

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, March 12, 1990.

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Richard Kozak (Transcona): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Eva Pohlitar, Fran Senior, Cheryl Ritlbaun and others, urging the Province of Manitoba to consider the use of all available means to oppose and restrict the establishment of adult-only video stores and all stores that deal exclusively with pornographic material.

I would like to acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided to the petitioners by Transcona Memorial United Church, the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Tabor Baptist Church, Blessed Sacrament Roman Catholic Church and St. Michael's Ukrainian Catholic Church. These churches are located in the constituency of Transcona.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS BILL NO. 105—THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier) introduced, by leave, Bill No. 105, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Rule 85, I wish to give a brief explanation of this Bill.

It has now been some nine months since our second budget was presented. Since that time Manitoba has faced forest fires, soft world mineral prices, drought and a harsh federal budget. The overall effect of these external influences necessitates the close examination of Government priorities.

Bill No. 105 will reduce the access allowance base for MLAs from \$25,000 to \$17,000 per year, representing a saving of close to a half million dollars a year to the people of Manitoba. We as a Government are prepared to show by example the leadership required and expected in this province.

We recognize that elected Members must join with those who elected them in reducing the burden on the taxpayers of Manitoba and we hope that the Opposition will support us in this responsive and responsible move by promptly passing the Bill prior to the end of this Session.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION put, MOTION carried.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of Honourable Members to the gallery where we have from the Immanuel Christian School eighteen Grades 7, 8 and 9 students. They are under the direction of Otto Bouwman. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson).

On behalf of all Honourable Members, I welcome you here this afternoon.

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Decentralization Hiring Policy

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party in Manitoba had a policy of decentralization in their 1986 campaign and their 1988 campaign. We believe that Government-led decentralization can be the spark to lead businesses to also expand into rural communities.

In November when the Government announced its program without naming departments, employees or any process of consultation with communities or employees, we urged care and compassion. In their usual pigheaded, take it or leave it, my way or the highway, they have shown they will not consult, they have no compassion and that short-term political gains are first and foremost on their agenda.

Can the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) tell this House why the hiring policy of this Government for the last 22 months has not reflected or indeed given any indication that the jobs that they were advertising for would be located in communities other than Winnipeg?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in their usual have-it-all-ways way, the Liberal Party is now trying to be on both sides of this issue. On the one hand they say they support the principle of decentralization, but they do not support decentralization in practice. They cannot have it both ways.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: The Liberal Critic, the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray), in response to this said last week that what we ought to be doing is moving positions, not people. That is precisely what we are doing. We are moving the positions, entire, discrete units of Government departments, out of Winnipeg into different areas throughout rural Manitoba. In that process we carried through with what we said we would do. We had a task

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force go out throughout the province and first work within the Government departments, with management in Government departments, to determine what units of Government would be most appropriate for moving.

Second, they went out to communities and they consulted extensively. I know that Mr. Sid Reimer and his group of people were in various communities throughout the province, and that is why the 60 different communities who will be receiving jobs as part of this decentralization process were involved in the process.

He consulted with the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, with the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities, with various people so that they would know what Government is doing, why it is doing it and what the benefits are of this type of decentralization. We are satisfied that in so doing we have come up with an excellent proposal that makes economic sense and that is good for the long-term economic interests of the people and the Province of Manitoba.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, it became very clear over the weekend why Mr. Sid Reimer was hired. His past experience has been in disaster relief. As a result of this incompetent Government that is exactly what he will be doing, providing disaster relief.

MGEA Consultations

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Can the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) tell this House why the task force, why your Task Force on Decentralization, which promised consultation with employees to be affected and with their union, has never engaged in that consultation process?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we did a couple of things with respect to the union. First, in letting them know this was our proposal last November and that we were going to be working through Government departments to identify the specific units of Government that would be decentralized outside the City of Winnipeg, we let them know what would happen and what the process would be.

At that point in time the MGEA indicated that they were fundamentally opposed to the decentralization, Mr. Speaker. Under those circumstances, obviously MGEA was not then going to be a willing, active and positive part of the process. When they were opposed to it from Day One, obviously we had to then make the decision on a policy and a management basis as to what areas of Government could efficiently and effectively be operated from new locations outside the City of Winnipeg.

* (1340)

We made that decision, Mr. Speaker, because we believe it is in the long-term best interests of the province and the people of Manitoba to ensure that in areas outside the city that have suffered some economic hardship as a result, of course, of the world price wars in grain that have resulted in losses in income to the rural community—I know that the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) knows that it is projected

to have massive reductions in income for the farm community. That impacts upon banks and financial institutions, that impacts upon service sectors to the rural economy and all those areas that have been devastated, there is an onus on the part of Government—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Carstairs: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, but the Minister has put wrong information on the record. The Manitoba Government Employees Association is on the record as supporting decentralization provided that decentralization policy takes place along the lines of attrition and by filling vacancies.

Office Locations

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this Government prides itself on being good managers. If they are such good managers, can they tell the House today—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Carstairs: Can they tell the House today why this Government has not completed a physical space analysis of potential office locations before they made this announcement?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, what the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) is saying when she says it should be done by attrition is that what you do is for MACC, as an example: you wait until every single position is vacant at MACC, there is nobody working at MACC, and then you move them out. But during that period of time, which may take place over a space of 20 years, you would absolutely devastate, decimate, and render totally useless one entire section of Government.

You cannot do it by attrition. You cannot transfer empty positions. If we were to transfer empty positions, what we would do is, at the present time there is a vacancy—I read in the paper where the research director of the Leader of the Opposition of the Third Party is going to be vacant—we transfer that vacancy out to another community. What would he do for a research director in the meantime, Mr. Speaker? That is the most ridiculous suggestion I have ever heard. We now know why the Liberals are totally incompetent, Mr. Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

MGEA Consultations

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, there are 200 positions coming vacant

each year by attrition combined with lateral transfers. This can occur in a reasoned, compassionate and caring manner. Can this Government, having ignored the Manitoba Government Employees' Association to this point, because they did not agree with the Government, tell us, why are they now requesting that MGEA participate in a worker adjustment program when they refuse to hold discussions with those very same people, even a month ago?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Of course there are hundreds of positions vacant in the Government service at any given time. The fact is they are all in different areas. They are not all in the areas that you want to transfer out. There may be one here, one there, one the other place. You have to have discrete units of Government that provide a specific given service that you can move out into another community outside.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberals are getting to be terribly embarrassing here when they do not even understand management. Fifteen percent of the positions that have been, in fact, designated for transfer are vacant. That is consistent with Government numbers of vacancies that we want to try and move.

The fact of the matter is that you have to have a unit of service that you move out. Some of the positions may be vacant, but if all of them were vacant that unit could not provide service to anybody in this province. The Liberals do not seem to understand what their policy of attrition really means. Why are we working on an adjustment committee? I will answer that after the next question.

Mrs. Carstairs: Mr. Speaker, but the Government does not seem to understand that there are numerous employees who work in clerical functions, who work in computer work, and that work can be transferred quite easily from department to department.

* (1345)

Hiring Policy

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Can this First Minister (Mr. Filmon) explain why no effort has been placed on local hirings of the unemployed or underemployed in rural communities in order to fulfill these positions that they are locating into those communities?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what can happen if people decide not to move out with the job, is that hirings will then be done in the local community.

If the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) is suggesting that we fire all those people rather than transfer them out to the other areas of the province then she is getting even more ridiculous. That is an absolutely absurd suggestion, that we fire all these 600-and-some-odd people so that we can fill the positions.

We are transferring the position out. If the people choose to move with the job, which we hope they will, they have a very generous relocation package. If they

choose not to move then we will deal with them very fairly and evenhandedly. They will be given the opportunity to bid for another position to remain in the City of Winnipeg.

If they choose—those who are in excess of 55 years old—to take early retirement, we have an even more generous severance package for them to ensure that we treat them fairly, equitably and decently as good employers, because we have a commitment to them, unlike the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) who wants us to fire them all.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mrs. Carstairs: Obviously, in the answer to the last question the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) did indeed give the other agenda of the Conservative Party: force them to move and if they do not move you fire them.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable First Minister, on a point of order.

Mr. Filmon: At no time did I say that. I merely said that is what the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) has proposed, and that is that people be fired rather than moved out.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable First Minister did not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Impact Families

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this Government is using a dull axe when it should and it could be using a sharp scalpel. It is once again using bullying instead of persuasion. There are families caught in this Government's shortsightedness.

Will this Government please explain how an MGEA employee is to explain to their child that mom and dad have to live in separate communities in Manitoba because of this Government's policies?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I am sure Honourable Members will want to give the courtesy to the Honourable First Minister to respond. The Honourable First Minister.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, under special circumstances such as the Leader of the

Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) is referring to—and she might know that we did not choose people to move, we chose positions. We chose positions to be moved, just as her critic, the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray), suggested we do. We moved the positions out.

When that special circumstance has occurred they will find that they have a choice as to whether to move at all. If not, we will do everything in our power to find them another position within Winnipeg. If one of them chooses to move then we will do everything in our power to find a suitable position for the other one to take in the same location as the first one. We will bend over backwards as a good employer to ensure that we do everything for those people, unlike the Leader of the Opposition, who makes a foolish suggestion, and that is that we fire people—

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

* (1350)

Decentralization Relocation Criteria

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission (Mrs. Hammond). We, of course, are receiving calls all across the province today from people. It leads to the obvious question of whether the Government had any criteria at all for the relocation notices that went out last week.

As part of the criteria, was the unemployment rate in various regions used as one of the criteria? Were the family circumstances of employees used as a criteria? Was the vacancy rate in certain jobs used as any of the criteria in terms of the Government's decision-making in terms of the proposals that they announced last week?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act): Mr. Speaker, when the Government decided on the decentralization we looked at all the regions because we wanted to move jobs out to rural Manitoba and serve the people that were meant to be served as well as Winnipeg. The criteria that was looked at was from each department to take a look and see what made sense to move where, and that is what we have done.

Unemployment Statistics

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, the Minister mentioned "when." One of the unfortunate disasters of this program is that they waited a year and a half before they decided to enter into this program and lost tremendous opportunity in terms of decentralization.

My question to the Minister is, can the Minister explain why only five positions have been moved to Swan River with a vacancy rate of 8.8 percent and 59 positions have been moved to the Minister of Health's (Mr. Orchard) riding with an unemployment rate of 7.3 percent? Is there any criteria under the Government's

decision-making that are tied to which boys in the back room were cutting the loot as opposed to what is really needed for the unemployment rate?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission.

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act): Mr. Speaker, as I said before the different departments made the rationalization. As far as Swan River is concerned, we also looked at jobs that were going to come into that community such as Repap.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, under the Repap sale the people lose 300 jobs in that Swan River area—(interjection)—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Concordia has the floor.

Mr. Doer: As documents tabled in this Chamber from the Western Diversification Fund will indicate, on May 19, the Minister lost 300 jobs in the Swan River area, Mr. Speaker. The Government has only transferred five jobs to the Swan River area, five positions to the Swan River area with a much higher unemployment rate than the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) and some of the other Ministers in the front bench.

My further question to the Minister is, where does it fit into the unemployment rate statistics to only move 10 jobs to Gimli and Interlake with a 10.3 percent unemployment rate versus the unemployment rate in the Minister of Health's riding of 7.3 percent, where the Government is planning to move 59 positions? Can we not conclude that these were politically motivated in terms of the decisions that were made?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, since Gimli is a seat that is held by the Government I doubt that argument comes into play. One of the things that was looked at as well was the fact of Government jobs that are presently in the community. We were looking at the regions as well. There will be comparable jobs in the region.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we could go on and on about the discrepancy between the unemployment rates in the various regions and the positions moved by this Government. In some cases, it does not make any sense in terms of the unemployment rates.

I have a further question to the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission, if anybody is responsible for the Civil Service Commission. Probably the Member for Arthur (Mr. Downey) is responsible for the Civil Service Commission lately, as we have seen.

* (1355)

My question to the Minister is, can the Minister justify the impact study of moving 14 positions in the Education Department to Winkler, again with a low unemployment

rate, lower than the City of Winnipeg, when 38 people, many of them seniors, many of them supplementing their own pensions, who mark papers, will lose their jobs as a result of this planned redeployment of the Government? Did they do any impact study of the 38 people who will have to lose their jobs, many of whom are single, elderly people versus the 14 positions that are moving to Winkler?

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, we have moved units into rural Manitoba so that there would be jobs for rural Manitoba. Where it is possible to help these people get other jobs, we certainly will be doing it through the workplace adjustment committees, which will be working very actively to see that we get jobs for people either in Government or outside of Government.

Decentralization Manitoba Literacy Office

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): On June 27, 1989, this date marked the date of the announcement of a Manitoba literacy office. On September 8, that particular office, the Manitoba Literacy Office, did open in Winnipeg at 1200 Portage. Outside of the city, the highest percentages of those in greatest need of the services are found in the south central part of the province and in the northern community.

