



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 26, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Rail Line Abandonment

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jake Buhler, K. Fullerton and Mervin Holinaty and others requesting the Legislative Assembly to request the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Findlay) and federal Minister of Transport to ensure that communities currently using the Cowan Sub and Erwood Subline are able to continue shipping grain to market.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Manitoba Telephone System

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk). It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? Dispense.

THAT the Manitoba Telephone System has served this province well for over 80 years providing province-wide service, some of the lowest local rates in North America and thousands of jobs; and

THAT MTS has made over \$100 million since 1990 and this money has stayed in Manitoba; and

THAT MTS contributes \$150 million annually to the Manitoba economy and is a major sponsor of community events throughout the province; and

THAT MTS, with nearly 4,000 employees including more than 1,000 in rural and northern Manitoba, is one of Manitoba's largest firms, headquartered in Manitoba and is committed to Manitoba; and

THAT the provincial government has no mandate to sell MTS and said before and during the 1995 election that MTS was not for sale.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) not sell the Manitoba Telephone System.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I have three annual reports to table for 1995-96: the Annual Report for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship; also for the Franco-Manitoban Cultural Centre; and the Annual Report of The Freedom of Information Act.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report of Civil Legal Services for the year ending March 31, 1996, and also the Annual Report 1995-96 of the Department of Justice.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the financial statements for the Leaf Rapids Town Properties Ltd., and also the Annual Report for Manitoba Decentralization.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I have several annual reports to table: firstly, for the Ministry of Agriculture, the Annual Report covering the years 1995-96; the Annual Report from the Manitoba Farm Mediation Board covering the years '95-96; the Annual Report from the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation for the years '95-96.

I have the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences Annual Report from the University of Manitoba, and on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), the Annual Report for the Ministry of Highways and Transportation for the year '95-96.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I have three reports to table. The first one is the Annual Report

for 1995-96 for the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The second one is the 1995 Annual Report for the Crown Corporations Council, and the third one is the Report of Amounts Paid to Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ending March 31, 1996.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger), I would like to table the Annual Report and Financial Statements of Venture Manitoba Tours Ltd. to March 31, 1996.

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Report for the Department of Government Services, including emergency expenditures for the fiscal year 1995-96.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the Annual Report for 1995-96 for Manitoba Family Services.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to present the report of the Department of Labour for 1995-1996.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon fifty-three Grades 5 and 6 students from William S. Patterson School under the direction of Mrs. Gwen Streich. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

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

* (1335)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Care Workers Collective Bargaining

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, comments made by the Minister of Labour (Mr.

Toews) this week have indicated the extent that ministers will go to abuse their power and intimidate working people in this province. It is consistent with a pursuit of an autocratic style that we have seen from this government in dealing with working people over the last couple of months.

I would like to ask the Premier, is it the policy of the provincial government to eliminate the rights of health care workers to vote for the bargaining unit of their choice and replace that right or give that right to a government-appointed czar or commissioner in terms of deciding what labour unit that person will join without a vote?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I have no knowledge of what the member refers to.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, of course we know that MHO, in a draft document, has called this proposal of the government, this policy of the government undemocratic and abhorrent, and that is the management body. You should hear what the workers say about the Filmon government's strategy to eliminate their democratic rights.

I would like to ask the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), was this amendment to various parts of acts an intemperate policy of the government and the Minister of Labour, or is it a deliberate strategy to place more autocratic power in the hands of the Filmon cabinet and take that away from working people to decide the bargaining units of their choice?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, no, the honourable member is making reference to a way to resolve disputes arising from labour issues which would come along during the course of transition in the health system, and by way of example, a very positive development in Brandon, for example, at Brandon Mental Health Centre. We want to build psychiatric capacity at Brandon General Hospital and one union represents the nursing profession there, another union represents the nursing profession at the Brandon Mental Health Centre, and as of this time we still do not have that matter resolved as to which bargaining agent should represent the workers in those cases. The idea of this commissioner envisaged in Bill 49 is to attempt to iron out those issues that come along in a co-operative

way so that the workers would receive the maximum benefit from the resolution of these difficulties.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, this is not ironing out situations. It is stomping out the rights of people to vote and determine in a democratic way the bargaining units of their choices.

I would like to ask the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), was it the policy of the Ministry of Labour to oppose the fact that the Department of Health and a commissioner would override the rights of people to determine their bargaining unit, which is contained within The Labour Relations Act? Did the Minister of Labour fight these changes? Does he care about these changes? Does he care about the democratic rights of working people to have a vote, or does he just want to give that away to a government-appointed dictator as we have under the Filmon policy of the government?

Mr. McCrae: The other people I would invite the Leader of the Opposition to think about in this matter are the patients, the consumers of health services who will not benefit if union disputes are not resolved in an expeditious and amicable fashion. You see, we have at Brandon Mental Health Centre patients who need the resolution of these kinds of disputes so they can get the proper care. The honourable member's characterization of this is totally off the wall, Madam Speaker, has nothing to do with the principles he is talking about and has everything to do with friendly labour relations and has everything also to do with the best care for the patient.

* (1340)

Teaching Profession Collective Bargaining

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, in recent days we have seen a minister of the Crown in an intemperate and unpleasant dispute with ordinary Manitobans. It recalls similar scenes in the hall with the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) telling teachers who were concerned about their profession that they were not real teachers. This same minister is now introducing divisive labour legislation in education.

I want to ask the Premier, whose views on university negotiations were well known in this House, who do

Manitobans turn to to find a balanced and trustworthy voice that both sides to a negotiation can believe?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Well, Madam Speaker, it certainly would not be the member opposite.

