation, because it would empower the parents, it would empower the children and, indeed, all residents of the community, some appeal mechanism that is currently not available.

We often say we want to have public participation in the democratic process, so that we have to be responsible and representative of the people, of the communities, in which we live. We want to have public participation in the education process. We want the public to be involved in that, not only in the education of the children, but also in the decision making of the school trustees as they make decisions that affect our children's future, not only in the education aspect, but on the programs that are available to develop their minds and their bodies as they move through the education process. We want to improve the quality of education, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (1640)

I think that this bill would go a long way toward improving that quality of education because it would give people the opportunity to address the concerns that they have and to hopefully resolve them in a fair manner. By giving the Ombudsman the power to make decisions on matters brought to their attention, to act as a third party arbitrator or an adjudicator, I believe would instill a sense of fairness

back into the decision-making process, something which is currently not there.

I think the public would welcome changes like this. I know I have had discussions with constituents of mine who have raised matters of concern in their dealings with the school board and that when I have raised this matter with them, the possibility of having this appeal mechanism, they were supportive of this initiative. They thought it was a good step. It was a positive move, a move in the right direction and it would improve the quality of education and make the trustees, in fact all elected representatives, responsible and not exclude one specific group by way of school trustees. It would give a voice to the parents to resolve disputes at the base level in dealing with the school board, so there would be no need, at least hopefully no need, to have those matters brought before MLAs to be brought to this Chamber, except in more serious circumstances.

The government talks about education reform. I know this is something that has been talked about a fair amount. I know that there have been serious negative impacts upon my community by the so-called reform, and that we have not seen in my community, at least to this point, Mr. Acting Speaker, any positive changes.

This bill will be a positive change to the education process. We, as members in this House, all of us, if we are supportive of this, play a positive role in changing education for the better. We want to bring the community-based decision-making level down to the community level. We want the community to play a role in that process. I believe that this would be a relatively low cost change by giving a voice to the children and parents of our community. I believe that it would contribute to improving the quality of education in Manitoba.

I hope that all members opposite, when they have the opportunity to debate this particular piece of legislation and to review this legislation in its content, will be supportive of it, because I think it will improve the responsibility of school trustees within their own communities. I hope that they will view this positively and we can hopefully expect their support when this comes to a vote, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to add my comments on this legislation.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Acting Speaker, yes, I have something to say about this

amendment. You may not agree with it, but I do have some comments to put on the record.

Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise and speak in favour of a bill that is before the House, which is unusual given the fact that most of the very light legislative agenda that we have before us are bills from the government side.

To my way of thinking, most substantive bills that have been presented before this House this session are bills that have been brought forward by the opposition. I refer specifically to Bill 200, the act to put in place a Children's Advocate, and Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act.

I think, Mr. Acting Speaker, there are some similarities between these two acts and some similarities in regard to the problems that our society is facing that have led to these two private members' bills being put before the Legislature this session.

As my colleagues have stated, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), when he proposed this legislation in December, and my colleagues the members for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) in their discussions today, this act would allow for the Ombudsman to deal with issues that arise out of concerns being expressed by parents or individuals involved with the public school system.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this act is, as the member for Kildonan stated in December, a very simple but effective piece of reform, simple because it is a very short piece of legislation that would be very simple to implement, simple and progressive because it would allow for access by the users of the public school system to an appeal process that they currently do not have available to them.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the public school system in the province of Manitoba is becoming increasingly the court of last resort. The problems that face us as a society, the social problems and the economic problems and the family problems that face us all in Manitoba today are played out often in the classrooms and in the schoolyards of our public school system.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

The fact that many children go to school without adequate nourishment is a concern to us. The fact that many children come from dysfunctional families is a concern to us. As the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) put on the record this afternoon in a question to the Minister of Family Services (Mr.

Gilleshammer), the fact that many children actually have nowhere to go in this society of ours today is of deep concern to us, Mr. Speaker.

Many of those problems that are faced by us as a society as a whole, as I have stated, play themselves out in the public school system. The school system was not designed to deal with the quality and the quantity of problems that are facing the school system today.

The current Ombudsman Act does not provide for the Ombudsman to deal with those issues and those concerns. The school trustees are elected and are, therefore, not eligible to deal with these issues in many ways either.

The question is, is there currently an avenue of appeal, an avenue that families and people who are involved in the public school system can access when they find a concern with the school system? The answer, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid to say is currently there is not. Just as in the Department of Family Services the Children's Advocate is now in place—not completely to our satisfaction, but it is in place—which does allow for the children who are clients of the Family Services department to make presentation to a semi-independent advocate to deal with issues of concern about the services that they are receiving, so Bill 205 would parallel in the public school system. It would allow the Ombudsman to deal with issues of concern as they arise out of the public school system.

The current Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) and her predecessor in that portfolio have spoken extensively about the issue of reform, that the school system needs serious reformation. We will not, of course, on this side of the House deny that statement either, Mr. Speaker. However, as we have stated in many cases, we have a very different definition of reform from that expounded by the current government.

* (1650)

Bill 205, to our way of thinking, truly is a piece of legislation that would institute needed reform to the public school system. The reform that the Minister of Education is advocating is yet another case of offloading. It is yet another case of the province saying we do not want to take the responsibility that is mandated to us in legislation for the education of our children in this province. We do not have an economic strategy. Our province is declining in virtually every economic indicator. Our population

is decreasing. The problems are expanding, and the government, in the words of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson) today, stands aside.