My question to the Acting Minister of Education (Mr. Manness), Mr. Speaker, is, when the decision to decentralize was established as a campaign promise, why would the Government open a new office in Winnipeg instead of in the southern part of the province or in the North where these services are needed?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I did not catch the full question, but I will ask the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) to read the question in Hansard and to give a full reply in response to the Member.

Decentralization Manitoba Textbook Bureau

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): My next question I will address to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), Mr. Speaker. With 90 percent of the users of the Textbook Bureau living in Winnipeg, this department offered on a cost recovery basis, how is the decision made to relocate in Souris? What was the rationale?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the building that the Textbook Bureau was in was sold and that they were required to find a new location. As a consequence, they were one discrete unit of Government that was available to be moved intact into another area of the province. Under those circumstances, the various logistics of the operation were examined and it was concluded that it could be operated quite effectively and efficiently from another location such as Souris, and the decision was made.

Decentralization Manitoba Textbook Bureau

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): What is the projected loss to the Government for the walk-in trade, now such a large part of the cost intake from this particular department?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, we are expecting minimal reduction in the revenue as a result of this move. If the Member is seeking a more specific response to her question, I will also take that as notice.

Decentralization Impact on Women

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker, the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Mrs. Hammond) was patting herself on the back during International Women's Day for providing opportunities for women in our province. On the other hand, the Minister is part of the Cabinet who is penalizing women in lower paying jobs in the Civil Service Commission because of the method and the approach to decentralization.

Most women given their relocation notices are in lower paying positions and will have to quit their jobs because they are not the principal breadwinners of families, or they are single parents, and for family support reasons cannot move. Mr. Speaker, we know women statistically have a higher unemployment rate, and this Government is contributing to those statistics.

My question to the Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission, for Labour and for the Status of Women (Mrs. Hammond) is, for those women who cannot move for economic reasons, will they be given guarantees of an opportunity for transfer to other jobs, or will they be told to take it or to lose your job?

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act): Mr. Speaker, we are going to do everything possible to make sure that the people—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Honourable Madam Minister.

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, we—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), from his seat, gave the impression that the Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) had no right to go to the Ukraine. I would ask the Premier—

* (1400)

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Mr. Speaker: Order, please. What is your point of order?

Mr. Lamoureux: —to retract his comments—shameful.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order, please. The Honourable First Minister, on the same point of order?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Yes. When the Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) wants to go and teach about democracy, he should know that shouting down people in this Legislature is not a very democratic thing to do.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Inkster—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to advise the Honourable Member that he does not have a point of order.— (interjection)— Order, please. The Honourable Member for Seven Oaks, on a new point of order?

Mr. Mark Minenko (Seven Oaks): Mr. Speaker, there is an expression in Ukrainian that says, do not look too far—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Minenko: —beyond one's own nose. We have nothing to learn from this Premier (Mr. Filmon)—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I remind the Honourable Member for Seven Oaks that he does not have a point of order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. Honourable Madam Minister.

Mrs. Hammond: Mr. Speaker, we feel that we will be able to replace a large number of administrative support staff. There are 250 vacancies in Winnipeg right now, and between now and the time of the move we really feel we will be able to do a very good job to get jobs for these women, and people, who are not able to take the move.

Notice of Intent

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker, with a supplementary question to the same Minister, employees have been told they have 30 days to sign letters giving their intent on whether they plan to move, yet this Government has not even decided when some of those branches will move. Is it September or next year? Is it reasonable for employees to give 30 days

notice, and will employees be penalized if they sign the letter indicating they can or cannot move and then, for whatever reasons, have to change their mind? Will they be penalized? Will they lose severance packages? Will they lose pension benefits—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Minister responsible for the Civil Service Commission.

Hon. Gerrie Hammond (Minister responsible for The Civil Service Act): We are going to make sure that there is enough leeway for employees to have an opportunity to make up their minds. Should someone change their mind before a move, if it is not at the last minute, I am sure that we will be able to accommodate them. We are not forcing anyone to move, but what we are doing is making it possible for them to make a choice with their families.

Decentralization Vital Statistics Branch

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): I have a final supplementary question to the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson). We are delighted to hear that criteria have been used, so perhaps the Minister of Family Services could share with the House the criteria that is being used for the relocation of the Vital Statistics Branch, which employs all women. What is the rationale for redeploying that branch, which has a very high walk-in traffic?

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): The criteria is the overall criteria of this Government, that we want to provide services to people where people live. There will still be a presence in Winnipeg for the Vital Statistics Office.

Private Schools Funding Formula

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Acting Minister of Education (Mr. Manness). School divisions and teachers throughout the province are still reeling after the announcement that this Government, along with the Liberals, is abandoning public schools.

Mr. Speaker, it has been estimated by others that this policy change is going to cost the taxpayers an additional \$100 million over eight years to support private schools. Can the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) indicate whether the Government has done any studies to indicate whether, or what impact this will have on the funding to public schools given that \$100 million cost is based on the existing number of students in private schools? Can the Minister indicate what will happen to those funding requirements should private school student enrollment increase by 10 percent or 20 percent or 50 percent?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, firstly let me indicate to the Member that this Government is not abandoning the public school system—far from it. Indeed, when you commit this year

to the Public Schools Finance Board an additional \$40 million, it seems to me, to the public school system—or something of that magnitude or larger—I can say to the Member, we are not abandoning the public school system.

With respect to the potential draw on funding, should hypothetically—and I stress hypothetically—there be an increase in enrollment within the independent school system, then obviously there is going to be a greater requirement for the Government to direct additional funds there, but today, given the fact that we inherited a province where growth in the public school system was not only stagnant but indeed was falling, I would have to say that there would be an offset on that side of the ledger.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, the Acting Minister of Education (Mr. Manness), had better get his blinkers off. Today, a private school in Winnipeg is advertising on the radio, suggesting that they can handle new clients based on the Government's new largesse to private schools. They are advertising to attract students to a private institution, a private, supposedly, non-profit institution.

My question to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is, has anyone in this Government shown enough responsibility to do any kind of an impact assessment on the effect of this new policy on public schools, given the potential for a major drain, a major loss of enrollment to public schools in the Province of Manitoba?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, there was some sensitivity done around various scenarios with respect to the potential increase, the funding required in support of a larger number of students being enrolled within the private schools system, but the Member himself can do that very same analysis.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) meet with the Brandon School Division, who have written to me and said the board is opposed to the provision of increased financial support to private schools at the taxpayers' expense. The Whitehorse Plains School Division says money allocated to private schools should rather go to the public systems—the School District of Lynn Lake, the School District of Rhineland, superintendents, teachers. Will the Minister of Education (Mr. Derkach) now meet, or his Acting Minister (Mr. Manness), now meet with those public school representatives to assure them that the funding for public schools remains the prime objective of the Government of Manitoba in support of public school students?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, certainly the Minister of Education has met and will continue to meet with all school divisions that request to meet on this item and indeed others. Again, this Government, through its policies, through its announcements over the last several weeks, has committed on average, funding in support of the public school system up towards just slightly under 80 percent. That is a tremendous commitment, to hundreds of millions of dollars, and that will continue.

East European Trade Business Opportunities

Mr. Richard Kozak (Transcona): The export opportunity of the 1990s arises from the economic restructuring of eastern Europe. The Government of Poland, for example, has set up an office seeking Canadian machines for woodworking, agriculture, leather sewing, textile and knitting, food and fish processing, metal working and plastics, as well as such goods as cosmetics, food products, clothing and footwear. Manitoba produces these things, Mr. Speaker.

My question for the Premier is, has the Department of Industry and Trade had any—any—direct contact with such offices? How will it assist exporters to create jobs in Manitoba through east European export opportunities?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have certainly been one who has felt that the opening up of the eastern bloc was a massive opportunity for producers, manufacturers and suppliers in Manitoba. When you think of the huge new market that is there in many of these countries with whom we have excellent relations, and in fact many of the people who have built this great province of ours have their roots in eastern Europe and many of these countries that are now being opened up for the first time in more than half a century, those opportunities are there to be had. They come with some complications, because obviously one of the difficulties of those eastern bloc countries is that they lack the financial resources to be able to buy many of the goods that we produce here in Manitoba, and we have difficulties.

* (1410)

Last year I met with the Polish Ambassador, for instance. We were talking about opportunities for new trade and sale with Manitoba or its products. One of the difficulties that they face is of course that they owe the Government of Canada massive payments for wheat that they have been unable to pay. The Government of Canada has not been able to continue its sales to them because of the massive debt that they have. So we have to work out these things, but let him be assured that we are very interested in establishing and expanding those opportunities.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member for Transcona.

Mr. Kozak: Mr. Speaker, the international monetary system, if it is worth a grain of salt, will provide liquidity to eastern Europe. This is one boat that we cannot afford to miss. We do not have to rely on the dubious goodwill of the federal Government. The Canada-USSR Agreement on province-republic co-operation gives this province a direct right to negotiate economic co-operations in eastern Europe.

Will the Premier (Mr. Filmon) take speedy action to identify export opportunities and co-operate with Manitoba businesses in seeking economic co-operation agreements throughout eastern Europe?

Mr. Filmon: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, when I met a couple of weeks ago with Mr. Roslylav Bratun, who is, I know, known to Members opposite, who was a Ukrainian Congress member in the U.S.S.R., we talked about that very agreement. We talked about the fact that the provinces could have their own relationships with the Soviet Union and attempt to develop it and expand upon it. We agree that the opportunities are there. We agree that by working co-operatively with our suppliers, producers, manufacturers here in this province, we should be able to open up untold opportunities in terms of markets for our goods produced here in Manitoba.

Mr. Kozak: For my final supplementary, Mr. Speaker, I will try to take a slightly different tack that I think will help the Premier (Mr. Filmon).

We all recognize that many west European firms have a head start in eastern Europe but cannot grow fast enough without partners to take advantage of every opportunity. What will the Premier do to assist Manitoba businesses in negotiating joint venture agreements with west European firms that would open the door for Manitoba goods in east European markets?

Mr. Filmon: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is always nice for Liberals to be helpful. They have not been so in the past for our Government. They voted against tax reductions to Manitobans. They voted against reducing the deficit. They voted against substantial increases in health care funding. They voted against substantial increases in capital funding for health institutions. They have voted against every single thing that we have done in this provincial Legislature. Despite all of that, we have achieved good things for Manitobans. In fact, I am surprised that he has not asked about the employment statistics, because they show that 8,000 more people are employed in Manitoba today than were a year ago.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon), will take his seat now, please.

Decentralization Unemployment Statistics

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): We are pleased to see the Government finally supporting the New Democratic Party position and action over the last number of years of decentralizing Government activities.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Plohman: We have seen, Mr. Speaker, under the New Democratic years, 49 percent of Civil Service jobs in rural areas—the Highways Sign Shop in Dauphin, MPIC, and in Brandon the fire college, the ACC in Dauphin—

Mr. Speaker: Your question here, please.

Mr. Plohman: —and the list goes on. I ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon), why were over 100 positions placed in comparatively wealthy rural communities? When you talk about that we have to talk about comparative wealth—Altona, Carman, Winkler, Morden, while communities like Lynn Lake, Winnipegosis, Ethelbert, Fork River, Sifton, Grandview, Cross Lake, Gilbert Plains received absolutely nothing from this decentralization proposal, and they have much higher unemployment rates. Where was this Government when it was looking at fairness for those jobs instead of putting them in southern Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I spent a fair bit of time outside the City of Winnipeg this weekend listening to people, talking to people, throughout the province. I can tell him that I have been reading the news media reports and listening to them on radio, and people in communities throughout this province are happy with this decentralization.

More than 60 communities benefited from this decentralization. We have spread the decentralization initiative, not just to major communities such as Brandon and Portage and Dauphin or Thompson, we have spread it out into smaller communities. We have done that for very good and valid reason, that we believe that even a handful of jobs in small communities has a very significant impact. People throughout this province understand that and are supportive of it.

I cannot believe that the New Democrats and the Liberals are opposing meaningful decentralization, the first time in the history of this province that we have had meaningful decentralization and they are dead against it, Mr. Speaker, and I know that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Mr. Plohman: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), on a point of order.

Mr. Plohman: Would you consider adding about a minute on. The First Minister (Mr. Filmon) has abused the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. There is 40 minutes for Oral Questions.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), with a committee change.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources for Monday, March 12, at 3 p.m. be amended as follows: Ducharme for Neufeld, Cummings for Penner, and Manness for Gilleshammer.

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I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for 3 p.m., Monday, March 12 session be amended as follows: Burrell for Driedger (Emerson), and Findlay for Gilleshammer.