As is the case in any democratic society in the world, we will obviously have an opportunity to debate the issues that are brought forward in government. We will obviously have our differences and the member opposite is perfectly entitled to represent her point of view, however biased and one-sided it may be, but the fact of the matter is that we as a government will do our best to listen to all those in society, to represent in the long term—[interjection]

Well, Madam Speaker, the members opposite come here representing special interest factions all the time. They are supported only by special interest factions. We have a greater responsibility, and that is to create a sense of fairness amongst all of those in society. Every Manitoban, whether they be a voter or a taxpayer, a citizen of this province is entitled to our consideration. That means we do not get to choose on behalf of certain special interest groups, as the members opposite do. We instead represent everyone and try and create that balance of interest that creates the greatest good for the greatest number. [interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member is not on the record and has not been recognized.

Ms. Friesen: My supplementary question is to the Minister of Education, whose views on labour legislation and labour relations have been heard loud and clear in this House and who deliberately intends to create divisions in education with her collective bargaining proposals.

I would like to ask the minister, is she prepared to reconsider her labour legislation in education to find a process that can be considered fair by all Manitobans and that will serve all of our community?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, again, I indicate the member's preamble and the comments from the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who made a comment from his chair that was cruel, absolutely cruel—the member for

Thompson, with his cruel comments, and the member for Wolseley, with her preamble, I will answer the question, not the cruel comments or the preamble.

Madam Speaker, I would indicate that we have worked very, very hard in terms of talking to people, experts, lay people, professionals in the field of education, to come up with legislation that I believe in my heart is absolutely and eminently fair, balanced things for trustees that they have to manage well, protection for teachers and rights for teachers that they have not had to this point.

There are things in Bill 72 that make it, in my opinion, a much improved system for both sides of the collective bargaining issue than ever we have had in Manitoba before.

* (1345)

Labour Relations Act Teaching Profession

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): My supplementary is for the Minister of Labour.

Will the Minister of Labour explain why his policy is to include teachers under The Labour Relations Act for financial reporting but to withhold from them the other protections of the labour act? Could he explain to the House what the underlying principles of fairness are there?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): I believe that people who are compelled by legislation to pay union dues should also have union leaders accountable to them. That is the basic premise of the Labour Relations Act amendments. I am prepared to stand by those.

If teachers want further amendments in respect of what the member for Wolseley is saying, I am prepared to sit and listen.

Labour Board Resources

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, on May 16 of this year in Labour Estimates, I asked the Minister of Labour questions about the resources of the Manitoba Labour Board to handle the increased workload that is going to result as a result of the government's Bills

26, 49, 72, 73, and perhaps others. At that time the minister said that the board assured him that they have adequate resources and were capable of doing the increased workload.

I want to ask the Minister of Labour today, does he still stand by his statement to the board, that they will have the capability and the resources to handle the increased workload as a result of the government's legislative agenda here?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): I have raised that issue with the chairperson of the Labour Board on a number of occasions over this summer, and he, as the responsible administrative officer of the board, has indicated, yes, he does have the resources. The resources are at his disposal.

Mr. Reid: Well, then perhaps, Madam Speaker, a supplementary to the same minister: Can the minister explain then his statement of April 26, when he went to an 8 a.m. meeting with his deputy minister with all the seven members of the Labour Board, when he said to them at that time: I know that the board is in desperate need of funds and I can assure you that when this new process is in place, additional funds will be found.

How can the minister say one thing in the April 26 meeting with the Labour Board representatives, and then say to this House that they have adequate resources? Madam Speaker, who is telling the truth in these matters?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, subsequent to that date, I in fact have had a number of discussions with the chairperson of the Labour Board. He advises me that he has sufficient resources to address the concerns raised by any of the new legislation.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, once again to the same minister: Whom are we to believe? Are we to believe the seven members of the Labour Board who told this minister on April 26 that they needed more resources to deal with the government's labour legislative agenda, or are we to believe this minister who has misled members of this House and members of the public with respect to the lottery workers in his statements to them this week? Whom are we to believe, this Minister of Labour or the members of the Labour Board who tell us they need more resources to deal with this labour legislative agenda?

Mr. Toews: If members of the Labour Board have specific concerns in that respect, they need only approach the chairperson who will then report to the Deputy Minister of Labour and those issues are discussed with me. I am concerned about that issue; I have discussed the issue on a number of occasions, and I have been assured that there are appropriate resources in place.

* (1350)

Autopac Privatization

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I would like to table a document that came from Manitoba Public Insurance from Jack Zacharias, president and general manager to MPI. It was sent to Autopac-designated managers, and I quote directly from the document where it is stated: Developing the terms of reference for a study to be conducted by an external organization. Further, if you like, to determine whether the exclusively broker-based system continues to be the best means of delivering Autopac to Manitobans.

My question to the Premier: Is this government now considering the privatization of Autopac?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): No, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Lamoureux: Unfortunately, we did hear that for MTS, too.

My question to the Premier is: Can the Premier explain why the 335 independent Autopac brokers appear to be being shut out of the whole process?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I cannot fully answer on behalf of the minister responsible for Autopac, but I do know that he and Autopac officials have met with the president and other representatives of the Brokers Association in recent times. I have been contacted myself by brokers, so I know that the matter is under discussion. So I do not think that there is any thought that brokers are being shut out of this.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, can the Premier give the assurances to the 335 independent brokers that they

will have a role to play in terms of the delivery of Autopac for all Manitobans well into the future?

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Madam Speaker, I can give that assurance.

Labour Relations Minister's Comments

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, we are seeing increasingly that this government, now that it has received a majority in 1995 through whatever means were available to them at the time, is now imposing their personal agendas, particularly in terms of labour relations. We have seen the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) talk about comments in this House about bombs and their caricatures of labour relations in this province. We see with the Minister of—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the member for Thompson has, on several occasions in this House, implied that a bomb that was thrown at my husband's office in an attempt to murder him was not a real incident. I am sorry, but it was real and I am not saying it is anything to do with labour relations. I am just saying it happened, and it was not the only time it happened. I think that when he says the kinds of things he says, regrettably, regrettably, he denies my reality and he denies the reality of some 385 incidents of criminal convictions in a very, very terrible affair that he keeps trying to relate to other incidences that have no connection whatsoever. He tries to take an incident that has no connection with our current labour relations and draw a parallel. In that, he is being dishonest, unkind and hurting hundreds of people who have suffered through hell.

