



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 22, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS****PRESENTING PETITIONS****Independent Judicial Review Committee**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of W. Summers, R. Santos, L. Marcaida and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to advise the minister of the need to consider establishing an independent review committee to report to the Legislature on ways in which our judicial system may better service the public of Manitoba.

Video Lottery Terminals

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of D. Frederick, E. Batke, D. Farly and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to consider permitting communities to hold plebiscites on VLTs, reducing gambling advertising and increasing funding for treatment of problem gamblers.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of E. Butler, G. Duncan, N. Duncan and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier to consider permitting communities to hold plebiscites on VLTs, reducing gambling advertising and increasing funding for the treatment of problem gamblers.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of M. Jenkins, G. Booth, H. Massey and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Premier to consider permitting communities to hold plebiscites on VLTs, reducing gambling advertising and increasing funding for treatment of problem gamblers.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS**Independent Judicial Review Committee**

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? Dispense.

THAT an independent judiciary does not justify a total lack of public accountability; and

THAT the lack of public confidence and the level of frustration in our judicial system continues to grow.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to advise the minister of the need to consider establishing an independent judicial review committee to report to the Legislature on ways in which our judicial system may better serve the public of Manitoba.

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimnik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in

from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimnik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS the provincial government has embarked upon a project in which it is closing hospital kitchens and having hospital food transported in from Toronto for reheating; and

WHEREAS this proposal will not improve the quality of food but will cost hundreds of jobs to the provincial economy; and

WHEREAS on December 8th of 1997, the provincial cabinet staged a photo opportunity for the media in which government MLAs were served chicken breast from a chef flown in from Toronto for the occasion while the actual meal served residents that night was macaroni and peas; and

WHEREAS this proposal will result in more health care dollars being spent on questionable privatization projects; and

WHEREAS in December of 1997, the provincial government was forced to drop a similar privatization scheme involving home care which had been opposed by the clients, families and the public; and

WHEREAS once again the provincial government without consultation has committed itself to a privatization project which will likely cost taxpayers more money for a poorer quality service, thus forgetting the patients who deserve better care.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Health to consider immediately cancelling the hospital food proposal and concentrate on delivering quality health care instead of using health dollars to provide contracts for private firms.

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

THAT the Urban Shared Services Corporation (USSC) has announced plans to privatize laundry, food services and purchasing for the Winnipeg hospitals; and

THAT it is estimated that more than 1,000 health care jobs will be lost over the next year as a result, with many more privatized in the next two or three years; and

THAT under the terms of the contract, Ontario businesses will profit at the expense of Manitoba's health care system; and

THAT after construction of a food assembly warehouse in Winnipeg, chilled, prepared food will be shipped in from Ontario, then assembled and heated before being shipped to the hospitals; and

THAT people who are in the hospital require nutritious and appetizing food; and

THAT the announced savings as a result of the contract have been disputed, and one study by Wintemute Randle Kilimnik indicated that, "A considerable number of studies have compared costs of service delivery in health care between self-operation (public sector) and privatization. Invariably, privatization is more expensive."; and

THAT no one in Manitoba seems to benefit from this contract, especially patients.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospital food services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Committee of Supply

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Chairperson): Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has considered certain resolutions, directs me to report progress and asks leave to sit again.

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

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to table the report of the Provincial Auditor, the Value-for-Money Audits, Spring, 1998.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to table the Teachers' Retirement Allowances Fund 1997 Annual Report.

* * *

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I wonder if there would be leave to revert to Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees for the purpose of a report from the

Economic Development Committee reporting on Bills 48, 49 and 50. We would require leave for that.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to revert to Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees? [agreed]

* (1335)

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to have the honourable member for Pembina present the report from the Standing Committee on Economic Development? [agreed]

**Standing Committee on Economic Development
Third Report**

Mr. Peter Dyck (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Development): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the third report of the Committee on Economic Development.

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your Standing Committee on Economic Development presents the following as its Third Report.

Your committee met on Friday, June 19, 1998, at 9:30 a.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

At that meeting, your committee elected Mr. Dyck as its Chairperson.

Your committee heard representation on bills as follows:

Bill 47—The Brandon University Act; Loi sur l'Université de Brandon

Edward Lipsett, Private Citizen

Bill 48—The Mennonite College Federation and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur la Fédération des collèges mennonites et modifications corrélatives

*Edward Lipsett, Private Citizen
Victor Martens, Menno Simons College
Gerald Gerbrandt, Mennonite Bible College
Ed Buller, Mennonite College Federation*

Bill 49—The University of Winnipeg Act; Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg

*Edward Lipsett, Private Citizen
Geoffrey Scott, University of Winnipeg Faculty Association
Dr. Roger Kingsley, University of Winnipeg
Roger Coll, United Church of Canada*

Bill 50—The Universities Establishment Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la fondation des universités et modifications corrélatives

Edward Lipsett, Private Citizen

Your committee agreed to defer clause by clause consideration of Bill 47, The Brandon University Act; Loi sur l'Université de Brandon, until a future meeting of a Standing Committee.

Your committee has considered:

Bill 48—The Mennonite College Federation and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur la Fédération des collèges mennonites et modifications corrélatives

Bill 49—The University of Winnipeg Act; Loi sur l'Université de Winnipeg

Bill 50—The Universities Establishment Repeal and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la fondation des universités et modifications corrélatives

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

Mr. Dyck: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek, (Mr. McAlpine) that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon twenty-three Grade 5 students from Whyte Ridge Elementary School under the direction of Mrs. Ruthanne Dyck. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Vodrey).

We also have twenty Grades 4 to 12 students from Iberville Colony School under the direction of Mrs. Lee Stewart. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns).

Also, forty-seven Grade 5 students from Winkler Elementary School under the direction of Mr. Lawrence Siemens. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Judicial Inquiry 1995 Election

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the process under which elections take place, the integrity of that process and the respect for those democratic results are principles that underline this Legislature, in fact, underline all of democracy here in Manitoba.

New information from Mr. Darryl Sutherland, a native candidate in the Interlake, has stated that the PCs, the Manitoba PCs, paid all his expenses in the 1995 election campaign. Given the newness of these allegations, the seriousness of these allegations, the importance to the very principles of this Legislature, I would like to now ask the Premier to call a judicial inquiry so people like Mr. Sutherland can give testimony under oath for the sake of the whole democratic process here in the province of Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, these matters, these allegations, were ones that were raised,

I believe, by the New Democratic Party three days prior to the 1995 election campaign. They were then the subject of an investigation by Elections Manitoba, who are the nonpartisan objective review body that all of us, I believe, support. As parties in this Legislature, we choose to make decisions surrounding elections and all of the machinery of elections outside of any political influence or control. We put them in the hands of an organization such as Elections Manitoba, and we trust them to make the proper analysis and judgment on all issues surrounding the conceptions of election campaigns.

We have had that matter looked at, all of us. It was not our choice. It was Elections Manitoba's choice to respond to the allegations of New Democrats three days before the election campaign, and I have no reason to doubt or mistrust their findings in that analysis and investigation.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, we have learned a long time ago with this government that if they have something to hide, they will stonewall, and predictably and regrettably, this is what the Premier has done. Mr. Sutherland's allegations, his public allegations, his new information—in fact, Mr. Sutherland, according to his own statement, was not even interviewed or investigated by Elections Manitoba. The Premier knows that under The Evidence Act of Manitoba, a judicial inquiry can deal with any alleged attempt to corrupt or change an election result. It is clearly under The Evidence Act.

So I would like to ask the Premier: why will he not fulfill Mr. Sutherland's request so that he can divulge the sources of his finances, which he alleges is the Tory party? Why is the Premier afraid to have a judicial inquiry and have Mr. Sutherland testify under oath where he got the money and who was responsible for giving him that money?

* (1340)

Mr. Filmon: These allegations were ones that have been shopped around. I understand, even in the last week or two, the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) has been shopping them around to every available media outlet to see who would bite, Madam Speaker—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Crescentwood, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, I have not shopped anything around, and imputing the motive, that he is obviously imputing to me in that regard, is unparliamentary. He should stick to the issue of why he will not call a judicial inquiry.

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Filmon: No, I have no further point of order to make on that, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Crescentwood does not have a point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, to respond to the question.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the information that has been alleged in the past with respect to any impropriety has been turned over to Elections Manitoba. They have chosen to interview people and examine people, and under those circumstances, they have decided—[interjection] That is why we have an independent body like Elections Manitoba, so that we do not deal with allegations of questionable intent and of questionable substance, that we have them looked at by Elections Manitoba.

There is a process in place. That process has been followed, and Elections Manitoba, I trust their judgment. If members opposite do not trust their judgment, then they ought to go and make that complaint and allegation to Elections Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, this is Mr. Sutherland's first statement to the public. Mr. Sutherland was not even interviewed by Elections Manitoba, and it is Mr. Sutherland who is now confirming the Tories funded his campaign. I would think if the government could appoint Ted Hughes to study the integrity of the justice system dealing with the Pollock affair in 1991 and said,

because of the stature and prominence of this case, an independent judicial inquiry is required, why will the Premier not have an independent judicial inquiry with the power to subpoena, the power to take sworn statements? Why is he afraid to have his staff and his campaign organizers appear before a judicial inquiry as we did with Ted Hughes in the Pollock affair?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I repeat: I will put the integrity of Elections Manitoba up against—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: —the politically motivated allegations of members of the New Democratic Party any day, any time.

* (1345)

Madam Speaker: The honourable Leader of the official opposition, with a new question?

Mr. Doer: Yes, a new question, Madam Speaker. Mr. Sutherland has alleged that the money came from the PC Party and that the Premier's people were involved. Mr. Sutherland, under The Elections Manitoba Act return, who is now claiming he got this money from Conservatives, has filed a return that he donated \$4,913 in 1995 to his own campaign. When you compare that to the Premier who donated \$1,000, to Mr. Radcliffe who led the list of MLAs in this Chamber or on the opposite side in this Chamber with \$2,300, people like Mr. Ernst, \$1,300, it looks like Mr. Sutherland donated five times more money than the Premier or more than four times more money to the Premier. He donated more money than quite well-off Conservatives to their own campaigns. How does the Premier square this—the \$4,913 donation to himself—with other donations that have been made by members of this Chamber when Mr. Sutherland is now saying that the money came from the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I think the member opposite makes my point. He is alleging either that Mr. Sutherland lied the first time or that he lied the second time. That does not necessarily make the grounds upon which we should have any further investigation, especially when you have a witness whose credibility

is certainly in question and the matter has already been looked into by Elections Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Well, the last time I looked, Madam Speaker, this kind of money does not grow on trees, but Mr. Sutherland is now claiming that it grew on the trees of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba. These are serious allegations of corruption right in the Premier's Office.

Former Tory candidate, Tory candidate in 1995, Mr. Sigurdson attended a meeting with Mr. Sokolyk, a person who is at the right hand of the Premier, and Mr. Aitken in April of 1995. When Mr. Aitken, the campaign manager for the Progressive Conservative Party in Interlake, claimed that the money had been passed on to the aboriginal candidates, Mr. Sigurdson alleges, Madam Speaker, that his chief of staff said job well done. Why will you not have your chief of staff and yourself testify under oath about your connections with the funding of Mr. Sutherland, as requested, in terms of an inquiry?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I remind the Leader of the Opposition that that same Mr. Sigurdson's earlier allegations against the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), which were proven to be false, were brought here by the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) again. This is the kind of false information, this is the kind of sleaze mongering that we get from the member for Crescentwood every time, and his Leader now stands up to support that. Well, they are welcome to it. They are welcome to it.

* (1350)

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 492 indicates very clearly that the language used by the First Minister involving the member for Crescentwood is unparliamentary. I would like to ask you to not only call to order on this but ask that the First Minister of this province answer very serious allegations about political corruption in this province leading right to his own office. Will you please have him come to order and answer the very serious questions we are raising in this House?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I would ask that the honourable First Minister withdraw the word "sleaze." It has been ruled unparliamentary on two previous separate occasions.

Mr. Filmon: I will withdraw the term, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister.

* * *

Mr. Doer: If the Premier had nothing to hide, if members opposite have nothing to hide and Mr. Sokolyk has nothing to hide, why will they not just have a judicial inquiry and clear the air? What are they afraid of in terms of this process? Mr. Sale and Mr. Evans, Interlake, attended a meeting with Mr. Sigurdson on January 6, 1998, which was attended by the same Mr. Aitken who was present at the meeting with Mr. Sigurdson, with Mr. Sokolyk in 1995. Mr. Aitken also confirmed that he had stated, Mr. Sokolyk had stated job well done when he was made aware that the money had passed from the Tories to the Native Voice candidate in Interlake, a point that Mr. Evans is willing to testify to and Mr. Sale is willing to testify to.

Given the fact that we have Mr. Sutherland, Mr. Sigurdson, Mr. Aitken in the presence of two MLAs testifying that the money came from the Conservative Party to Mr. Sutherland, why will the Premier not have a judicial inquiry so Mr. Sokolyk, other members of the Conservative Party that were involved in this, the campaign manager for the Interlake, all can testify under oath for the sake of the integrity of the election process here in Manitoba? What have you got to hide?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the members of our party who have been alleged to be involved were interviewed by Elections Manitoba. Elections Manitoba did their investigation and they have reported. I will put my faith in their credibility versus the credibility of witnesses who have already been demonstrated to have been untruthful in their statements.

Judicial Inquiry 1995 Election

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, during the 1995 election we in the Interlake felt that we were running against two Tory campaigns, one against the official Progressive Conservative candidate and the other against an independent candidate who was widely rumoured at that time to have been financed by the Conservative Party. Those rumours were confirmed to me personally by Al Aitken, the Conservative Party organizer for the Interlake, in a meeting we had with him in January. Will the Premier do what has been asked of him and call a public judicial inquiry so that I can give my version, Mr. Aitken can give his version so that we can testify about this matter under oath?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I repeat that I am satisfied from my investigations, as Elections Manitoba was satisfied from their investigations, that our party and our central campaign were not involved in that. The individual that he named was the subject of inquiry. He acknowledged that he had had various meetings. In fact, he talked about his role, and it was in the news media at that time.

I repeat: the matter was investigated by Elections Manitoba, and they are an independent party. They are not people who are politically motivated, as New Democrats opposite are.

* (1355)

Mr. C. Evans: Madam Speaker, we have new evidence that is now in place. Will the Premier allow the implicated parties, Darryl Sutherland, Kim Sigurdson and others who have been implicated in this new evidence from the 1995 election, a chance to do so under oath? Will he call this public judicial inquiry?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, this clarifies exactly the substance of the allegations. These are two people who both have been demonstrated publicly to have falsified information in the past, who are the substance and sum of the allegations that New Democrats will be putting forward. I will put my faith behind Elections Manitoba.

Mr. C. Evans: Madam Speaker, again I ask the Premier if he will provide a public judicial inquiry so

that we may testify, so that I may testify, so that others may testify on the allegations. If this Premier does not feel that those that have made accusations are credible, then will he provide us with an opportunity to have the others, Mr. Cubby Barrett and Mr. Taras Sokolyk, testify under oath?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I repeat: that is what the process was that resulted in the inquiry by Elections Manitoba, a nonpartisan group in Manitoba that is not controlled by any party in this Legislature, that I believe is supported by all parties in this Legislature, and that is why they conducted their review. I put my faith and trust in them.

Judicial Inquiry 1995 Election

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, Elections Manitoba and Darryl Sutherland have both confirmed that he was never interviewed. He was the candidate in receipt of \$4,913 for his election. Allan Aitken, uncoerced in a meeting with four people, confirmed the entire story of a plan to recruit and run aboriginal candidates. He confirmed that story to myself and to my colleague and to Mr. Sigurdson. Mr. Sigurdson signed an affidavit to the extent that he confirmed the story having happened, and he confirmed it before our meeting in January. These are new facts, new evidence—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Will the honourable member for Crescentwood please pose his question now.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the First Minister not recognize that there is substantial and extensive new evidence which was not on the record, which was not on the record for Elections Manitoba in their so-called complete investigation? Will he recognize that there is money that has flowed, that there are meetings that took place? These allegations are there. Why will he not call a judicial inquiry?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, the so-called new evidence is brought forward based on the comments of two individuals who have been demonstrated to have falsified information in the past.

I would rather put my faith in Elections Manitoba and their investigation.