I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for the 8 p.m., Monday, March 12 sitting be amended as follows: Driedger (Emerson) for Praznik. I move, seconded by the Member for—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. The Table Officer is having difficulty in hearing who is getting changed from committee.—(interjection)—Order, please. The Honourable Member for Gimli.

Mr. Helwer: I move, seconded by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources for Monday, March 12, the 8 p.m. session be amended as follows: Gilleshammer for Ducharme.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed. The Honourable Member for Inkster, with committee changes.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): With committee changes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake) for the vacancy—that is just to confirm it.

I move, seconded by the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose), that the composition of Law Amendments for Monday, March 12, 3 p.m. be amended as follows: Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) for Springfield (Mr. Roch), Ellice (Ms. Gray) for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans).

I move, seconded by the Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for Monday, March 12, at 8 p.m. be amended as follows: Sturgeon Creek (Mrs. Yeo) for Ellice (Ms. Gray), Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger) for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake).

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed. The Honourable Member for Thompson, with committee changes.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for the Member for Logan (Ms. Hemphill), and further that seconded also by the Member for Dauphin that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the Member for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis) for the Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski).

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

* (1420)

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Do I have leave to make a non-political statement, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for St. Johns have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed)

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: Today, Mr. Speaker, I want to stand and pay tribute to the Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society, located in my constituency at 1230 Main Street.

This society is the oldest Polish organization in western Canada. It has worked tirelessly over the years and decades to help new immigrants adjust to life in this country, to preserve Polish culture in this province and to enhance the social and cultural life in our community.

This society recently embarked on a major renovation program and held its official reopening yesterday, Sunday, March 11. I had the pleasure, Mr. Speaker, of attending this event and participating in the official ribbon cutting ceremony.

As a result of the tireless work of the building committee of the Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society their building has gone through a veritable metamorphosis and is a beautiful addition to our historic north end. In fact, the decision to stay and renovate, despite obvious problems along Main Street, is a fine example for Main Street revitalization, shows genuine respect for one's roots and displays a real sense of community.

I congratulate Mr. Ed Bielaszka, President of the Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society, and pay tribute to the oldest member of this organization, Mr. Nick Miga. On behalf of all Members in this Legislature, I want to thank the Holy Ghost Fraternal Aid Society for doing so much to keep Polish culture alive, for helping to revitalize our most historic Main Street and for demonstrating the greatest possible commitment towards the preservation of our heritage.

Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member for Niakwa have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed) The Honourable Member for Niakwa.

Mr. Herold Driedger (Niakwa): Mr. Speaker, I would like to extend the congratulations of our Party and that of the Chamber, actually, to the Manitoba Biathlon Association and the Manitoba biathletes who participated this weekend at the Canadian National Biathlon Championships held at the Falcon Lake biathlon facility.

Biathlon—for those Members of our Chamber who are unaware—is an Olympic sport which involves cross-country skiing and .22 calibre shooting. It is, in Manitoba, only a very young sport, the biathlon association here only being four years old.

Last year they were able to host the western championships. This year they hosted the national championships. Our team, our biathletes, earned three

medals: one gold, one silver and a bronze, indicating the high calibre of athletes that we have in this province.

The Manitoba Biathlon Association did a superb job in hosting this event. All Manitobans can be proud. I encourage this Chamber to extend its congratulations to the Manitoba Biathlon Association.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REPORT STAGE

BILL NO. 63—THE CONSUMER PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (3)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call the report stage for Bill 63?

Mr. Speaker: Bill No. 63, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (3); Loi no 3 modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur. The Honourable Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Co-operative, Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways (Mr. Albert Driedger), that Bill No. 63, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (3); Loi no. 3 modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur, as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be concurred in.

MOTION presented and carried.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, I have been engaged in conversation, and perhaps you could tell me at what stage we are at with Bill No. 63.

* (1430)

THIRD READINGS

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General) presented, by leave, Bill No. 63, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act (3); Loi no. 3 modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur, for third reading.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Allan Patterson (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray), that debate be adjourned on Bill No. 63.

MOTION presented and carried.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Bills 102 and 103?

SECOND READINGS

BILL NO. 102—THE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1990

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General) presented, by leave, Bill No. 102, The Statute

Law Amendment Act, 1990; Loi de 1990 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives, for second reading, to be referred to a committee of this House.

QUESTION put, MOTION carried.

BILL NO. 103— THE STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT (RE-ENACTED STATUTES) ACT, 1990

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General) presented, by leave, Bill No. 103, The Statute Law Amendment (Re-enacted Statutes) Act, 1990; Loi de 1990 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives (Lois réadoptées), for second reading, to be referred to a committee of this House.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): I have a question for the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae). Is the Minister planning on putting any remarks on the record on this Bill?

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, on Bill 103 I would have proposed to make some comments. I can still do that. Indeed, I had some comments to make on Bill 102, and would have. I can put my comments on 103 on the record now. Perhaps when we get into Committee of the Whole, put my comments on the record regarding Bill 102, if that is satisfactory to Honourable Members.

So on Bill 103 I have a very few remarks to make in moving second reading of Bill 103, The Statute Law Amendment (Re-enacted Statutes) Act, 1990. All Honourable Members will recall that we passed an Act of this sort at the last Session of the Legislature. In the course of the re-enactment process, thousands of pages of legislation were reviewed in order to provide the final text of all Acts requiring re-enactment to the Legislature. In the course of that enormous task, some errors were made. The purpose of Bill 103 is to correct those errors of which we have been made aware during the period since our last correction Bill was passed.

I do not believe I wish to make any further comment with respect to this Bill. I am sure that Honourable Members will agree it is simply a housekeeping Bill and with that I would ask for the support of Honourable Members for this Bill.

Mr. Alcock: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that debate on this Bill be adjourned.

MOTION presented and carried.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, I believe it is agreed that we could deal with Bill 104 at 4:15 this afternoon. Is that convenient for Honourable Members?

Mr. Speaker: Is that agreed? (Agreed)

Mr. McCrae: That being the case, Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to proceed to Bills 99 and 100?

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DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS
BILL NO. 99—THE APPROPRIATION
ACT, 1989

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), Bill No. 99, The Appropriation Act, 1989; Loi de 1989 portant affectation de crédits, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Radisson (Mr. Patterson) who has two minutes remaining.

Is there leave that this matter remain standing in the name of the Honourable for Radisson (Mr. Patterson) who has two minutes remaining? Agreed.

Standing also in the name of the Honourable Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray) who has 21 minutes remaining, is there leave that this matter remaining standing? Agreed.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, can you tell me which Bill we are on right now?

Mr. Speaker: Bill No. 99.

Mr. McCrae: I rise to engage in debate on Bill No. 99. I understood that there would be other Honourable Members from other Parties speaking to this, this afternoon, but be that as it may, there are some comments that need to be put on the record with regard to a number of matters that have come forward in the last couple of years, certainly the last 22 months that we have been in Government.

Mr. Speaker, this gives me an opportunity to use the debate on the Bill to bring forward a number of concerns that I have and a number of concerns that other Honourable Members on this side of the House have regarding the conduct of the business of the people of Manitoba as it is being undertaken by Honourable Members on all sides of this House. We go back to the early days of the present Government in 1988. Manitobans were mightily relieved to have an opportunity to make a judgment on the performance of the previous Government and to make choices as to how they wanted to see the Province of Manitoba governed in the future.

The 1988 election resulted in a Conservative minority Government in Manitoba, a Government which since then has achieved many major items of progress and initiative for the people of Manitoba. I think the people of Manitoba, when they have an opportunity to pass judgment on the performance of the present Government, will do so in a positive fashion weighing all of the pros and cons, weighing the positions put forward in the last 22 months by all of the Parties in this House, weighing the positions put forward on any number of issues by Honourable Members in this House over the past 22 months.

(Mr. William Chornopyski, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

To bring the discussion up to date, I think Manitobans, wherever they happen to live, are going to agree that no matter where you live in the Province of Manitoba,

you are a Manitoban and you should be treated as a Manitoban by your Government. For many, many years we have watched the migration of our population from my part of the province and other parts of the province which lie outside the Perimeter Highway, a migration of people into the City of Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the City of Winnipeg is the obvious place to go if opportunities are lacking in what I call rural Manitoba, but when I say that I refer to those urban parts of our province which lie in places like Brandon, Dauphin, Thompson, Portage and other urban centres. We refer to rural Manitoba when we refer to that part of Manitoba which lies outside the Perimeter Highway. This is a problem that has been developing over a number of years, occasioned to a large extent by a downturn in our farm economy.

Honourable Members, if they do not already know, should be told or reminded that Manitoba was built by the agricultural and other, but it is certainly agricultural pioneers of our land. Those people, people like my own family, had a large part to play in the development of the West, and that development had a lot to do with agriculture and the growing of cereal and other crops to provide not only for the people of our province but the people of Canada and the people of the world. We should be proud of that contribution made by our agricultural producers and also be mindful of the impact that the work of our agricultural producers has on our other more urban settings.

As a Member from a setting like that from Brandon, representing Brandon West, I got into this business of politics to try and do something for my community and for my part of the province. I think the announcement made on Friday by our Premier across this province will go a long way to alleviating some difficulties that there are out there in rural Manitoba, but also goes a long way towards a recognition at long last that rural Manitoba needs the kind of attention that it is getting from this Government, attention it did not get from the previous Government, and we know that attention would not be forthcoming from any Government headed by a Liberal Leader in our province.

In fact, those who live in my part of the province are very offended. People in my part of the province were mightily offended by the position taken by the Liberal Party in Manitoba. Now we understand also why the New Democratic Party, with relation to decentralization as a principle and decentralization as a fact—you cannot be against the fact and for the principle. It does not work that way. Honourable Members need to understand—(interjection)—The Honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) says, why can it not? Why can we not be in favour in principle but not in fact?

I am saying that question will tell you as much about the position of the Members of the New Democratic Party both inside and outside this House as it will tell you about the position of the Liberal Party, and that is that they are against rural Manitoba. If it does not benefit Winnipeg, or if Winnipeg is giving up anything, then they are against it. That bothers me a lot. That is one of the main reasons why I got into politics. I spent five years of my life in the City of Winnipeg, and certainly the last four years of my life. Five sevenths of my time is spent in the City of Winnipeg.

I think I can speak with some conviction of this matter. Three of my five children were born at the Women's Pavilion right here in the City of Winnipeg. I do not need to take any lessons from people on the Liberal benches about the impact on a place like the City of Winnipeg. It is a very fine capital city, and the people here are fine too. They are a lot more forward-looking than Honourable Members in the Liberal and the New Democratic Party who say that decentralization is bad for Manitoba and is bad for people.

* (1440)

I simply do not buy that, and neither do the people of Winnipeg. The people of Winnipeg are as convinced as I am that Manitoba needs to be a happy and a healthy province. It is only going to be happy and healthy as a province if people in Brandon are happy and healthy; if people in Churchill are happy and healthy; if people in Arborg are happy and healthy; if people in any part of this province want to feel that they are a part of this province.

The Honourable Member for Interlake (Mr. Uruski) would do well to think over what he just said a few minutes ago about wanting to be in favour of decentralization in principle but not in fact. That does not make sense. The Honourable Member should recognize that. With the experience he has in this place, he should know, as a public speaker and as a debater, that you cannot put something like that on the record and expect anybody in the world to believe it. The position has not merit whatsoever. It is very much similar and sounds more and more like the position of the Liberal Party, which is just to be opposed to everything.

Maybe some day they will get a chance, and of course they do not know what they will do if they ever get the chance to wheel the levers of power. But I can tell you, from the indications we have been getting around here, Manitobans would do well to look with some caution as such a prospect into the future.

It is not just on decentralization that we need to review the policies and platforms put forward by Members of the Liberal Party in this place, nor, for that matter, the policies and platforms put forward by the Member of the New Democratic Party. To their credit, and this includes the Honourable for Interlake (Mr. Uruski), Members of the New Democratic Party could see beyond the end of their noses, beyond the closest power grab. They could see that Manitobans did indeed want to see some controls brought in in this province, that Manitobans would indeed like to see taxes cut. Manitobans indeed would like to see deficit spending brought under control.

Manitobans indeed would like to see the debt situation in this province on a long-term basis brought under some kind of control. People could see the Crown corporations, a number of them in this province, were not being operated properly. But you know, every time we turn around, every time we propose a tax cut not only for personal taxes, individuals, but for businesses in our province as well, where do the Liberals stand? Even the NDP supported those kinds of things, and you have to give them credit where credit is due for that. Where were the Liberals?

Well, they were only looking at the next possible election, and they certainly would not want to be blamed for ever supporting anything a Conservative Government ever brought in. Never mind that it might be the best budget that we have seen in years. Let us forget all about that. This is a chance for us to vote against the Tories, so let us do it. We will find a way to explain to our constituents that we voted against the tax cuts that the Tories are bringing them. We will find a way. We have not figured it out yet, but we will find a way.

