



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

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, July 23, 1993

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Verna Mason, Abby Mason, Lucille Mason and others requesting the Premier (Mr. Filmon) to consider making as a major priority the establishment of a solvent abuse treatment facility in northern Manitoba.

* * *

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Victor Spence, Henry S. Spence, Olive Peterson and others requesting that the government of Manitoba consider reviewing the state of Highway 391 with a view toward improving the condition and safety of the road.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Mr. Bob Rose (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Eleventh Report of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its Eleventh Report.

Your committee met on Wednesday, July 21, 1993, at 7 p.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building to consider bills referred.

Your committee heard representation on bills as follows:

Bill 51—The Municipal Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités

John Giesbrecht - The Union of Manitoba Municipalities

Your committee has considered:

Bill 26—The Expropriation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'expropriation

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

Your committee has also considered:

Bill 45—The Coat of Arms, Emblems and the Manitoba Tartan Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les armoiries, les emblèmes et le tartan du Manitoba

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

Your committee has also considered:

Bill 51—The Municipal Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités

and has agreed to report the same with the following amendment:

MOTION:

THAT proposed subsection 603(5), as set out in section 11 of the Bill, be struck out and the following substituted:

Qualifications of auditors

603(5) A person who is entitled to practise as an accountant under The Chartered Accountants Act, The Certified General Accountants Act or The Society of Management Accountants of Manitoba Incorporation Act, is qualified to be appointed under this section as the auditor of a municipality.

Your committee has also considered:

Bill 54—The Municipal Assessment Amendment Act (2); Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'évaluation municipale

and has agreed to report the same without amendment.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

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

Motion agreed to.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Arena Report Release

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

The people of Edmonton are going through a very, very emotional time right now with the threat of the owner of the Edmonton Oilers to withdraw their team from that city. Hockey teams are considered to be very important assets in cities across Canada. Indeed, people follow hockey very carefully and closely, and it is a very important part of our Winnipeg community to have the Jets here in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the government announced an agreement some time ago and also announced a task force to review the situation of the viability of the hockey team and the recommendations dealing with a new capital facility dealing with a new arena. That report was completed at the end of June. The public awaits that report. There are very important decisions to be made, we would suggest, around the report.

I would like to ask the government: Will it release that report today so the people of Manitoba and the members of this Legislature can discuss and debate the important issues that are facing the public of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for raising that issue because I know that he, like we, believes that the Winnipeg Jets hockey club is a very important asset to the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba.

He knows their economic value and he knows their value not only in terms of making this capital city a very attractive place in which to live, work and invest, but giving it a profile well beyond our borders. I know that when we presented the Order of the Buffalo Hunt to Teemu Selanne, he was very supportive of that and the team and so on.

I thank him for raising that very legitimate issue. I also know that he was supportive of our initiative of appointing the Mauro commission because of the high credibility and the broad understanding of both finance and business and the city's needs that Mr. Mauro brought to the table. That particular move and the arrangements surrounding it have made it possible for us to eliminate the kind of

conflict that was there between the ownership of the hockey club and Winnipeg city and enterprises and so on.

We, too, are very anxious to have the Mauro report tabled with us so that we can table it publicly. We have not received the Mauro report, and I repeat that very strongly: We have not received the Mauro report. When last we were in touch with Mr. Mauro yesterday, he was out of town, and it is expected that sometime early next week, we will indeed receive that Mauro report, and we will table it forthwith.

The Winnipeg Jets Government Funding—Conditions

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I would like to encourage the government to table that report prior to the concurrence motion, so questions can be asked about that report, and issues can be raised and debated in this Chamber, so that we can have a debate about the recommendations and a public role through the governments in those recommendations.

I would like to ask the Premier: In light of the fact that the present agreement with the Jets, which deals with losses being covered by the provincial government and the civic government, only concludes in three hockey seasons from now—it was only a very short-term arrangement—what strategy has the government itself developed for the issue of private ownership and obligations of private owners?

We see Mr. Pocklington in Edmonton literally threatening every day to pull the team out of the city of Edmonton if he does not get this condition or that condition. What are the strategic decisions that this government has made dealing with the issue of—what type of obligation would the private owners of the Jets have to make for provincial support?

* (1005)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we have steadfastly maintained that any commitment on our part for public funding, whether it be to a new arena or to whatever other elements might be contained within any recommendations of the Mauro commission, would be totally dependent on the ownership of the Jets, whatever form that ownership may take, making a long-term commitment to the use of that arena, to

the rental of that arena and also to remaining in the city of Winnipeg.

There would be absolutely no question that we would not make any commitments if we did not have something like at least a 20-year lease commitment. We have suggested that we would, as collateral to ensure that obligation was maintained, want to have the franchise of the hockey club as collateral to ensure that it could not be sold out from under the city or the province.

Mr. Doer: I would concur with the Premier that long term would be a minimum of 20 years.

Is the Premier saying to us today that this will be a minimum bottom-line position for the provincial government so that we will avoid in Winnipeg the situation which we see in Edmonton, where the private owner on a daily basis is threatening, if this condition is not met and that condition is not met, the further condition is not met, the team will be moved from the city? After it has built up a tremendous community reputation and pride, it will just be yanked out from under?

Are we saying, bottom line, minimum 20 years as the long-term definition for public support of this project?

Mr. Filmon: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his support of our position. The answer is yes.

Student Records Pilot Project Report Release

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, this government's penchant for hiding reports is becoming painfully obvious.

In Education, not only did the minister not provide a report, she even refused to admit that it existed. Either the minister was so incompetent that she did not know that her department had conducted a student records information pilot project, or else she did not want to reveal its existence. She attempted to conceal it, Mr. Speaker.

Take your pick. Either she refused to admit it existed, or she did not want to reveal it and concealed it.

Since we only obtained this report through freedom of information, I want to ask the minister: Why did she refuse to acknowledge the existence of that report, and why has she failed to act on it for three years in this important area of the department?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting to have the representative of the paper shredders union come and ask that question. A man who was part of a government, a man who sat in cabinet for three years and refused to proclaim The Freedom of Information Act so that they could hide everything from the public and then shred anything that they did not want the public to know.

That is absolutely ridiculous for him to even ask that question. It is absolutely the most foolish thing that I have heard this entire session. But I am not surprised, coming from the member for Dauphin.

* (1010)

Student Records Pilot Project Report Release

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): Mr. Speaker, once again we got a desperate nonanswer from this Premier. We are the ones who passed The Freedom of Information Act; it was this government who did that.

The Premier has come once again to the rescue of his Minister of Education (Mrs. Vodrey) to avoid answering an important question.

I want to ask the minister clearly, straightforwardly, why she failed to acknowledge existence of this report and act on it for the last three years. She cannot avoid answering that question.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member has received the 1990 report. It does discuss a pilot project. As the member knows, we are very concerned and interested in the area of student records, and as I have said to the member during the 70 hours of Estimates, we are certainly moving ahead in that area.