* (1400)

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Crescentwood, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the First Minister not acknowledge that an Elections Manitoba investigation, which failed to even talk to the recipient of the money that came to finance his campaign from the PC Party, failed to even talk to him, can hardly be used as evidence of a complete and thorough investigation? Will he not recognize the investigation was incomplete and call a judicial inquiry?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, without accepting any of the preamble from the member opposite, all he brings forward is so-called new allegations by two individuals who have already been demonstrated to have provided false information in the past. That is not the basis on which you call a new inquiry.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Crescentwood, with a final supplementary question.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, will the First Minister not recognize that a campaign manager for his own candidate in the Interlake confirmed all of these allegations? He confirmed them to two MLAs; he confirmed them to a former candidate. Will he not recognize that it is not just Mr. Sutherland's new evidence, it is Mr. Aitken's? He confirmed the whole story. Will he not recognize this is new evidence and call an inquiry?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, the members opposite continue to deal in innuendo and hearsay evidence, hearsay evidence from two individuals who have been demonstrated to have been given false information in the past. That is not the basis of throwing out—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, on a new question. Mr. Aitken, in conversation with myself and with Mr. Evans

and with Mr. Sigurdson, told us that the plan that he took part in was a plan that was hatched in the highest offices of the Conservative election campaign with Mr. Sokolyk, that when he met in the hotel, the Norwood Hotel, with Mr. Sokolyk and Mr. Sigurdson during the election campaign, he confirmed to Mr. Sokolyk that monies had been passed at the party's request, and the reply from Mr. Sokolyk was: good work; job well done.

Will the Premier not recognize that this is evidence that is both substantive and new, and it cannot simply be brushed aside as having been previously investigated by an investigation which was manifestly incomplete? Will he simply not do the right thing and call a judicial inquiry?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, Mr. Aitken was the subject of the inquiry that was conducted by Elections Manitoba. He was interviewed at that time. His role was enunciated publicly in the affair. I will place my faith in Elections Manitoba rather than the allegations of a New Democratic member of this House.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Crescentwood, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, a new question. Mr. Aitken confirmed to Mr. Evans, myself and Mr. Sigurdson, and in fact to others, that the Elections Manitoba investigation consisted of having a long discussion over coffee in a public restaurant. No sworn statement was ever taken. No written statement was signed. This was not a statement under oath. Mr. Aitken simply fenced and toyed with an investigation that was incomplete.

Will the Premier not recognize that Mr. Aitken was not sworn under oath? None, in fact, of the testimony taken was taken under oath. It is time for a judicial inquiry. Will he call it?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I repeat that I will put my faith in Elections Manitoba and their investigation. That is why they are there. They are there on a nonpartisan basis to represent all parties in this House. They have the responsibility to do these investigations, and I put my faith in them.

Physician Resources Foreign-Trained Physicians

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, once again, over the weekend there was an article that appeared in which it talks about foreign-trained doctors. Again, foreign-trained doctors are being somewhat neglected when we have the government of the day trying to bring in doctors from abroad.

My question is for the Minister of Health. Over the years, we have constantly asked what the government is doing with respect to the foreign-trained doctors, and we have not been able to deal with that issue. My question specific to the Minister of Health is: does the government have any intentions whatsoever to bring in programs or to deal with this issue once and for all?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the member for Inkster and I share the same interest in this particular area. There are two other parties involved in it that are not under direct control or, in some cases, even indirect control of government: obviously, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which is the licensing body, and of course, the University of Manitoba. We have been working with both to try to move them to the same conclusion that we have come, that more opportunity should be made available for foreign-trained physicians.

It is not a simple issue. There is a great complexity of the whole licensing scheme around physicians, and it is one that is a very restrictive one, one, some would argue, for good reason, others would argue for other reasons. But we are working away at it, and I wish, of course, for faster progress, but there are two bodies with which we have to deal.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask the minister to give consideration to the patients, in particular, in rural Manitoba and, in fact, to those who do have the expertise, do have the abilities, that need to get that internship program, so that in fact instead of sitting at home watching this government try and get from abroad to bring to Manitoba—their needs are not being met.

I ask the minister specifically: when can we anticipate that this issue is going to be dealt with? The government has been putting it off for years now.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the crux really of the issue is to prove qualifications and the ability to practise medicine in the province of Manitoba. The College of Physicians and Surgeons has that power, that authority, granted by this Legislature to be the governing body for licensing of physicians. The argument that they put forward continually is about ensuring that there is a proper check on qualifications, and not only qualifications to practise medicine but to be able to practise medicine in a style and a manner that is acceptable in the context of Canada and North America. One of the tests that seems to be a continual difficulty for foreign-trained physicians is, I believe, the Part 2 Examination which has to deal with style of practice, sensitivity and those types of issues.

So this is not just a simple question of yes or no by the ministry. It is one of checking and ensuring proper qualifications to practise medicine in the Canadian context.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I think there is a certain argument to be put forward.

Madam Speaker: Question.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I would ask the minister if he acknowledges that there is an argument that can be put forward with respect to cultural differences and that there are individuals—and I would ask the minister: does he feel that the 70 individuals that are often referred to do not have the types of qualifications that are required in order to be meeting some of the demand in rural Manitoba, or is it maybe, quite possibly, that the internship program is really what needs to be expanded, and there needs to be a better will towards these potential physicians?

* (1410)

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, two parts to the equation. One is the qualifications and training in the practice of medicine, which is a matter of verifying the standards of the schools in which education was obtained. That becomes very complex, and I would even suggest over the last number of decades, within colleges across the country, has become more and more restrictive as opposed to less restrictive. The second is one of style of practice and mannerisms of the country.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons has proposed some options to us. One, of course, is that of physician assistants, which would allow the licensing of certain individuals to be able to practise under a physician and gain the experience to be able to pass the Part 2 Examination. That is something we are examining now.

Judicial Inquiry 1995 Election

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, in any process of justice, justice must not only be done but seen to be done. In this instance, the key individual involved in the investigation, Mr. Sutherland, was never interviewed by Elections Manitoba. His funding of \$4,900 that he says came from the Tory party was never investigated by Elections Manitoba. Mr. Aitken was not under testimony under oath. Mr. Sokolyk, the Premier's chief assistant, was not investigated under oath. The Premier is acting as judge and jury saying we are going to accept that and we are not going to believe anybody else.

Madam Speaker, for the sake of justice, I am asking the Premier: if what he says is true, will the Premier be prepared to stand up and launch—and he ought to since he is Premier—an independent judicial review of this scandal to clear the air and clear the minds of all Manitobans, particularly the new evidence?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, you know, the members opposite always try to turn everything into a scandal. We see the motivation right here. Members opposite have access to institutions that we have set up as members of this House to guard and protect our rights in election campaigns. That is what Elections Manitoba is all about. It is nonpartisan. If members opposite want to argue that somehow they are partisan, that they are acting in a way that goes against fairness and the electoral process, then let them make that allegation.

The fact of the matter is that all of us, as political parties, co-operate to the fullest extent with Elections Manitoba. We on this side have always done that. We have made our people available, our information available, and that is why Elections Manitoba is able to do its job as well as I believe it does. If the members

opposite think that Elections Manitoba is a problem, is somehow acting in a partisan way, then they can make those accusations. They can go directly to Elections Manitoba and they can do that. But, you know, Madam Speaker, there is a certain irony to this, that all of this was investigated right after the election campaign when memories were fresh, when information was right at hand and all of those things.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to complete his response.

Mr. Filmon: And now, Madam Speaker, we have members opposite who claim to have acquired this information in January, over five months ago, but they waited until the last week of the Legislature to bring it all forward. They waited until then to try and create a scandal out of this. Why? For their own political interests. Why? Because they do not have any other issues upon which anybody should elect them, and that is why we have this whole thing happening today.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Kildonan, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Chomiak: Will the Premier not agree that, whatever the forum, be it criminal justice or inquiries or whatever, if a key witness was not investigated, if the key witness is Mr. Sutherland, if the key witness's financial accounts, which served as the very basis of the investigation, were not investigated, and if two other key witnesses were not investigated under oath—is it not incumbent upon the Premier as head of the government, as not being above the law, not acting as judge and jury, is it not his role to clear the air and to call a judicial independent inquiry to even prove his own case, never mind the allegations that are flowing from the mouths of those individuals who were not even investigated by Elections Manitoba? He has the power in The Evidence Act to do that, and he has done it before; he should do it now.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, as a lawyer, the member opposite should know that another one of the principles of justice is that it is up to the accusers to prove their case. Because they do not have substantive proof, they therefore want somebody else to have an

inquiry to try and get some proof, but the fact of the matter is another one of the principles is having credible witnesses. The two witnesses they have got, one has acknowledged or at least is now saying that he falsified the information the first time that he registered with Elections Manitoba, and the second one is the same one who made false allegations against the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns). So there is a certain degree of credibility lacking in the case, and that is the whole principle behind this so-called scandal. The scandal is that members opposite would seriously try and make this an issue in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: I have two rulings for the House.

During Question Period on June 2, I took under advisement, in order to review Hansard, a point of order.

It concerned an answer given by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) to a question asked by the honourable member for Swan River (Mrs. Wowchuk). The point of order raised by the House leader for the official opposition (Mr. Ashton) was that the minister was not responding to the matter raised. Having reviewed the Hansard transcript, I am ruling that there was not a point of order. The answer of the Minister of Family Services was relevant to the matter raised in the question.

During Question Period on June 4, 1998, I took under advisement, in order to review Hansard, a point of order raised by the government House leader (Mr. McCrae).

* (1420)

The point of order concerned a question posed by the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) which the government House leader asserted was out of order based on past rulings of Manitoba Speakers.

The honourable member for Elmwood asked of the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura): "Can he

confirm that several companies, including at least one Manitoba company, quoted lower prices than IBM for the actual hardware provided? Can he confirm that?"

The government House leader was correct that there were instances in the past where such a question was ruled out of order. However, in Manitoba, the practice has evolved where questions seeking confirmation have been routinely asked and allowed since the early 1990s. This is in step with Beuchesne which, in the most recent edition, has dropped the provision of prohibiting questions seeking confirmation. As Citation 410.(2) of the current edition of Beuchesne reads "While some previous guidelines"—for Question Period—"remain valid others have fallen into disuse."

The government House leader, therefore, did not have a point of order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Gimli Harbour Front

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, this past Friday I had the pleasure of participating in an important event in Gimli. There it was announced that the Manitoba government, the town of Gimli and the federal government will each spend \$600,000 towards the improvement of the Gimli harbour front. The expansion of Gimli's south harbour will strengthen its tourism and fishing industries and help the town prepare for the 1999 Pan American Games when it will play host to the sailing competition.

The harbour front project will be assisted with the help of funding from the Canada-Manitoba Economic Development Planning Agreement. The development of Gimli south harbour will see parking spaces increased, container storage expanded, the existing harbour dredged, the south harbour area expanded, boat berths constructed and a new wooden walkway developed along the new breakwater.

This project will play a significant role in helping Gimli capitalize on its freshwater fishery as well as its beaches, harbour and harbour front, yacht club and the town's Icelandic culture and heritage. The expansion will make Gimli one of the most significant inland

harbours of Canada and will provide the foundation for an exceptional tourism marketing program.

Enhancement of the Gimli harbour front will also create jobs and business opportunities in the community and in the Interlake region. This investment promises a substantial payoff in terms of future economic and tourism benefits for the Gimli area, and I would like to congratulate all three levels of government for co-operating on this very important project. Thank you.

Judicial Inquiry—1995 Election

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): When an election is held in any jurisdiction, Madam Speaker, the parties to the election expect it to be fought on fair grounds, and they expect the acts and the laws of the land to apply. When it appears that the laws of the land do not apply, every single statute that deals with this issue deals with it as a very, very serious matter, one of the most serious in all of our legal codes. Whole acts are put in place to ensure that elections are fairly fought.

Madam Speaker, allegations in regard to the funding of aboriginal candidates in three ridings in Manitoba were made shortly—in fact, before election day in 1995. Statements were taken from those making the allegations, signed statements, but those who were affected by the allegations, against whom the allegations were made, were either not searched out and spoken to at all or were spoken to in a very friendly manner over coffee in a restaurant. So far as we are aware, no sworn statements were taken, no statements under oath were taken. So far as we are aware, no bank records were subpoenaed, no attempts were made to ascertain where \$4,913.95 came from to a candidate who himself has now said it came from members of the Conservative Party.

Madam Speaker, these are not trivial allegations. These are new and serious allegations from four different individuals: a campaign manager, a candidate, another candidate and an official of the PC Party. Manitobans deserve to have the air cleared. All those who have been named, both pro and con on this issue, must have the opportunity to swear under oath and to give testimony before a judicial inquiry. Nothing less will satisfy justice in this case.

Killarney, Manitoba

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, when Marj Hocking composed a story promoting the town of Killarney as a retirement community, she did so by drawing on her 36 years of experience as a resident. Her article about the quality of life in Killarney, which she entered in the Canadian Living's national competition, won first prize and will be printed in the July edition. Canadian Living magazine, which reaches 2.2 million Canadians, picks top towns and cities in categories ranging from community spirit to gardening to sports. Killarney now has the honour of being designated the top community for retirement.

This kind of third party endorsement reaches millions of homes across our country, does a great deal to assist Killarney's efforts in promoting itself as a retirement haven. Ms. Hocking's comments are something out of a tourist guide and have captured the essence of what makes Killarney a unique community.

She wrote: situated on beautiful Killarney Lake, it offers everything retirees could possibly need in the social, recreational, cultural, spiritual, educational, and above all, friendship fields. In her article, she also touched on the personal care homes, restaurants, shopping facilities and parks in the area.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to represent the town of Killarney in this Legislature. With citizens such as Marj, who at age 90 continues to selflessly promote her community, Killarney and Manitoba are all the richer.

McIntosh Resignation Coalition

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I want to draw the attention of members of this House to a coalition of Manitoba high school and university students calling themselves the McIntosh Resignation Coalition, who are calling on the Conservative caucus to request the resignation of Manitoba's Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh). These students are angry because the minister has continually undermined, insulted and attacked students instead of working with all members of the education community to improve the education system.

The students raise a number of concerns which have been raised with us by many Manitobans. They are concerned about the offloading of education funding onto school divisions. We have heard from many rural divisions who are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of their students. They believe and they put it in writing to this government that they fear the quality of education is deteriorating in their jurisdictions.

The students also expressed their concerns that the rapid increases in students' fees are making it more and more difficult for ordinary families to have access to post-secondary education. They point to the absence of a fee policy. I know that the minister made promises as long ago as 1994 that there would be a fee policy forthcoming within 12 months. It is now 1998 and there is no fee policy on the horizon.

These students claim that the minister has argued that the delay is because of massive consultations with students. These students, on the other hand, argue that no such massive consultation has taken place, a point that we have raised many times in this Legislature.

We urge the minister and the government to respond to the many, many serious issues raised by these Manitoba students.

* (1430)

Central Manitoba Regional Health Authority

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Last Wednesday evening, I, along with several of my colleagues, had the opportunity to attend the Central Manitoba Regional Health Authority's annual general meeting. The theme of the meeting was, and I quote: Touching Tomorrow. It was seen throughout the hall. Posters illustrating students' views on health care covered the walls.

The students put a lot of time and effort into this competition, and my congratulations go to Kristen Olson, the regional finalist. Her poster graced the cover of the RHA's annual report and will also be featured on their new website. Kristen knows the value of a healthy lifestyle and wrote, and I quote: on my poster I put a girl thinking about healthy things. You should do all these and more. Some things are getting enough sleep,

eating healthy, exercising, having a good physical environment. It really is your health, your future.

By all accounts, the AGM was a successful event, allowing students and residents of the Central Region to meet with members of the governing board reviewing their financial statements and discuss issues of concern. I would like to commend the Central Manitoba RHA and executive for their efforts to improve the health and lifestyle of the 96,000 people of the region. The board has worked hard this year and has made great efforts to consult with the public. The community health needs assessment was an ambitious and successful project, especially for such a large region. This assessment has laid the groundwork for the RHA's endeavours over the next year.

Madam Speaker, the year ahead is a busy one for the Central RHA, but through consultation and a dialogue with Manitobans, I have every confidence that their health needs will be met both now and in the future. Thank you.

Committee Change

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for Monday, June 22 at ten o'clock be amended as follows: the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) for the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe). This substitution had been moved in the committee, by leave, this morning, and I am now moving the same substitution in the House so that the official records will be accurate.

Motion agreed to.

MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

Judicial Inquiry—1995 Election

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that under Rule 31, the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the need for a public judicial inquiry into new allegations that Darryl

Sutherland, an independent Native Voice candidate in the Interlake in the 1995 provincial election, was given illegal campaign contributions by Allan Aitken, the chair of the Progressive Conservative campaign in the Interlake, and Roland Cubby Barrett, a prominent fundraiser for the Progressive Conservative Party, and that the illegal contributions were directed by Taras Sokolyk, the Premier's chief of staff.

Motion presented.

Madam Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable member for Thompson, I believe I should remind all members that under our subrule 31.(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other parties in the House is allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately. As stated in *Beauchesne Citation 390*, urgency in this context means the urgency of immediate debate, not of the subject matter of the motion. In their remarks, members should focus exclusively on whether or not there is urgency of debate and whether or not the ordinary opportunities for debate will enable the House to consider the matter early enough to ensure that the public interest will not suffer.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I want to suggest to members of this Legislature that this, indeed, is extremely urgent, that so long as we have this issue with the clear questions of corruption at the highest levels of the Conservative Party and this government, as long as we see the evidence of clear dirty tricks in the last campaign, and as long as we see a Premier trying to stonewall, we need to debate this issue in the House.