Well, so far they have not found a way. Their leadership is sorely lacking in the Liberal Party of Manitoba. They tend blindly to follow their Leader without any input from the Members of the caucus, which is a dangerous situation. It is not very democratic either.

I will tell you -(interjection)- The Honourable Member for St. Vital (Mr. Rose) tends to want to get me off track with comments about his own Leader. I tell you, one should not waste too much time considering the capabilities of the Leader of the Opposition in this House, because daily she shows us that she is not ready to be a Leader of the Opposition, let alone a Premier. I have no doubt in my mind that Members in the Liberal Party opposite are looking carefully at their options when it comes to leadership in the future, because they have a real problem now. They are learning that the quick-fix leadership approach is not the one that works. The people of Manitoba are not so blind that they cannot see the failings of the Liberal Party opposite in this Legislature and elsewhere in this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those brief comments, I will end my comments now, and perhaps the Honourable Members would be interested in listening to some comments from other Members of my caucus. I know they have not really accepted everything I have had to say, but you know, that is what debate is all about.- (interjection)- They certainly have their opportunities.

The Honourable Member for St. Vital has given his evaluation of my comments this afternoon. I appreciate them whether I agree with them or not or even accept them. The Honourable Member for St. Vital, I know he is a very, very important person and a very important Member of this Assembly, and he lets everyone know just how important he is. Knowing that his evaluation is coming from such an important individual, I shall consider the comments carefully and give them the attention that they deserve.

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a minute there I thought I was being encouraged about what to say, what to do, but I would like to spend a little time debating this. It is sort of an unusual situation when the business of the House comes to the point where we sort of want to put some comments on the record. What I would like to do is maybe just do a little bit of an assessment of what has happened in the last 22 months since we took Government.

We jokingly made mention of the anniversary of Thursday of two years ago when the Government was

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overthrown, so I think this is probably an appropriate time in the closing days of the Session to maybe discuss the record of this Government. It has been a very challenging time. It has been very challenging for the Government of the Day to try and deal with the economic situations within the province. I think that I want to compliment, as we have done in the past, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) who I think has done a tremendous job together with my colleagues in terms of performing under very stressful conditions.

If you look at what has happened, the first summer that we were in we had the drought situation which had a dramatic impact. For Members who live in the city, I think they can see exactly the kind of impact that the drought of '88 had on Manitoba itself. It virtually dries up the finances of the farm communities, and the town themselves, the dealers, the storekeepers, everybody is impacted dramatically by that, because when there is no crop, there is no cash, and when there is no cash, there is no spending. The ripple effect of that over a period of time affects the people in the city just as much as it does anybody else in Manitoba. That was how we started off the first summer with the dramatic drought that we had.

Then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that continued on into 1989 when in some areas, and I suppose that the eastern portion of the province was a little bit more fortunate because we did get some timely rains which basically allowed the livestock industry who is so dependent on feed to get their feed, we still had large portions of the province that were affected by drought again. That is the second time in a row for many people, and it is sad to see especially some of our young farmers who are struggling hard. They have a big capital debt load, and then have crop failures of that nature. Now we have the crop insurance programs that are available there. It is something that keeps them going to some degree. Being a farmer myself, hope springs eternal all the time, you always hope for a better year next year.

What it does, it basically I think justifies in my mind at least the decentralization activities that we have undertaken to try and help stem up the economy in the province to some degree. On top of the drought situations that we had, I guess I got my biggest awakening this past summer when first we had the fires in the Interlake. Then later on in summer while the House was adjourned already and I had the privilege of being up north doing one of the things that I like to do best, which is doing some fishing, after a few days of fishing virtually the whole North blew up on us in terms of fire.

I came back and from that time on I was preoccupied with the evacuations that had to take place. I tell you something, the financial impact on the province in terms of financial money was just—we had no clue until it was all over when we finally started establishing the figures. Can you imagine the evacuation of 23,000 people from isolated communities up north? Everything worked well. I just endlessly have complimented the people up north in terms of their ingenuity, in terms of taking a hold of a very difficult situation and coming through it. I want to compliment people in the EMO

organization that basically synchronized everything at a time of stress. This is when you really see what people are made of. That is what was shown to us last summer during the fire situation—the people that had to be moved as well as the people who were receiving them. We did all of these things with a minimum of disruption and no accidents, no serious accidents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you think that it was not stressful, a major concern in terms of what was happening, communities that we moved out because of smoke conditions, actually if we had applied that theory to even the Town of Thompson, we would have had to evacuate the whole City of Thompson. I was up there at that time. When you saw how the pilots were operating under the stressful conditions, with smoke, they went in and basically served above and beyond the call of duty. I have a lot of respect for our young pilots that were up there, including the ones that were flying the water bombers. A tremendous effort was put forward, but the cost was very, very high to the province.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by the time we had done the tabulation, we were well over \$70 million. I want to express some concern about the federal Government at the time. I have said this many times. During the time of the fires when everything was going wild, a lot of attention was drawn to the situation. In fact, we had not just national but international coverage of the major unprecedented fires that we had in the province. When the fires are over, everybody sort of forgets about it, but the people who were affected up north did not forget, and most certainly I have not forgotten. Being the Minister responsible for the Manitoba Disaster Assistance Board, we have worked out a program which we think is a fair and equitable one for the people in the North, especially for the trappers, because I do not know how many Members have had the opportunity to fly the North after the fires took place. It is a very sad sight. I know the economic impact on the trappers themselves is a very dramatic thing as well.

* (1450)

What we have done is we have a three-stage program in which we are compensating the trappers. One is for basic equipment, which is the easier one. By and large, it involves snow toboggans, traps, that type of equipment.

Can you imagine, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to try and establish where this damage is taking place? When you look on the map, northern Manitoba is a big, big area. Then to try and find out who has lost what, we think we have dealt with it very capably. We have asked for assistance from the people in the community to help us with that. They have done this. Now as I indicated, Stage 1 was basically the equipment. Stage 2 is going to be the replacing of trappers' cabins. We are working on that. We think it is coming along well. We have the individuals making application where they have lost the cabins, but we also in that case had to identify how many cabins were burned. We set up a system of compensation for that.

The third thing, something that most people possibly just automatically overlook, is the fact that we are going

to be compensating the trappers for cutting their trails again. When a fire goes through, you have a mishmash, especially in the heavier stands of trees that have fallen across these trails. So we are going to be compensating them on a per kilometre basis to take over the next two years. I think part of the reason we do that is that it is almost like a make-work project in order for the lack of income that they will have from the devastation that has taken place on their trapping income, that this will give them an opportunity to be compensated to some degree while they are cutting their trails again. I feel that that has been a positive program. We have a lot of compliments coming from the trapping industry up north. They feel that it is a good program and that we are handling it relatively well.

The things that have happened in the last little while—we had another drastic situation in the last year when Lynn Lake, basically the mine closed, and we have a town that by and large is dying, I suppose we could say. It is very sad to see these kinds of things happen.

Then they looked at the whole thing and considered what is really happening in the rural area. We look at my constituency in the southeast area where we have 33 small hamlets and communities and, when they start off with a little community like Middlebro, like Sprague, where we have lost the plant now; when we look at places like Piney, we look at places like Vassar, and I can go through the whole realm of them. These are all communities—and I should mention Gardenton. I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you have a feeling for Gardenton and Tolstoi, you know the people out there, you are well known yourself out there.

It is sad to see what is happening there. It is difficult, you know, I get out into the constituency, I meet my constituents, and they say, can you do something to reverse this change? Invariably what happens, what do you do? We have in our own way, and I want to touch on that a little later yet, tried by decentralization to some degree to help bolster up the economy in the rural area. I think nobody has an argument about that. I am sure in spite of the questions and answers that have been going on about decentralization that everybody has to agree I think it is justified.

We are very unique in Manitoba in that we have one major city with over half the population of the province being in Winnipeg. When I see my own children looking for jobs, there are very limited job opportunities in these small rural communities. Invariably it all moves towards one or two of the growth centres, and I could use Steinbach as one, Morden, Winkler, some of the bigger cities, but by and large the majority of our young people move into the Winnipeg area because this is where the job opportunities are.

How we can ever reverse that whole trend, I think we would be living in a dream world if we thought that we could make all our communities remain active and retain the activities that they have out there. It is sad to see, and as the younger people are moving out of these communities, the older people by and large, gradually when they get to retirement age, they like to get a little closer to a place where they have the comforts of a nursing home, doctor's office, where they do not have to travel as far. This trend is continuing, and I have great difficulty with that.

As I indicated, I think it is sad to see what happened in Lynn Lake, but in my constituency it is happening the same way as it is happening in Lynn Lake. It is just that it is happening slower, but on a very permanent basis. Those are things that I think Governments have to deal with.

How do you deal with it? With the action that we have taken with decentralization, it is only a very small fraction of the people in the Civil Service Commission that are being affected by it. When I made the announcement in Steinbach for the eastern region on Friday, it was well received by the mayors that were involved. They felt it was a positive move. The other side of the coin is of course that not all the communities were able to get some consideration. In fact, my own community of Grunthal did not get any position and so the question when I got back home was raised, why not my community?

We tried to do it in a fair and planned way so that we could address at least regionally to some degree the concerns and have these kinds of you know, the economic spin-off I think we anticipated was something around \$24 million. It will have a bit of a buoyancy for the rural area in terms of helping to some small degree

I wish in my own mind that during the hard times that the farm community has that we could offer them part-time jobs in many cases, because I think that is what is required in many cases, as we have families in the city where you have two people working in the family. In the city you can do that; in the country, you do not have those kinds of jobs. That makes it very difficult. So how does a farmer who is running his operation with financial difficulty, with drought, how does he pick up an additional job? You only have so many individuals that can be school bus drivers. So these are the things that Governments face. How do you deal with it as Government?

I am sure that support is there from all Parties in terms of supporting the decentralization. We are trying to do it in a compassionate manner. I know there is concern out there. Not everybody is going to be happy with it, most certainly not, because it is a dramatic move, but I think that there are some positive things that are there for the rural area. I think we have to start thinking in terms of Manitobans, not just in terms of parochial concerns that we have, or just Winnipeg. I think we have to look at what this will do for Manitoba, and I think that is a positive thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, while I am on my feet, some of the challenges and the problems that I have been facing, and I see the Member for Churchill (Mr. Cowan) is here, so I would like to just put a few remarks on the record in terms of the community of Churchill. I have said this during Question Period from time to time. There is another community that has gradually been dying, when you consider that a little over 20 years ago we had a population of over 7,000 people in Churchill, and at the present time we have less than 1,000 there. By and large, this has all been federal commitments that were there, were gradually withdrawing certain services from there. The United States air base was there at one time; the Canadian air base was there at one time; gradually everything has been moved out.

For myself, I love the community of Churchill. I have had the occasion to be there many times, and I think it is a very unique situation. I think this is something that many people should go up there and have a look to see what it is all about so they understand it a little better. I realize a lot of money has been spent in the area over a period time. To gradually see it decay to the point where it is now saddens me. I will tell you something. The powers that be, the provincial Government has a very small role to play other than a lobby role. The major players that are in there are the federal Government—either Crown corporations, CN, Ports Canada. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have seen what has happened in the past few years. Last year we had a little better year in terms of grain shipment. The year before that it looked like we might not get any. Finally, we got two.

* (1500)

I have grave concerns as to what the future holds for Churchill in terms of the port, in terms of the rail line. CN makes no bones about it that they are not overly enthused with the maintaining of the line. In fact, they are not maintaining it. I am hoping that we can have discussions, my staff can have discussions, with the federal Minister and his department as to what are the options and the future of Churchill. I think it is down to that point where decisions have to be made as to what we will do with the port or with Churchill itself. From my own end of it, when I consider what I call the enemies of Churchill—and I think there are a lot of them—the St. Lawrence Seaway people are definitely not very excited about supporting Churchill. You have the private grain companies that are not that supportive.

Then we had under the Port Churchill Development Board, where we had three provinces financially participating in it, have now withdrawn their support—Saskatchewan and Alberta. Basically, it is their grain that is going through the Port of Churchill, so instead of having that, what I have done, the initiative that I have taken is that I have removed, we are doing away with the Port of Churchill Development Board. We will be calling it the Churchill Development Board, so that it does not just deal with the port, it deals with all aspects of Churchill, but because it was a legal entity that was set up under the Port of Churchill Development Board, we have to take the necessary action. Saskatchewan and Alberta have now withdrawn from this, and now we can develop our own board that basically will work as a lobby group that will look at all aspects of it.

I would like to see a more synchronized approach being taken even by the Government of the Day. I would like to see that the various departments, for example, we have the Department of Natural Resources looking at the possibility of establishing a national park. Then we have the tourism aspect of it, and I think that is a big part of the future of Churchill if we can take and enhance that to some degree. Accessibility of course is always a problem and that is why it is important that we look at retaining that line out there because once the rail line shuts down and Ports Canada shuts down then the only way to communicate with Churchill is by air. That is a very, very costly situation and I think it would be very, very harmful for Manitoba as a whole.