Mr. Plohman: She even failed to admit it existed during the Estimates. I want to help the minister with this.

Since on page 11 of this report, which we received through freedom of information, it says that the failure was due, and I quote, to lack of leadership and commitment, I want to ask this minister: Is this failure to act and this lack of leadership her lack of leadership that this report is talking about, or is it the former Minister of Education, or both?

Mrs. Vodrey: The issue of student records—the tracking of students, the courses that students take, the enrollment where students are attending

school—has been a very important one for a very long time. This government has recognized the importance of tracking students. This government has recognized the importance of making sure that we know where students are attending school and also the completion rates of student performance.

As I have said during the Estimates process, we are moving ahead with a student records process, and I am looking forward to explaining it further to the member as it actually comes forward.

Untendered Contracts Justification

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we have consistently heard in this session from the government that they simply do not have the money available to fund what they believe to be very important social programs, such as the Student Social Allowances Program, such as home care needs, other things in the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of that, I was somewhat surprised and shocked to see that in the last three months there have been 14 untendered contracts totalling \$168,244 for things such as repair in cleaning a wool tapestry, various interior design services required as need may be, interior design consulting, approximately 14 contracts which I would like to table this morning totalling \$168,000.

In this time of fiscal restraint, when we are cutting people off of things like Student Social Allowances, how come this government is letting contracts like this totalling those dollars for things like interior design needs?

Hon. Gerald Ducharme (Minister of Government Services): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I am very surprised that the member would even get up after not spending one minute in Government Services on a \$113-million budget, and he gets up and asks about some consulting.

Mr. Speaker, there is a process in place that we do with our interior design consultant work. That is a process where we spend somewhere in the vicinity of \$113 million. We spend about \$650,000 in one year on consultants.

Mr. Edwards: We spent dozens of hours in Health and in Family Services discussing the cuts that this government made. What we heard was: We have no money; our priorities are going to be in these areas, but we have no money.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, their priorities apparently are in increasing untendered contracts to interior designers.

My question for the minister: Not one staff position went down in this year's Estimates, 43.2 positions in the subappropriation on Accommodation Development, which does the interior design work, not one staff year, not even one-tenth of one staff year decrease, and yet we see \$168,000 in three months in untendered contracts for interior design work.

How does the minister justify that, when his cohorts are saying they have no money to keep kids in school?

* (1015)

Mr. Ducharme: Mr. Speaker, we have 10 million square feet of office and warehouse space that we must maintain here provincially. Is he suggesting that we allow the roofs to fall down, we do not do any painting in these particular offices or do not do any carpeting in this particular office?

I would suggest to him that maybe next time he asks for something in this particular building, he will see that the reason why we go to untendered and consultants, he will see that most of these consultant jobs—there is not one of them—is an amount of money that you use to go out for tender. The consultants that you carry forward ask you to do it this way. There is a list of consultants that is available who approach our different departments and ask for that particular work.

I am surprised, again, that he would forget to even go through the \$113 million that we spent and did not spend one minute in Estimates in regard to those.

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, 14 untendered contracts, one has to do with architectural services, none have to do with engineering services. These are all interior design. This does not have to do with protection of the government's assets in those buildings. This has to do with interior design work to talk about how to space things and apparently where art should come up and, meanwhile, that amount of money equates to 28 people being cut off of Student Social Allowances services at the rate of \$6,000 per year approximately.

How does this minister justify that type of expenditure in this year when everybody is being cut back, child protection is being cut back, health is being cut back, and we are spending \$168,000 in

three months on untendered contracts for interior design?

Mr. Ducharme: First of all, if the member had gone to Estimates, he would have seen that interior design is not just dealing with draperies and carpet. It is dealing with accumulation and accommodation of space available in this government. If he wants to turn around again and if he had gone to the Estimates process, he would have seen that this department, for the first time in the history of Manitoba, reduced its leasing cost in this province.

Education System Aboriginal Student Statistics

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, we have a labour force in Manitoba where one in four entrants in this decade will be aboriginal. We have a Native Education Branch whose purpose is to ensure the success of native students. Yet, we have an Education minister who has no knowledge of how many native students are in Manitoba, where they are located and what grade levels they have achieved.

Will the minister tell us when that information will be available?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, the member in the process of Estimates wanted to make sure that Manitobans identified themselves, were forced to identify themselves by background. I explained to the member at that time that the records are not kept in that way.

This member has wanted Manitobans to be forced to identify themselves by background in everything they do.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, in the student record system pilot project of 1989 that this department conducted, that exact question was asked.

I want to ask the minister: Did the department find an appropriate and effective way to define aboriginal students through that pilot project? What was learned from that pilot project?

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, as I said to the member, we are moving ahead now with a management information system within the Department of Education and Training that will help us keep a tracking of students across Manitoba.

This member has asked continually for us to identify students very specifically by way of

background. As I explained to her in the process of Estimates, we do have a Native Education Branch. Our Native Education Branch does work—
[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin (Mr. Plohman) has already had an opportunity to put his questions and get his answers. The honourable member for Wolseley right now is attempting to get an answer.

* (1020)

Point of Order

Mr. John Plohman (Dauphin): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, on page 5 of this report that we talked about earlier, it says specifically that—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Dauphin is attempting to put another question under the guise of a point of order. He does not have a point of order.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education and Training, to finish with her response.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, as I explained to the member when we were discussing issues relating to our Native Education Branch on the K-to-12 side, that branch is working very carefully with communities, with individuals, but also with all Manitobans because these issues affect all Manitobans, are important for all Manitobans.

Information System Priorities

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, why is the one million dollars to be spent on education information systems this year to deal primarily with school information rather than student information? Could the minister tell us why that is the priority now?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, as I explained to the member, there needs to be a phase-in of the volumes of information which this department would like to be able to keep track of on behalf of Manitobans. So the system has been set up in a way for schools and for the department to begin to put the information together in a way that it will be the most useful in the shortest amount of time.

Housing Starts Provincial Comparisons

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

Yesterday, I released information providing disturbing economic statistics that Manitoba had lost 7,000 jobs in the first half of this year, whereas the neighbouring province of Saskatchewan had gained 6,000 jobs.

We now have information of further serious decline of the economy. In the first half of 1993, Manitoba's housing starts in urban centres declined 25.1 percent. We are down to 563 units in all of urban Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister. What are the reasons for this relatively chronic, weak economic situation in Manitoba? Why are we ninth out of 10 of the Canadian provinces in terms of housing starts?

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, it must be drawing to the end of the close of the session. We get all the economic questions in the first week and the last week, and we do not have many in between. So it is a good sign, and I am happy to receive the question.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that the forecasts with respect to the national economic growth are going to be decreased, and that is difficult news to accept across the land. I think that we will be hearing more detail with respect to the forecast coming out of the Conference Board, indeed other forecasts, over the course of the next number of weeks.