I want to stress the connections here, starting with Taras Sokolyk, and I want to put in context this affects not only the credibility or lack thereof of the Conservative Party, but goes right to the heart of this government. We know that Mr. Sokolyk was the campaign manager in the last election. I have from Tory Talk June '95: the person behind the machine; the guy who worked to keep it all together; the campaign manager who refused to fail; his friends call him fearless.

Madam Speaker, the one Conservative we have to keep in mind—let us keep in mind Allan Aitken, former

aide to M.P., Tory M.P., Felix Holtmann, and campaign manager for the PC candidate in the Interlake in 1990 and 1995. What was Allan Aitken's role? Allan Aitken's role was contacting Darryl Sutherland, the aboriginal candidate, the Native Voice candidate, offering to finance his campaign. As the member for Interlake (Mr. C. Evans) pointed out before, he had to run against not one but two Tory-funded candidates in the last election. I want to add to that the PC candidate in St. Boniface.

I find this interesting, Madam Speaker, because the defence of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) earlier is essentially to call two Tories liars but say the other one is not lying, comments he will not make out of this House because he will be sued for it. We have a tough time in determining, in this particular case I might add, which Tories are lying on this particular case. The way to find out is by having an independent investigation, a judicial review of this matter.

Let us stress, Madam Speaker, why this is so important. Darryl Sutherland has made it clear that his campaign was funded by the Conservative Party. We have the witnesses who are both well-connected Conservatives involved in the campaign, but we also have reference to a meeting that took place between Allan Aitken and Taras Sokolyk. That conversation apparently went with Sokolyk saying—with the question of the funding of the aboriginal candidates—that it was a job well done.

I recall this—friends call him fearless, the person behind the machine, the guy who worked to keep it all together, the campaign manager who would not refuse to fail. What it does not reference in this, Madam Speaker, this campaign manager, the chief of the staff of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) would do anything to try and subvert the democratic process, including funding bogus candidates in three critical seats in the last election. That is unacceptable, and it is particularly unacceptable to see once again the disgusting attitude of this government when it comes to aboriginal people in this province, and aboriginal people throughout this province are disgusted by this government's actions.

There is only one way to clear the air, Madam Speaker. We cannot do it through any other opportunity, an isolated grievance or any other matter.

The way to clear the air is to have the debate today so that we can try and persuade the Filmon government to listen, the Premier to stop stonewalling, to do the right thing, deal with new evidence that has come forth in the last few months that shows clearly that Darryl Sutherland's campaign was financed by the Conservative Party right up to the top level with Taras Sokolyk.

I say the longer this government tries to stonewall, the more it will be the question on people's minds: why is the Premier not anxious to have this matter dealt with, with people under oath putting their statements on this issue before? Perhaps it is because the Premier himself does not want to be in a position of being called to testify, because I question on the public record today, if it involved Taras Sokolyk, the Premier's right-hand man, what did the Premier know about this and is that perhaps the reason why he chose to stonewall today? This is corruption. This indeed is the most clear evidence of dirty tricks we have seen, perhaps with the exception of 1988 in this province, and I say—[interjection] Well, members mention Jim Walding, and we will deal with that because that, too, will come to the fore. But I say today we are dealing with a government and a political party that has shown that it cares nothing about the use of dirty tricks. This taints the democratic process. We want the investigation. We want the judicial inquiry. We want a debate today so we can persuade the government to listen to the people of Manitoba who will be wanting explanations about this. That is why we want the debate today. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1440)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the presentation made by the honourable member for Thompson, in support—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to the words of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), which he uttered this afternoon in support of his application under Rule 31 dealing with matters of urgent public importance, that the business of the House be set aside so that we could spend the day discussing the matters he is speaking of.

Now, Madam Speaker, this particular procedure in our rules is there so that we can deal with matters of urgent public importance, and I am assuming the honourable member for Thompson gave appropriate notice to Your Honour with respect to his intentions to raise this matter today. So I do not really think I need to deal with that, but he is raising allegations in this House which he thinks justifies setting aside the business of the House to deal with this matter of urgent public importance.

As I said, I listened carefully to what the honourable member said, and I wrote it down as he said it. He said that we have new evidence that has come forth in the last few months. Now this House has been sitting for the last few months, and if, as all the comments of honourable members opposite would indicate or suggest today, this is such an important matter and of urgent and pressing importance, then why has it taken them months to bring it to the attention of the House?

Madam Speaker, the position being taken here today is laughable. What it demonstrates to me is that we have an extremely frustrated opposition party groping to get onto the other side of the House and return to power, which I suggest is the highest case of dreaming in technicolour. The honourable members opposite have failed after all these months in the House to raise any issues that should somehow do damage to this government, so they sit on allegations for several months. They sit on allegations for several months, and then on this day in June of this year bring forward allegations that, by their own admission, have been in existence now for the last few months.

Madam Speaker, this is about the worst case put to try to justify setting aside the ordinary business of the House for a debate on a matter of urgent public importance. We have allegations raised by honourable members which amount to nothing more at this stage, especially after these matters have been around for the last few months, nothing more than innuendo as a last desperate attempt to try to raise issues that will somehow stick on the government as it were.

Honourable members collectively have failed to raise issues in this House in the last few months, and so they have found something that happened in the last few months that they decided to bring forward today.

Madam Speaker, it fails on all counts in terms of urgency of debate, so other business, important business, and I am sure honourable members on all sides would recognize that the other business that we have in front of us is extremely important too, but we have had Estimates review, we have had all the latitude that is allowed in the debate of bills before the House. We have concurrence. We have had all kinds of opportunities for honourable members, and they remain even yet so that the honourable member's argument must fail, unfortunately for New Democrats, whose frustration, I am sorry to report, is showing today.

Madam Speaker: I wish to advise the House that the notice required under Rule 31.(1) was provided. I thank honourable members for advice on whether the motion proposed by the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should be debated today. Under our rules and practices, the subject matter requiring urgent consideration must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention. There must be no other reasonable opportunities to raise the matter. With respect to whether there are other opportunities to debate this matter, I would note that the honourable member for Thompson has not used his grievance. This is a serious matter; however, I am not convinced that the matter is of such urgency to require that the regular business of the House be put aside in order to debate the matter today.

Therefore I am ruling the matter does not meet the criteria set by our rules and practices.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: The rules prohibit the challenge of a ruling, but I would like to point out, Madam Speaker, that grievances appear on the Order Paper before a matter of urgent public importance. I have no opportunity to use a grievance today and other members would like to speak on this who have not used their grievances. I respect the fact that under our rules we cannot challenge your ruling, but the aspect about the grievance I would suggest is somewhat out of order because grievances appear on the Order Paper before I am able to raise a matter of urgent public importance. I have no opportunity to rise on a grievance until tomorrow. I have no opportunity today, so while we

certainly cannot challenge your ruling, I would ask that you take the matter under advisement.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson does not have a point of order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPORT STAGE

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I would like to proceed to report stage of the bills listed on page 2.

Bill 19—The Public Trustee Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Toews) and seconded by the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), I move that Bill 19, The Public Trustee Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la loi sur le curateur public et modifications corrélatives), reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

* (1450)

Bill 22—The Veterinary Services Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), I move that Bill 22, The Veterinary Services Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les soins vétérinaires), reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 24—The Crop Insurance Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and seconded by the Minister of

Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), I move that Bill 24, The Crop Insurance Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-récolte), reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 36—The City of Winnipeg Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) and seconded by the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), I move that Bill 36, The City of Winnipeg Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg et modifications corrélatives), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 37—The Farm Machinery and Equipment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) and seconded by the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), I move that Bill 37, The Farm Machinery and Equipment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur les machines et le matériel agricoles et modifications corrélatives) reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 41—The Life Leases and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), and seconded by the honourable Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), I move that Bill 41, The Life Leases and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur les baux viagers et modifications corrélatives), as

amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 44—The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Attorney General (Mr. Toews), and seconded by the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), I move that Bill 44, The Statute Law Amendment Act, 1998 (Loi de 1998 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I would like to deal this afternoon with third readings related to Bills 42, 16 and 21. I think I have it now, Madam Speaker, after further consultations with my colleagues. I would ask you to call for third reading Bills 12, 25, 27, 4, 14, 16, 18, 21 and 42.

THIRD READINGS

Bill 12—The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that Bill 12, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation manitobaine de lutte contre les dépendances), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

* (1500)

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I would like to just put a few words on the record. I did not get a

chance to speak to this bill at second reading and would like to indicate why we are opposed to this bill. This is another one that follows the Conservative government's trend to lessen public accountability. On that fundamental principle, we are opposed to the bill.

Madam Speaker, for the record, we want to indicate our support, however, for the Addictions Foundation, and as Lotteries critic, I want to indicate how essential we feel the Addictions Foundation is and the role that they need to play with the growing number of gambling problems and gambling addicts that we have in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, the government has a pitiful record of its support of the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba. Less than \$1 per capita is invested into the treatment and awareness programs of gambling, which, compared to other jurisdictions which many invest over \$2 per capita in their jurisdiction, illustrates how poorly supported the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba really is.

So we would like to indicate our disappointment for the lack of support by this government for the treatment of addictions of those individuals, Manitobans who have problems with alcohol and gambling, particularly since I am the gambling critic, that there are a lot of serious issues raised with that, and the financial support, although raised by a meagre amount, Madam Speaker, comes nowhere near to dealing with the very serious issues relating to gambling problems.

Again, we are opposed to this bill on the basis that it breaks the fundamental rule of public accountability. This bill, as is typical over and over and over, reduces public accountability which is unacceptable and which this side does not support.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading Bill 12, The Addictions Foundation Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: No? All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On division, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: On division.

Bill 25—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), that Bill 25, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I wanted to put a few words on the record before this bill exits third reading.

Madam Speaker, this bill has four major components to it. The first part enables the Province of Manitoba to enter into reciprocal agreements concerning drivers' licences with external jurisdictions similar to the current licence exchange provisions within the provinces of Canada. As long as Manitoba's licensing requirements are met by affected drivers this should not be a major concern but rather a very positive thing in ensuring consistency throughout.

The second part proposes the removal of the regulation that requires carriers to place a fidelity bond on COD shipments. This is consistent with the deregulation of the trucking industry in the province of Manitoba in particular, and it should lower the overall costs that the industry faces. Part of the personal

concern I have is that there has to be an ongoing monitoring of that deregulation and the impact. Government should be doing what it can to ensure that the negative impacts are in fact marginalized in particular with respect to the workforce or to the employees or contractors, I should say, also.

The third part of the bill makes available medical records of individuals in the trucking industry by eliminating discrepancies between the act and The Personal Health Information Act.

The fourth part concerns the elimination of outdated and unproclaimed amendments on the books that have since been replaced by newer provisions or generally speaking housekeeping. As this bill is, the minister has mentioned, predominantly of a housekeeping nature, it should not attract a great deal of attention or criticism, I believe, and so for our perspective it does receive support. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is third reading, Bill 25, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 27—The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that Bill 27, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Fonds de participation des travailleurs du Manitoba), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): This bill does deal with the relatively obscure area of financial funds,

namely the Crocus Fund. The bill puts Crocus on the same legal footing as funds governed by The Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations Act. Those changes would allow the fund to sell shares to retirement savings plans.

Madam Speaker, the concept which the bill talks about is in essence a positive one in the sense that we are seeing capital gathering in which Manitobans and entrepreneurs and the like are able to tap into these funds in order to provide other economic opportunities or sustainable development in many areas within the province. The concept is a good one. There have been concerns that have been raised with the ways in which, at least in part, the government is moving towards some of these funds; but as a whole, as I have indicated, the concept is a very positive one. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is third reading Bill 27, The Manitoba Employee Ownership Fund Corporation Amendment Act. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 4—The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James Downey (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Bill 4, The Child and Family Services Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services à l'enfant et à la famille et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

* (1510)

Bill 14—The Executions Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move on behalf of my

colleague the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), and seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that Bill 14, The Executions Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'exécution des jugements), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion presented.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 16—The Water Resources Administration Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James Downey (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), I move, seconded by the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), that Bill 16, The Water Resources Administration Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement hydraulique et modifications corrélatives), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 18—The Registry Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), that Bill 18, The Registry Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'enregistrement foncier), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 21—The Communities Economic Development Fund Amendment Act

Hon. James Downey (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman), I move,

seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that Bill 21, The Communities Economic Development Fund Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur le Fonds de développement économique local), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 42—The Norway House Cree Nation Northern Flood Master Implementation Agreement Act

Hon. James Downey (Acting Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman), I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), that Bill 42, The Norway House Cree Nation Northern Flood Master Implementation Agreement Act (Loi sur l'Accord cadre de mise en oeuvre de la nation crie de Norway House relatif à la convention sur la submersion de terres du Nord manitobain), be now read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 51—The Cooperatives and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Bill 51 which is at second reading stage.

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), Bill 51, The Cooperatives and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur les coopératives et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Leave? Leave has been granted.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): I do know the member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) is going to be putting some words on the record on the bill. He has accorded me the opportunity to go first here.

Madam Speaker, this bill is a major revision to the current act respecting co-operatives. It reflects a national standardization of co-operative legislation, and, as such, it resembles Ottawa's recent co-op legislation, a substantial change in the introduction of no-par-value investment shares. Presently, co-operatives may only issue per-value shares which do not rise in value if the co-operative is well financially. This system will help co-operatives raise the capital they need to create a so-called new generation of sorts—is I think what the minister refers to it as—of co-operatives.

Further, government regulation on co-operative operations will be reduced. The role of the registrar in establishing by-laws will be diminished as a result. According to our candidate, actually, in the last by-election, Ms. Alana McKenzie out in Charleswood, one of the things that she had indicated is that certain housing co-operative people say that this bill represents an offloading of co-operative responsibility to the province, but, however, the province has not committed to maintaining adequate levels of funding to co-operatives, which causes a great deal of concern.

I have had the opportunity to have some dialogue with co-op members, Madam Speaker, and the association in Canada, along with CMHC. There is, I believe, a valid argument being put forward that when it comes to the housing co-ops, if the federal government is, in fact, going to be, as it clearly seems to, getting out of the housing co-ops, that there is very strong merit for having that independent agency or looking for another alternative. The general feeling is that there is a stronger sense of independence amongst the co-operatives if, in fact, you allow for that agency, as opposed to the province assuming ultimate power over the provincial housing co-ops.

So I would suggest to you that the current Minister of Housing (Mr. Reimer) who I know is going to be having discussions over the next couple of months trying to resolve the issue of housing co-ops, in particular that the minister give very serious

consideration to the idea of having that agency for co-ops that would be based on a national basis. I think that the housing co-op boards and their memberships as a whole would, in fact, be fairly supportive of that.

Quite often we need to develop, I would argue, alternative housing concepts for the province, and I have always been a fairly strong advocate, I would humbly suggest, Madam Speaker, of the need to move from let us say government-managed units into tenant management and, likewise, the expansion of housing co-ops in particular, because the biggest difference, the way I look at it, from my perspective, is that whether it is a government-sponsored or private sector-sponsored apartment unit or a row-house unit, you are in essence a tenant and there is that tenant-landlord relationship.

The same thing cannot be said about co-ops, that what is really needed is, I believe, more a co-op development. In the co-ops, in my opinion, you are a resident as opposed to a tenant because, in fact, you get to participate directly in a very democratic process as to what is happening in the community in which your co-op is situated, at whether it is roofing, fencing, or any of the other concerns that are raised. So there is some caution or concern whenever the ministries, whichever department bring in issues regarding the co-ops. I do believe that we need to be much more supportive of our co-ops in general. In certain areas we need to concentrate and focus more time on ensuring that we do what is right, and that is providing supports for housing programs to ensure that they are going to be there in the long term.

I will just go for a few more minutes then. I know that there is—[interjection]

Okay, well, with those few words I am prepared to sit down. I was just going to comment on a very positive resolution I can recall in my early days as an MLA that I passed at a Liberal Party policy conference, but I will save that story for another opportunity which I am sure I will get some time in the future.

* (1520)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I would like to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 51, The Cooperatives and Consequential Amendments Act.

This bill is one of the largest that I have ever seen. It is about 300 pages long and, in fact, it is the first major provincial revision in quite a number of years—I believe in 20, 20-some years now. Manitoba is the first province to pass such an act, but the federal government has, in fact, passed legislation just this spring and proclaimed it earlier this year. What this is, is all of the provinces and the federal government have attempted to standardize the legislation across the province and that is the reason behind this initiative at this time.

One of the major changes in this legislation is it enables co-ops to issue nonpar value investment shares, allowing the value of the co-op shares to increase and making it easier for the co-ops to raise capital to invest in other operations. The co-ops will be able to sell unrestricted numbers of nonvoting shares. They will also have more powers to make their own by-laws without having to have the approval of the registrar. All the co-ops were evidently sent a discussion paper in March outlining the proposals, and I would like to thank, by the way, the minister for reviewing in some detail the proposals in this bill with me.