To me, Churchill is part of our heritage. To have a port of that nature in the middle province, in the Keystone province, having an ocean-going port I think is something that we have not exploited properly. We have not taken full advantage of it. Granted it is open only certain portions of the year on limited time, but from what happened at one time when they were taking and transporting in and out via the rail line, even cars were coming in through that port at one time. Now we are down to hopefully we get some grain moving through there but that is about the extent of it. I blame CN to some degree for that because I think if they had been actively pursuing trade along the rail lines there that we would be in a much better position.

I also have facetiously said from time to time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if this Port of Churchill was located anywhere in the eastern provinces, Quebec or Ontario, that possibly we would have a beehive of activity out there. I just seems that the federal Government does not pay enough attention to it. They give us with limitations lip-service by and large but to me I perceive it as a slow death unless we can start turning things around. That is why we are trying to work through my department on options. I wanted from the federal Minister to have a commitment, what is the future of Churchill, and then develop it from there. I do not have that commitment. We have limited commitments.

When I talked with Mr. Bouchard, the federal transportation Minister, he gave me the assurance that there would be passenger travel to Churchill for the next five years. In the meantime, Mr. Bouchard has been replaced and we have Mr. Lewis. I am hoping to meet with the federal Minister to have an understanding to see what his gut feeling is about it. I suppose this happens at all levels of Government. When you change Ministers then you have to redevelop the attitude and find out what the feeling is. Just like the critics, if the Ministers change you have to try and find out how responsive is the new Minister. This is what we are developing right now.

I felt we had a positive sign from the previous Minister of Transportation. I am not sure exactly what Mr. Lewis' position will be. I am in the process of trying to line up a meeting. When I met with the four western Ministers just a little over a week ago, it was surprising how things change. Last year when I attended the Western Roadbuilders' convention I was the youngest of the four Ministers. Just a year later, now I am the second senior member already there. It gives you an idea how fast some things sometimes move in the political arena.

Well we see that happen here even in the House. When Mr. Speaker handed out the pins the other day and had them numerically—like every individual was identified as to what place of seniority they had in this House here—I got mine, and I was number six, basically the class of '77. There are four of us, and there are only three more senior Members in the House other than the class of '77, so it is surprising when you consider the average life of a politician in this building is less than six years.

I anticipate that every time there is an election, there are more changes, so being here 12 and a half years you almost feel like you are a legend already to some

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degree. Maybe that is why sometimes one does not get quite as feisty and you look at things a little differently. You see the activities taking place in the House here and especially in Question Period, the jabbering that goes on and everybody trying to tear at each other. After awhile, it is not quite that important anymore.

I feel very confident that the majority of the Members, each in their own way—and we all have different personalities—when we deal with issues in this House everyone perceives, as I did when I was first in the House, to be a giant killer, that if you can take and embarrass somebody in the House, you have really accomplished something. After awhile you sort of get used to the idea, and it is not that important to necessarily embarrass anybody. It is more important to try and get things done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to tell you that now as we wind down this Session, as we get closer to spring, we have many of the schools coming in. Sometimes the conduct in this House is something that creates an embarrassment I think not only for myself but for many Members in the way it is being conducted here. It is just during Question Period, I have said to people on many occasions. They say how can you work with that kind of a thing going on in the House. I say if you would come and attend after Question Period when we get down to committees, a lot of good things happen. We try and do the best we can at that time, but somehow that 40-minute Question Period is the stage for everybody to be an actor and to try and see whether we can score big points. Like I say, for myself I do not think it is that important anymore. Maybe it comes with age, because I have to tell you that in the first years when I was here I was about as raunchy as anybody else I suppose and doing my yelling.

Well, like I say, everybody has their own character in here and it surfaces in various ways. Some feel certain satisfaction out of trying to create a problem or embarrass somebody. To me it is not that important. What is important to me though is I have appreciated after 10 and a half years that I had the opportunity to serve in Cabinet, and what was important to me, I did the best that I knew how in terms of fulfilling my responsibility in my departments. That has been a real challenge for myself. No matter what happens politically or otherwise, I have had 22 months of that. I have enjoyed the challenge. I look forward to of course naturally continue in that capacity if possible.

When we look at the 22 months that we have been here that I have been involved personally as Minister in the Cabinet, it has been a very rewarding situation for myself. The 10 and a half years prior to that were learning experiences, and I wish that everybody could maybe have more time, because I think it is an ongoing learning experience. I have said all the time I will be the candidate in the Steinbach riding.

I have indicated all along that it is important that we try and make this thing function out here. Sometimes in the last little while I have been a little nervous about how we have been functioning here, and then I look back to the times when we had the French language debate in '83 and '84. Possibly that was not the high

mark of our political debates here either, but that happened to be the case. When we look at Bill 31 right now, final offer selection has taken a tremendous amount of time.

* (1510)

I suppose the thing that I find most interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to see how minority Government operates. That is different from majority Government. I know when the NDP were in power that they ran basically the House and the activities the way they saw fit with certain considerations. I recall from '77 to '81, when Sterling Lyon was the Premier at that time, we had our agenda that we ran.

Now we have sort of a loosey-goosey type of agenda, because when you have two Opposition Parties with a minority Government, it is something different. I think that has been a learning experience for all of us and I think that we have to view and probably look at making some changes.

When I see what is happening in the committees now, when we have 129 presenters and some of them take up to two hours, the other day when I was in Law Amendments one presenter took a full hour and a half. I think the fact that we are the only province that allows presenters to come, we should address the aspect of a time limitation on there. We in the House are limited to 40 minutes of speaking time. Why should presenters have endless time to make their presentations? It has often been said that if you cannot say anything in the first 10 or 20 minutes, you know if you cannot make your point, then you will never make it. Maybe I am at that stage here right now that -(interjection)- Anyway, it is a pleasure debating to some degree in the House here. It is surprising how one changes.

I can recall sitting in the back bench right over there. When I made my first speech, I read my first speech, and I was terribly nervous when I did that and I could not really overcome that because I have never been a polished speaker, never taken training. Then ultimately one time, many of you will remember Sid Green, when a Bill was introduced, he got up immediately on second reading—it had to do with the milk industry, and I was a dairy farmer. Mr. Green spoke as if he knew all about the dairy industry, of course all wrong, and I was aroused at that time, so then somebody said, well, if you are so mad, get up and speak. I got up without any notes and took my time and straightened out the dairy industry.

Since that time I have felt much more comfortable operating in this House. The important thing is that you should basically know what you are talking about, and that is something that is not maybe always the case out here.

Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Minister we do not have that many opportunities to get involved in the debate itself so when you do have the chance it is sort of refreshing to get up and just maybe talk about how everyone views it from their own perspective.

With those comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will sit down.

COMMITTEE CHANGES

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a committee change. I move, seconded by the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), that the composition of Industrial Relations be amended as follows: St. James (Mr. Edwards) for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), Ellice (Ms. Gray) for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko), Radisson (Mr. Patterson) for Niakwa (Mr. Herold Driedger).

I move, seconded by the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be amended as follows: Transcona (Mr. Kozak) for Assiniboia (Mr. Mandrake).

I understand the committee change I made earlier on Law Amendments for Monday, March 12, had said the Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) for Springfield (Mr. Roch). I should have said the Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) for St. James (Mr. Edwards). I so move, seconded by the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema), that that be the case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure for me to stand up and put some thoughts on the record this beautiful spring afternoon. As we have all noticed over the past weekend, I guess starting on Friday—and I do not know, I do not think it was any indication of the Liberal annual meeting that warmed the weather up, so to speak, but I do know that we have seen a touch of spring in the air over the last number of days. I know that right in my own constituency on my own street and the streets I have been travelling over the weekend, the large puddles indicate that the sewers are still plugged in many instances and water sitting all over the place indicates that spring is fast approaching, and along with that I hope is approaching the end of this one very long Session, the longest Session that I have participated in, in my four years in this Legislature.

I do want to say that the past four years have been very eventful. We spent two years in Opposition and for the past almost two years now as Government, and I know that the NDP Opposition does recognize and realize what it is like to be Government. I will tell you, sitting in the Opposition benches for the first two years of my political career was certainly not the time commitment that I had expected or anticipated becoming a Member of Government and a Member of the Cabinet of this Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that the Liberal Party has not had that opportunity to govern the Province of Manitoba, so I just want to relate to them my experience being in Opposition and being in Government. You cannot compare the two, but I must say that the last two years, almost two years, have been extremely challenging, extremely eye-opening, and have certainly made me come to realize that there is never a dull moment. Things happen at a very fast

pace, and we are ever challenged to work long hard hours and to take part in the process that we are faced with in this Legislature, probably a somewhat more difficult situation being a Government in a minority situation than it would be in a majority situation.

I do know there does have to be more give and take, that there has to be some sense of co-operation to make things happen. I do know that we all for whatever political purposes tend to be unco-operative at times, tend to be somewhat on our own agendas. Just pointing cases, final offer selection and what the New Democratic Opposition Party has been able to do with mounting a campaign and having presenters come forward to committee and make very lengthy, long presentations and ask a lot of questions, I believe that they accomplished their goal to some degree by prolonging the Session, by getting the Liberals sort of on both sides of the issue, not really knowing where they were coming from or what direction they should take, whether they should support the legislation or not. So they did use their position to stall the repeal of final offer selection.

I do know that the Liberals have through the legislative process attempted in their own way to prove their political points. That is what the process is all about. I recognize that and I realize that. It can be used to political Partys' advantages and in a minority situation the Government very often just has to go along with what is happening and take it in our stride and continue to, I suppose, work away and accomplish the things that we set out to accomplish whether we have control over the timing in this Legislature.

I do want to say, the one thing I do recognize in Government is that much of the work that gets accomplished by a Government happens in-between Sessions when there is the time to sit down with the departmental officials to go over what is happening in the department, to look at new initiatives, to go through the budget process, and to determine what direction Government is going to take. I suppose one of the reasons that both Opposition Parties would like to sit in the Legislature a little more is because it would mean that Government really cannot get down to the business of governing the province.

* (1520)

Very often, you know, it has been said that anyone who speaks for 20 minutes and cannot get their point across should not really be speaking at all. I do know that we do have 40 minutes in this Chamber to speak and to attempt to make our points. I am one of those people who firmly believes that you cannot hold people's attention for 40 minutes and do it terribly effectively in most instances. There are times, and there are those great orators who can function and do function very well and can hold the attention of their audience for 40 minutes. I know that I am not one of those people—(interjection)—

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with all the remarks that are coming across the floor—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, although we do come from different political philosophies and backgrounds in this House, and that determines whether we are a Conservative, a Liberal or a New Democrat, a socialist, basically we are all human beings. Each of us in this House has something to contribute. We may not always think the same way; we may not always agree with each other. We as Government are here for one purpose, to govern.

The Opposition's role is to be critical of what Government does, to attempt to gain some political popularity. I have been on both sides of the fence, and I know how difficult sometimes it is in Opposition to be critical because I believe that basically all of us are decent human beings, that we all have something positive to contribute. I guess I go back to my own upbringing and the way I personally feel about the human race and about people. I always, and always have, and I have been taught to look for the positive side of people, because there always is a good side. No matter how negative you may feel people do come across or how many times people are critical of you personally or because they do not believe in your philosophy, I believe that everyone agrees that there is some decency and a good side to every single human being.

An Honourable Member: It depends on how much.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) says it depends on how much, I think. Obviously some people are more positive than others, but I do not think it hurts to sit back to take a look to assess people. You know, I thoroughly believe that if you have a positive attitude and if—maybe if I could give an example of walking through the local grocery store. I usually shop at the Foodfare in my constituency. It is amazing, as you walk down the aisles and you look at people, if you smile at them, 10 to one, they will smile back at you. All you have to do—

An Honourable Member: Friendly Manitoba.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I will get to Friendly Manitoba too, but if you do make the time and effort to have a positive attitude about life, people will in the majority of instances be positive in return.

That just brings me to our Province of Manitoba and how proud I am to be a Manitoban, to be born and raised here in Manitoba. We moved to Toronto for one year just in the early '70s, and I was terribly homesick, could hardly wait to come back to Winnipeg to my friends and to my family. When we made the decision to move back, I was extremely pleased. I came back to Winnipeg, settled down here, raised our family here, and I want to stay here and remain here forever.

I hope that the people who—and I know that most people who have come to Manitoba, whether they have immigrated here for one reason or another, are proud to be Manitobans and to be Canadians. Whether we were born and raised here or whether we immigrated here, we are all here for a reason, and I believe that we as a combined community should be talking much

more positively about our province. We know that bad news sells newspapers and seems to attract the media's attention. There are a lot of good things that Manitoba has to contribute to this country and to this world of ours, and we do have to be our own ambassadors, because if we as Manitobans cannot speak positively and try to sell our province to other Canadians, to other visitors, heaven knows, no one is going to do it for us.