* (1355)

Mr. Ashton: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker, the comments I referred to were made on the record by the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and by the Minister of Education in this House in which she accused

not only members of this House but other people of Manitoba of supporting and condoning that. That is something we have never done, and it is the kind of caricature and the personalization of what is happening in terms of working people in this province that has led us to the kind of situation we have today. She should not impose her personal views on labour relations in this province or accuse us of supporting something that is a criminal act. We do not. We support the rights of working people.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable Minister of Education, I will take the comments and the point of order raised under advisement and I will report back to the House.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Thompson, to quickly pose his question.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I will refer now to the comments, the personal comments that have been made by the Minister of Labour, and I want to ask the Minister of Labour if he has had time to reflect on the impact his comments have had not only with regard to the casino workers, most recently, but comments he made to such individuals as the president of the Steelworkers in Thompson, where it gets to the point in Manitoba where the president of Steelworkers 6166—they have been locked out by Inco; there is a labour dispute in my community; it is creating a great deal of impact on our community—now indicates, and this was on the record, that he has no trust either in the neutrality of this government or the neutrality of this minister because of comments the minister has made directly to him.

When will the minister recognize that his personal comments are having a direct impact on labour relations in this province?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): I might say that I went up to Thompson and I met with that particular president. We had a good discussion, and he indicated to me it was the first time that a Conservative Minister of Labour had come into the union hall. My door—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Toews: And whether that is true or not—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Toews: He thanked me for coming to the union hall and speaking to him, and perhaps it was the first Minister of Labour in his term of office there that had been to see him, but I indicated to him that I was always prepared to listen to him.

My deputy minister has been up to see him on numerous occasions to seek his input on various matters. I do not know what else I can do at this time to assure him of my interest in the strike in Thompson but I am interested, and I am concerned.

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

Mr. Ashton: Supplementary, Madam Speaker. Can the minister then indicate why Mr. Desjarlais feels he was lied to when he was told at this meeting that there would be no major changes to The Labour Relations Act? In fact, the same minister then went on to the Rotary Club in Thompson and said it was a balanced piece of legislation, the existing act.

Why did this minister, once again, make the kinds of comments that are getting him in trouble in terms of casino workers, directly with the president of 6166, something that has destroyed any trust or credibility that minister has involving the current labour dispute?

* (1400)

Mr. Toews: What I said to both Mr. Desjarlais and the Chamber of Commerce is that there is a balance in the act between management and unions. Unfortunately there is a serious imbalance between employees and the leaders of a union that are supposed to represent those employees. That is what the amendments to The Labour Relations Act are all about, not to change the balance between management and labour unions but to give workers for the first time democratic rights—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

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

Mr. Toews: Democratic rights, Madam Speaker, that were denied by workers of the civil service when the NDP government passed legislation unilaterally and statutorily recognizing the MGEU as the only bargaining unit without any vote. That is not democracy. I want to see democracy in the workplace.

Minister of Labour Replacement Request

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Speaker, as a final supplementary, when will this minister and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) recognize that the only serious imbalance in this province is in terms of the lack of fairness in this government and either remove the Minister of Labour or at least change the name of the department and this minister to something more applicable such as the minister responsible for corporations, because he has nothing to do with labour?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour): I have many responsibilities in my office that this Premier has entrusted me with. I intend to carry out those responsibilities in a fair and even-handed way, and when my colleague across the way indicates that I only have a corporate background, he deliberately chooses to ignore that I had a career, a proud career as a public servant, and I am proud of that fact. I bring that experience to this House and I care about public servants in the province of Manitoba, and I will do my best on their behalf.

Home Care Program Records Confidentiality

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, today it has been reported that private health information from a private company was found by members of the public. One of the main concerns we had with the privatization of home care was the inappropriate use of health care information by private companies. Now that the government is still proceeding to privatize a portion of home care, what assurances can this minister give that private information will not be used inappropriately, will not be sold and will not be used by private companies to sell additional services to those people that they serve?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The honourable member's concern is well-founded, Madam Speaker. Whether it be private sector or public sector or information from a doctor's clinic or some such information like that, the concern is well-founded. This is why we have, under the auspices of the Health Information Network, consultations that are going on. We have consultations going on with consumers and care providers dealing with the privacy to which people are entitled with respect to their health information, and the experience reported on today is one of those things that ought to form part of those discussions. I have instructed that the private providers' records also become the subject of these discussions so that whatever mechanisms we put in place in the future will reflect the concern that we all have about the question being raised today by the honourable member, and, also, as we work towards the development of legislation to guarantee people's privacy with respect to their health records, this concern will be reflected in all of that work.

Drug Program Information Network Records Confidentiality

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, perhaps then the minister can address the fact that this consultation group has been criticized by a subcommittee, by the consumer group and by the pharmaceutical group about the fact that the government has not put in place with respect to DPIN, the pharmaceutical program, the appropriate security and safety measures for that program that already exists, and they have already been criticized by his own consultation group for not doing that.

Can the minister confirm that?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): No, but any legitimate concerns being raised, this is indeed—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, Oh.

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

Mr. McCrae: Any legitimate concerns there might be, this is the appropriate time for those kinds of concerns to be raised and to form part of our consultations with respect to privacy of health information and indeed the whole endeavour to look at the issues related to access to

information and where it ought to be allowed and where it ought to be limited. If the honourable member can be more specific with me, I will look into the specific concerns that have been raised.