According to the department, the only contentious part of the discussion paper was in regards to termination of housing co-op members, and the department claimed that they had large numbers of housing co-ops writing and demanding to have the power to terminate membership as in the bill, and not as proposed in the discussion paper. Actually, the co-operative movement historically has been very important in Manitoba. I wanted to note that while the number of co-ops—by the way, in 1988, the number in Manitoba was about 425 co-ops. Evidently in March 31, 1997, as of that date we have had a slight decrease over the last 10 years and now we are at 402 co-ops.

We, on this side of House, are very concerned that co-ops be fostered and encouraged wherever possible in this province. Certainly if there is a change of government next year, we will be making a direct focus in this area to encourage and make sure that these numbers grow from the 402 that are currently registered.

There are a number of new generation co-ops that have been set up in South Dakota, I believe, and North Dakota, and there are a number of these co-ops

developing in Manitoba. I understand there is an egg producers co-op with over 400 members; they own their own plants. There is an ostrich producers co-op looking at establishing a plant for their 40-plus members. So this legislation is evidently something that will assist the expansion of these new generation co-ops and are seen as having some potential.

I guess, other than the fact that we are concerned that there may be decreases in the number of co-ops is that there would be a concern that there is a potential that the co-op movement could be turned into for-profit operations, and that would be a concern that we would have here.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I made these comments, I would agree and suggest that we would be sending this bill to committee. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: The question before the House is second reading Bill 51, The Cooperatives and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur les coopératives et modifications corrélatives). Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, would you call Bill 46 for debate on second reading?

Bill 46—The Correctional Services Act

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on second reading on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), Bill 46, The Correctional Services Act (Loi sur les services correctionnels), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Leave has been granted.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, very briefly. This bill was intended to replace the current Corrections Act, and it establishes a framework for administration of correctional programs for offenders. The commissioner of the corrections will oversee programs that concern offenders, and the terms such as "probation officer" or "juvenile counsellor" will be replaced with the "correctional officer." Seeing as the current act is well over 30 years old, it has not been harmonized with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, amongst other things, something that this bill seeks to do.

As such, inmates will have their rights noted in this bill. The bill tries to balance victims' rights with the rights of criminals by attempting to keep criminals who are tagged as potential reoffenders behind the bar for as long as possible. I would further comment that rather than letting them go after two-thirds of their sentence and good behaviour, as a whole, even though there have been concerns raised about Bill 46, we are quite prepared to see it go to committee. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh).

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

* (1530)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Consideration of Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): Order, please. The Committee of Supply has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of expenditures for the fiscal ending March 31, 1999.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Chairperson, I have some questions for the Minister of Family Services on The Adoption Act, which was passed last year and which has yet to be proclaimed, it is my understanding.

First of all, I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services when the regulations will be made public.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Chairperson, we will be proclaiming the legislation, we think, some time this fall. We were hoping to have it done for July, but it is taking a little longer. They are quite detailed, the regulations, and we are looking at some time in October, November, possibly.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable member for Burrows, let us try and keep everything on the record.

Mr. Martindale: I also would like to know when the regulations will be made public.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know that we are doing a consultative process right now with some groups around the regulations, and, normally speaking, when the act is proclaimed, the regulations would go along with the legislation.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister tell me which groups or organizations she is consulting with, please?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do not have that detail, but I certainly can get it and provide it for my honourable friend.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for that answer. I have in front of me a pamphlet produced by the Department of Family Services, I presume, entitled The Adoption Act, and I have some questions for the minister, based on this pamphlet. I do not know if the minister has a copy of it with her, so I might have to read into the record some of the information and then ask my question.

The second paragraph says that the act permits adoptive applicants and birth parents to choose to receive services from either a licensed adoption agency or a Child and Family Services agency in the adoption

of children who are not permanent wards of an agency. Could the minister tell me how many individuals, then, approximately, might be eligible for adoption, since I take it from the statement that I read that permanent wards are not eligible for adoption?

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is not what the statement says. The statement does say that birth parents can choose a private, not-for-profit adoption agency or a Child and Family Services agency if they are not permanent wards. If they are indeed permanent wards, it is only the Child and Family Services agencies that can provide the service.

Mr. Martindale: I thank the minister for clarifying that for me. Under the title The Adoption Process, it says: Under the new act, adoptive applicants are required to pay for home studies and other services on a sliding scale linked to the income of the applicants.

My first question would be: do the new legislation and regulations mean that there will be a charge for a home study for people going through a Child and Family Services agency as well as the private, not-for-profit agencies?

Mrs. Mitchelson: If they are permanent wards that the agency is looking for a permanent home for, there will be no charge for the home study. If, in fact, it is a young birth mother that chooses to go through a Child and Family Services agency, there could be a charge depending on the income or financial circumstances of that mother. This would be for babies that are being placed for adoption where there is no protection issue. So if they are permanent wards, there is no fee, and if they are not permanent wards, it is a choice by a birth mother. No matter which route they choose, there may be fees on a sliding scale, based on income.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if the minister could give me a little bit more detail on the sliding scale fees. For example, if someone was of low income or even on social assistance, would the fee be waived? Does the sliding scale go so far as to zero?

Mrs. Mitchelson: The details around the fee scale are not finalized at this point in time, but if someone was on welfare or very low income, there would be no fee based on someone with a significant financial income.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask the minister then if she could tell me about the upper end of the fee scale. I know in her answering questions to the media, she referred several times to the Province of British Columbia where I believe the maximum fee is \$1,500 for a home study, and she thought it would be less in Manitoba. I wonder if the minister could provide that kind of detail as to what the maximum fee might be.

Mrs. Mitchelson: The number has not been finalized, but it will be somewhere between \$1,000 and \$1,200, in that range.

Mr. Martindale: I recently spoke to parents who adopted two children. In the case of one child, they paid for the birth mother's legal fees and for their own legal fees for a total of about \$5,500. For the other child, what they just had to pay for their own legal fees, it was \$2,500. So could the minister confirm for me that the home study fee would be in addition to the legal and all the other fees, so that people might be looking at a minimum of \$3,500 now?

Mrs. Mitchelson: We have no control over the legal fees that are charged right now for adoption, so legal fees are not included in the number that we are talking about. We are talking about specific service for a home study, and that will be between \$1,000 and \$1,200. We do know that if people choose to go through a Child and Family Services agency, there are no legal fees. We know that if they choose a private, not-for-profit adoption service, legal fees are charged. That happens today, and that will continue.

Mr. Martindale: Could the minister then confirm for me that this is really a new fee that the Filmon government is bringing in, and that in the past, it would be my understanding, that the home study was done by a Child and Family Services agency staffperson, and therefore, there was no cost? Now, under this new legislation and the regulations that indeed this is a new fee that people will have to pay for if they choose to go through a private nonprofit agency, therefore, it is another cost to individuals that they have not had to bear in the past.

Mrs. Mitchelson: That is indeed correct. Through the public hearings we held on The Child and Family Services Act, adoptive families had no problem with paying the fees. What they wanted to do was to get a

home study done in a timely fashion so that the child could be placed with them, and they were quite well prepared to pay that fee in any discussions that we had through the public hearings.

But my honourable friend cannot have it both ways. I mean, he stands up and says that Child and Family Services agencies are overworked and overburdened, and if in fact we have the ability to lighten the load so that they can focus on protection, I hope he would be quite happy with that. In his comments he is saying only Child and Family Services agencies should be able to do the home studies, and the taxpayer in Manitoba should pay for that. On the other hand, he is saying that we should lighten the workload on the case workers in the Winnipeg Child and Family Services agencies.

He would like to have it both ways, and we believe, and we know, that if a family is adopting a child, there is a significant 18-year commitment to adopting, a financial commitment, on behalf of any adoptive parent.

We know that many, many prospective adoptive parents are going out of country to adopt, and the cost is significantly higher. They are paying up to \$10,000 to adopt intercountry, Madam Speaker, so I would hope that we could lighten the workload of Child and Family Services agencies so they could focus on the kind of protection work that I know my honourable friend and I both want to see them do.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, also in this pamphlet under Private Adoption, it says: agencies will now complete home studies for private adoptions before a child has been identified for the adoptive parents.

I wonder if the minister could tell me if that is a change from past practice or whether that statement is just there to clarify for some reason.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I would have to seek the advice of my staff on that and get back to my honourable friend.

* (1540)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, under Regulations, it says: the act allows the province to make regulations

governing the payment of fees for applications. I wonder if the minister could tell me what particular application that is and how much the fee will be.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I will have to get that detail from my staff and provide that for my honourable friend.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if it would help the minister if I read the other items which follow. In addition to the payment of fees for applications, it says: licences, registrations, the placement of children for adoptions, conditions to be met in order to obtain a licence and any other matters necessary for the operation, management, administration, accountability of agencies under the act.

I wonder if that provides any more indication for the minister as to what the payment of fees for applications means.

Mrs. Mitchelson: No, it does it does not except that what we are saying under the legislation is that if a not-for-profit, private agency does the home studies, they have to have the same qualifications as those that are working in the Child and Family Services system to do the home studies. We do not want substandard home studies. We want a consistent approach to home studies that is uniform no matter who does it. But as to the detail around application fees, I would have to get that information.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for offering to get that information to me.

I am wondering if this refers to fees over and above the home study. Certainly, we are aware that now private, not-for-profit agencies will be allowed to charge for a home study, but I am wondering if there are additional fees over and above the home study that private, not-for-profit agencies will be allowed to charge.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Private, not-for-profit adoption agencies charge fees now, legal fees, and they will be able to do the same kind of thing under the new legislation. The only additional requirement is if a home study is done through a private, not-for-profit agency—and that agency may waive the fees if they

want to for the home study and provide it as part of their service. That option is there for them now, but we are not instituting any new fees that were not there in the past.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I am wondering if the minister means that the government is not going to institute new fees, but I am wondering if the private, not-for-profit agencies are going to institute new fees since it appears that they may be authorized to do so under the new regulations.

We have the act. We know what the act says. The minister says it will be proclaimed in the fall, and, at that time, the regulations will be made public. But we do not know, and I do not think I am being consulted about what will be in the regulations. So I guess I am trying to anticipate here and maybe anticipate some surprises in the regulations and, therefore, am asking questions in advance about possible new fees that we have not heard about other than the home study.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, we are not instituting or implementing any new fees on behalf of any private, not-for-profit agency. They are at liberty to charge as they are now for legal fees. There is some involvement, I think, during those legal fees of some sort of counselling or classes or preparation or something. They can do that now, and they will have the ability to do that after the new legislation.

The only fee that I am aware of in the regulations is the fee for the home study. I would certainly correct that statement for my honourable friend, but that is the only one that I am aware of in the new regulations as they are being developed.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, the minister mentioned that the staff at not-for-profit private agencies will have to have the same qualifications as staff in Child and Family Services agencies. This was an issue that came up during the passage of the bill, and the minister's staff very kindly briefed me on The Adoption Act before it went to committee.

One of the statements that was in the explanatory notes—and I am going from memory, unfortunately, I do not have them in front of me—was that in future, the government was going to consider regulating the social

work profession. I know that this is a very controversial area because some people think the social work profession should be regulated and others think it should not be, but one of the concerns is that someone may call themselves a social worker and, therefore, get hired perhaps on a contract basis with a not-for-profit private adoption agency. In the absence of regulations of this profession, we do not know whether or not they will have the same qualifications as somebody working for an agency.

I wonder if the minister can enlighten us any further as to whether we are just going on the minister's word that they will have the same qualifications or whether in the future the government is considering regulating the social work profession, and, if so, whether they are working on legislation or getting any closer.

Mrs. Mitchelson: We are not getting any closer at this point in time. It is an issue right across the country. It is not something that Manitoba can solve in isolation of trying to figure out what needs to happen. But in the regulations, there will be certain criteria and guidelines and certain rules that will have to be followed in performing a home study. That will be spelled out in the regulations, and we will go from there. So it will be the way the home study is handled and the kinds of questions that need to be asked and the kinds of, I suppose, observance of the prospective adoptive family and the record checks and all of the other things that are normally done to determine whether or not a prospective adoptive family is suitable to place a baby.

Mr. Martindale: I have a more general question. I would like to tie in this issue with the issue of children in hotels and four-bed units and other emergency placements, the very large number of children in care in Manitoba, the highest per capita in Canada—I believe over or around 5,000 individuals at the present time—and ask the minister if she sees any connection at all between the large number of children in care and The Adoption Act and some of the changes, like private agencies being allowed to charge for a home study.

Does the minister believe that as a result of The Adoption Act and some of the changes that are being brought in that more children will be adopted, that then there will be fewer children in care, perhaps that will

free up some foster homes, and that fewer children will be in emergency placements?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I have already indicated that children that are permanent wards are there because they need protection. I would certainly like to ensure that the process works extremely well so that once children become permanent wards, then there is some sense that they will never go back to their family of origin that we move expeditiously in recruiting prospective adoptive parents. I do not think there is any lack of adoptive parents. I think part of the issue in the past and one of the reasons why we brought in a piece of separate adoption legislation was to heighten the profile and even get prospective adoptive parents to sort of broaden their thinking around whether they have to wait for 10 years for a healthy infant or whether they might be prepared to look at taking a little older, a little more special needs child or a child that is a permanent ward of an agency and they might take a chance on looking at that as their future family whether in fact we might not recruit more adoptive parents that would take special needs or children that are under protection through our Child and Family Services agencies.

But another issue too, I mean, we know that we have gone from 20 years ago where 95 percent of single parents placed their children for adoption, and today we have 95 percent of single parents choosing to parent. So the pendulum has swung, and I think part of the issue is that we do not even talk in many instances about adoption as a parenting option to many of these young girls, and I think it needs to be included. We are not going to make any decisions and we are not going to force anything on anyone, but we do know that very often an adolescent single parent who ends up on welfare has—and we all know too that welfare rates will never be high enough to take us above the poverty level. You will always be in poverty, and there is not any province or any government across the country that will be able to make welfare rates equal to what they call the low-income cutoffs. That is not a reality, so it is a commitment to a life of poverty.

* (1550)

Now, with the more open adoption process, in many instances birth parents have some connection to their child. It is sort of a mutual contract that is arranged

with discussion and consultation with the birth parent and the adoptive parents. Sometimes these days birth parents play a significant part in their child's life, even though they place that child for adoption, and that is reality.

So it is sort of heightening the profile and the awareness that there can be another option for single parents, that it can be as open as the two parties agree to and that in some instances it might be a better solution. So we want to leave all those options open and available for individuals.

Will, in fact, the issue of permanent wards being adopted in a more expeditious fashion happen? Certainly a discussion I have had, especially with the Winnipeg agency, sort of said, you know, sometimes there are children that are sitting as permanent wards. Manitobans that are looking to adopt children do not know that there may be an older child with some special needs. There may be a sibling group with some special needs. What the agency is starting to do is have some more orientation sessions with prospective adoptive parents, those that, you know, have put their name in for a healthy infant and are asking parents whether they would think about an older child, a special needs child, and consider that as part of their family. So that activity is starting to happen, and I would be hopeful that as children become permanent wards that we look in a very expeditious way at finding a permanent home for them. The earlier we find a permanent home, the better off we will be.

Mr. Martindale: I am a little surprised to hear the minister say that there is no lack of adoptive parents, although having talked to foster parents who want to adopt, I guess I am not totally surprised. But what they are saying to us is that if there was an adoption subsidy, they would adopt tomorrow. It is my understanding that a number of other provinces have adoption subsidies, and I suppose the minister would have detailed information on exactly how many provinces. I know Saskatchewan does. I am wondering if the minister would consider adoption subsidies in Manitoba so that we can provide permanency for many children who would benefit from that in their lives.

Recently I was talking to someone in the Youth-in-Care Network who was a foster child. We were

discussing the issue of attachment disorder, actually an expression, I suppose a psychological term, something that I had not heard until recently. I am going to have to do some research and some reading on this and educate myself, but we know that when children are moved from foster home to foster home—and last week I was given the example of a five-year-old who was moved 22 times to the present—it is no surprise then that children would have an attachment disorder, because they have not had anyone in their lives that they have lived with long enough to bond with.

So would the minister consider adoption subsidies so that we can bring permanency into the lives of these children?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, there is support available to adoptive families when children have special needs. That is there now under the legislation. It will be there after the facts, so there is the ability for us to provide the supports with additional resources right now. That does happen, and it will be there after the legislation is passed.

I guess, the whole issue, I would have to on an individual one-on-one basis examine why if a foster parent desires adoption as a more permanent option for the child that they are fostering, if there are special needs that require additional support, as I said, it should be there and available. I would have to on an individual basis find out why that is not happening, but it is there. The provision is there in the legislation now and it will be into the future.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for the answer because, I guess, I would like to know more about what kinds of supports are available, whether the minister is talking about respite or Children's Special Services or finding ways to meet special needs that children have, whether it is special needs child care or whatever. In this context, it is probably relevant to talk about what is happening in other provinces. For example, I was told recently that in Alberta, they have a foster-adopt program and that there are supports available for families after children are adopted. I do not know exactly what that is, but I am certainly going to contact the relevant ministry in Alberta or agency in Alberta and find out what that is.