It is time that we sort of grabbed hold of the issue, talked positively about what we have to contribute as people and as a Province of Manitoba. Once we start to think positively about ourselves and to talk positively about ourselves, I know that others will start to respond more favourably to Manitoba and to Winnipeg.

I am encouraging all of us. I am sure that even the Opposition once in awhile can find some good things to say about Manitoba, even if they are not terribly happy with the Government here in the province. There have to be some good things. After all, none of us would be here if we did not think this was a pretty good place to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just brings me to talking a little bit about the last two years of this Conservative minority Government and what we have done, what we have accomplished, and why we feel we have done a good job. I know that the Premier of the province (Mr. Filmon) always says that it is only the poll that is conducted on election day that indicates who the Government is going to be and who it is not going to be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, all indications are that we in a minority Government situation have been doing a good job in the Province of Manitoba. Our Premier has proved that he is indeed a leader, a leader that can and should be reckoned with throughout this province. He has done an excellent job of leading us through this minority situation.

I just want to speak very briefly too about the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness). I believe that he has handled himself in a very responsible way. While all other provinces and indeed the federal Government and even the City of Winnipeg have been increasing taxes, we are the only province that has reduced personal income tax by two percent this year, some \$61 million back in the pockets of the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that is no small undertaking. I do know that during the last election campaign, and I have said this over and over again, but as I knocked on doors throughout my constituency the major complaint of people, normal working families that had very often two people in their household working, indicated that they were tired and fed up with the NDP administration who had imposed tax after tax after tax upon them, that their take-home income was so small they had absolutely no money left over for those little things. Not only could they not take their family out to a movie or out to a restaurant to eat, they could not even afford to pick up fast food and bring it home because their disposable income was less as a result of the taxes. I guess Autopac was just the one straw that broke the camel's back so to speak.

The people were tired of it. They indicated they wanted a Government that was going to look at the

taxes that were being paid and decrease those taxes. I will have no problem going back out to my constituents whenever the next election comes along and run on our track record as a Government.

* (1530)

We have reduced personal income taxes; we have reduced the deficit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we have made a commitment not to increase personal income taxes in the future. I think all Members of the House know exactly what has happened as a result of the federal budget that has come down. It has in fact harmed our ability to maintain what we have committed to maintain. That is not to increase personal income tax.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to attempt to address the issues and address the shortfalls in a common sense manner that will allow us to continue along on our agenda and provide the services that we need to provide and we should be providing, but in a way we can all live with, that we as a Government can live with and the people of Manitoba can indeed live with.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not going to be an easy undertaking. We are committed as a Government to work very hard to maintain our health care, a No. 1 priority. I know, having come from the health care field and working many, many years as a registered nurse, that the health care system is very near and dear to each and every one of us because there comes a time in life, whether it is as a young child where you need medical attention just for a sore throat or an earache or whatever, to a time where you might need your tonsils out, to a time where you give birth to a baby, to a time when you have an illness that requires either minor or major surgery or just hospitalization to get your body balanced and straightened around. When it comes to that point in time, it affects everyone's life that surrounds that person, whether it be the child, the parents and the grandparents. All of those people have a direct concern for that person.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, our health care system is very near and dear to each and every one of us. At a time of major need or major crisis we all realize and recognize what the nursing profession has to offer to the quality of care and also to the, I suppose, the human side of attempting to compassionately deal with the family of those who are in difficult, unhealthy situations. There is not one person I do not think in this House or in this province that would agree that nurses indeed are overpaid and underworked. When it comes to a point in time where you need health care, I believe that each and every one of us would agree that they want the best care possible for their family member, for their dear one, their loved one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have committed to maintain our health care system as a No. 1 priority as a Government. We have also committed to maintaining our family services, our Department of Family Services, and our education system. We will continue to do those, putting health care at the No. 1 priority because we all know—and I have had some people very close to me recently that have had some health care problems—

access to the system and good access to the system is so very important when you have those who are close to you who are in need of care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we I suppose have to take a look at where we have come from, what we have accomplished over the last two years and what direction we are going because I believe that we may be in that minority situation for a very short period of time in the near future. I believe too that our plans as a Government have to be long-range plans because I firmly believe that when we go to the public for the next election, whether it is the combined Opposition's choice or whoever's choice, it may be that we will indeed form a majority Government in the future. We, as Members of the Legislature, will have to take a serious look and we already are taking a serious look at long-range plans because we do expect to be here for a long time.

All indications are, especially from the type of Question Period that we had today, that the Liberal Opposition seems to have absolutely no understanding of where they are headed or what they would do to run this province. Their solutions are not clear.

I am thoroughly convinced that should a Liberal Government form in the Province of Manitoba, the people of Manitoba would be severely harmed. We saw what happened under the NDP administration, and Manitobans said, enough was enough, they taxed us to death.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I have said, there was no disposable income left and people were tired of that kind of administration. They wanted someone to come in to take hold of things and to improve the situation. I know that under a Liberal administration, when we have seen them on all sides of all issues and wanting to have things both ways, they want us to cut costs, they want us to reduce the deficit, but they want us to spend more on programming day after day after day.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I might give you a sense of what direction we maybe think you should be going in. I believe you are probably one of the more moderate people over there on the Liberal side of the House. I bet sometimes you wonder to yourself whether maybe you should not be sitting over here on this side of the Legislature along with us.

I believe, as you sit there and you listen, you do not disagree wholeheartedly with what we say, with the direction that we are taking. You do know there are some empty seats over here if ever you should choose to see the light.- (interjection)-

Here the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer) is making some reference to the city councillor for Henderson ward. I do want to say that the Premier of the Province of Manitoba (Mr. Filmon) has made me the Minister responsible for Culture, Heritage and Recreation and not responsible for the councillor for Henderson Ward. That I am pleased to confirm to the House today.

* (1540)

Anyway, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I probably have gone on quite long enough. I just do want to indicate to you

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we will continue along the path that we are going. We hope that the Opposition will see the light over the next short period of time and move this Session to an end so that we, as a Government, can get on with the things that need to be done, like getting through the budget process so we can let both agencies and organizations that we fund know what the funding can be for next year, so we can get on with responsible Government, common-sense Government, that we know we are providing even in a minority situation where the Opposition tends to be able to delay the House and stall things to a point where it is of no advantage to anyone to be here.

What we want to do is to get back into our departments, work with our officials, work through the budget process and get on stream and on track so that indeed the people of Manitoba can be served adequately and very effectively by a Government that has the time to move ahead, I might say, in the right direction. Thank you.

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services): It is indeed a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 99, The Appropriation Act, 1989, which of course deals specifically with the spending appropriations and plans that were made. I guess most of them were made almost a year ago now and introduced as a budget some time in June. My memory says the 5th of June, but I may be out a day or so. It seems anyway such a long time ago that we did work through this, the current budget, and lay it before the people of the province of course in the Budget Address by the Finance Minister (Mr. Manness) and then thereby of course laying it before this House for its deliberations, and of course we have discussed it even though it is many months since that time.

There are many issues of course that could be raised in connection with this current year's budget which of course will soon be ending and we will be into the next fiscal year. Of course at this time it is sometimes difficult to keep one's mind straight what we have been doing this year and what we were planning to do next year because of course the department has to work through and keep on with the business of the department while we are working through the current year's budget in the House.

The Minister of Government Services (Mr. Albert Driedger) of course has talked about some of the things that have happened this year which definitely and drastically impact on the budget of this province and cause us a great deal of concern. One of the major ones from a point of view of human problems and natural resources problems and the funding problems was of course the forest fires which took place last summer which has a large impact on what maneuvering a Government can do in the line of finance when you have some unforeseen happenings such as that take place. That of course may be more specific to Bill 100.

I would like to talk today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about some of the things that have been going on in my department over the last year with regard to this budget. The Estimates of my department were debated in January at which time the Opposition Members had

the opportunity, as is the usual practice of this House, to go over line by line the expenditures of my department or any other department that they are debating and identify areas of concern to the Opposition; many of them are areas of concern which have been raised to them by outside agencies or constituents or some other people who have raised a concern.

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

I recall when I was in Opposition raising many points to with funding of matters in my constituency and of course that is the activity that takes place during Estimates. The main thing that took place in the Estimates of the Department of Family Services this year, which were by the way not debated to quite the extent they were the year before—in the budget before, I think, we almost set a record for timing. The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) now holds the record, I believe, for the hours since we have been in Government of debating the Estimates. I think he indicated to me that he had me by I think an hour or something like that.—(interjection)— Yes, well I think we were forty-eight and a half or so last year. So we are fairly close. Anyway, that was not the track that I was going to go onto when I raised this point.

The point that I was going to raise, and it is raised to me pretty well every day in my office, is the need for more funding. The Liberals and the NDP of course did not discuss in the Estimates of my department the increases that we have given to varying sections of the department. They did not of course give any recognition to the fact that outside of the Department of Environment, the Department of Family Services had been given the highest increase over all departments, and that was 9 percent. I have a large department, which translated into some I believe \$41 million increase in the overall expenditure in my department, meaning that the department is getting toward the \$500 million mark. When you combine two fairly large departments into one, as was done earlier last spring, you do create a large department, but none of these things were mentioned.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

None of these positive sorts of things were really gone over to any extent, unless I raised them, by the Members of the Opposition. The Members of the Opposition, most particularly the Liberals, spent most of their time asking for more funding for every single thing that Governments do and some of the things we do not do. It is appalling when you think of the remarks of some of the Members of the Liberal Party, some of the perhaps more responsible ones, when they talk about worrying about deficits and in the meantime their colleagues are leaping to their feet at every opportunity demanding more funding in every section. I believe the Premier used the number \$900 million not long ago. I am not surprised that is the tally now, and it may be higher. So think of what the deficits would be if we were going into that sort of spending.

Now we do, I know in my department, have many, many, many requests for funding. It is a difficult thing as Minister to meet with these groups and listen to

them tell us their needs, because they feel their needs are genuine, and they are closer to the front line of these issues than perhaps any of us in this room, but to have to then sit down with a budget and try to rationalize and prioritize and make sure that we have been able to work with the agencies and the programs and the services that the department has mandated and has over the years funded, and be sure that those matters are covered, because we, when we came into Government, came into a situation where there was a great crisis in many fields of endeavour that this department funds, whereas the NDP had talked over the years of the wonderful things they were doing and had gone into high deficit financing every single year.

We came into Government and discovered that crisis shelters, for instance, were in crisis themselves of closing because of the type of funding that was being awarded to them. The other agencies for the mentally handicapped, the group homes, the day programs, all these matters were of vital concern to us because of the problems they were in. Instead of what most Governments would like to do very often, launch a program of their own that they feel is of high priority, we were left for the most part with having to shore up programs that were there to make sure that they are still there, and that we have done to a great extent.

I could go over many of those programs. For instance, in the family dispute section we have increased the funding to that section by approximately 47 percent and have stabilized that situation so that the services of the shelters are available for battered women and their children who desperately need those, and they need them in a hurry. I am proud to be able to stand here and say that we have made a difference in that area. We have funded two new crisis shelters in this past year, and we have funded crisis lines. Certainly anyone would be able to say, oh, yes, there is a need here and there is a need there, and there are more needs perhaps—well, not perhaps—there are, I am sure in that area, but I am proud to be able to stand here and say we have addressed that area and that we have shored it up and it is operating.

* (1550)

The people who work in the system have expressed their thanks to me personally, and they have expressed their thanks in other ways to other people. I am constantly getting feedback from that area of the department. I think even the people who work in the department are feeling a sense of pride in that this Government has helped them to do their job in that particular area, because they were finding it difficult to operate as departmental staff constantly having to tell people to carry on with the—what was it?—\$13 that they had per diems and \$6.90 for children, which just did not go far enough in maintaining those shelters in those systems. Now, with a per diem of \$45, whether it is for children or adults, it is far more adequate. They can actually operate and provide the service that they were wishing to provide.

I do want to pay tribute to those many, many women who spend long hours as staff and many of them as volunteers in that service to other women. It is to their

great credit that they spend this time and work in this field, because it must be very difficult and very depressing and discouraging for them at times when they see the sort of things that they do. I think very often we read in magazines and we read in newspapers this one person's story of what had happened to them, but I think one of the most interesting times I had was when we opened the Osborne House. A woman who had used the facility of Osborne House came forward as one of the speakers at the opening and gave her personal experience and how much Osborne House had meant to her in her time of need.

Where we all understand these things, and we try to understand them, when you hear and meet someone who has been through that trauma and who has survived it, is going on living and has overcome all these tribulations, you really have to pause and say, well, places like Osborne House and Ikwe do make a difference, and others of course in the province.