Mr. Chomiak: I would appreciate if the minister would confirm and table for this House whether or not any complaints have gone forward to the pharmacy association, or other body, concerning the inappropriate use of information on the health care network that presently exists. Can the minister report back to this House whether or not any complaints have been received in that regard?

Mr. McCrae: Yes, I would want to know about that, Madam Speaker, and I appreciate the honourable member bringing this matter forward. I can tell him though that, because of the Drug Program Information Network, we have seen literally thousands and thousands of cases where pharmacists have had reason to double-check or pharmacists have had reason to give the patient a specific warning because of what is on the screen with respect to their health care. Pharmacists have had specific reasons because of information on the system to contact the doctor, the prescribing physician, to make sure that the prescription is right.

Unfortunately, I cannot tell you how many hospital admissions we have prevented, but we do know—because you never do know how many problems you might have prevented—that it must number in at least the hundreds, if not the thousands, of hospital admissions prevented because of all of the safety measures that are now built into our Drug Program Information Network. It is extremely positive and better health care.

* (1410)

Extreme Fighting Licensing

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): My questions are for the Minister of Sport. Last Friday, on September 20, the Walker Theatre broadcast another extreme fight. This is billed as the most brutal event in the history of sport. It is broadcast via satellite from Atlanta, Georgia, and this fighting is banned in 30 states across North America.

I want to ask the Minister of Sport, did the minister and the Boxing Commission know about this fight, and can

he confirm if the commission gave this bout a licence under the Boxing Commission?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister responsible for Sport): Under The Boxing and Wrestling Commission Act, the powers given to the commission deal with live events, not broadcast events, Madam Speaker, so I have no idea if they knew about it. I am sure they have not given them a licence to do it because they would have no jurisdiction.

Regulations

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Can the minister confirm that if this was a boxing event it would invoke Section 25(1) of the regulation under the commission, and if then there could have been criminal charges under the Criminal Code for this bout?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister responsible for Sport): I do not want to confirm anything that the member said, Madam Speaker, but I can assure her that—nor did I see the event to which she refers, but fights of extreme violence, the sort of no-holds-barred types of fights or the Iron Man or tough man or whatever they call them, are prohibited under the Criminal Code, and if an event took place that involved that, then the police could act.

Provincial Ban

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): My final supplementary for the same minister: Will this minister take steps to specifically ban the broadcast or the live bouts of these events, as they have done in 30 jurisdictions across North America?

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister responsible for Sport): I believe that the decision over what gets broadcast in this country is carried out by the Canadian Radio-Television Commission and not by the Manitoba Boxing and Wrestling Commission.

Rural Stress Line Funding

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, in their election platform, this government in their health platform said that they are now emphasizing wellness and a variety of creative preventative strategies.

Madam Speaker, the rural stress line is an excellent example of preventative health and one that has been

successful and supported by many farm organizations and farm businesses. Unfortunately, it is no longer supported by this government.

Since the Canadian Mental Health Association, the rural stress committee and Klinik have come forward with a proposal to help the line continue, and they have asked this government for \$80,000 to keep the line going, will the minister recognize the importance of this line and make a commitment to the people of rural Manitoba that they will have preventative health services through the rural stress line?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, a couple of years ago when the Canadian Mental Health Association and its partners came forward to request some funding, the government of Manitoba decided to assist on a one-time basis with a contribution to get them going. A year later, because the program was still, it could be said, in its infancy and in its development stages, the government of Manitoba made another \$40,000 contribution to assist them to get going.

It was very clearly understood on each occasion that our funding would be limited to that which we made available and that support from the community ought to be sought, and that was the position the government took. Subsequently, the partners came back to government even though the government had been very, very clear about its commitment, returned to government to make further funding requests, and we, in our analysis of the situation, found that the line could indeed be operated much more efficiently and cost-effectively. Subsequent to that, the CMHA has been engaged in some discussions with Klinik, and we are interested in seeing a partnership go forward on the basis of cost-effectiveness.

Ms. Wowchuk: How can the minister be taking such a lengthy time to make a decision on this issue when he knows that, without a definite commitment, the people who are supporting the line, the corporate sector, the farm businesses, are starting to withdraw their funding from the line? Why will this minister not recognize that this is a preventative service and was something that he promised during the election?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member somehow has not been listening, I guess. Madam Speaker, our contribution as a government to this program, a worthy

program, but our contribution has been made. There is no further contribution to be made. We have been very clear with the partners that this is the position we have taken.

We have provided mental health services in some 52 locations throughout Manitoba, unfortunately, without the support of the New Democratic Party, but mental health services had never existed before. Right in the town of Swan River, for example, where we have a crisis stabilization unit, the honourable member claims to be supportive of that, but—you know, we have provided services everywhere across Manitoba—mental health services had never existed before. What the honourable member did not hear is this: Our contribution to the farm and rural stress line has been made.

Canada Pension Plan B.C. Proposal—Government Support

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

The B.C. government has made some innovative and progressive proposals to deal with the problems now facing the Canada Pension Plan, including the lifting of the \$35,400 per year ceiling which eventually would increase benefits for middle-income earners plus protecting benefits for disabled persons while increasing premiums only modestly in the near term. These proposals were put forward at a recent deputy ministers' conference, and I understand the Minister of Finance will be meeting with the federal minister and provincial ministers to discuss this next week.

Can the minister advise this House whether he is prepared to support the B.C. and Saskatchewan proposals, which will deal with the problems facing CPP, while making it more generous and more equitable for Canadians?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, without accepting any of the preamble of the member for Brandon East, we are doing an assessment of the proposal put forward by British Columbia, but the initial reaction to that is there are some concerns that even though there can be some immediate financial gain to Canada Pension Plan, there can be more significant

long-term costs to the Canada Pension Plan as a result of the B.C. proposal.