So I wonder if the minister could expand a little bit on her statement that there are supports available now in Manitoba.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, I would offer to sit down with my honourable friend and get a briefing from the department and from the agency on exactly what does happen. I am not familiar with absolutely every instance and what kind of support is provided. I mean, I think it might be really important for us to get a comparison right across the country so we are comparing apples and apples as far as support for families.

I certainly believe that if a family is wishing to open their home and their hearts to a child on a permanent adoptive basis—and there are circumstances that would warrant additional financial resources—that we should be attempting or endeavouring to provide those. So I do not have that kind of detail, I cannot explain in detail right now, but I certainly would be prepared to sit and have that discussion at some point in time.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I thank the minister for offering to give me a briefing, and I guess it is timely because I was going to ask for a briefing on The Adoption Act, but I would appreciate a briefing both on The Adoption Act again, now that it is closer to being proclaimed, and also on what supports exist in Manitoba. I am especially interested in knowing what supports exist in Manitoba to adoptive parents, because what I have been told by people in the community is that there are no post-adoption supports in Manitoba. So it would be very helpful for me to find out what supports, if any, are available because people phone me, especially when I ask questions about adoption or fostering. I need to be able to answer people's questions, or if the information I am given is not correct, I need to correct people, or, after I have had a briefing, to send out information to people so that foster parents can access those resources.

I know that the minister does not have the details, but I am wondering if she could give me even a little bit more general information about whether we are talking about respite or Children's Special Services or exactly what kind of support we are we talking about.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I cannot give a lot of detail right at this point in time. I do know that there is some support

available if children do have special needs and I would have to get detail. I cannot discuss at any length that kind of information just off the top of my head.

Mr. Martindale: On a related topic I was recently visiting with a foster parent in her home, and she was saying that there is a real need for foster parent support. Now, I understand from visiting other foster parents in their home that there is quite an extensive process that they have to go through in order to have their home approved as a foster home, but the issue that was raised with me was that once they got the child, there was almost nothing afterwards.

* (1600)

In my most recent meeting that I just referred to, the parent had special needs children, and she said that when there is a crisis, of course you can phone your worker at the Child and Family Services agency, but the worker is sometimes helpful and sometimes not helpful. Some workers are experts, some workers are not, and she said that what she really needed was someone, first of all, when there was a crisis, available by phone, someone with expertise, with expert advice that she could consult by phone in order to get over the crisis. If that did not do the trick, then what she would like is for an expert person to come into the home when there is a crisis, maybe for one hour, maybe for two or three hours. Apparently, according to this foster parent, that is not available now.

So I would like to suggest it to the minister for a number of reasons, because parents are asking for it and because it seems to me that when there is a shortage of foster homes and when we have large numbers of children in temporary placements, and the minister knows that this problem is not getting any better, is not going away, we do not want parents giving up children.

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

That is what we are being told. I mean, parents go through this lengthy process of getting their home approved as a foster home. They get a child, and then they have a crisis or they have two or three crises. Then they say that is it. I do not want to foster anymore because I cannot handle this. But we really need those

parents to continue fostering because there is such a desperate need for homes. So I think this is a very good idea. In one of my speeches on this issue, I think it was last year, I mentioned the home of a foster parent where they had high-needs children. I am not sure what level or what daily rate, but they gave up fostering because the last three children left in handcuffs. They said: we cannot cope with these kids anymore; we are going to stop being foster parents.

In fact, the last time the police came and took one of their foster children away in handcuffs, the kid said: by the way, my friend is in my bedroom. So they went and checked and here this friend had been living in the foster parents' home with the foster child and the parents did not know it. He was living there in hiding and they found him in a cupboard or under the bed or something. So here are people who have a desire to foster, but these kids are so hard to handle that they need extra resources and extra help.

My question to the minister is: does she think that this sounds like a good idea? Should we encourage agencies to have expert advice available by phone and people available to do home visits in a crisis situation?

Mrs. Mitchelson: There is exactly that kind of service available now through the Emergency Youth Crisis Stabilization system where we have mobile teams that go out—that is exactly what is available now through the closure of Seven Oaks Centre and the whole Emergency Youth Crisis Stabilization system that has been put in place. There are Mobile Crisis Teams that do go into individual family homes. Those crisis teams are available for foster parents and natural parents. I guess the issue is that the agency has a responsibility to inform foster families that this kind of service is available. I have foster parents right in my own constituency that I have met with. I have been over to their homes and talked to them and they have some issues, exactly what my honourable friend says. You know, one worker for one child is an excellent worker and gets back and communicates on a regular basis, but another worker that is dealing with another child in their home sometimes is not quite as responsive. What the reasons are for that I do not know, but that is an issue, and that is an issue that I hope the Winnipeg agency is going to sort out as they move through their

strategic plan and get some sort of sense of what needs to happen to make things run a little more smoothly.

So we know there were issues, but I do hope that the agency is in fact informing. They certainly know about the Mobile Crisis Teams that are available. It is probably a good idea for me to follow up with a letter as a result of this discussion with the agency to ensure that they have informed all of their foster parents that this service is available to them. I think it is an excellent idea, and we are moving in that direction.

Mr. Martindale: I guess I would like to make sure that I do not leave a false impression on the record. I do not think I want to blame workers. I think I was just making a distinction between people that might have an expertise in a certain area and others that may have an expertise in a different area, and I am sure they are all trying to do a difficult job under difficult circumstances.

I am not sure though that the minister is answering my question in quite the way that I wanted to. Well, I guess that would not be the first time, but I think I was asking for something a little bit different than the Mobile Crisis Team. I am familiar with the Mobile Crisis Team. In fact, I was just at the Macdonald Youth Services annual meeting, and they had some statistics on the number of calls that they had received and the kind of responses that they had made. I think probably it is a good idea.

I guess we need to wait for six months or a year or two years and evaluate it and see whether it is a suitable replacement for the Seven Oaks Centre or not. But I guess my question is can we set up something for our foster parents that is not quite like the Mobile Crisis Team but may be in some ways—on the other hand, it is similar. I guess I was thinking of existing staff at Winnipeg Child and Family Services agency or other agencies in the province, that existing staff would be able to respond either by phone or in person to foster parents who are experiencing a crisis with their foster child or foster children.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I know that the Winnipeg agency specifically has an after-hours service that is available. It is an issue I have raised with the new CEO and with the previous CEO of the Winnipeg agency. So very

often children are taken into care or apprehended in the evenings, during the night and on the weekends, and yet we have just a very small number of staff that work those shifts. I would hope part of the strategic plan that they are looking at right now will look at utilization of their staff. I have asked the question directly, should in fact we have more workers on shiftwork and weekends and available for families that need that kind of support and service?

I do not know as yet. I mean I look to our health care system, and we have 24-hour service seven days a week for emergency situations. Maybe the way we have been doing child welfare through our Child and Family Services agency has to be thought about in a very different way today, looking at the issues of children and abandonment and the number of children in care, and the number of kids that need support. So I am open and certainly have raised the issue with the agency, specifically in Winnipeg, and I would hope that through their planning process they are looking at how they can best serve the needs of the children and put the children first and reorganize the way they do business in order to better support families and protect children.

Mr. Martindale: I do not have the strategic planning document with me, but I am wondering if the minister can tell me if the main reason for the strategic plan for Winnipeg Child and Family Services is to facilitate a reorganization or primarily to save money or primarily to do things differently. What is the main objective here?

* (1610)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, the main objective, I would hope of a strategic plan of an agency would be to better serve the children and the families who need the support and service from that agency. So the document was a document that was prepared in order to facilitate the strategic plan. It was not the plan that was developed. It was a document that was presented to staff in the agency to get their minds around how they could better serve children and families through the system that is there. I would hope that absolutely everything through that planning process would focus on better service and delivery of service for children and families who need the support of the agency.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, could the minister tell me if she gave any direction to the agency on how they were to save, I believe, it is about \$3 million this year—I am just going by memory from Estimates; it might be more—or whether that is entirely up to Winnipeg Child and Family Services? If it is up to Winnipeg Child and Family Services, what is going to happen if they cut per diems or cut contracts or arrangements that they have with other agencies? And when that happens, is the minister going to have a hands-off attitude and say, well, we had nothing to do with that, it was an agency cut? Or whether the minister and her staff are involved with any budget cutting that is going on so that money is not saved, for example, at the expense of children or at the expense of foster parents or the number of families willing to take foster parents because of cuts.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Chairperson, the agency has a mandate to deliver its services, and we fund them in increasing amounts year after year. I would hope that through their process of planning, they streamline some of their administrative functions in order to ensure that the front-line workers are the ones who receive the ability to do the kinds of work that they need to do. We know that it is not an easy job, and I would not want a job working in a Child and Family Services agency. It is a difficult job, and I think that there are many, many committed and dedicated people working in our system at the front lines who only want to see things happen in the best interests of children and families.

So I think that their planning process will look at ways that they can achieve some administrative efficiencies and delivery services in a more comprehensive way at the front line. So I do not know what their plan will be to look at where achievings may be saved. We will certainly look at that with them. We always do through the department, just as we look at their budget on a year-to-year basis, and work with them to determine what the level of funding should be.

So they will make decisions. We, as yet, have not seen what those decisions might be. My main interest is ensuring that children are well served, are served in a fashion that is appropriate when they need protection and when they need care from the agency—as I know is their objective. We will have to wait and see what the agency comes up with, but I want my honourable friend

to know that we have never denied monies for service that the agency has spent as a result of their need for resources to protect children.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I am wondering if the minister can tell me how they are going to save \$3 million or more from administrative efficiency. Surely, administration is one of the smaller costs percentage-wise—and I am sorry I do not have the budget of Winnipeg Child and Family Services here—but, surely, salaries and per diems and other items must form a major part of their salary and administration a minor part of their budget. I am wondering where they are going to save all this money in administrative efficiency. I guess my concern is that they are not going to be saving money at the expense of children and families.

I will try and summarize it succinctly. I guess I am having trouble believing that if they are going to save \$3 million or \$4 million, that they are going to do it from administrative efficiency and that it is not going to directly affect children and families, which I hope it does not.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will reiterate that my main priority is to ensure that children and families who need protection and service from the agency are well served, and I have every expectation that their process will lead to a system where the front line workers have the support that they need to do their jobs.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Chairman, I have a couple of questions that I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture, one of them, in particular, pertaining to elk ranching.

We have just had a meeting with the MMF, and the MMF has said that the government has negotiated an agreement with First Nations in order to allow them to start elk ranching. I wonder whether the Minister of Agriculture has had any meetings with the MMF or any consideration is being given as to how the Metis people can become involved in the elk-ranching industry.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Chairman, the honourable member is correct that we have—when I say we, I should be more specific. The Department of Natural Resources, under the direction

of my colleague the current Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), has successfully negotiated an arrangement with the First Nations people to participate in the new opportunities of elk ranching, and they have entered into a special arrangement whereby they will have an opportunity of creating a herd. I believe upwards of a number of about 250 is contained in that agreement and, hopefully, in the two or three years remaining that we have authority for the running of capture programs, that that herd will be supplied, from which the First Nations people will kick-start their own elk-ranching operations.

In other words, rather than having the Department of Natural Resources negotiate with a number of separate bands and organizations, this one organization at which the First Nations head office personnel was involved have negotiated this arrangement with the Department of Natural Resources.

I have certainly held out to the other members of the aboriginal community, namely the Manitoba Metis Federation, that in my judgment some similar type of arrangement should be entered into, and I have had, not serious, but discussions with the current president of the Manitoba Metis Federation, Mr. Dave Chartrand, and I have had earlier discussions in the past with the immediate past-president, BillyJo Delaronde.

I simply want to say and put on the record that it is for the Metis Federation to enter into these discussions and negotiations with the Department of Natural Resources, not with Agriculture. They are certainly as prepared to talk to the Department of Agriculture and to get into elk ranching on an individual or even as an association with me if they are talking about animals that they are purchasing or animals that they are purchasing in other jurisdictions, but if they want to have—I believe I understand the member correctly—kind of a similar arrangement to what the First Nations people have, then they would have to begin those negotiations with the Department of Natural Resources.

Ms. Wowchuk: I will pass that advice on to the people who have raised the matter with me.

Again, on elk ranching, I want to ask the minister, earlier this year we had some discussion about elk that were moving interprovincially and in fact, during the

earlier part when we were doing Estimates, the minister indicated that the issue of Mr. Pat Houde was still under investigation.

* (1620)

I wanted to ask the minister, we were told there were elk being moved out of Manitoba but they were refused by Saskatchewan. I understand they were refused because they had red deer genes in them. I would like to ask the minister: who did that testing? I realize the minister may not have this information at hand right now, so I would appreciate, if the minister does not have it, if he could get back on this matter in writing. Were they tested by the Manitoba government or were they tested by the Saskatchewan government? Was it the Saskatchewan government that refused to allow these animals, because of that testing? Did the Manitoba government know in fact that there were red deer genes in the animals in Manitoba? Is the government doing any investigation as to how this kind of stock actually got into Manitoba?—because my understanding is that there is supposed to be pretty accurate testing on all the animals that are coming into the province and then going out of the province.

So I wonder if the minister could indicate whether it is his Department of Agriculture that found out about these red deer genes that are in elk, and as a result of that, they were not allowed into Saskatchewan. What are we going to do to ensure that the Manitoba elk stock, that is supposed to be the best in North America, ensure that that stock stay pure rather than running the risk of having interbreeding with—having red deer genes coming into that stock?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I will take the bigger part of that question as notice and provide that information. I know that the protocol involved in moving animals interprovincially has some of its difficulties. Alberta, for instance, is very, very stringent about not letting any animals in from anywhere. We can buy animals from Alberta, move them into Manitoba or move them into Saskatchewan, but then they have had a bad situation because of a disease outbreak, and it is understandable that they have instigated these measures.

My understanding is that that is part of the reason why we chose the more—why we went to DNA testing

which probably is, in terms of animal identification and genetic identification, the most sophisticated form of identification that you could have in livestock to do precisely what the honourable member indicates, to ensure that we have and can and will perpetuate the high quality of genetics that we are fortunate to have in our wild and the animals that we are capturing.

But I will undertake, pass on the honourable member's questions to Mr. John Taylor who is the director of this program, and she will have within a very short time a response, a written response to those questions

Just to touch lightly on, you know, I do not wish to discuss it, but as I confirmed just toward the end of our Estimates period, specific charges, five or six of them, have been laid against the gentleman that she named.

Ms. Wowchuk: Again, I have questions in several areas that I want to ask that we did not get a chance to discuss in Estimates. So, again, if the minister does not have the information and can provide it later, that would be very helpful.

In March the minister received a letter from the Manitoba weed supervisors who were expressing concern about the rate of staff turnover within the Soils and Crops Branch and within other departments of Agriculture. Their concern was that with all the different information that is out there, different changes that are taken on in technology, there needs to be consistent staff to be able to offer unbiased information regarding the input of products, sustainable development initiatives and new technology developments as well as diversification, and Manitobans will suffer because of this lack of consistency and shortage of staff that has resulted in the Soils and Crops branch.

I would like to ask the minister if he has looked at that and what steps he has taken to address that to ensure that we have adequate staff that can provide the unbiased information that farmers do need as we have this wide variety of products and inputs and new technology that is out there to help in the farming industry. With inconsistent staff, many times there can be holes left in it where farmers and other people involved in the agriculture industry as well are left

without adequate information. How is the minister addressing this issue?

Mr. Enns: I will respond to that in several ways. You know, I always as minister take it somewhat as a compliment when individual members of my staff are hired away from me. It tells me that they are pretty good people and that they are being recognized in the community at large for the skills and talents that they have brought to their discipline and to their workplace. I must report in the last little while the member is right. We have lost a number of very good people in the Department of Agriculture, and that causes me some concern. I have instructed my deputy minister in the administration of the department not to waste any time in filling these positions. We are in the process of doing so in Soils and Crops branch and throughout different sections of the department that this has happened.

I am not telling any secrets when I tell the member and put on the record that the past three or four years, departments like mine along with other departments of government, were as a matter of policy instructed to work with a vacancy rate of X number of 4 percent or 5 percent and not to be too quick to fill a job when it became vacant, partly because it was our contribution to the overall direction of government to balance the budget and to live within the monies available to the department. I am pleased to be able to indicate that that policy has been relaxed, and we are now vigorously in the process of filling positions as they become vacant, whether it is an Ag rep in Ashern or somewhere else, whether it is people that have left me in the Animal Industry Branch, the veterinarian lab.