It is all laid basically at the feet of all the provinces across the land which have decreased their deficits upward of \$8 billion. Almost all of the reasoning and the rationale behind that, which of course this government supports, flows out and impacts not only housing starts, to which the member refers, but also a whole host of other statistics.

There is just not as much public money being directed toward many of the activities as was borrowed in the past, and, Mr. Speaker, we know the benefit of that of course is reduced control on taxes and hopefully a moderation with respect to the service stats on the debt.

*(1025)

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, to some extent that is a credible observation, but the fact is our neighbouring province of Saskatchewan has engaged in deficit reduction, so I ask the minister why is Saskatchewan No. 1 in growth of housing starts in the first half of 1993, whereas we declined by 25 percent?

Our sister provinces have engaged in deficit reduction too, so why is—

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

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, the member has got me again. I do not know why Saskatchewan is No. 1 on the list.

Let me say, this government has been actually quite kind to the province of Saskatchewan. We have not brought out all of the statistical jargon that we could have with respect to the province of Saskatchewan, because we understand fully the indebtedness that the NDP government has had to deal with.

I would only ask that the member be so kind to us, and recognize the debt we inherited from him and what we have been trying to deal with over the course of the last six years.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Regrettably, this is not a one-year phenomenon. We have had a steady decline since 1988.

So my question to the minister is: What explanation does he have, if any, for this steady decline, virtually a steady decline since 1988? How can we explain that in 1988 we had 4,448 starts, and now this year we will be lucky to end up just over a thousand starts at the rate we are going, probably the lowest level since the Great Depression of the 1930s?

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, I have not looked at the numbers recently. I do not know what the base year over year was in Saskatchewan. I do know that if the member wanted to look at the ranking, he would also point out our other neighbour, our neighbour to the east, was 10th in that same listing. I do not probably have the real answer for that either.

Let us look at the base of Saskatchewan. Let us see whether the increase was roughly 500 homes—I think our base is what . . . something—and I would say, when you compare all of the provinces and all the statistical rankings, I dare say

this province, particularly when you look at employment and unemployment, is probably as well balanced and well favoured as any in the land.

Health Care System User Fees

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, some—

An Honourable Member: Does anybody else over there not get a question?

Mr. Edwards: You should let Brian write one of his own one of these days.

Mr. Speaker, some 14 and a half months ago the Minister of Health came forward with his health reform action plan. That plan was unequivocal in its statement that the government would not resort to user fees, did not believe in user fees, that these were not part of the plan and would not be part of the plan.

I want to just ask the Minister of Health today to restate his commitment to that and assure Manitobans and assure members of this House that that unequivocal statement remains as true today as it was then when he put it in his letter.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no question on this side of the House that we support the Canada Health Act, its five principles. That has been stated in the health reform document. I have stated that at every opportunity where I had an opportunity to present the reform package anywhere in Manitoba, as well as on occasions outside the province of Manitoba.

Inherent in that statement is the commitment that we will not introduce user fees which would break our commitment to uphold the Canada Health Act and, Sir, we have not.

Facility Fee

Mr. Paul Edwards (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to hear that continued belief and continued commitment on the part of the government.

Mr. Speaker, it has given me some concern that in fact there are private facilities in this province. There are a number of private clinics in the province which charge what is called a facility fee. I know the minister will be familiar with these. That

is a fee that a user pays to get the service for day surgery.

I did a little checking and at least with one of them, cataract surgery is \$510, carpal tunnel surgery with a new scope is \$350, and so on and so forth, up to approximately a thousand dollars, depending on the surgery. That to me is a user fee.

Can the minister indicate how that process squares with his commitment not to have user fees in this province?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend will fully acknowledge that each and every one of those private clinics he refers to were established in the mid- to early '80s and have been in operation, undertaking in a lot of cases noninsured surgery, in other words, some procedures that were removed from the insured services list. In some cases they have, since mid-'80s and occasionally even earlier than that, offered services that are insured which are provided in the hospital.

The opportunity to provide fully covered insured service exists comprehensively in Manitoba, will continue to exist comprehensively in Manitoba, because this system in Manitoba is undergoing change with input from all of the players in the system to make sure we can continue to offer those needed health care services in our hospitals and our outpatient clinics, et cetera.

* (1030)

Mr. Edwards: Mr. Speaker, as the minister I am sure will acknowledge, a key part of the quality of service is the speed with which people have access to the surgery they need. We understand that there have to be decisions made on the importance and the emergent nature.

I just want to read from an ad which was in the Winnipeg Free Press and indicates that treatment is available at a time convenient to a person's personal schedule if they want to pay this fee.

Mr. Speaker, my concern is, as we are increasingly ranking these surgery provisions, we will be creating a two-tier system if we allow this type of fee-for-service system to proliferate.

How does the minister square that type of fee for covered insured services, making it more convenient for those who can pay? How does that square with his commitment not to have user fees?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, very easily.

Let me indicate to my honourable friend that the health care system in Manitoba does not exist for the convenience—or whatever the language was that my honourable friend used in the advertisement and obviously believes, that the health care system in Manitoba is there for the convenience of Manitobans. It is there to meet medically necessary needs.

Sir, in doing that, I simply remind my honourable friend that, even though the Canadian Hospital Association questions the survey methodology, the most recent Fraser survey has indicated that Manitoba has the greatest decrease in time waited for essential services surgeries of all provinces surveyed and the greatest decrease in the number of individuals on waiting lists compared to the other provinces. That is a sign that the system improvements are working, not as my honourable friend fearmongers about that it is not.

Antiracism Strategy Comic Book Distribution

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): Mr. Speaker, I believe everyone in this Chamber is concerned about what appears to be an increasing incidence of racism in our society today. It is certainly a worrisome and troublesome development, and it calls for innovative and creative approaches. One such idea, I am proud to say, comes out of my constituency. Bob Haverluck, in conjunction with the Family Life Centre of North Winnipeg, has written and designed an antiracism comic book entitled *Confessions of a Jail Bird*.

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I would like to table a copy, and also I have 57 copies for all members for the Pages to distribute whenever they have time.

My question is for the Minister of Education.

I would like to ask the minister if she would take an active role in the distribution of this comic book and purchase copies for distribution and recommend its use to every school board and educational institution in Manitoba.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, certainly the Department of Education and Training has been very active in the whole area of concerns about racism and in multicultural education.

We remind the member that we released, a year ago in May, our policy on multicultural education, and we have in process our race relations guidelines to be released shortly for the schools.

Whenever it has been requested that we look at a piece of information for distribution to the schools, certainly the department and I will look at it, and then we will come to a conclusion.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I appreciate the response from the Minister of Education and her commitment, as I understand it, to review it and consider distributing it to educational institutions.

I would ask her if she would consider purchasing enough copies for each school board and educational institution in the province of Manitoba to have one and to review it so they, in turn, can consider using it as part of their programs to deal with racism in their respective institutions.

Mrs. Vodrey: Mr. Speaker, as the member may know or may not know, we do have a process within the Department of Education and Training to review literature which has been produced by people within the community. That system looks at it in relation to both our libraries within schools and also anything which may be of use within our curriculum.