I have visited many of these shelters, and I have seen the work that these people do. We, as a Government, appreciate it because they are doing it for women. They are doing it on our behalf. They are doing it on behalf of all society.

Now one of the things that—and I go back to the many requests that we get from groups who are really trying to make a difference in this world and this province and wish to—some of them, all they ask is for a different way that Government could give them their funding, a different mechanism. That is easier to do than many things. It is finding the new funds to increase their programming that is more difficult. I always instruct my staff to work with them to see how we can help them in some way. When it is possible of course we can include those things in our priority list for consideration for future budgets.

Many agencies, unfortunately—and I think it is a habit that they have fallen into from working under previous administrations—go into new programs in the middle of the year without negotiating and without discussing these matters with the department and then find themselves in difficulty and come to us and say they are in deficit. Well the deficit does not really originate from what we were funding them for, because we have increased the funding for what they were actually doing, from our point of view of our programs.

They saw a need, and you cannot really fault them to some extent, but it makes management of the system much, much more difficult. I have been expressing this concern to many of the agencies that I meet with and saying, look, if you have this need that you see please make arrangements and plan ahead and alert us as to what your needs are going to be. Look at your programs to see that well maybe you could scale down one and change the thrust of it and do a better job that way, because things change over the years. Just because we funded a program in '85 does not say that it has to always be funded in exactly the same way or operated in much the same way. It could maybe be changed and do a better service. We are always learning things.

Mr. Speaker, I have, as you are aware, over the last few months reorganized the department to give it a

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different thrust and function and to more efficiently give service to the people of Manitoba.

One of the things that I said to the department when we had a strategy meeting last fall was that they may get very, very sick of hearing me say management, and asking them to manage better, but that I felt, and am still of the opinion that if we manage the money we have better, we can give better service to people.

The department has embarked with that in mind on a great many initiatives that may seem small at the outset, but I truly believe that we are gaining a better management system in the department. We have set up an audit division within the department which had not really existed before in Community Services and I think that will go a long way to helping. We are setting up an agency relations bureau in the department which should go a long way to working with agencies for long-term planning and for better management of their resources, the taxpayers' resources.

We have to always bear in mind, the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), the Minister of Culture, was just talking about that a few moments ago, and talking about the difficulty of individual Manitobans in budgeting their own finances when the Government insisted on raising their taxes every year. This makes it very difficult for any family to budget if they have unforeseen taxes. Their wages can go up, but if their taxes also go up, it makes it more difficult for them to plan.

We have to take all these things into consideration when we, as a Government, are planning our priorities and also I think the Opposition should bear this in mind when they are asking for things. When they are asking for millions of dollars to be spent here, there and everywhere, they should also be asking themselves, is this exactly what they would do if they were in Government? Would they take away some program to replace this funding, or how much were they going to ask of the taxpayers?

All of us being taxpayers I think can understand, there is a limit to how much we can continually be forking over and just seeing expansion of programs and no change in focus and rationalization for this. There are a lot of things that we should—there is responsibility of the Opposition, not only of the Government, to prioritize and to work together to better use the taxpayers' money.

I wanted to speak for a few minutes on decentralization. I think that the initial reaction of employees, of course, and one could put yourself, ourselves in their shoes, could empathize with them when their initial reaction of course was of some trepidation because they did not know what was going on and it is a major thing in a person's life. I hope and my Deputy is following this through when she is talking to the people in my department who are being moved, to attempt to look at this as an opportunity.

* (1600)

There are a lot of opportunities out there in the rural areas that may have gone unnoted by people who have

always lived in the city. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) has indicated that he has moved to a smaller centre and how interesting he found it when he had been there for awhile.

I find it brings to my mind an incident which happened in the small town in which I live. I guess I better not be too specific because I do not really want to name the people involved, but there was a move from Winnipeg to a province-wide institution and the young man was asked to move to our community to work. I think he was quite eager to move, but he was just about to be married and his wife-to-be was very, very upset. At one point she absolutely refused to move to the community.

As it turned out, they were married and did move to the community. As it happens with jobs of this particular nature, he was soon transferred. After a couple of years he was transferred out of the community into another, and I do not remember whether he went back to Winnipeg or where he was transferred.

In many private companies, it does happen that people move from time to time and are transferred here and there. His wife in the meantime had joined the bridge club. She had started to take part in the curling club. She had been on the executive I believe of the curling club, and she had started to take part in the various fundraising activities of the community. You know, when it came time for them to leave—the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Albert Driedger) said, did she refuse to leave? I do not really think she refused to leave, but she cried her eyes out because she was so upset at the move. She was one who had always lived in the City of Winnipeg but had learned that there is a great deal of fun to be had and a great deal of enrichment of life to be had in rural communities, and she did not want to move. So I just cite that as an example of things that can happen and attitudes that can change. I think many of the people will find that they are going to be most welcome in the communities they are going to. I think they will learn that we want and need those jobs in rural Manitoba.

Rural Manitoba has suffered a great deal mainly due to the farming downturn, to the drought and grain prices, et cetera. When that happens in a small community in rural Manitoba, it means definitely that the small towns within that community of course suffer a great deal and there are businesses that close. The farm machinery business, for instance, has been in a real flux the last few years. There have been agencies or distribution points closed down and all the businesses in small communities have a great deal of difficulty surviving over this sort of thing.

You know, I guess it is, Mr. Speaker, when you get older and have lived a few years and have been through a few changes in communities, I find it interesting to hear sometimes the great ruckus that is raised over change, because change is inevitable. I do not think we would ever want to live in an environment where nothing ever changed. For instance, one of the great joys I have in living in Manitoba is that seasons change. I would find it very boring to live in a place where it was always the same temperature and nothing ever changed. So things change, and over the years there

has been a great deal of change in rural Manitoba. There have been changes in the cities too. They have grown and changes take place, but I can remember as a small child going to the post office in a home right close to us and it had been changed from where the station was years before when the railway went through and all the involvement of even just post office changes in a small community over even the space of my short life are very interesting to watch.

We used to have a train every day go through, because Glenboro for instance is on not the main line but a secondary line. That does not happen anymore because of the changes in other transportation mechanisms. All these things evolve as change to communities, and they disrupt lives for a certain period of time, but inevitably we have to accept them.

I can remember a few years ago, Mr. Speaker, when the Interprovincial Pipeline used to have a huge office facility, not just office, a plant at Glenboro, an Interprovincial Pipeline for some reason that I will not get into. They are obviously an oil transporting company. An oil transporting company decided that it would be more economic to go with Hydro for the power for their pumping station. I will not even get into that because it seemed very strange to me, but we lost in our small town about 16 families. It was devastating for a while, but we managed to get over it.

Things come and go and things change in rural Manitoba. The changes that have taken place in the last few years will be hard to bounce back from. It will be hard to replace the businesses that have been closed and the rationalization that has taken place with many of the services because that is what the small towns are, service centres. It will be hard to replace the many machinery dealers. It has all been rationalized to the point where they can do their parts work so much—probably more efficiently, not from the point of the farmer perhaps but from themselves by distribution points which are more widely spread.

Small town and larger town Manitoba does need an injection of sorts into its economy to help it to survive this downturn. One of the things that Government can do, short of—I am not of the opinion that Government should be going out and putting industries into towns. Government can create an atmosphere in which industries will locate in smaller areas and that is what hopefully we will be doing and that is the thrust of our Government to create that sort of economic climate where things happen.

One of the things that Government can do is rationalize the service that they give through the Government departments to the people of Manitoba. The Family Services Department is, of course, a department which is basically fairly decentralized at the moment. We do provide a lot of services by necessity. By the very fact of what the services are we provide them outside of the City of Winnipeg, so we do have offices in various locations. It was the feeling of our department that we could provide even more services outside of Winnipeg.

* (1610)

We are doing so in a rationale structured basis so that we will disrupt lives of people who work for us as little as possible. I have indicated to staff and to the Deputy Minister and the Assistant Deputies that we will do all in our power to help those people who find themselves in difficulties as the one that the paper indicated on Saturday, I believe it was, of the couple that were supposedly one going to one town and one another. We will certainly do everything we can to work out that situation so that they can both go to the same town if they would like to move, or jobs within the department, if they choose not to move. These things, which may make a sensation on the front page, are something that we had anticipated and we will be working toward solving when they are raised with us. We need the people of course to come forward and tell us what those problems are. Certainly our intention is to work with them to solve them.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other issues of course in my department that could be raised today. I particularly would like to make mention of the work that has been put forward by the working group on day care, that has already recommended to me, as Minister, and I in turn of course to Cabinet, their short-term initiative for next year with regard to the funding of day care in order that the staff of those centres will get a higher salary. That has been our stated goal all along, that the day care workers, with the training that they have, should receive a higher salary than they do. We have been working in that regard.

With the announcement that I made a couple of weeks ago, we are increasing the committing for next year starting April 1, to increase the Salary Enhancement Grant again by some \$500 but to also ask the parents to contribute more by increasing the parent fees. Of course, when we increase the parent fees that parents pay toward child care, we also increase the cost to Government, because when Government pays the subsidies, they are also increased. That created some expense to us also.

We also have a commitment to raise the maintenance grant by 5 percent. Now this grant had not been increased for four years, so of course this will go a long way between those two initiatives to give the boards of those day cares, who hire the staff and set their wages, more flexibility and the ability to increase those wages.

I have written to those boards encouraging them to do just that, that much of this, not all of these increases, should be used to increase the salaries. The boards eventually and initially of course set the salaries.

All in all it came to a revenue package which I think was quite acceptable to the day care community. They have certainly indicated to me that it is. It came to a revenue package close to \$3 million. So it is a major commitment by Government to day care.

The other part of the package was an expansion package which amounted to \$2 million, and which indicated that we would put another 425 spaces into the system. Now someone will immediately say, well, that is not enough because of the waiting lists. Well, we recognize that. There are long waiting lists, but it

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is another commitment to funding of spaces so that more children will be able to get into day care and more parents will be able to be in the work force if they so choose.

All in all, it is a partnership like the other things we do in this department. It is a partnership between the parents and the boards and the Government to provide flexible and accessible child care to the parents of this province. We are honouring our commitment to do that. We have indicated that ahead of budget, which is not usual or something Governments can very often do, but it indicates in good faith that we are going to do that and do it on the first of April. We had to of course announce it so that parents were aware that their fees would be going up for one thing.

We also have a commitment from the working group that they will be coming forward in the near future with their long-range recommendations for the funding and the operation of child care in the province. I am looking forward to that, because I value their input and am hopeful that they can come forward with some workable solutions to the problems that beset us with the funding of child care.

It is not always easy to see a solution immediately, and we want a solution that is acceptable to all sides to the issue. I do not think that even in my wildest dreams that we would have a perfect solution, but we certainly want to work in that regard and make sure particularly that we have accessible child care for people who must work, single-income families and others who need the assistance of Government so that they can take part in the workforce, because it is very important that they do so.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I have to interrupt the Honourable Minister. There had been an agreement earlier on in the day that at 4:15 I would interrupt the proceedings to deal with second reading of Bill No. 104.

When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Minister will have six minutes remaining.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Opposition House Leader): I am not certain if it was clear what the entire agreement was, but it was simply that we would interrupt proceedings at this time to deal with this particular Bill so that it could be passed to committee to be dealt with. I think all sides want to speak on it, and then the intention was to recess the House until eight o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: I believe that was the agreement. The Honourable Member for Minnedosa.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS
SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS
BILL NO. 104—THE PROFESSIONAL
HOME ECONOMISTS ACT

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa) presented Bill No. 104, The Professional Home Economists Act; Loi sur les conseillers en économie domestique, for second reading, to be referred to a committee of this House.

MOTION presented.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I place my comments on the record in support of Bill No. 104. Home economics is a profession that was established in the late 1800s and early 1900s in Canada and worldwide. A professional association was first formed in 1911 here in Winnipeg. Later this association branched out into the regions of our province so home economists would have more direct involvement province-wide. In 1987 the professional association was re-established in Manitoba, and is now referred to as the Manitoba Association of Home Economists.

A degree program has existed for home economists at the University of Manitoba since 1915. Over the years changes have occurred in curriculum and even the name of the degree received. The graduates specialize in one of four areas of study: comprehensive, foods and nutrition, clothing and textiles, and family studies.

Home economics has diverse and specialized areas of professional practice. Hence in some way either directly or vicariously it touches upon or affects all members of our society. With quality of life issues ever more prevalent the job of a home economist becomes even more important and valuable. Of concern however is that the demand for information to meet the human needs has caused many people to enter the marketplace providing information of services which are not always accurate.

The terms "home economists" and "home economics" are often used by those outside the profession. Much information is now being provided by people not trained as home economists. These persons, in some cases, have little or limited training in home economics, yet they are providing information and services to the public. The recipients of this information are not able to evaluate the qualifications of the service provider much less decipher what information is accurate and what is not.