Just in the Estimates currently under review for approval, there are three new positions in the veterinarian branch. I am pressing the department to find some additional support in the animal livestock branch because of the growing workload that the department is facing in the expanding livestock industry throughout Manitoba, and when I say livestock, I mean all kinds of livestock.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

The honourable member will appreciate that by introducing and encouraging the expansion of such

nontraditional areas of livestock production, as bison and elk, this takes staff time, and time is dedicated to that. At the same time, while the traditional forms of livestock in beef, in pork, in poultry, are not standing still, they are expanding, so the demands of our time, if anything, are increasing and likewise for the general extension work that the department does. So the long answer to your question is I acknowledge that there have been some problems. I acknowledge that, in specific areas, there have been problems, particularly in the Soils and Crops area we have had about three individuals leave us relatively in a short space of time, but we are busy recruiting people to fill these positions.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, an issue that has been raised several times by KAP is issues of sales tax. I understand from a presentation they made that one of their concerns is that in other provinces, PST has been removed from farm production buildings, and, as I understand it, the PST has been removed from farm production buildings in Saskatchewan.

* (1630)

I wonder whether the minister has looked into that, and whether he can provide us with any analysis of what the impact of removing such a tax would be on farm buildings, and whether he has taken a position or whether he has been encouraging in any way to have the PST removed from farm production buildings as it has been removed, I understand, in other provinces and in fact in Saskatchewan, whether there is any consideration being given to that, and what the impact of that would be. Again, I do not imagine that the minister would have those numbers at his fingertips, but if he would be able to find them for me it would be very useful.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, the impact is not too difficult to figure out. It is 7 percent. If you are building a million-dollar barn and \$700,000 or \$800,000 of it is in building materials that currently is subject to the PST, you can figure it out. It is 7 percent of that 700 or a thousand or a million dollars. I have certainly listened to the representations made by KAP on this matter, as well as individual producers.

I am well aware that a neighbouring jurisdiction like Saskatchewan—and that is always troublesome when you are butting up against a neighbour that has in fact

removed the tax from this kind of building material. As Minister of Agriculture, yes, I have petitioned directly with my colleague the Minister of Finance, and I have solicited the support of other members of my caucus in cabinet to do the same, but the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) has his responsibilities and in the final analysis was not able to accommodate that request. There are other priorities that we also had. We would like to see the total elimination of the payroll tax, and that is a commitment that this government has made early on in its mandate. We have moved a long way in that but as the member knows, we have not totally succeeded in eliminating that.

I am well aware of KAP's disappointment in this area. I believe I just was copied earlier, letters written by KAP to the Finance minister and his response. Some justification or rationalization of why it was not done is, I am sure the honourable colleague will agree, that having the tax in place has not seriously impeded the expansion of the hog industry in the province. In fact, there are those who would like to see that expansion impeded a lot more and that we go somewhat slower in the expansion of the hog industry than is happening, so I suppose it can be and it was certainly argued by the Finance people, that look Mr. Minister of Agriculture we hear you. We know that you and everybody else would like to have tax relief, but you cannot really make the case that because the tax is in place we are throttling or we are holding back, or we are cutting back on the building of hog barns in Manitoba. When there are so many other priorities to be considered, major ones being health, education, ones that we are reminded of every day in this Legislature, I, in this instance, had to accept the decision of Finance, that for the time being at least this tax relief to this special interest group, and it is a special interest group, the hog producers and the hog farmers, that they would have to continue paying the tax.

That does not mean that we will not try again in another budget. I would like to harmonize the taxation system as much as possible, particularly with provinces like Saskatchewan and Alberta with whom our producers have to compete in the production of hogs and their eventual sale. Certainly, one would like to level the playing field, make it as equal as possible as to their participation in this very exciting part of agriculture.

But that is where the matter stands. I am not prepared to give up. I am going to keep on trying to convince my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) that we ought to reconsider that level of taxation on these buildings, because we certainly feel that there are many ways that the province recoups economically in a very short order when these significant agricultural production enterprises fall into place.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I believe that it is not only hog barns. It is poultry barns. As I understand it, it is all farm production buildings, so it just does not only relate to hog barns.

I want to ask the minister, we had a brief discussion on the Manitoba Crop Insurance appeal tribunal and the three-person appeal panel resigned. I want to ask the minister if he can indicate whether that panel resigned by choice or whether they were directed to resign, and whether the minister condones statements made by the chairman of the board who indicated in his comments that the person who won the appeal through the Ombudsman got special privileges because he works for the Justice department. When I heard about that, I was quite concerned about it because, in my opinion, the Ombudsman is supposed to be an independent office, and we view it that way, but when we have people saying that someone got special favours because they happen to work within the Department of Justice, I think that that taints the Ombudsman's office.

So the question is: how was that particular matter dealt with when we have, I believe, the chair of the appeal tribunal indicating that someone got special treatment? Can the minister indicate whether there was concern about these kinds of comments and whether the people who were in that position were asked to resign, or was it that there was dissatisfaction with the way the Ombudsman handled the situation, and they chose to leave of their own free will?

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I can clearly indicate to the honourable member for Swan River that the members of the Appeal Board that serve in the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation all resigned of their own free will and volition. It was certainly not at any urging or direction from myself or anybody in the Department of Agriculture. They did indicate in their letters of resignation that they were disappointed, I think—to put

it the best way I could describe it—that having ruled on an appeal, that government, the minister saw fit nonetheless to reverse that ruling and accept the Ombudsman's ruling on this matter.

I am a little concerned about the honourable member for Swan River's comments about the Ombudsman, because I think all of us, we treat the Ombudsman's office with a considerable amount of respect, and that precisely was part of the problem. By the way, I, at no time, was apprised of or knew of the particular individual involved in the case. My first inkling or hearing of this case was that the Ombudsman had issued a ruling or a judgment, brought forward a judgment that this individual should be reimbursed or his complaint should be dealt with positively by the corporation, despite what the Appeal Board had ruled. So I was faced with a position. Do I take the judgment of the Ombudsman's office or do I take the judgment of the Appeal Board? Quite frankly, maybe not the member for Swan River (Mrs. Wowchuk) but somebody else, maybe her Justice critic or somebody else, if I would have said no to the Ombudsman and disregarded the Ombudsman's report, I could surely be fairly criticized, saying: what have we got an Ombudsman for if when he and his independent, this is truly an independent staff, make a ruling it is ignored by the department involved?

So I was in a Catch 22. The settlement amount was not large. It was in the order of \$1,100 or \$1,200. Even though I am still convinced in my own mind that Manitoba Crop Insurance was right in their first ruling when they denied the claim, I suspect and I believe that the Appeal Board was right when they ruled and they supported Manitoba Crop Insurance in that action, but I was not prepared on this issue to take on the Ombudsman and fight his claim. So with the advice that I got from my deputy minister and senior staff, who said to me, Mr. Minister, do you really want to take the Ombudsman on on this case, I said, no, I do not really want to do it and I accepted the Ombudsman's offer, but I earned the disappointment of my Appeal Board, who promptly resigned.

* (1640)

I might say the members of that Appeal Board had served well and diligently for many years. My

predecessor had appointed them, so my heart was not broken when they resigned, in the sense that having served seven or eight years on a board or commission, there is a policy, an unwritten policy that we are asked to observe as ministers that these are not meant to be lifetime appointments, that rotation is in order. I accepted their resignations with regret, certainly with no serious difference of opinion. I want to put on the record that Chairman Sierens and that board served the Manitoba Crop Insurance and the farmers of Manitoba very well over the many years that they served on the Appeal Board.

It is my hope that the new board that I have just appointed under the chairmanship of Terry Johnson, a former chairman of the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation, will continue that level of service to the producers throughout Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Chairman, I was wanted to assure the minister that I was saying that we have to ensure that the Ombudsman's office is recognized as an independent office, but when we hear comments made by the former chair of the board, who says, well, you know, the person who brought the case forward works for the Department of Justice so maybe that is why he got his case heard further or quicker or extended, then that sort of sheds a bad light on the Ombudsman's office. I would not want that to happen, because I do truly support an office like this, and I think that we have to have some independent office to oversee and take a position on decisions that government makes, because sometimes government departments do not make the right decision.

I just want to close by saying that I think we have real—I want to tell the minister that I think we have some very challenging times ahead of us. He is going to negotiate on safety net programs ahead of us. We are getting into some very challenging times on the Prairies, with very low grain prices and trouble in the Asian community, which is not going to help us. I hope that when the minister goes to this he will take a very strong stand and ensure that we do have some safety nets in place for our farmers.

When you think about what is happening in Europe and other countries, other countries are prepared to subsidize their farmers. Canada has given away all

their subsidies. There is no support and we just depend completely on the marketplace. We do have crop insurance, we do have NISA, but there is, when you look at what other countries have, Canadian farmers and Manitoba farmers are left very much to bear the brunt of the market, and the markets right now are not looking very good. When we lost the Crow and those benefits, we said, oh, well, the marketplace is going to replace all of that.

The minister will talk about diversification. Yes, there has to be diversification, but we still have grain producers, and we still have a rural community that depends on those kinds of things. I hope that the minister will keep those things in mind and recognize that we are in for some very challenging times in the farm community and negotiate to the best of his ability and recognize and work towards getting some of the many things that farmers have asked for as safety nets. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chair, just a very short response to the honourable member for Swan River. I certainly invite her on her own volition to check with the Ombudsman's office whether or not there was any undue consideration given because of the employment base of the claimant that he dealt with. I am sure he would put that story to rest very quickly. I want to thank her for her good wishes on the oncoming meeting in Ontario with my colleagues and certainly accept her advice.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Chair, just a couple of points or questions to the Minister of Agriculture. I know that we have had a couple of good years for producers in Manitoba. I know a lot of farmers tell me about some of the booming comments in the newspaper that we should not necessarily believe, but there has been relatively a good couple of years in terms of income and development in the farm and agricultural economy here in Manitoba. I am also hearing a lot of concerns about prices, the European subsidy situation, the amount of producers it may have a considerable amount of financial decisions tied up in credit decisions that they have been able to secure, and the real worry about the changing of agricultural price system now in the world and how it will affect Manitoba producers.

I would like to know from the Minister of Agriculture what his analysis is of the present situation for

producers here in Manitoba, the individual producers. I know in macro terms we can talk about GDP and the percentage of GDP and all these other things. I am talking about individual farmers. I am quite worried about a number of people being at risk in terms of their livelihood and their farm situation from what I have heard. It may not be right, or it may not be wrong. I just want to know directly from the minister how he sees this. Obviously, weather will play a part. The prices play a very, very important part in farm income and the sustainability of the farm family in Manitoba.

So I just want to ask a general question. There has been not a lot of coverage of the commodity prices generally in Manitoba in terms of the world economy. The so-called Asian flu may affect obviously pork prices and the pork development here in Manitoba. I know it is a big question to the minister, but I am concerned about it and a lot of people tell me I should be concerned about it. I want to know from the minister himself what he feels the situation is and what is on the immediate horizon for our producers here in Manitoba.

Mr. Enns: Mr. Chairman, I thank the opposition for that general question. It allows me to put a few things on the record. It is always important to remember when we talk about how are farmers doing in Manitoba that we look at the kind of farming industry that we have in Manitoba. Many of them are doing very well, and they are those who have usually some involvement with some livestock whether it is in the poultry industry, whether it is in the dairy industry, whether it is in the beef industry. These producers are organized to some extent, supply and manage systems, have done and are doing extremely well. The hog producers which is becoming a bigger and bigger part of our agriculture scene, although having gone through a bit of a price trough just in the last 12 or 18 months, are looking forward with some optimism. They have pulled out of the lower pricing that they were in for a while in the last little while and are looking to a sustained business. Where the problem lies, and it is very serious, is in the grain, in the cereal industry.

I just met—I might inform the House that the Farmer of the Year Award family is Mr. Bruce Dalgarno, who is also the president or was the past president of the Manitoba Canola Council group. He is a canola farmer

from the Newdale area. He reported to me, just a few minutes ago—I had a short courtesy visit in my office earlier on this afternoon—that canola, for instance, will supersede wheat in being the highest value crop bringing in the largest dollar income to western—throughout Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta this year, which shows you that kind of dramatic turn. Wheat and other cereal crops continue to be in a very serious slump and I am not optimistic about that future. I am deeply troubled.

* (1650)

We had a visit to us, this part of Canada, by Dr. Franz Fischler a week ago, who is the chief bureaucrat, deputy minister, if you like, of the European Common Market nations on agriculture.

Organizations like the Canadian Wheat Board, our grain commissioners, KAP had a chance at a luncheon meeting to visit with him, as well as myself, to ask him—the honourable member might recall a boatload of barley docked in California, of all places, with the highly subsidized first import of European feed grain onto the continent, and that sparked fears that the Americans would retaliate and our Canadian farmers would find ourselves once again feeling that crunch. Last time that happened, my colleague the now deputy minister of transportation was in charge of the Department of Agriculture, and as I have done on different occasions—at that time there was the political will in Ottawa and the determination on the part of the provinces, led to a large extent by the Minister of Highways and Transportation here, and we crafted together a very significant income support program known as GRIP, that was in place for a period of five years and in Manitoba alone provided in excess of very close to \$800 million, \$900 million during those five years in income support.

That, no doubt, played a big role in getting a number of grain dependent farmers through that very difficult price period that existed in the late '80s to just about up to '93, '94, '95. As the prices rose, the commodity prices rose, then the program became less attractive relative to the premium dollars paid. It was always understood if that happened then the sunset clause would click in and we would be out of the program.

My concern, Mr. Chairman, and I voice this, and quite frankly I seek support and need support—and I will tell you at what level we need it. Somebody has to start talking about this in Ottawa. I know Ottawa is still on the scene because there are not—I am somewhat critical of those roughly large numbers of members of Parliament that we have in the official opposition who I find are strangely silent on this issue. I am not hearing that much noise from my grand national party in Ottawa on this issue, and I am not hearing much noise from honourable members who have the political affiliation of the Leader of the Opposition in Ottawa on this situation. I question whether the political will is there in Ottawa, to begin with, to begin any kinds of serious discussions with provincial ministers like myself.

I will be finding that out very shortly in two weeks when I attend the annual Agriculture ministers' meeting in Niagara on the Lake in the first week of July, whether or not there will be any interest at all to even think about some price support program to help the grain farmer out of this situation. It does not bode well for the grain farmer right now. The Americans appear to be taking off or are in the process of getting into a very healthy, good yielding crop. Our own crop I think, with the rains that we have had by and large that extended into the western provinces, will likely be average to, maybe in Manitoba, above average. So the immediate future is not too hopeful for a price recovery. Just what that impact will be is difficult to say.

What it will do and it ought to do, to some extent, for that and other reasons, as it becomes less and less attractive to export grains out of here, is to shift evermore into intensive livestock productions. I encourage the honourable member to understand the economics of that. It is an opportunity that we have in Manitoba. We have to do it responsibly, we have to do it right environmentally speaking, but it is an opportunity that needs to be taken advantage of to get us around the current low commodity price structures. They can return, but to eventually build a more sustainable agriculture industry that uses both components, of grain, feed grains, livestock, added jobs, added processing jobs, both in the city and in rural areas, that is how you build a sustainable, long-term agricultural basis.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Chair, I think we all agree that dealing with our own crops and having the value-added industries in our own province, subject to all the concerns the Minister of Agriculture has raised, it is an advantage for us to be the master of our own house, if we can use that terminology, but there are a lot of producers who still are producing material grain products, cereal products, for the world. Canola producers, yes, they are producing more acreage, as the minister said, than before.

It worries me, some of these battles that are going on now in Europe on the whole issue of genetics. I was talking to a producer the other day who produced honey, and he was telling me that if his bees went to canola plants—now some of his products are being banned from countries like Germany, if the bee went to the flower of the canola, which raises a whole other set of issues that I do not want to raise today. I just felt very sorry for the producer who had all these 10,000 cases of honey and going through that kind of issue in his own industry and not having made the decision himself on the product.

I can assure you that I have read the press releases and read some of the comments made by Dick Proctor, the Agriculture critic for the New Democratic Party that is a person who is fairly close to the Romanow government in Saskatchewan which has a lot of producers and a lot of people worried about the situation I have raised. So it does not get a lot of coverage, regrettably, but, oftentimes, coverage on an issue before it has become serious never takes place and only takes place in the media when it is serious. Witness the situation in terms of the sustainable resource of fishing. Only when we are so depleted that we did not have other options to take did it become a “media issue,” a public issue.

I think that right now we are seeing questions that are being raised—I am sure the member from western Canada, the one representative from the western part of Canada from the Conservative side may have been raising these issues. I am sure he is aware of it. I know the member from Regina has been raising these issues, Mr. Proctor, and he is, as I say, in close contact with the Saskatchewan government, the Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture, on agricultural issues.

This is, to some degree, the first post-Crow, post-Pool crop year where the prices may be low, the input costs are high, the credit may be tight for a lot of grain producers and cereal producers. I agree with the member opposite, there needs to be—we have national programs in Europe. We have national programs threatened and actually taking place in the United States, and we need to talk about national programs for a contingency plan for producers here in Canada.