I would let her know that there is a process which this would go through, and I will see that it is started through the process.

Family Life Centre of North Winnipeg Funding

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): My final question is to the Premier, Mr. Speaker.

The Family Life Centre of North Winnipeg is a nonprofit organization, has no government funds. They are desperately looking for a tiny grant to help market this comic book so that all institutions and groups in Manitoba could have access and consider its use.

I would like to ask the Premier if he would raise this with his ministers and find a way to come up with a small grant to help this fledgling organization market this comic book so we can all deal with racism in our society and increase understanding through laughter.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I must admit that I was not listening to the question. I was not sure that the question when it began was

directed toward me, so I would ask if the member would mind repeating it.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: I would just mention to the Premier that the Family Life Centre of North Winnipeg is a nonprofit organization, does not have any government funds, but needs a tiny grant to help market this comic book which is a very useful tool in dealing with racism and promoting understanding through laughter.

Would the Premier discuss this with some of his ministers and find a way to come up with a tiny grant for the Family Life Centre of North Winnipeg to help market this useful educational tool?

Mr. Fillmon: Mr. Speaker, since I am not familiar with the material, I would ask that the member have the organization correspond with my office, and I will take the matter up with the appropriate minister.

Manitoba Environment Council Replacement

Ms. Marianne CerlIII (Radlsson): When this government eliminated the Manitoba Environment Council they severed a long-standing link with the scientific community in Manitoba working on ecology issues even though this organization is mandated in legislation to advise the government.

My question is for the Minister of Environment. How is he selecting the individuals for his six-member appointed body that is going to replace the Manitoba Environment Council? Are there criteria that have been developed for selecting these individuals, and can he table that criteria in the House?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, I have undertaken to consult with the existing members of the council to advise me on names and on criteria that might be used to bring people to committee to assist me in this area. I think the member should be quite satisfied to know that we will probably have a more active environment council this fall.

Ms. CerlIII: Can the minister explain how he expects to replace the scientific expertise of more than 50 individuals with six people appointed through his office?

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, one of the things that frustrates me about this process is that I, in fact, believe that the people who are part of these networks that the member refers to will still be quite knowledgeable.

They will still be free to provide information to me, and I expect that those who will be appointed this fall to the revamped commission will be able to use that network to continue to garner the information and the expertise that comes from the work of those people.

I expect the network to be widened, not narrowed, unless of course they refuse to work with me.

Ms. CerlIII: Mr. Speaker, the minister is expecting people who have been advising government for a number of years to apply to offer that advice on a continuing basis, and I do not think that is reasonable.

Given that the council is mandated in legislation and that there are a number of issues that now have passed which they were not advising the minister on, can the minister tell us when his new council will be established?

* (1040)

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, I am beginning to be a little bit disappointed by the approach that the member is taking because she seems to be implying that people of expertise and environmentalists of good will will be unwilling to work with me unless I pay them to provide their advice.

That is not the approach that I think is out there in the community. I think that those who are truly concerned about environmental matters will work with me, that they will work with the new council. The appointment of those members will be forthcoming early in the fall.

Ostomy Program Social Assistance Recipients

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) a question about the letter received from the Assistant Deputy Minister of Health to all ostomy patients, and asked the Minister of Family Services why they got this letter and if it was being corrected. The minister stated that they could use their health card.

I would like to inform the House that the minister was wrong, that they have never been able to use their health card for ostomy supplies. It has always been direct billed to Home Care.

So I would like to ask the Minister of Family Services if he would correct the record. Since he put misinformation on the record yesterday, would he correct himself?

Hon. Harold Gillieshammer (Minister of Family Services): Mr. Speaker, the member may also want to correct himself when he talks about the many hundreds of people writing letters on an issue like this. I checked with my department. We have had no inquiries by mail. In fact, the only inquiry I have is one that he sent me about 10 minutes ago across the House.

We will certainly deal with that individual, and I thank the member for bringing it to my attention.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for Burrows, a very short question.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, one of his Income Security offices has had phone calls.

Can the Minister of Family Services tell the House why it was necessary for us to fax his department a copy of the ostomy letter? Why does his department not have it? Why do we have to—

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

Mr. Gillieshammer: Well, I certainly would feel that the member has worked very diligently to come forward with one letter, and compliment him for his hard work on this issue. I would assure him that this one letter that has come forward from him will be answered.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickeys (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis), Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for Transcona (Mr. Reid) for Friday, July 23 at 1 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: St. James (Mr. Edwards) for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray).

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for Friday, 1 p.m. session, the member for Morris (Mr. Manness) for the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger), the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) for the member Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey) for the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister), the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) for the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose) and the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) for the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson).

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Law Amendments for Monday, 9 a.m. session, be amended as follows: The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Rose) for the member for Morris (Mr. Manness), the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) for the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) for the member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Vodrey), the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) and the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister) for the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer).

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources for Monday the 9 a.m. session, be amended as follow: The member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) for the member for Riel (Mr. Ducharme), the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) for the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gillieshammer), the member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) for the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik).

Motions agreed to.

Nonpolitical Statements

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Agriculture have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like this opportunity to spend a couple of minutes paying tribute to some volunteers in Manitoba and pay tribute also to some very

dedicated Manitobans who helped build this province.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the board of directors of the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame inducted three more people to that esteemed group of people of some 90 individuals who have been inducted into the hall over the last about 15 years. The three members inducted yesterday were a Mr. Jimmy Moffatt from Carroll and Brandon, Manitoba, who was known as "Mr. Pork Promoter" across all of rural Manitoba. I know many people will have eaten the pork that Mr. Moffatt has cooked in many locations across the province.

Mr. Speaker, there was a very special individual who was introduced to the Hall of Fame yesterday. It was a Mr. Peter Fidler who was an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company who lived from 1769 to 1822. He travelled across rural Manitoba in the very, very early days planting seeds and surveying. He is known as Johnny Appleseed in Manitoba, the first surveyor in Manitoba, and retired to Fort Dauphin.

The third member inducted yesterday, was Mr. Andy Forsythe from High Bluff, who was an elevator operator and lived in the period 1874 to 1956.

I would like to pay tribute to the volunteers, the board of directors, who have carried on this tradition for several years of honouring Manitobans, and making Manitobans feel proud in the development of their province and of the three very esteemed individuals who were introduced yesterday. I thank all of the volunteers for their efforts in that direction.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member for Swan River have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): On behalf of the members on this side of the House, we would like to join with the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) and government members in recognizing those people who have been inducted into the Agricultural Hall of Fame, and also to the many volunteers who do the work in this organization. Certainly it is important that we recognize those people who do the amount of work that they do to promote our province, and to promote the products and help develop the agricultural sector of Manitoba.

I do not have a copy of the names that the minister mentioned, but I do know one of the people, and that is the person who is working as the pork promoter across Manitoba. We have seen him at many, many functions, and he has certainly done a very, very good job on behalf of the pork industry promoting their product. If he is retiring, then he will certainly be missed in the many rural communities that he attends.