Also significant in this argument is that many individuals receiving the services of so-called home economists are disadvantaged. These are vulnerable members of our society and are thus at a high risk and are currently not protected from receiving information that could potentially be detrimental to the health and well being of the public. Hence home economists are concerned due to the fact they have no mandate to ensure the public is provided with credible information.

* (1620)

Home economics is one of the few professions without some form of regulation governing their practices. As the profession has diversified over the years, many positive things have resulted, specifically a diversified operation lends strength through the profession as its members all strive for the common goal, service to the public.

The negative side of diversity and variation, however, is the confusion inherent within. Degree names change, and a degree itself does not identify what specific qualifications the individual has with which to service the public. Other matters which contribute to the sense of confusion include variations among programs of study, diversity of employment settings, job titles and preferred practising titles.

Home economists desire Bill 104, The Professional Home Economists Act, to be passed so as to reduce the risk to the public by enabling the profession to govern itself. Presently the public is not well served. It is confused and unable to evaluate the qualification of practitioners. There is, at this time, no vehicle providing the public with recourse. The solution, in this case, is to establish recognized standards through legislation defining the profession.

The home economists are seeking the right to call themselves registered professionals. They want to be able to regulate and conduct the practices of individual members through the professional association. The Act will ensure competent and quality services to the public. Without the Act there is no criterion upon which to monitor the practice and conduct of individuals providing advice and information.

Legislation will also help to ameliorate the confusion caused by a diversity of degree names, specializations, job titles and others. The risk factor to the public would be reduced, as an easily accessible forum would be created. The consumer could raise charges of unethical conduct or incorrect advice and information which may have put them at risk. Thus this Act will provide the public with recourse not presently available.

Competency of practitioners is of utmost importance in reducing risk to the public. This legislation will ensure that those practising home economics will have appropriate training and qualifications. Home economists will be required to regularly participate in continuing education programs to improve and upgrade their skills. Hence professional home economists will be able to accurately disseminate information so the public may be more knowledgeable and well informed.

This Act represents an important step in strengthening the profession in the eyes of the public. It will ensure the public is protected by stipulating the qualifications required to use the title "home economist." The Professional Home Economists Act is the culmination of several years of consultation among home economists in Manitoba. The health and well-being of the public are responsibilities of utmost importance in the practice of home economics.

This legislation will be in the best interest of the public and I urge the support of all Members of this Legislature. I thank the critics of the Opposition Parties for allowing us to introduce it at this time. Thank you.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): William Dean Howells once spoke about "a field for endeavour towards the happiness of the whole human family". Mr. Howells was not speaking of a particular profession, but he surely could have written those words to describe the practice of home economics.

Those words were written many, many years ago, as one can tell by the way that the words are written, but he does speak of in this field of endeavour, happiness of the whole human family. When one looks at that, one certainly thinks about home economics. One thinks about the fact that home economics as a profession has always believed in working for and with the family as a unit, as opposed to two individuals. Home economics certainly believe about improving the quality of life for families with which they work. One can certainly describe that in terms of happiness of a family or improving the quality of life.

Manitoba home economists and their professional organizations have been working towards registration of title and regulation of the profession for a number of years. It is a double pleasure today for me to be able to participate as a home economist and as a Member of the elected Assembly, in the debate on Bill 104, The Professional Home Economists Act.

A number of years ago when home economists began the long process of seeking professional status through legislation, little did I know that it would be my opportunity to participate in this process as an elected Member of the Assembly. It is with great pride today that I stand in this Legislature and support the debate on the Bill 104 and support its speedy passage to committee. I do this on behalf of the Liberal Caucus and I do this as a professional home economist.

Home economics has been a degree program at the University of Manitoba, as the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) mentioned, since 1915. For the past 75 years, women and a few men have graduated with a degree in home economics, and more recently with a degree in human ecology. Many different names do exist across the various faculties in Canada and elsewhere in North America, but the nationally and internationally recognized name for the profession is home economics. Although graduates right now at the University of Manitoba graduate with a degree in human ecology, they are still called as professionals, home economists.

Home economics encompasses a very unique body of knowledge and this profession is unique in that the profession draws both from the physical sciences and from the social services. It incorporates these into one study which is known as home economics. Home economists must be familiar with sciences such as biology, chemistry and other sciences as well as that social service side in terms of sociology, psychology, human behaviour. It is a science which has a practical side and that as well is unique in the field of home economics.

I mentioned earlier that home economists have always believed in a family centred approach to working with individuals. When one thinks of some of the older professions such as, social work is one that comes to

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mind, or nursing, oftentimes those professions have gone through changes and metamorphoses in terms of how they deal with society and with individuals. Oftentimes social workers at one point in time felt very much that they should be dealing with the individual and it should be individual centred in terms of the approaches to therapy. Nursing has been the same in terms of how they deal with individuals and family, but home economists and the profession of home economics have always been consistent in that it has always felt that a family centred approach to serving people is the best way to go.

When one looks at the field of home economics, one of the things that is oftentimes unique in this particular profession and which is something that the professionals are proud of, but which sometimes causes some confusion in the public, is the fact that home economics as a study is a very diverse area.

There are four major practice areas in home economics. Those are clothing and textiles, foods and nutrition, family studies, which deals with human and family development, financial management, consumer economics and management, shelter and housing aspects, and home management. There is also a comprehensive professional practice as well, which deals more with the multifaceted practice which is of a broader and general nature, so that the practitioner is enabled to be competent in the fundamentals of the other three practice areas that have been identified.

So home economics is certainly a diverse area in its field of employment. One can also ask, well, what do home economists do? Why should we even be looking at a professional Act, something that is in legislation for a group that calls themselves home economists? Well first, as well as the four major practice areas, the diverse employment opportunities with home economists are many. They certainly work in many areas in the private sector as consultants. Many of them are employed with the Government. They deal with families, but many of their target populations are some of our vulnerable citizens in society.

* (1630)

Home economists work with children, with young people. Home economists work with the elderly, whether it is in the area of assisting elderly and disabled in the area of clothing design, assisting them in the area of foods and nutrition, assisting them in the area of money management. Home economists deal with the mentally handicapped and the physically disabled in any of these program areas as well. The area of home economics is certainly an area that has oftentimes been stereotyped in past years, but I think that society in general has come to somewhat more of an appreciation of what exactly home economists can do.

As we look at our society today, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important to recognize when we look at the issues that are facing us today, there are very many social issues facing us. There is the area of family violence and how that affects our families and how that affects our children. There is the area of the increasing cost of living for many families. There is the area of

increasing poverty. Poverty is at a higher level in Canada. One out of five children lives in poverty. Many children are homeless. Many families, particularly single parent families, live in poverty. They have very limited resources. They need assistance. They need advocacy in regard to how they manage best their very limited dollars.

These are some of the areas where home economists have played a major role and I believe will continue to play an even greater role as we forge ahead and look at the social services, the educational services that we must provide for Manitobans.

I think that has been somewhat underestimated. When one sees how home economists are working in the school system right now and are teaching basic living skills for young people who will then be our next generation, will then be our next adults and parents in society; when one sees home economists who teach courses in interpersonal relationships, which can go a long way in regard to teaching people how to live with one another, how to relate to one another, there can be some preventative programs in those areas which hopefully can curb some of the domestic violence which we are seeing.

Certainly, one program alone in a school is not going to do that. I think when I looks at the whole context of programs and services that are provided in the school by home economists in the private sector, and by home economists in Government, one can see the preventative nature of the services, and the impact will be seen. I believe home economists that are professionals have known that for many years. Only now in the last few years is it becoming more evident to employers, whether public or private, as to the benefits that home economists have as employees in their organization.

The question still remains: Why should home economists have rules and regulations; why should they have a right to the title; and why should it be legislated? I think there are a number of reasons and answers to that question. Again the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) has touched on a few of those.

Certainly it has been mentioned that—is it really very easy for consumers out there, for the general public, to evaluate the quality of the service that home economists can provide or even so evaluate actually the qualifications of someone who calls themselves a home economist? Because the profession is such a diverse one, because technology is much more sophisticated than it was a number of years ago, I would suggest, and the home economists suggest, that it is not that easy to evaluate the services. There are a lot of people out there who are providing services who may call themselves home economists. What would that do if someone is not a home economist, is not registered as a home economist and does not fall into rules and regulations as outlined in this professional Act? What could be the ill effects or the negative impact to a particular consumer in that particular case?

We can think of many examples, Mr. Speaker. One looks at the area of money management where home economists are actually providing specific advice on

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money matters to individuals and families. If those home economists, or if people are not properly trained or are not home economists, but call themselves that and actually give very poor advice, which may result in that person having to go through orderly payment of debts or having to go into bankruptcy because of very poor financial advice given, that is a detriment to that particular individual.

With another example, we have high technology where in fact it is very, very important that home economists can give professional advice in the areas of food preparation. We know very well that improper food preparation techniques can and have led to the death of individuals in our country and in our province. It is very, very important that we have individuals who are qualified and trained, who can give that appropriate advice, who are not out there giving false information or inappropriate information.

Mr. Speaker, we can look at other examples as well in the area of nutrition, where many home economists are working with young families, working with parents and basically teaching these young families what is appropriate nutrition for their families. Technology changes the information that we have available to us from dieticians, from nutritionists, from physicians. It changes in regard to what is best for infants, what is best for our children, what is best for adults as well in regard to what is appropriate nutrition.

It is important that we be giving out that advice appropriately. We do not want individuals out there who are not properly trained home economists who are willy-nilly giving advice that relates to nutrition of someone, that relates to how an infant will be fed, that relates to how an elderly person, with a certain number of disabilities, what their diets should be. We do not want that false information out there.

There are certainly a number of reasons that one can give as to why there is a necessity for home economists to be registered as a profession, why it is necessary that this particular association actually has a discipline committee and actually has a complaint committee where they can deal with that.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at this particular Bill, we see that the home economists are asking for a right to title. They are asking that in order for someone to call themselves a professional home economist, the designation that they use, the person be a registered member of the profession. This particular Bill lays out the specifications and the necessary steps that must be used in order for that to occur. The professional home economists also have itemized in their particular Bill that there be a discipline committee to hear discipline where they feel that there has been a complaint from the community, where there is a complaint from an individual or the public about the conduct or behaviour or method of practice of a home economist. This particular Act also sets out a complaints committee where complaints can be heard and where there are steps and provisions for investigation.

The Act as well deals with the process of appeal so that in fact professionals are given the opportunity as well, where they feel they have been unfairly treated

by the association, to actually have the right of appeal. This is important as well as far as due process.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the number of professions that we have in this province and one sees the limited number of those professionals who actually have a right to title and who actually have rules and regulations within legislation, the group calling themselves home economists are one other group who are asking for the registration, for the right to title. I think we can only say, as in other organizations and professions that have asked for this, that in fact it can only mean a benefit to the public. There is no negative impact to the public at all for having a Professional Home Economist Act. In fact there is some good that can come of that. In fact we will have a higher quality of registered professionals, and we will be disciplining and dealing with our professionals in such a way that we have more control within our own association, and I think that is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I think I would like to say in some of my closing remarks that there has been a lot of work and effort and study by individual home economists who have been working on this professional Act. It is not something that has been developed overnight. It is something which has taken a number of years to perfect, a lot of consultations. We must give the home economists credit for having consulted with all home economists in the province, getting agreement from the professionals in the province that they would like to go ahead with such an Act. So I think that it is important to note that in fact there have been extensive consultations with the professionals.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would again like to say that as a Member of the Liberal Caucus and as a home economist it is certainly my pleasure to support the speedy passage of this Bill to committee.

* (1640)

I would just like to close by saying I had referred to in the beginning, Mr. William Howells and how he had spoken about that field of endeavour which spoke about a happiness of the whole human family. I would like to close by saying, he also indicated that it is the keenest joy after all and the toilers truest and best reward. I think those words are very true when one looks at the profession of home economics and one knows the professionals who work in the field that, in fact, they are hard working, they take much joy and reward in doing the best possible job to serve the families of Manitoba.

I would close by saying that we look forward to seeing this Bill in the committee stage and having this Bill come back to the House to be proclaimed because in fact the home economists in Manitoba will have their first professional Act.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, Members of the Chamber have already outlined the certain positive parts of this Bill. We in the New Democratic Party believe this Bill is worthy of consideration. Certainly we all value the work and the wisdom of home economists across the province, and

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the profession of the home economists. If it is in the public interests to change the names and that is consistent with what we hear at the public hearings at second reading then we are certainly willing to go and support the position of the various people working in this profession in terms of the proposal before us. We, therefore, will take a very open mind at public hearings and listen to the people of Manitoba and we would see it as appropriate to pass this Bill on to the public hearing process at this stage. Thank you very much.

QUESTION put, MOTION carried.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):
Mr. Speaker, shall we call it six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?

The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that I will return at 8 p.m.