What concerns me most with what I am hearing out of British Columbia is that it appears that they are not ready to come to the meeting on October 4 to work constructively towards finding a solution. They are talking about putting the issue on a track two and deferring the issue and tinkering with changes to the Canada Pension Plan. If we want to do justice to the Canada Pension Plan, everybody has to be a part of the solution—people who are currently benefiting in the plan contributions, people who will be contributing today and into the future. That is the kind of attitude all governments have to come with to this meeting to find a solution for this plan to put it on a sustainable, affordable basis for today and for future generations.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, the B.C. position will not put it on a sustainable basis, Madam Speaker.

Is this minister prepared to join B.C. and Saskatchewan in opposing the proposals to reduce disability benefits and freeze the basic exemption which would hurt the most vulnerable groups in this society? Would he agree with that?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, the most important thing for all citizens, including the most vulnerable groups in society, is that the Canada Pension Plan be put on a sustainable, affordable basis. That is the single most important thing that government should be focusing on when they go to this meeting. That will probably require a contribution from everybody—people who are currently receiving benefits, people who are currently contributing to the plan and will be contributing to the plan in the future and people who are currently receiving Canada Pension Plan. That is the kind of attitude that is required of all governments to find a solution to this very serious problem.

* (1420)

Government Position

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, I would like the minister, at this point, to advise this House that he is prepared to table documents on

Manitoba's position so we can see it, because the proposals put forward by B.C. do allow for the plan to be sustainable and, at the same time, make it more equitable and more generous for Canadians in the future. It is a viable proposal that B.C. has made.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, once again I do not accept the preamble from the member for Brandon East in terms of what he is suggesting about the B.C. proposal in terms of what it will accomplish for the Canada Pension Plan. There are all kinds of information available on the Canada Pension Plan, the detailed document from the consultation process that is available.

An Honourable Member: What is your plan?

Mr. Stefanson: The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) is asking for our plan. We are going to this meeting to deal with all issues. We are going there with a broad framework but realizing there has to be flexibility on the part of all provinces, because to ultimately fix the Canada Pension Plan, it requires the support of seven provinces and the federal government. So no province should be going there with an absolute rigid, blinker-like approach. You should go there with the attitude prepared to fix the Canada Pension Plan, and that is the attitude we are going with, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wellington, for one quick question.

New Year's Eve 1999 Celebration Funding

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, yesterday the City Council approved the expenditure of several hundred thousand dollars to plan a New Year's Eve party for 1999 in the city of Winnipeg. I understand, as well, that they are going to ask the province and the federal government to share in the expenditures of this money.

I am wondering if the Minister of Urban Affairs can tell the House if he has received a request from the City of Winnipeg to spend money on this party, and if so, what the response from the province will be to this ridiculous request.

An Honourable Member: . . . like a good party.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): I am always interested in a good party, that is true.

An Honourable Member: This is a good party.

Mr. Reimer: And this is a good party to be involved with. However, Madam Speaker, to the best of my knowledge, I have not received any indication or any correspondence from the mayor or from the council as to their plans for the millennium.

I imagine all Manitobans are waiting for this in anticipation of one big party. Naturally we will all be invited, but until I get a formal request, I really am not too sure what commitments the city has made at this particular time.

Madam Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Police and Peace Officer Memorial

Mr. David Newman (Riel): Madam Speaker, today I rise in the House to draw attention of all honourable members to a very important and a very sad ceremony which will be held tomorrow, September 27, 1996, at 10:30 a.m. in Memorial Park.

We will join with our fellow citizens across Canada for a brief flag-lowering ceremony to remember and honour the police officers and peace officers who have died in the performance of their duties. As police and peace officers, these individuals have devoted their lives to the protection of Canadians. Through their work, they have guaranteed the safety and freedom of society and have allowed Canadians the ability to benefit from and enjoy freely the merits of both family and community.

The dedication that these individuals have given to their work and supremely their loss of life is a gift to all of us. We, our children and our communities all benefit from the high standards of professionalism that the police and peace officers have provided. It is their commitment to our service that has made it possible for you and me to

live and work in a secure and peaceful environment. We should all learn and greatly benefit from their fine example.

Finally, I would like to urge all members to take the time tomorrow to come out for the brief ceremony which will be held at 10:30 a.m. in Memorial Park. As the flag is lowered, I would ask all members to take a moment to remember all of those who have so proudly served to protect us, remember with pride the lives of those who have died for our safety and thank them for the service they have provided for all of us. Thank you.

Canadian Wheat Board

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today and put a few words on the record in terms of this government's sorry, greedy attitude towards the Canadian Wheat Board and in particular the lack of direction that it has been giving the farmers of Manitoba in terms of single-desk selling.

Farmers are very clear on this. They want some changes to the Canadian Wheat Board, but they want to keep the hands of the federal politicians and this government off the single-desk selling aspect of the Canadian Wheat Board.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Dauphin. I wonder if I might ask those members who are having private meetings at the back of the Chamber to please do so in the loge or outside the Chamber.

Mr. Struthers: Some may think that there is a lack of understanding on the part of the members opposite when it comes to the benefits of the Canadian Wheat Board and single-desk selling. It is my belief that this attitude of this government fits into their philosophy of providing some benefits for the very few, the big farmers who are living close to the American border, and they do not really care about the majority of farmers who live too far from the market to benefit from a switch from single-desk selling to their preferred method which is the dual-marketing system for our grains.

On this side of the House we want to make it perfectly clear that we are in favour of single-desk selling and that

we fully support the Canadian Wheat Board and stand with farmers on this issue. My advice to the Conservative government across the way is to get off the fence, get out there, take a position one way or another and come clean with the farmers in the province of Manitoba. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Francotonne

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madame la présidente, j'aimerais féliciter le Conseil jeunesse provincial qui organise depuis plusieurs années un grand rassemblement pour les élèves des écoles franco-manitobaines. Cet événement a pour but de stimuler chez les jeunes une fierté d'appartenance à leur culture par l'entremise d'une variété d'activités, telles que spectacles et ateliers. Ceci étant dit, cet événement donne aussi l'occasion à notre jeunesse de vivre et découvrir une communauté franco-manitobaine rurale.