To the other members and the families of all of the people who were inducted, we extend our congratulations and recognition for the work that they have done for this province.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Clayton Manness (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask for unanimous leave of the House—and I have talked to the Liberals, and I have not had a chance to talk to the NDP House leader—as to whether or not we can move Bill 50 and 53, one of them being the statute law amendment bill, and the other being victims of crime, which were referred to a committee for, I believe, Monday morning, whether or not we could bring them to this afternoon's Law Amendments, and consider them after Bill 55.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House to allow the honourable government House leader to move Bills 50 and 53 to Law Amendments this afternoon?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No leave.

Mr. Manness: Mr. Speaker, would you call Bill 28, please.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 28—The Manitoba Intercultural Council Repeal Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson), Bill 28, The Manitoba Intercultural Council Repeal Act; Loi abrogeant la Loi sur le Conseil interculturel du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I would like to continue my remarks on Bill 28. The legislation, which, if passed, will eliminate the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

I would like to start today, as I ended and ran out of time yesterday, apologizing for a word I put on the record. I was talking, I believe—and I do not have Hansard yet—so I have to go on generalities, but I was discussing the political appointments of members of the Multicultural Grants Advisory Council and the Multiculturalism Secretariat, and I used a word that I should not have used.

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

* (1050)

I started to apologize, and I would like to continue my apology. I said "political hacks," and the word "hacks" has no business being in the context of the people who have been appointed to these organizations. I have a great deal of difficulty, as my caucus colleagues do, with the process of appointing people to these important positions, but I do not have any difficulty with the individuals who are so appointed. I wanted to make it very clear that I did not—the word "hacks" was inappropriate, and I would like to apologize through Hansard and through my comments today for the use of that word.

Having done that, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to continue on in my discussion about the implications and the background of The Manitoba Intercultural Council Repeal Act. I was talking about the politicization of the Manitoba Intercultural Council by this government and, most particularly, by the current minister responsible for the Intercultural Council, stating that her actions belied the language and the words she used when she talked in a variety of venues about the politicization that the previous government had undertaken with MIC.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to put on the record some of the comments that the Minister of Culture placed in Hansard on May 30, 1983, when the Honourable Eugene Kostyra was introducing the legislation that brought into being the Manitoba Intercultural Council. I would like to read these comments into the record because they show the previous government's commitment to the concept of arm's-length organization. They show the previous government's commitment to the concept of independence. They show the previous government's commitment to the concept of advice, and that underlies the institution of the Manitoba Intercultural Council. I would like to put

them into the record because they show very clearly, I believe, the distinction between the previous NDP government's commitment to the Manitoba Intercultural Council and its principles with the current minister and government's lack of commitment to those principles.

The first thing I would like to quote from the then-Minister of Culture, the Honourable Eugene Kostyra—there are a couple of reasons given for the legislation enabling the government of the day to appoint up to one-third of the total Manitoba Intercultural Council.

This has been a sore point with the current minister. It has also been, I must admit, a point of contention in the multicultural community and within the MIC itself. Mr. Acting Speaker, it is an issue that we, after 10 years, would recommend that the minister look at changing. I would like to put on the record, for everyone's edification, the rationale for this particular part of the MIC legislation 10 years ago.

The government appointments are limited to a maximum of one-third of the total council, and this was as a result of a recommendation made by the Interim Liaison Committee on Multiculturalism, which is a result of their consultation with the representatives of the ethnocultural organizations throughout Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, in 1982 and 1983, when the government of the day did extensive province-wide consultations before they implemented The MIC Act, this was a recommendation from the community that the government have the authority, which is permissive in the legislation, to appoint up to one-third of the council.

The reasons for that recommendation were basically two. The first is that the multicultural community throughout the province of Manitoba felt that there had to be some way of ensuring there was balance between the representation for the various groups and the parts of the province.

We all know that the province of Manitoba is geographically vast and that the population is not evenly distributed throughout the province. The community was concerned that, if various organizations or various regions were underrepresented through election, the province have the authority to balance and to provide for representation through their ability to appoint.

The second reason given by the multicultural community at that time in 1983 for giving the government the authority to appoint was that there might be situations where an individual was not closely linked with a particular multicultural group or a particular ethnocultural community, but that there would be a need felt by part of the council and the government for that person's expertise. So this was another reason that the multicultural community thought it was appropriate for the government to have an ability to appoint representatives. I just wanted to put that in the record, Mr. Acting Speaker, because that has been a point of contention in recent times.

The individuals and groups who were consulted with by the government in 1982 and 1983 were also very concerned that the MIC not be some rubber-stamp type council for government. They wanted a council that was going to give good advice to the government, that was going to have the ability to carry on some research and was going to liaise with other groups and not be under the complete control or domination of the government.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this is exactly what the Manitoba Intercultural Council did right to this very day. It was established and it has functioned throughout its 10 years with those kinds of activities. As I read into the record yesterday, the range of publications external to their recommendations to government shows the power and the appropriateness of those kinds of activities of the MIC.

The Minister of Culture the Honourable Eugene Kostyra recognized as well that—and I am quoting here—"it may be from time to time, . . . that it is advice that the government itself may not want to hear at particular times, but I think if we are going to have a meaningful Council in the Province of Manitoba, we want that kind of freedom."

By that, the minister was stating that it is uncomfortable to have an organization that is independent and filled with people who have an understanding of important issues to provide advice to the government. It is uncomfortable for the government because there will be times when a government will hear something that it does not want to hear or that it is going to have difficulty in implementing.

That, Mr. Acting Speaker, the government of the day, the New Democratic government of 1983, was

willing to do, because they knew it was important to have that kind of independent voice giving advice and speaking out for the concerns of the multicultural community in the province of Manitoba. They knew that they were not going to like everything they heard. The MIC knew that the government was not going to be able to implement every recommendation fully, but for five years the MIC and the government worked together. There were differences, there were difficulties, as there is with any organization working with government or advising government, but they had a basic trust and respect for each other.

It is tragic that that basic trust and respect over the past five years has been steadily eroded and it has now come down to Bill 28, the repeal of the Manitoba Intercultural Council, a piece of legislation that, as I stated before, should never have been brought forward. It belies the minister's stated commitment to multiculturalism. It serves no useful purpose for the people of Manitoba.

I would like now to discuss at some length the process that was undertaken by this government leading to Bill 28, the dissolution of the Manitoba Intercultural Council. Basically, it will be a discussion of the Blair report. For individuals and groups who follow multicultural issues, the Blair report will be very familiar.

* (1100)

Prior to my discussing the Blair report, the process that led to the Blair report and the recommendations following from the Blair report, I would like to talk a bit about and quote from the August 1988 report of the Manitoba Task Force on Multiculturalism, submitted to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, the Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson. The report is entitled, *Multiculturalism is for all Manitobans: Towards a Horizontal Mosaic*.