They even stated publicly that their only response to the issues that are facing us today is to stand aside or to say, as the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) has stated, there is nothing we can do about the fact that we are losing thousands of jobs in one of our most important, historically and economically, sectors of our economy, that is the transportation industry. Five thousand jobs in three years, 5,000 families, Mr. Speaker, in the province of Manitoba in three years who have either no source of income or severely reduced sources of income. The highest paid, blue-collar jobs in the province, 5,000 of them have been eliminated.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one might ask what does this have to do with Bill 205, The Ombudsman Amendment Act? It has an enormous impact. [interjection] Well, I am certainly glad that the member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock) asked that question. I was hoping that I would not have to respond in a rhetorical fashion but could respond to an actual question. I would be delighted to respond.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): What is the capital of Iowa?

Ms. Barrett: The member for Osborne asks the member for Wellington what the capital is of the state that the member for Wellington considers her home state. The capital of Iowa is Des Moines.

Mr. Speaker, to return to what is a very serious matter, the fact that the province of Manitoba has lost in the last three years 5,000 very well-paid jobs in the transportation sector has a great deal to do with the situation that our public schools find themselves in. Economically, it means that tax base that the school divisions—I would suggest largely in the school division of Transcona-Springfield—used to be able to rely on has been diminished by the loss of those high-paying jobs. The tax base has been further eroded by the lack of the spin-off economic effects that those 5,000 jobs had on the local and provincial economy.

As well, the impact on those families—not only the purely economic factors have created a crisis in our education system, but the impact on those families being able to function in a constructive manner has been seriously jeopardized by the loss of these jobs,

these jobs and tens of thousands of jobs like them in the province, leading to the kind of social disorder that we are facing in Manitoba as a whole, and, as I have stated before, the kind of social disorder that is played out in our public school system.

The students, the teachers and the administrators in our public school system should not, Mr. Speaker, need to deal with those kinds of problems. They should not have to deal with them, because if there was an economic plan put in place by this province we would not have to deal with the fallout of tens of thousands of jobs being lost in the province of Manitoba. If the only economic strategy this government has shown is their statutory requirement to provide the basics under the social assistance scheme—and they have even managed to offload that particular program. Schools, in order to function most effectively and appropriately, in order to provide the atmosphere within which children can learn, teachers can teach, counsellors can counsel, and recreation programs can be undertaken, are missing because of the government's lack of action in the economic areas.

This amendment would at the very least allow the public schools, the children and the parents in the public school system, an avenue of appeal when they have seen something that they feel is very inappropriate in their public school system. It should be only one small element of a true reform in the education system which would go more to the heart of the matter of lack of resources, lack of commitment, lack of any overall strategy or any overall vision of what education can and should be for the children of Manitoba.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, we on this side have been able to provide a very simple piece of

legislation that would make a difference. It would be a start. It would be true reform, albeit on a small scale. We certainly hope that the minister and the government will actually take on the responsibilities that have been mandated to them through legislation and be responsible and show a degree of responsibility that has been sorely lacking in the past for the education of the children of Manitoba and support this measure.

One final, brief comment, Mr. Speaker, is that when the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) asked the then-Minister of Education, were there problems, and the Minister of Education said, no, the system is working very well because there have been virtually no appeals in the education area, the reason for that, we feel, is that the people in the system, parents in particular, do not trust the system as it currently stands. They feel the need for an independent appeal process, a need that we agree is there and should be addressed.

We believe that support by all three parties in this House for Bill 205 would be a small step in a very progressive direction. Thank you.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Are we proceeding with second reading of Public Bill 202?

Six o'clock? Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

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

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

Thursday, March 11, 1993

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Matter of Privilege

Health Care System Reform	
Chomiak	923
Manness	924
Lamoureux	924
Ashton	925

Presenting Petitions

Pharmacare System Reform	
Cheema	926
Improvement of Highway 391	
Ashton	926

Reading and Receiving Petitions

Implementation of No-fault Auto Insurance	
Ashton	926

Tabling of Reports

Annual Reports: Industry, Trade and Tourism; Fitness and Sport Directorates	
Stefanson	926
Third Quarter Report, Manitoba Lotteries Foundation	
Manness	926

Oral Questions

Consolidation of Health Services	
Chomiak; Orchard	926
Canadian Economy	
L. Evans; Manness	928
Personal Care Homes	
Cheema; Orchard	929
Overseas Students	
Friesen; Stefanson	930

Transportation Industry Employment	
Reid; Driedger	931
Rail Line Abandonment	
Reid; Driedger	931
CN Rail Privatization	
Reid; Driedger	932
Headingley Jail	
Edwards; Praznik	932
Street Youth	
Cerilli; Gilleshammer	933
Public Child Care Centres	
Martindale; Gilleshammer	934
Video Lottery Terminals	
Lamoureux; Mitchelson	934

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Debate on Second Readings

Bill 5, Northern Affairs Amendment Act	
Barrett	935
Bill 8, Insurance Amendment Act	
Friesen	940
Bill 13, Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act	
Ashton	945

Private Members' Business

Debate on Second Readings - Public Bills

Bill 200, Child and Family Services Amendment Act	
Alcock	953
Bill 205, Ombudsman Amendment Act	
Martindale	954
Reid	957
Barrett	960