Cette année, Francotonne aura lieu le 27 septembre, demain, à Île-des-Chênes. Je profite de cette occasion afin d'inviter tous les membres de cette auguste Assemblée à se joindre à moi afin de féliciter le Conseil jeunesse provincial pour cet événement éducatif et culturel de grande valeur.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

[Translation]

Madam Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Conseil jeunesse provincial which, for several years now, has been organizing a major gathering for the pupils of Franco-Manitoban schools. This event is intended to stimulate among young people a pride in belonging to their culture by means of a variety of activities such as performances and workshops. As well, this event gives our youth the opportunity to discover and experience a rural Franco-Manitoban community.

This year, Francotonne will take place on September 27, tomorrow, at Ile-des-Chenes. I would like to take this opportunity to invite all members of this august Assembly to join with me in congratulating the Conseil jeunesse provincial for this very valuable educational and cultural event.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Misericordia General Hospital

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (River Heights): I am pleased today to rise and tell my colleagues in this Chamber that last Sunday, September 22, I participated—and I would advise my colleagues that I completed—a five-mile run in support of a fundraising venture that the PC members of this government are continually running, a fundraising venture for the Misericordia General Hospital Foundation.

The participants in the Misery Five-mile Run came from a broad cross-section of our Winnipeg community. They included elite runners, moms and dads from the community with their children, supporters of the Misericordia and staff and friends of the hospital. The Mis run has been held for the seventh year consecutively. It was initiated by the staff at the Misericordia, and this year the celebrated Monty Hall was the race starter.

The foundation raised over \$7,000 which will go to the breast care centre at the Misericordia General Hospital. The Misericordia General Hospital Foundation is headed by Mrs. Susan Skinner, a River Heights constituent, and their fundraising goal for this year is \$500,000. Congratulations, Susan. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Rail Line Abandonment

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I rise today to bring to this House a very important matter which will have a negative impact on the economy of Manitoba but, most particularly, on the Parkland in the North. That is the federal government policy to, first of all, privatize CN and then pass Bill C-14 that allows for the rail lines to be abandoned at an accelerated rate. In fact, we are losing the Cowan Subline and the Winnipegosis line, and very soon I am sure we will see the Erwood Sub and other lines up for grabs.

Unfortunately, we are not getting the support that we need from our member of Parliament, Marlene Cowling. I want to share with you what she is saying on this. She says, first of all, I share your concern about what the changes will mean to our rural community, but I would like to reassure the people of Dauphin and Swan River that this issue does not mean the end of economy for the area, rather, it is a window of opportunity. If we take the

time to embrace the opportunity, we can chart the course to our future by working together looking for real opportunities and networking to make the future look brighter.

Madam Speaker, this is a person who sees rail line abandonment that will destroy our communities, and rather than speaking up for the people of the area, she says this is a real opportunity and I am very disappointed that we are not having better support. The NDP has asked for Reg Alcock, the chairman of the transportation committee, to hold hearings to look at the impact of this on rural Manitoba, but to date neither the government nor any of the 12 Liberal members have the fortitude to stand up and fight for Manitoba.

Members of the community formed a committee, the northern Manitoba rail committee chaired by Maxine Plesiuk, and letters have been written to David Anderson asking for a meeting to discuss this matter. Letters have been written to the provincial government asking them for support to delay the end of these lines until a buyer is found. We have had no support, and I want to again reinforce and call on our provincial government to stand up for Manitobans and do an impact study. Fight for Manitobans and look at what the cost of the loss of these lines will be. I urge you to help us delay the loss of these lines until an alternate buyer is found and we can have a way to transport grain out of the area.

Committee Changes

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), for Friday, September 27 for 10 a.m.

Motion agreed to.

* (1430)

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development (for Friday morning at 10 a.m.) be amended as follows: the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine); the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) for the member for

River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe); the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) for the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, I have a number of committees to announce. Firstly, for Friday, September 27—sorry, that has already been announced. Friday, October 4, the Standing Committee on Economic Development will meet at 10 a.m. to consider the Annual Report of Venture Manitoba Tours.

On Friday, October 11, the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet at 10 a.m. to consider any reports referred with respect to the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

Thursday, October 17, the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet at 10 a.m. to consider all relevant reports of the Manitoba Telephone System.

On Friday, October 18 at 10 a.m., the Standing Committee on Municipal Affairs will meet to consider all relevant reports of The Forks-North Portage Joint Venture and/or single corporations because they were previously separated.

On Thursday, October 24, the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections will meet at 10 a.m. to consider the matter of judicial compensation.

On Friday, October 25, the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet at 10 a.m. to consider relevant reports of Manitoba Hydro.

On Thursday, October 31, the Standing Committee on Economic Development will meet at 10 a.m. to consider all relevant reports of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation.

Madam Speaker: The Standing Committee on Economic Development to meet Friday, October 4, 10 a.m., to consider the reports for Venture Manitoba.

Friday, October 11, Public Utilities and Natural Resources committee to meet to consider all reports related to the Manitoba Public Insurance Commission.

Thursday, October 17, 10 a.m., the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources to meet to consider all reports relating to the Manitoba Telephone System.

Friday, October 18, Municipal Affairs, to consider the reports related to both North Portage and The Forks.

Thursday, October 24, 10 a.m., Privileges and Elections to consider judicial compensation. Friday, October 25, 10 a.m., the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources to consider reports related to Manitoba Hydro. Thursday, October 31, 10 a.m., Economic Development to consider all reports related to Manitoba Lotteries.

Mr. Ernst: Madam Speaker, we may have one or two more dealing with annual reports and so on, but I will have to announce those at a later time.