The report was obviously begun prior to the change in government in May of 1988, but the report was given to the current Minister of Culture in August of 1988. It stated some very interesting things, Mr. Acting Speaker, in relation to the Intercultural Council.

I would like to quote: The Manitoba Intercultural Council must have its own role strengthened as an advisory body to government. It must receive a new role as an advocate of ethnocultural concerns before government.

The final statement in the executive summary of this task force: That there be a principle and rationale outlined and a multiculturalism policy developed in continued consultation with Manitoba's ethnocultural communities.

Now the government has put forward a multiculturalism act, has made a multiculturalism policy statement. Mr. Acting Speaker, we submit, on this side of the House, those statements, those policies and that act ring hollow in light of the government's intention to eliminate the Manitoba Intercultural Council.

This task force stated in its recommendations that MIC should not be eliminated, should not be emasculated, but should in fact be strengthened and broadened and that its mandate should be extended to advocacy as well as advice.

I would like to quote again from this report. I quote: The MIC has performed admirably in its role of adviser to the minister since its inception in 1983.

Another quote: We believe that the growth of the advocacy role is appropriate and that it must be acknowledged in the legislation.

Then this task force has a series of recommendations on the functions that they believe the Manitoba Intercultural Council should undertake. I will not read them in their entirety, but I will outline generally. These functions, Mr. Acting Speaker, respond to the recommendation that the MIC have not only an advisory but also an advocacy function.

They recommend that the MIC be retained, that the current role as an advisory body should be reaffirmed and strengthened and that the government, through the Minister of Culture, Heritage and then-Recreation, should continue to refer matters to the MIC for subsequent advice, should continue to meet with the council at least once a year.

It also recommended that the MIC request that the minister respond in writing to the issues raised and advice offered by MIC from time to time in order to strengthen the advisory role of MIC.

This task force, which was as a result of extensive consultations again throughout the province by the then-NDP government does not talk about eliminating or reducing the role of MIC, does not say anything about the fact that MIC has outlived its usefulness. No, precisely the opposite. This task force report states very clearly that MIC

has performed admirably and its role should be strengthened and expanded, not curtailed.

It also states again the recommendation that its legislated mandate be broadened to include advocacy and that the legislation be amended to that end.

Then it goes on to list 18 additional functions that it feels MIC should undertake, ranging from the continuing and expansion of their current functions to additional functions. I would suggest that this also states and shows very clearly that MIC was performing a vital function, functions that should be expanded, not contracted.

There were other recommendations dealing with recommending that the minister undertake an analysis of the roles of the various parts of MIC, that there be an annual report on financial expenditures and that MIC be subject to an external audit.

I spoke yesterday about the results of that external audit which were undertaken on MIC and the fact that the external audit found only minimal problems with the audit functions of MIC.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, we have in late 1988 a task force that had been far ranging, making recommendations not to contract but to expand the function of MIC, stating very clearly that MIC performed a valuable function, that it should be expanded and that the minister should be held accountable to MIC for the recommendations that MIC brought to her, a far cry from what the minister has ultimately done, which is put forward a bill that will eliminate completely MIC as an independent body legislated by the government.

I would like now to talk about the Blair report, about the process that led to the Blair report and the comments by some of the members who participated in the Blair report.

J. Don Blair was hired by the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mrs. Mitchelson) to, and I quote from Mr. Blair himself: She has retained me to review the role, mandate and structure of the Manitoba Intercultural Council and provide recommendations on its future.

I am quoting from a letter that Mr. Blair sent to all of the community organizations in the province that dealt with multiculturalism.

We have no quarrel about that statement. It is appropriate at 10 years, or going on 10 years, for

an organization that was as groundbreaking as the MIC was to be reviewed and to look at its future role.

We had a task force in 1988 making recommendations. Since 1988, the government has steadily cut away the role and the authority of MIC, as I have stated earlier, in taking away its granting function, in putting in place The Multiculturalism Act without any reference to MIC, in establishing the Multiculturalism Secretariat, but still MIC had legislated authority and legislated responsibility and it was 10 years so it was time to do another review. That is fine.

However, the time lines that Mr. Blair gave the multicultural community to respond to his questionnaire was not fine. The letter that was sent out as a covering letter to the survey on the Intercultural Council was dated July 6, 1992. Mr. Blair requested responses by August 15, 1992. Anyone who has ever had anything to do with research, with questionnaires, with that kind of request for consultation knows that six weeks is absolutely not enough time to do this. We know that the mails do not deliver next-day service; as well, it is the middle of summer. July 6 to August 15 is the height of the summer season when organizations have wound down. It is the height of the summer season when individuals who want to consult with their organizations will have a very difficult time to do this. We wonder, Mr. Acting Speaker, if this was not done deliberately so that the minister would be able to say she had consulted, that Mr. Blair had asked for consultation and had received responses—but at the worst possible time of the year.

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

The survey itself was six pages long and included a number of questions about the responding organizations and then purposes of MIC: asking if the organizations believed that MIC had performed its functions; asking a question if the respondents believe there is a need for an advocacy body on behalf of ethnocultural communities in Manitoba; then asking the respondents to comment on the objectives of the Manitoba Intercultural Council; asking if the organizations feel they have been well served by MIC; and then asking two questions on the structure of MIC: one, is the representation of MIC providing the proper mix to fulfill its purpose, and should the structure remain unchanged and should

the Manitoba Intercultural Council be fully elected by its members and any other suggestions they might have?

* (1110)

Mr. Acting Speaker, on the surface, these are not illegitimate questions to ask, but as I have stated, the time frame was far too short. An organization is not able to consult particularly small ethnocultural organizations who have, in many cases, no staff, or if they have a staff, have a part-time staff who have difficulty getting their groups together on short notice, probably, and all of those difficulties are exacerbated by its being the height of summer. So we have some major concerns about the process that was undertaken, just the timing of the process.

As well, Mr. Acting Speaker, they sent out, I think, just under 1,000 questionnaires. They received just over 100 back, which is indicative, I would suggest, of the lack of time that these organizations had to respond. Mr. Blair, then, as well, interviewed individuals one-on-one in private interviews.

Again, that in and of itself is not a bad idea, because a written questionnaire with structured responses does not always give you the range of ideas, concerns and recommendations that you might get out of a one-on-one, in-person interview. So we have no concern about that part of the process; however, again they were very short. The time to set these interviews up was very short.

In some cases that I know of, people have told me that they volunteered to be interviewed by Mr. Blair. People who are very active in the ethnocultural community and some of them active in MIC were denied interviews. In many cases, in several cases as well, an interview was set up, Mr. Blair cancelled it, and it never got rescheduled. So that part of the process appears a bit murky to us.

The real concern we have—well, one of the major concerns we have with the process, both in the written survey and in the interviews, is the fact that we have no idea who these people and organizations were who responded either in writing or in face-to-face interviews. Mr. Blair in his report stated that he did not append a list of either the names or the organizations or the general kinds of organizations that responded because of client confidentiality.