Is the minister aware of any contingency plans? We are only three or four months away. We should have contingency plans in place now for the kind of clouds on the horizon for our producers. Are there any contingency plans on the horizon for producers in western Canada, particularly Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where this could be really quite a dramatic and negative year for many farm families that are directly affected?

* (1700)

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being five o'clock, it is now time for private members' hour. Committee rise. We will have to get back into the House to get leave to waive private members' hour.

IN SESSION

House Business

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I understand there might be leave to waive private members' hour today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Marcel Laurendeau): Is there leave to waive private members' hour? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you know, the Law Amendments committee is at work this afternoon considering a large number of bills. It would also sit at 7:30 p.m. this evening to consider Bill 35. After the committee has finished consideration of Bill 35 this evening, I would be announcing that the bills not completed in this afternoon's sitting of the committee would then be considered after Bill 35 at this evening's sitting. They include, if it has not already done so, Bills 10, 11, 13, 20, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 45, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, 300, 301, 302, and 303.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Madam Speaker, Bill 47 would also be transferred from the Economic Development committee to the Law Amendments committee and added to the list of bills being considered. The Law Amendments committee will sit tomorrow evening at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 2 and whatever other bills might not be completed at this evening's sitting of the Law Amendments committee and which are referred to it.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the Law Amendments committee will sit on Wednesday afternoon at 3 p.m. to consider bills referred. I have in mind Bill 51 for that particular meeting. I understand that Bill 10 has been dealt with and need not be included on the list I have just given to you.

Madam Speaker: To repeat the announcements by the government House leader: the following bills will be considered in Standing Committee on Law Amendments this evening, Monday, Bills 11, 13, 20, 26, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 45, 47, 52, 53, 54, 55, 57, Bill 300, 301, 302, 303 and in addition Bill 35 which was previously scheduled. I have just been advised that the bills I read out are in addition to Bill 35 and following the completion of Bill 35.

The Standing Committee on Law Amendments will also meet on Tuesday, June 23, at 6 p.m. to consider Bill 2 and any of those previously listed that have not yet been completed. The Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Wednesday, June 24, at 3 p.m. to consider Bill 51 and any others not yet referred.

Is there leave now to transfer Bill 47, as previously scheduled in Economic Development, to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I do not think I asked for leave to have the Law Amendments committee sit Wednesday afternoon at 3 p.m. at the same time as the House is sitting either.

Madam Speaker: Is there leave to permit the Standing Committee on Law Amendments to be scheduled on Wednesday at 3 p.m. concurrent with the House in session? [agreed]

Mr. McCrae: With the leave of the House, Madam Speaker, I would move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that Madam Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee to consider of the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Consideration of Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Marcel Laurendeau): The committee will come to order.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Chairman, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) was asking if any contingency plans were being worked out to respond to what certainly would appear to be disappointing grain prices this fall and perhaps for several years to come. The short answer is, no, not really.

I have asked the management of our Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation to work with figures. This was some time ago that what we have done with our Manitoba crop insurance is we have enhanced it and fine-tuned it to what I believe to be the finest program in the country. It is not just because I say so. It is because 80 percent of our eligible acres are enrolled in some form of the crop insurance program. Farmers have choices. They can insure up to 80 percent of their yield, 70 percent of their yield, or just take the basic, which is literally premium-free, 50 percent kind of a disaster yield.

The key word here is all we are insuring is the yield. I have asked the management of Crop Insurance if we could build some price factor into that deal. You see, that is our problem. If the prices are zilch, then 80 percent of zilch is still zilch. That is what our premiums are producing, and if we could build some form of the revenue program, the GRIP program, into our basic crop insurance program, that is, in my humble opinion, something that could be thought of that would bridge this period, and it may well be three, four, five years.

I hear reports from Europe that their subsidy support for agriculture in Europe is doing exactly what it ought not to be doing. It is producing all kinds of surpluses for them that will soon or later come to what we will have to compete with, but, I quickly add, and the honourable member will appreciate, it takes more dollars. I am satisfied that I certainly would be prepared. I know that I would have support from my colleagues to go to our Treasury if there was a national program that could be developed. I am not prepared and I do not think I am being asked by the honourable member to go it alone, you know, leave Ottawa entirely off the hook. Not at a time when they are passing programs that will, for instance, provide multi-multimillion dollar, a hundred million dollar support to producers who are in trouble on the East or West Coast in their fisheries industries.

I do not think the prairie farmer or producer should be treated any less differently, and I think that is what I have said earlier. I need to see some spark, some feeling of willingness to recognize that there is a problem looming. No, the problem is there, but it is not quite at that crisis situation yet where farmers are getting on their vehicles and demonstrating in front of our Legislative building, but they well could be by this fall. The immediate concern for the producer right now is to get over the frost dangers, get over the lack-of-rain dangers, get over too much rain dangers and get the crop growing and harvest it, but by fall, if their prices are very poor, then we could be hearing much more from our farm community.

* (1710)

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I know that Saskatchewan will undoubtedly be working with Manitoba on this issue. I think we could be in the same collective boat in terms of producers here in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. I know our Ag critics raised it, and I will raise it with our national leader the next time I have a chance to talk to her, so she is alerted to it. I am sure she has raised it before, but sometimes the media is dominated by West Coast and East Coast fishing. We have some similar problems with fishing right here in Manitoba, in the freshwater fishing situation here, but obviously we—I do not know whether Minister Goodale or other ministers of the Crown are involved in this issue or not, but the alleged cabinet planning

session for the federal government is taking place now. One would think it is on the national agenda now. This may be the last meeting of cabinet before they break off for a couple of weeks in the summer. It is important to have some kind of program be worked on by officials in July, so we can get something predictable in August. There should be something predicible right now, in my view, because some of these price pressures have developed months ago when people like yourself, I am sure, have been raising this with your federal counterparts, so whatever help we can be.

We sometimes disagree with the design and the focus of support programs, but not the bridging through the national government for producers, the equity of treatment for grain and cereal producers here in western Canada that other resource sector individuals receive from time to time that bridge commodity prices or bridge national government subsidizing the commodities that we are competing with in the same markets—and anything we can do. As I say, there is always some disagreement on focus of programs and capping versus noncapping of programs, but the concept of bridging is something we would support.

If there is anything more we should be aware of, please let us know. I wish the Minister of Agriculture well with the federal counterparts. Obviously we all have connections back to the family farm. Some are more removed than others in terms of each generation, but many of us, I should say, not all, have connections back to a family farm, and so I certainly thank the minister for his answers. We are standing by, and I think the federal government should be standing by today at the federal cabinet. They should be coming out with programs right now, but they should be worked on with the provinces as well as to have a contingency plan.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): I would like to ask some questions to the honourable Minister responsible for Seniors.

I would like to start first with the specific ones, some kind of a follow-up of a petition that I sent to the minister about a month ago, a few weeks ago, on behalf of the residents of seniors at 185 Smith Street. Specifically I identified three problems there: the problem of physical impossibility of the person in a

wheelchair to get into that complex building at 185 Smith Street without any assistance from anybody else; the second problem of the risky cement pavement with a sharp angle that could endanger a person in a wheelchair, and the lack of security guards during the weekend in that housing complex at 185 Smith Street.

I would like to specifically ask the honourable minister the progress of the first problem of physical impossibility. What is the status now?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister responsible for Seniors): I thank the member for Broadway for those questions. He is right. They have just been brought to my attention very recently. Regarding the wheelchair accessibility, the concrete, I believe it was the partition or something that was in the way there. I am not exactly sure what that one was, but I remember getting a note on that and then in regard to the security at the unit, at the complex.

I can report to the member that we are looking at trying to get a cost analysis on putting in one of those wheelchair accessibility buttons—I believe that this is what the member is referring to—to open and close the door on that. It is not something that we usually have in our seniors complexes or in our public housing complexes, but it is something that I have asked the department to look at and see where the significance of it is, what the utilization of it might be, what the rationale behind it is in putting it in at that particular unit. I should mention to the member that the—I do not know exactly which complex it was, but I do know that at, I think it is at least one other complex there was a bit of a fundraising effort put forth by the residents, and they had an installation put in.

Manitoba Housing has now taken over responsibility for maintaining the door opener on that particular complex. I am in the process of conveying that message to 185 Smith, the tenants association there too, but before we proceed with that type of initiative, I have asked for a pricing from the department as to the actual costs involved in putting in one of those automatic door openers for the seniors at 185 Smith Street.

Mr. Santos: So, the honourable minister has no specific information as to the costs of these improve-

ments that are being asked, and there is just a recommendation to study it?

Mr. Reimer: No, it was not a recommendation to study it. The recommendation was to try to get the costs so that we can make a decision as to how much it actually is. It was just brought to my attention, as the member mentioned, just within the last week to 10 days that there was a request for this. So the information may be on its way to me, or it may be in the mail, but I have not seen it as of today as to what the costs are on that operation.

Mr. Santos: The president of the tenants association at 185 Smith Street had indicated to me at the time that they are willing to meet with the minister in order to follow this up. If it takes too much time and a long time—I do not know how reasonable is a reasonable time—just in case they are and ask me if the minister is willing to meet with them, is there an open door to the minister's office with respect to this issue?

Mr. Reimer: Certainly, I am willing to meet with the tenants association, the president of the association. It is just a matter of co-ordinating a time with him, and hopefully it is done in the next short while because I think that they would like to move on with the decision making on it. I will instruct my department to arrange a meeting as soon as possible, and hopefully by that time I will also have some costing information with me at that time. But, certainly, at any time we can meet with him.

Mr. Santos: The second problem relates to dangerous and risky cemented pavement, about one-half inch higher level at a sharp angle to the level of the side street, pedestrian pavement in the entrance area of 185 Smith Street housing. Its width may topple any person in a wheelchair, trying to steer through the protruding edge of the pavement entrance. I understand there is some jurisdictional problem here because that pavement side of the street is owned by the City of Winnipeg. I suggested that they just remove the edge, as a matter of temporary solution, by means of asphalt or cement filler about four inches wide along the edge thereof. They say there is some problem with this because, if anybody gets hurt while in the temporary solution, they may be held liable—whatever touched the problem will be held liable for that injury. If anything

is being done, I would like to hear something that is being done about this problem. In the meantime, would they just take the risk and get someone before they topple over in their wheelchair there and get hurt, and if they do get hurt, where is the remedy?

* (1720)

Mr. Reimer: I am not exactly sure of the specifics regarding the lift on that concrete and its implications, but I guess sometimes common-sense thinking and common-sense decision making have to prevail at times. Sometimes we just have to go ahead, and if it just means putting in a small lift or a levelling off of it, I do not know why that would be a problem. But I will have the department check on that, and if they have something that we have to do, you know, that we can do through our Maintenance department and through our Department of Housing, I do not know why we would not proceed and get it fixed. Because if it is a danger and it is posing a problem for people to get in and out of 185 Smith, and it is a possibility, as the member mentioned, that they can upset themselves in some way, common sense would dictate that we have to fix that. I will have the department check on that and find out exactly why we cannot remedy that.

I do not think that we should get caught up in some sort of bureaucratic hassling between the city and ourselves as to whose responsibility it is. If it is just a matter of some blacktop or something like that that is going to remedy the lift, I think that we will just have to, like I say, make common-sense decisions on this.

Mr. Santos: What is the time frame by which they can wait for this common-sense solution? The problem is ongoing, and if not dealt with may result in some kind of injury. This is usually the thing that happens in, let us say, a dangerous intersection in our busy streets in the city. Until someone gets killed, nobody puts the light or the stoplight there, or the pedestrian walk. This is a danger that is ongoing, and until somebody gets hurt, maybe somebody would like to move in. Is there a time horizon by which these residents at 185 Smith Street can look forward to some kind of, any, solution, whether temporary or not?

Mr. Reimer: I will get a hold of the department, or I will have someone in my department, I will contact

them tomorrow morning and have someone take a look at it tomorrow, find out exactly what it is and have a report back to me, hopefully by the end of tomorrow so that we know exactly what the problem is. Is the member saying that this is just in the front entrance to 185 Smith?

Mr. Santos: That is the one they pointed out to me, so I went there and looked at exactly what it was that they are complaining about, and I saw that really sharp angle. You cannot steer yourself without taking that risk that your wheelchair can topple down.

Mr. Reimer: Then I am right in saying that it is at the front entrance at 185 Smith Street that the people cannot get in through that because of a lip in the concrete at the front door. Is that correct? [interjection] Thank you.

Mr. Santos: The third problem they raised is the weekend security person that they need during weekends at the entrance of 185 Smith Street. What is the minister's reaction to this request?

Mr. Reimer: I am not aware of whether this is something that was there previously or something that we have changed in regard to having weekend security at the complex. I do know that there is what we call a 24-hour hot line for anything that happens within our public housing as to incidents or breakdowns or some sort of maintenance problem. I would have to report back to the member whether this a change and whether this is something that has just come about in the last while that we do not have security on the weekends. But like I say, I do know that we do have a 24-hour phone line that the people can access and people will come out to remedy problems if there is some sort of problem that they want corrected.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I wanted to ask a few questions of the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik), and I wanted to start with the matter of the Society of Compassionate Friends. The minister might recall that around the beginning of June, I wrote to him on behalf of the Society of Compassionate Friends. The Society of Compassionate Friends, I think, had written to all MLAs on March 27, 1998, and this society, as I am sure the minister knows, is a society that offers compassionate services and comfort to groups of

parents. I do not think it is confined to parents but to individuals who are bereaved because they have lost a family member.

I know I spent a few hours with the Society of Compassionate Friends speaking with the director or co-ordinator who is a volunteer; that is to say, she is unpaid. She told me about the work they do, and actually I heard of the work they do through other work I have done in the city, and certainly they are very, very impressive. I am sure that all members of the Legislature appreciate the work that they do. I am sure that there is a great cost service because of the work they do, because I am sure that if individuals were not getting the comfort and solace and support from this group, they may well need services from our health care system.

Anyhow, this group since 1991 has been trying to get some small modicum of funding from the Department of Health. I know that they had some dealings with Mr. Orchard and with various ministers and other members of the Tory caucus down through the years, but nothing has materialized. The woman who is currently the co-ordinator, Mrs. Delores Belot, has apparently been working pretty well 12 months a year, so many hours a week. I cannot remember how many, but a good number of hours, and she and the other volunteer person are quite frankly burnt out.

Mrs. Shirley Render, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I would hate to see the Society of Compassionate Friends close down because they are not able to continue with their work. They do feel that they need to have, as I indicated earlier, some small sum of money in order to hire somebody who could co-ordinate services. They have a donated office at this time across the street from the Health Sciences Centre.

I wrote to the minister asking if he would agree to meet with the Society of Compassionate Friends, and I got the usual letter back saying that this matter would be brought to the minister at the earliest opportunity.

An Honourable Member: And it was.

Ms. McGifford: The member for Interlake says that it was. Well then, if it was, I would like to know if the

minister has made a decision about meeting with these people.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the month of June, as the member well knows, is a very busy month around this building. [interjection] The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), if you would at least allow me the ability to answer the question, I would most appreciate that.

The request did come in, and I would like to have the opportunity to meet with the group. It is a matter of finding time that one can schedule, and the month of June, as with most ministers, we tend to schedule very few meetings such as this for the obvious reason that there is a lot of House business going on and meetings, committee meetings, are called on relatively short notice. I would like to keep as much time free for the House as possible, but we will be attempting to meet with them.

With respect to funding for this particular organization, I have been involved in government for 10 years as a provincial member. I have worked for a federal minister of Health for two years, and I can tell members that I have seen this same scenario played out many, many times. A group of people who have a particular interest in health or in social service areas, often because something has affected them, they form a support organization or a particular group—and thank goodness for that. They work very, very hard at it for a long period of time, and the amount of work continues to grow. They do it as volunteers or on money that they are able to fundraise, and then they get to the point, as the member has described, where the key volunteers in the group become burnt out and are not able to continue on the work and earn their living as well. So the request comes to government, federal, provincial, municipal, to foundations, et cetera, for funding that allows them to put in place full-time, paid staff to be able to do the work and thus take some of the pressure off.

* (1730)

We have many such requests, always had and will continue in a whole variety of areas. It does become not a matter of a desire to fulfill this. Obviously, they do very good work. All reports that I have had are that

they provide excellent work, and one has to admire their commitment as volunteers. It does boil down, quite frankly, to the availability of financial resources.

As Minister of Health, I can tell you that the demands on my budget grow continually. We continue to add large amounts of money to that budget. Last year, we added nearly \$100 million in year to demands that are there, and it is a matter of sorting out priorities. We do not have the resources, nor do I think the people of Manitoba can afford to pay for absolutely everything that is requested of us. If I have the ability to find the resources for an organization like this, I certainly would and I would certainly consider it, but it is not like we have large pools of dollars necessarily. We have lots of demands on us as a ministry, but I certainly am prepared to have a look and I am prepared to meet with them.