Would you call Bills 49, 52, 53, 21 and 33.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 49—The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Speaker: To resume second reading debate, firstly, on Bill 49, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant les offices régionaux de la santé et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [interjection] And on the amendment proposed by the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs who has 24 minutes remaining.

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I have concluded my remarks, Madam Speaker, and suggest we call the question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I do believe that this is, in fact, a good motion and should have some sort of debate on it. The regional health authorities that this government has established is a recipe for disaster for health care well into the future for the province of Manitoba. What we are seeing is, by the creation of these super regional health boards, this government attempt to duck behind these unelected individuals in favour of trying to pass through cuts through the boards and deflect any criticism that might come to this government for their decisions.

Now, ultimately, through the legislation you are going to have some individuals elected from within the different communities, but it is the government that is going to be flowing the dollars to the regional health boards and if we take a look in particular—[interjection] Madam Speaker, if we take a look—I was somewhat interrupted and now I am going to have to start that train of thought over again. [interjection]

How long was the question that was being posed? Well, I have had the opportunity actually to talk at length on this particular bill throughout Manitoba, trying to get a better idea in terms of what it is this government is actually doing, but here is what has clearly been demonstrated.

The purpose of this bill is to allow for the government to shuffle any sort of criticism that might be levelled at this government for any cutbacks in health by saying do not blame us—[interjection]

The one minister makes reference to that being mischievous. Yes, the government is being mischievous. What they are saying is, do not blame us for any cuts that are happening out in rural Manitoba or in the city of Winnipeg. Blame the regional health boards. That is really and truly what it is that they are attempting to establish.

Within the Ministry of Health today, they have the administrative capabilities to be able to come up with a plan, a province-wide plan in terms of the future directions of health care. They have at their hand the ability to be able to convene different CEOs of the different health care facilities, whether it is a personal care home facility or a hospital facility. In fact, we will see in the recommendations for changes with the urban

hospitals in the city of Winnipeg, that is indeed what the government did. It had individuals throughout the city of Winnipeg sit down and come up with recommendations for this particular government to act on. They do have the abilities currently to be able to come up with a master plan, if you like, that takes into account all the different important components dealing with a health care plan.

* (1440)

One has to ask the question in terms of why, then, do they need to have the regional health boards. In rural Manitoba, it is estimated that this additional level of bureaucracy is going to cost somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$3 million, and that \$3 million is not new money that is being put into rural health, that money is coming out of the current budget that has been allocated, the operational budget and some of the surplus that is out there, or some of the reserves, I should say, not necessarily surplus. That is where this additional level of bureaucracy is going to be receiving its funds. So when the government or when the Minister of Finance looks at the Minister of Health and says, look, you have to come up with a 10 percent savings, the Minister of Health then reduces the size of the envelope, and then he leaves it up for the regional health boards to decide where those savings are going to be achieved. So then the health board says, well, because the government is starving us of cash, we are going to have to close down this particular facility or we are going to have to cut back on this particular service.

Madam Speaker, it is a whole lot easier to hold government accountable for its actions if, in fact, they are not trying to sidestep the process. It is easier, for example, for me to question the Minister of Health on a hospital that is being closed down or a service that is being trimmed by asking the minister direct, whether it is through Question Period, whether it is through the Health Estimates. It is much easier for opposition and interest groups and the individual Manitobans, the clients, the patients, if you like, to hold the government accountable than to hold, especially at the beginning, a politically appointed group of individuals accountable. So the government is attempting to sidestep the issue of accountability by the creation of these regional boards, because ultimately I would argue that everything that the minister is hoping to be able to achieve through these regional boards can be achieved today through the

Ministry of Health and our community health boards and our community—when I make reference to community health boards I am talking about our hospital institutions, our personal care facilities, our community clinics and so forth.

The big difference, of course, or a second primary concern that we would have, if you like, is that through this legislation what the government is doing is taking the community out of our facilities, because what they are doing is they are marginalizing the importance of our community volunteers, community boards in terms of what it is that they are going to be able to do, the types of services they are going to be able to provide, and I do not think the government has really thought it through in terms of the negative impact that it is going to have.

I have had opportunity to spend some time around the Misericordia Hospital over the last week, and I have seen just the type of effort that is put in, in terms of volunteers. You know, they are wearing the—I believe it is a red jacket. It has nothing to do with the Liberal Party per se, but you can easily identify the volunteers. That is something in which we are going to be losing out, because through the creation of these superboards and the marginalization of the community boards, you are going to see less involvement or you are opening the door for less involvement from the community, direct involvement. We do not believe from within the Liberal Party that that is a positive thing.

Madam Speaker, the more that we can get the community involved in our health care facilities, the better we are going to be at delivering health care services to Manitobans as a whole. So when we look at the two fronts of, well, it is going to be the regional boards are going to be used as a deflection of criticism from the public and others with respect to actions that this government is superimposing on our regional boards, one has to question the need for this bill, and when you start looking at the second front of here is a bill that is going to be marginalizing the community involvement, again you have to start questioning the need for this particular bill. That is why when I see the motion that has been put forward I do not have any problem at all in terms of supporting the motion.

In fact, Madam Speaker, I think there is a very strong case to be made that the regional health boards are not

necessary. I have a great deal of respect for the dean of this Chamber. I think that our dean would be telling us that the people who need to be held accountable for what is happening in health care is the government, the Ministry of Health, and anything that is done to take away that accountability is not in the best interest of the public of Manitoba, and that is the reason why, at least one of those two primary reasons why, we feel that this bill should not only be suspended for six months, that I would have suggested to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) that he just do the honourable thing and withdraw the bill.