Now, again, that is a spurious and a very unusual process to have been undertaken by any legitimate

research component. You can always protect the identity of a particular individual or a particular group by not listing specific names of individuals or groups, but you talk to people who do research and write papers about psychological issues, where they do case study analyses, they do not give names or identifying characteristics, but they do give the reader an understanding of the kinds of people, the kinds of groups that they dealt with in their research.

We have no idea if there were communities that did not respond at all, organizations representing communities that did not respond at all. We have no idea of the range and the breadth of the kind of communities and organizations that responded. We have no idea how Mr. Blair chose the individuals whom he spoke with personally. We have no idea of the criteria he used. At the very least, he could have listed the criteria he used for calling and making appointments with individuals to speak. We do not have any of that. That leads us to suspect the validity of the recommendations that Mr. Blair made to the minister.

The recommendations, too, are very interesting, because there are six major recommendations. The first recommendation is that The MIC Act be repealed, and that is the recommendation that the minister accepted. Recommendations 2 through 6 gave the minister an alternative, and these are the recommendations that we say on this side of the House, and many of the multicultural community organizations in the province also say should have been accepted by the minister.

They deal with amendments to The MIC Act that should be undertaken, such as that the act be amended to remove the power of government to appoint council members, to appoint the chairperson and to hire the executive secretary, that the MIC look at its mandate and provide a clearer definition of whom it represents and a specific role and mandate acceptable to its membership, internal processes for electing executives and those kinds of things, that MIC look at longer term plans and goals for which it is accountable to its membership, to the government and to the public, co-ordinate a communication strategy, a formal and effective mechanism between MIC and the government to provide feedback and advice, the government continue its statement that multiculturalism is all inclusive and that the government should facilitate a conference

to consider the state of multiculturalism in Manitoba and the structures and strategies necessary to ensure continued development of multiculturalism.

Those recommendations, with the exception of the first one, would have, had they been implemented by the minister, gone a long way towards addressing the issues that had been raised about the role and function of the MIC over its 10-year history. We suggest, Mr. Acting Speaker, that the reason the minister chose not to act on those recommendations but chose instead to act on the other recommendation that it be repealed is because the minister and the government she represents did not believe in the MIC, did not believe in what it was doing and did not want to have an independent advisory/advocacy body looking at multiculturalism issues.

What it wanted instead is what it is now going to get with the repeal of MIC, and that is a totally politically appointed group of individuals through MGAC to provide funding for organizations and the Multiculturalism Secretariat which, as I have stated earlier does very little outreach and liaising with community and the community organizations. The Multiculturalism Secretariat does basically internal interdepartmental linkage functions. Actually, when I stated that it did very little outreach, that is not completely 100 percent accurate, because at virtually every function that I have attended in the last year, the executive director of the Multiculturalism Secretariat has been very present, and in many cases, he is the one who is presenting a cheque to an organization.

* (1120)

A brief detour if I may, Mr. Acting Speaker, on that process, because that to me encapsulates and exemplifies the politicization that this government has undertaken in regard to multiculturalism, when the Manitoba Intercultural Council had the authority to distribute lottery funds to multicultural and ethnocultural organizations, the cheque was delivered on behalf of the Manitoba Intercultural Council at arm's length, virtually external agency to the government. So it was MIC that was providing the funds.

Today, when a cheque is issued to a community organization, it comes from MGAC completely politically appointed by Order-in-Council, and the cheque says it comes from the government of Manitoba. So it comes directly from the

government of Manitoba, not from an independent, arm's-length organization. Make no bones about it, that small distinction has had enormous implications for the community groups in the province of Manitoba because they know that if they speak out and say, shame on this government for following the Blair report, shame on this government for eliminating the Manitoba Intercultural Council, they run the direct risk of losing their funding.

This is just not fearmongering like the Premier (Mr. Filmon) talks about. We need only point to the advocacy groups of this province, such as the Manitoba Anti-Poverty Organization, the friendship centres, other community groups that have had their funding eliminated completely by this government as an example of what can happen when the purse strings are completely controlled by political appointees, answerable not to the community that elected them, because not a single one of those people who distributes lottery funds to community organizations was elected by the public. Every single one of them was appointed by the government.

The only advocacy group that remains in the province of Manitoba is the Consumers' Association of Manitoba, and I believe we have stated on numerous occasions, we know exactly why that organization has retained its funding.

With that brief detour, I would like to put on the record some concerns about the Blair report itself. These concerns were very eloquently outlined by Dr. Yantay Tsai, who is a past chairperson of the Manitoba Intercultural Council from 1985 to 1987. He lists eight major concerns with the Blair report.

One, the survey information was invalid. I have spoken about that, the fact that we do not know who returned questionnaires, and we do not know who was interviewed. Yes, I have specific figures. There were 117 of 971 questionnaires returned and 91 individuals interviewed.

I quote from his report: This deliberate concealment of information source would allow maximal manipulation of data to suit a particular outcome. The scarcity of returns to the questionnaires and the secretive manner by which conclusions are derived invalidate the report completely. Any decision based on such unreliable survey clearly lacks credibility.

A severe criticism of that—he goes on to talk about the fact that crucial facts were distorted, and the report makes a number of erroneous assertions which have led to untenable conclusions. There are three main areas which I will briefly outline.

There was a distortion in the Blair report of MIC's original mandate. The report states that the original goal of MIC was to make the government more knowledgeable about Manitoba's multicultural reality.

It then argues that the advice of MIC is no longer needed because the government has already reached an increasing awareness of multiculturalism. Well, we all know that is not accurate.

It does not matter what government there is; the issues around multiculturalism never are static. They are always changing. We are always finding new problems and concerns that we have to deal with.

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

We have raised some of these issues in the House in the last three months. The idea that there is no problem with Manitobans accepting the concept of multiculturalism is fallacious at the best.

Example two, the report claims that MIC does not represent all groups because its self-identification principle excludes certain organizations. It says that MIC only represents special-interest groups. This is a fallacious argument because everyone knows that an act that talks about the multicultural community is, by definition, exclusionary, as is the act that talks about and deals with the public education system or the health care system.

Mr. Blair states that groups in our society are well developed. Mr. Acting Speaker, multicultural groups in our society are as broadly ranging as any other group in our society. There are multicultural communities and organizations in Manitoba that have been organized and functioning for a hundred years or more. There are also groups in our society in Manitoba that are made up of people who have only in the last five or 10 years come to the province.

Anybody who knows the statistics, as do members opposite, on immigration patterns knows that is the reality. To say that all multicultural groups are well developed and do not need the assistance of an advisory and an advocacy body is

erroneous in the first order, and Mr. Blair should have known better.

The community views were misrepresented. Mr. Blair states that the community views represented in the questionnaires were fairly consistent. Well, we have to take Mr. Blair's word for it, because he never did say who returned the questionnaires. He never said to whom the questionnaires were distributed. He never said anything about the characteristics of the individuals he interviewed. He certainly never summarized the kinds of responses to each question that he received. He selectively made quotes.