Ms. McGifford: Then I understand the minister to say that he is committed to meeting with the Society of Compassionate Friends. The minister is nodding his head, so he is clearly agreeing that he will meet with these people. We do understand that June is a very busy month, and I am sure that the Society of Compassionate Friends understands that.

Now, the minister puts forth an economic argument or suggests that our Health budget is growing and growing and wonders where the money could possibly come from. I think this group is talking about a very modest amount of money. I do not know, I heard something as low as the \$30,000 range, so I could suggest that he might take the \$30,000 out of his government rainy day fund.

The other thing that the minister might consider is that if this society dissolves because the volunteers are burnt out, then the services that they are providing will have to be provided, but they will be provided in a much more costly way than they could be if indeed the minister can fund this society and it can continue as it is, other than having a paid co-ordinator.

I think, as well, and I am sure the minister would agree, that a society that is composed of those who have been affected and these individuals then loan support to others who have been affected and whose need is more immediate because their bereavement is

more immediate, probably it is a very empowering way to provide service and probably for that reason provides an excellent service.

I do not know whether the minister wants to respond or whether he would like me to go on with my next question.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Chair, first of all, no one in any way takes away from the work that they do as volunteers. There are many organizations that provide, through volunteer effort, support groups around various issues in health care, around various diseases and illnesses and conditions. The same good work is done by those organizations. Some of them receive assistance. Others do not; it is something that has developed over time.

All I am saying to the member is we receive many, many requests for this kind of support, and it is easy to say it is only a certain amount of dollars. If we had taken the New Democratic Party at its word every time it has asked us to get into our surplus dollars, there would be none left and we would be in a deficit as a province once again. So it is easy to make that request—it is only \$30,000 to come out of this fund—but that request is made by her and her colleagues regularly, day after day in this House.

So it has to be put in this context. This is not just an isolated request. If it was the only request from members of the New Democratic Party for increased spending, then perhaps it would have more credibility, but it comes with many, many such requests.

I could say to the member as well that in the area of support for people who are bereaved, or who have family members or themselves going through serious illness, one addition that I did make this year, that is in the process of going out to be posted, is after meeting last fall with the Ministerial Association—I know this may be of interest for the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), given his life outside of this Chamber in his chosen profession, that I had a meeting, a number of meetings with them. They pointed out again the same issue around providing chaplaincy services across the province in our various health care facilities, about the need for that service, about the difficulty in coordinating it and organizing it on an ongoing basis.

So we did manage to reconfigure some dollars within the department this year, and we have approved creating a contract position for two years, I hope will be ongoing. The reason why it is a contract for two years is it allows for individuals to change within that position, but for someone who is a member of the clergy to be able to occupy that position, to take on the important task of ensuring that we have chaplaincy services throughout facilities in Manitoba, of various faiths and denominations. So I would say to the member very clearly that we have invested some dollars in this particular area. It is not necessarily with the organization that she references, but it is important to us, and this was an area that we have added some additional resources this year.

Ms. McGifford: I did want to point out to the minister that the Society of Compassionate Friends provides services not to individuals who are ill or whose loved ones are ill, its mission is to provide self-help, friendship, understanding, grief education, and hope for the future to all bereaved parents. So this is a society that provides these services to parents who have lost children. The children have died, so I wanted to point out to the minister that small correction. I am sorry that he does not value these services or does not consider that the feelings of parents are important enough to take money from his rainy day fund. I think that is shameful.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

I wanted to turn to another matter, however, and ask the minister some questions about AIDS. We did have the opportunity in Estimates to speak a little bit about AIDS, and particularly the provincial AIDS Strategy which has been with us for two years but very little progress has been made. But I do understand that the minister is now working on a provincial AIDS Strategy implementation advisory committee. I wonder if he could tell me how many persons are going to be on that committee which I understand was supposed to be up and running, making recommendations for implementation I think by the end of June. I understand that that has been delayed, and I do not know how long it has been delayed, but maybe the minister could give me that information. Perhaps that is enough right now.

Mr. Praznik: You know, the member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford) sometimes leaves me to wonder

because I at no time, in my remarks, said that I did not value the work of this organization. If there is anything shameful, it is the way in which comments are stretched out of reality by the member for Osborne. She has a continual habit of doing that.

We have many requests, many requests, for very worthwhile causes, and we only have so many resources to put into them. My reference to the Ministerial Association and support for that co-ordination was that the chaplaincy programs in Manitoba hospitals, and that support for hospitals and personal care homes, also deals with some of the same issues. I was not trying to replace one for the other, but I was making the comment that we had reassigned some resources in this year in an area that was important in this particular area.

The member for Osborne may like to play games with it and may like to be able to accuse other people of not caring or not being interested, but that is just simply not factual, and she does that organization a great disservice by advocating on their behalf with that attitude. I know that that organization, I suspect, does not share that same view.

I will meet with them. I will give them a hearing and I am sympathetic. I only have so many dollars, and I also see and know the areas where additional dollars have to be put in in areas of treatment of illness that are very important and have to be met. That is part of balancing the responsibility in government, and no one, no one on this side has said that we do not value those resources. So I want to make that very, very clear.

* (1740)

This organization is valued, and they are facing a difficult situation. Many organizations doing good works, as well, face this from time to time. Part of it is rejuvenation of volunteers, to have new blood in an organization, and one answer is some funding for a co-ordinator position. No one has ever denied that. It is a matter of identifying those resources. So the member does their cause a great disservice when she accuses others of not valuing their work. It simply is not true.

Mr. Chairperson, with respect to the AIDS Strategy, the AIDS Strategy very simply, I guess, is to ensure for those who are HIV positive that they are able to access

resources in a one window type setting, so that they are not sent to a whole host of government agencies or government-sponsored agencies to be able to access the resources that they require during the course of that illness, whether that be housing, whether that be home care, whether that be access to social allowance or other income supports, but that the variety of services can be accessed through one window.

I have indicated very clearly that we have asked the Winnipeg Long Term Care Authority to take on that co-ordinating role. Marion Suski, their executive director, is in the process of doing that.

We have called for proposals and names for consideration for the advisory committee that will go along with that. They have now been received by my office, and I am in the process of reviewing those nominations to be able to make appointments to that advisory committee in the not-too-distant future.

As members of the opposition I think would appreciate, this month is a very difficult time as we schedule and try to get many things done with the House, and it is one of the things my office is in the process of doing. I hope within the next week or two to be able to announce the appointment of that advisory committee.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Chair, if I could just briefly revert to the Society of Compassionate Friends because I neglected to ask this of the minister, but I wonder if the minister will then write or have his staff write or call the society to assure them that he will be meeting with them because I think they are very anxious to hear from him.

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Chair, I know my administrative staff and I right now are identifying dates in the summer, once this House adjourns, when I will be able to catch up on meetings that I have not been able to have over the last number of months because of just the sheer workload and legislative responsibilities. When we have identified those dates, they will be contacted for a meeting, and I will endeavour to ensure that they are contacted.

Ms. McGifford: To revert now or to return to the provincial AIDS Strategy implementation advisory

committee, I did ask the minister if he could tell me, first of all, how many members will be on that committee and if he could tell me what sectors of the community those members are from.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, I do not have with me my note on this particular committee as to the size. I would be glad to share that with the member when I am able to get that for her.

But the letters that I did send out to all the organizations involved, the whole cross-section of the community who currently deal with the AIDS issue or parts of the AIDS issue, it was a fairly broad list, and I would be prepared to share that with her as well. As I am sure she can appreciate, I do not have that with me at this current time.

Ms. McGifford: I have some general questions. I appreciate that the minister does not have his note or notes with him, but I am wondering if there will be people, first of all, from all over Manitoba, from the various regions and secondly, if people living with AIDS will be represented on that committee. Will aboriginal people be on that committee? What was the process for selecting them, if people living with AIDS are on the committee, and their participation?

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Chair, first of all I will endeavour to get a list of all of the organizations and groups that we did write to to share with the member. We did indicate, if my memory serves me correctly, that we wanted to have some people on the committee who do suffer from HIV and AIDS. We asked that the groups in making their nominations provide us with a number of names and to take that into account in providing us with those names.

Now I understand we have had all the responses back, or most of them back now, to my office, and we will be reviewing those nominations. I believe we asked each organization to give us a number of names, so that we have a large pool from which to make the appointments and certainly balance geography, different backgrounds and expertise, to have a well-rounded board to advise us in this area.

Mr. Doer: Yes, thank you very much and I thank the minister. I know she was out to other government

matters, and I thank the caucus members for allowing me a few moments with the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson).

Mr. Chairperson, I want to raise a question about the closure of the Mini-Skool on McLeod which I heard about just about 10 days ago, and I am advised that 136 children will lose their spots at this centre. The families that I have discussed this issue with, and I am sure the minister has heard about this, are very concerned that the centre will be closed down on August 21, 1998. It will present a real challenge for the families of the children that are affected, and it obviously has created a great deal of uncertainty for them prior to the summer July-August period.

As I understand it, the parents have had a couple of meetings to try to deal with this issue, and they have met with the Munroe Day Nursery Inc., an operation that has been in place for 24 years. It already has a waiting list of 75 children, but it does have a very positive track record for children in the area. I have had the opportunity to tour the program, meet with parents, meet with the staff of this centre before. I have always been very impressed with the proposal. As I understand it, some 113 children at the existing Mini-Skool on McLeod are registered, are the so-called subsidized or supported children in the child care centre. I know it is between 77 and 113 of the 136 spots.

So it seems to me we need provincial government support for the families in terms of child care. As I say, there is already a waiting list at the existing Munroe centre. The proposal is for the Monroe centre to work with the existing parents to take over the spots at the existing site at Mini-Skool, and that would be administered by the existing board of directors and administrative directors at Munroe as a short-term solution to the problem, but obviously they need partnership and leadership from the provincial government. I know the minister's office has been in touch with the parents in the area. On behalf of the parents I would certainly like to support their efforts to have decent child care for their kids.

Mini-Skool in Ontario has given them very little time in terms of notice. In my view, it was an absolute shock for those parents to hear that eight weeks down

the road they may be without any kind of child care for their children. They were devastated. Obviously kids build up relationships with staff, and they build up relationships with other children. The setting is known to them, et cetera.

So I would like to know what action the government is taking and what specific comments the minister has relative to the idea of moving these so-called subsidized spots to the new administrative body and what else we, as collective MLAs, in the northeast quadrant of the city can do for the parents and the kids.

* (1750)

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the questions and his comments. Certainly there is a need in the East Kildonan, North Kildonan area for quality child care. We know that we have some very good facilities, but as he has indicated, there are waiting lists. Now with the closure of Mini-Skool, it has left a lot of parents very uncertain. I do want to indicate that I am as concerned as he is. I know that we have received a proposal, and he probably has received a copy of the proposal that came forward to us. My department will be sitting down with him immediately to look at and review that proposal, try to get a little more information, a little more detail.

In the absence of having an opportunity to see that proposal come forward, there are several different things that could be looked at and things that I think we need to share with the parents in that community. We do know that some of the children that attended the Mini-Skool in the past will be attending Springfield Heights School. We do know that Springfield Heights does not have a before-and-after school program at this point in time. Many of the schools in our collective community have very successful before-and-after school programs. I know that my office has been in touch with the principal. I know that the daycare has been in touch with the parent council over there, and there might be some option. That is certainly not going to solve all the problems, but there may be a piece that could be addressed if there is identification of a significant need, and I believe there probably is. There is lots of experience to draw on in the River East School Division on successful programing.

I do also know that I have met with someone from Palliser Furniture who is looking at establishing a worksite daycare on Gateway Road which would be not far from the Mini-Skool site. I do not know whether that is an appropriate facility for some support. I know that they are looking at an onsite workplace daycare, but they are also looking at offering that kind of service to people in the community should there be spaces available in that onsite. They are just in the beginning stages of that, so, I mean, this is not something that is going to solve the issue or the problem for August.

I am very interested in seeing what the proposal is that has come forward. I think if we got some experience and some expertise in our community with the Munroe centre, we have to take a very serious look at whether there is an ability to work at least on a short-term basis with the families in our communities. I indicated we have just received the proposal, and my staff will be meeting immediately to try to flush out the detail and see whether it is workable. I think as we see the young families in our community entering the workforce or needing the kinds of supports, I do know that right in my own neighbourhood there are lots of young families that are going to need the support for quality child care, and we certainly want to make a commitment to work together.

I offer to my honourable friend the opportunity to work with my department and with the community. I know he has been in touch with them. I think it is to all of our benefit to try to ensure that come August, all of those children have a place to go. We may have to, in the short term, look at different options while we are exploring the ability to find the long-term solution. I am certainly open and willing to have us all work together. I do not think it benefits us to play politics with this kind of thing. I think we want to ensure that families are served and served in a secure environment, quality child care space. So I am aware certainly and will be working very quickly with the proposal that has come forward to see whether there is—I do not know whether it will be a short-term or a long-term solution.

Mr. Doer: I thank the minister for the response, and as I understand it from the president of the Munroe daycare nursery now that she feels she is dealing with people in the department that she feels have provided time and commitment to deal with this situation on

Mini-Skool on McLeod, so I pass on our thanks to the staff of your department for working with this.

The proposal has been made to your department. Having been involved with workplace daycares before I was involved with Western Glove, there is some real strength with workplace daycares. The parents obviously work with each other. The families know each other. The kids do quite well in the workplace setting. There is a bit of a learning curve for Palliser. It is pretty successful at making furniture, and it has got a pretty successful company, but the Munroe daycare centre has the expertise. It has worked with parents before. It has worked with staff. It has worked with the community.

We are talking a large number of children now, over 100 children, 100 families. This is something that has come from the parents themselves. They had their own meeting last week, and they came up with this idea. I was not able to attend the meeting. I agree with the minister it is not a partisan issue, but I always like when parents themselves come up with a solution. It is one which usually is the right one for their own kids. I usually find that parents themselves are best able to come up with programs that meet the needs, certainly the demands, that they have on themselves but also the needs of their own children.

Not to discourage Palliser at all from a workplace daycare, I want to congratulate Palliser for their great successes in manufacturing furniture and the great name it has across the world, but right now these parents have come up with this idea of Munroe daycare. They were aware that the other option may or may not be there. This is what they have come up with, and I have really asked the minister to look at it favourably.

I think if we move the spots from one administration, from the private company to the nonprofit corporation—and the Chair here has been a member of the former daycare task force. I see him nodding his head in agreement here—it is really important. I know governments sometimes work slowly, but I think the staff have really picked up the ball quickly. The parents have picked it up. The Munroe daycare has said, yes, we will help. We will do whatever we can for the kids.

I think that makes a lot of sense for all of us. So I want to encourage the minister and let her know that I

will work with her, but I think this Munroe daycare proposal makes a lot of sense. We do not need any shortage of spaces now in northeast Winnipeg, and this looks like a way to move ahead with the families in an appropriate way.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I agree with all the comments that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has made. We know that parents most oftentimes can come up with solutions if they are challenged, and certainly there is a little insecurity and a little uncertainty around where their children might be come the end of August or beginning of September, and they do not need the additional burden of trying to get some kids off to school and others into daycare, a whole new experience. There is a lot of pressure around the beginning of the school year, and if they had some certainty that their children were going to be well cared for, I think it would relieve some of the burden and the anxiety.

So we will work together and try to ensure that the right solution for the right reason is found. I am confident that we can. Just the comments that my honourable friend made about workplace daycare, it might be really interesting for me or someone to just give the people that are organizing at Palliser the names of some of the people that have had successful programs in the community for years. It might just help them develop their program in a way that will best meet the needs of their employees and the rest of the community. As I said, this is not a short term. We would not have a solution by August, I do not think, even if Palliser was up and running. But they should complement whatever else is happening within the community, so I think it might be important for us to put them all together.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. The hour being six o'clock, committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I hope that the Acting Speaker not see the clock for a few minutes until we can make these committee changes.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave that we not see the clock?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Chairperson: Leave has been granted.

IN SESSION

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk).

This substitution had been moved in a committee by leave this morning, and I am now moving the same. Substitution in the House without the official records will be accurate. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Do you have a whole bunch of them, George?

Mr. Hickes: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Just do them all.

Mr. Hickes: I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) for Brandon East (Mr. L. Evans) for June 22, 1998, for Monday evening.

I move, seconded by the member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) for June 22, 1998, for Monday evening.

Motions agreed to.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the

composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for June 22 at three o'clock be amended as follows: Riel (Mr. Newman) for Rossmere (Mr. Toews).

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for June 22 at three o'clock be amended as follows: Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) for Riel (Mr. Newman).

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for June 22 at 3 p.m. be amended as follows: Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for June 22 at 3 p.m. be amended as follows: Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach).

These changes have been made in committee, so they are just to be verified in the House, plus, I have one more here.

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for June 22 at 7:30 p.m. be amended as follows: Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), and St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson).

Motions agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hour now being after six o'clock, this House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until tomorrow (Tuesday) at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, June 22, 1998

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