We have no way of knowing what kinds of quotes, what kinds of concerns, what kinds of issues were raised, because there is nothing in there except what Mr. Blair wants us to hear and wants us to read.

The report, No. 4, states that the problems with MIC are the fault of MIC. We are saying that is not accurate. The problems with the Manitoba Intercultural Council relate specifically to the interference of the current government in the workings of the Intercultural Council to the increased political representation on the council and to the ultimate goal of this government, which is to eliminate the council.

Mr. Tsai goes on to talk about the fact that the report misconceives what multiculturalism is all about. The report says it is a process and then says it is a new concept of intercultural understanding. Multiculturalism is in flux, is in process, which is precisely why you cannot say that an organization like MIC has fulfilled its function, because things have concluded. It does not work.

There are self-contradictory remarks, fallacious arguments and no convincing rationale are the other major items that Mr. Tsai has talked about in the report.

As well, the Chinese Community Council of Manitoba made a statement in response to the Blair report where they say, from their perspective, the question is whose advice the government wants to listen to, the advice of the representative body of the communities or that of the party loyalists and supporters who make up—end quote. Those party loyalists and supporters, whether they are actually members of the Conservative Party or not, they are all political appointees.

It calls into the question the government's professed commitment to multiculturalism if it refuses or is afraid to listen to the advice of the representative body of the ethnocultural communities, which is clearly what the government is afraid of. It is afraid to listen to that external advice. It is afraid to listen to advice and recommendations from a group that it does not totally control. That is why it is eliminating MIC.

The Chinese Community Council of Manitoba goes on to say, and I quote: Until the late 1980s—parenthetically, I might add, the time when the Conservative government was elected—the MIC had been the single most effective and important organization in defence of multiculturalism and its promotion. It was the standard bearer of the cause of multiculturalism. It has remained a vital symbol of multiculturalism. The dismantling of the MIC under whatever guise will be seen as an abandonment and defeat of multiculturalism in Manitoba. Let the MIC be a truly representative organization of the ethnocultural communities which is effective and free of government control.

* (1130)

This is exactly our position, Mr. Acting Speaker. We feel that it is vital that the multicultural community in Manitoba be represented by an independent arm's-length body from the government. The Manitoba Intercultural Council for 10 years has provided that kind of independent analysis. [interjection] The member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer), who is well versed in these issues because he represents on many occasions the minister at multicultural events, and I enjoy the opportunities that I have to discuss issues with him and participate in many of these events, the member for Niakwa knows full well the important role that MIC has played.

Not only MIC, I think it is not just the Manitoba Intercultural Council, but it is important that we all agree, and we on this side of the House agree, I do not think the government does, that there is a need for an external advisory advocacy body. Clearly, the government does not agree on it, because they are eliminating the one external advisory body that this government has been able to avail itself of for the last 10 years.

What concerns us, Mr. Acting Speaker, is that this government is taking away the intercultural

council at a time when it has never been more important to have an organization such as MIC. We are living in a society which is changing daily. We are living in a province whose ethnic make-up is changing daily. We are becoming more and more cosmopolitan. This is a positive statement. This is a wonderful thing to be happening.

It is remarkable to see how individuals and communities come to the province of Manitoba from all corners of the earth. From more than 100 countries, we have people residing in Manitoba. We have people coming from, as I stated, communities such as the Ukrainian community, which has been a well-established community in this province for 100 or more years. We have people from Iceland who have been here for well over a hundred years. We have our aboriginal peoples who have been here for tens of thousands of years or thousands of years at the very least.

These groups are all part of the multicultural kaleidoscope that makes up Manitoba, but we also have groups such as the most recent nation that has found its independence, the nation of Eritrea, in the horn of Africa. There are 250 individuals from Eritrea in the province of Manitoba, or more now, who voted just several months ago for independence.

We have representatives, as I stated, from the newest nation on Earth, Eritrea, in Manitoba today. We have representatives and citizens from almost every single nation on the face of the Earth. Its per capita—my understanding is that Winnipeg has a higher multicultural makeup than virtually any other city in the country, with the possible exception of Toronto and Vancouver.

It enriches our province, it enriches our lives, the reality of multiculturalism, and whether we like it or not, we are going to have to deal with the many, many, many issues that this fact leaves us with. We are dealing with, or not dealing with, or in some cases dealing fairly well with, and in other cases dealing not at well with the issues of racism that face us in our society.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would not for a moment suggest that racism is a new phenomenon. It has been with us as long as there have been three people on the face of the Earth, I am sure. Its face changes as the composition of our society changes. I remember learning in my history books in the United States about the fact that in the late

1800s in Massachusetts there were signs in virtually every place of business, and these signs said Irish need not apply.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Now, today, that may seem a bit strange, particularly when one considers that the political history of the United States has been very definitely impacted on by the Irish from Massachusetts, most particularly the Kennedy family, which is 120 or 130 years of history in Boston and Massachusetts political life, but 100 years ago, they had a great deal of difficulty in getting jobs. Today, the Irish form one of the strongest and most powerful groups in North American society.

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

I am using that as an example of how things change and how the issues of multiculturalism and the groups that are affected by the issues of multiculturalism change as our society changes.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker, I will now conclude my remarks very briefly by saying, I appreciate the ability to have spoken for longer than the 40 minutes traditionally allotted to speakers. I feel, and we feel on this side of the House, that the issues that the Manitoba Intercultural Council over its 10-year history have addressed have been vital issues to the province of Manitoba, to the people of Manitoba and, most particularly, to the multicultural communities in the province of Manitoba.

We feel the government's actions in proposing Bill 28, a bill which would eliminate the legislated mandate of the Manitoba Intercultural Council, are ill thought out, ill conceived and should be revoked. We feel that time, and a very short period of time, will prove us correct, that for all of its problems internally, the Manitoba Intercultural Council was and still is a very effective organization. Without the legislated mandate and support of the government, there will be no organization that will be able to provide the kind of advice and assistance and recommendations to the government that the MIC was able to provide.

We commit ourselves, here and now, to reinstating the Manitoba Intercultural Council, after public hearings, once the government has changed. This is a pledge that I make on behalf of my caucus and my party, because we feel, Mr. Speaker, it is essential that the multicultural

community in Manitoba have a voice that is heard by the community, by the government, and it is essential for the government to listen to that kind of voice, a voice of reason and advice and advocacy that the Manitoba Intercultural Council has provided for over 10 years to the people and government of Manitoba.

* (1140)

Mr. Speaker, I hope the government reconsiders its decision to introduce Bill 28. I fear it will not. I think it is a sad day for the province of Manitoba, for the people of Manitoba, and it is a decision I am afraid this government will live to regret. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Committee Change

Mr. Jack Reimer (Niakwa): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) for the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson).

Motion agreed to.

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Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it 12:30? [agreed]

The hour being 12:30, this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, July 23, 1993

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