I guess the minister can make reference to that other jurisdictions have looked at this particular model. I know, for example, in Alberta that that is, in fact, what they have implemented, are these regional health boards. It is interesting that you will find there is a lot of criticism now from those regional boards, especially from certain members of the boards, to the public, and more so the public, because I cannot cite specific names from some of those regional boards, that the government is starving the system of cash, and they are having to make these decisions on what is happening with the future of health care in the province of Alberta, so they are being used as that buffer zone.

Madam Speaker, the Liberal Party within the province of Saskatchewan has been very critical of Roy Romanow and the New Democratic government in terms of the direction that they are taking health care in the province, and that they are attempting to do the same thing in terms of what this government is doing.

I have not researched it to the degree to find out which or every province or which province across Canada has decided to move in this direction, but I would suggest to you that whatever political party that is out there that is moving in this sort of a direction is really underestimating the abilities of our communities by not allowing for them to remain involved in a very significant way in the evolution of our medicare system. That is why we believe very firmly that when we look at Bill 49 that this is not a positive thing for the province of Manitoba and that the government should not be as concerned in terms of buffering itself from criticism.

* (1450)

We acknowledge, we always have acknowledged that there is a need for change in health care. In fact, we have

the Boundary Trails hospital that has been put on hold off and on again in terms of what is going to be happening with respect to it. [interjection] Well, the minister says I want to extend the delay of the Boundary Trails hospital. No. If I was the Minister of Health, I would be saying today that the Boundary Trails hospital facility is a good idea and should be moving ahead. That will result in two other communities losing their hospital facilities, but the idea of having one hospital that is going to be able to provide additional facilities and better facilities because it is going to be drawing on a larger patient base to a certain degree but, most importantly, it is going to provide better quality service for patients. Instead of having to come to the city of Winnipeg to receive a lot of the care because the two other community hospitals do not have the same sort of equipment, more of the doctors in those communities are going to be able to use what would be the Boundary Trails hospital.

By delaying the announcement of the construction of that particular hospital, what you are doing is, you are taking away from many rural Manitobans the opportunity to have a first-class facility in which doctors—because doctors are not just leaving rural Manitoba just because of money. They also want to have facilities that are going to allow them to challenge their abilities in terms of practice, and one of the best things that you can do in order to do that is to have facilities that are modern and by having the Boundary Trails.

Well, the government House leader (Mr. Ernst) said that, look, we are prolonging the process by not allowing this particular bill to pass. Madam Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the biggest problem today with coming to grips with the Boundary Trails hospital is not this bill. The biggest problem is the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of this province not recognizing the importance of this facility to the community in which it is going to be serving.

I would even go further, that they are taking away from the community, even if it goes ahead, by not allowing the community to have more involvement in the Boundary Trails proposal. That is, in fact, what this particular bill is going to do, it is going to marginalize the input that the smaller communities are going to have within the facilities.

So more and more Manitobans should be made aware that this government is trying to take the community out of the delivery of health care. We see that by the introduction of this particular bill, because you are marginalizing these community health facilities and future community health facilities, and that is the reason why, as I say, when we look at this particular motion that has been suggested, I guess you know, Madam Speaker, a more appropriate motion would have been to have seen that this bill be dropped from the order paper, that it not be allowed to continue on, because I want, and we will either way ultimately hold this government accountable for what actions are taking place in health care in the province of Manitoba.

We are not going to let the government escape from this Chamber in terms of saying, look, it is the regional health boards that are causing the problems and it is the federal government that is causing the problems because, truth be known, it is the provincial government that is responsible for the administration of health care, and that is the body that is going to ultimately be held accountable.

So even though the government is trying to sidestep that accountability by the creation of these regional health boards, Madam Speaker, we are not going to allow this government to sidestep criticism, and in many areas I like to believe, as a Liberal, we provide constructive criticism. We are not going to allow this government to sidestep accountability when it comes to the issue of health care. So even if they are successful at establishing these super regional boards at the expense of our communities, our intention is to hold this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and future governments accountable for whatever is happening in health care throughout the province of Manitoba.

We would like to see more of the government members come to the realization that the opposition, combined opposition, it appears, the conclusion that we have reached is that ultimately this particular piece of legislation is not in the best interests of Manitobans.

What I will do is that after this particular motion has been dealt with, if, in fact, we go on to debate the bill, I will put a few more words on the record at that time. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is the amendment proposed by the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act be not now read a second time but be read this day six months hence.

* (1500)

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Lamoureux: I would request for Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members. Oh, we cannot. Does the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) have support?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Madam Speaker: A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

Order, please. The question before the House is the amendment proposed by the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway), on Bill 49, The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act, be not now read a second time but be read this day six months hence.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Ashton, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Jennissen, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Lathlin, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Nays

Derkach, Downey, Dyck, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Pallister, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 23, Nays 27.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I was paired with the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings). Had I not been paired, I would have voted yea.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): I also was paired. Had I not been paired, I would have supported the motion.

Madam Speaker: I declare the amendment accordingly lost.

To resume debate on second reading, Bill 49, standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans). Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I just want to conclude some remarks on Bill 49 at this point in time. I am just rising and wanting to speak on Bill 49.

Madam Speaker, I do not want to make a long speech. I just want to put if you like—[interjection] Seeing as the members seem to be somewhat disappointed, we could extend it a bit if they so desire to a 30-minute speech.

Madam Speaker, I just wanted to once again illustrate two or three, possibly four points. First and foremost, what we are seeing is a creation of yet another level of

bureaucracy, and that bureaucracy is going to have to be financed. Those dollars are not new dollars. So when we look at that, that is not a better way of spending dollars in terms of delivering health care services, primarily because these regional health boards are there for two real reasons, first and foremost to deflect criticism against this government on decisions that it is making. Those decisions will be deflected to, do not blame us, blame the regional boards for winding down this service or closing down this particular facility. Do not blame us.

Madam Speaker, it is a government that does not like being held accountable for actions or the lack of actions that it takes. It constantly wants to be able to duck responsibility. Now it has two areas to pass on the responsibilities, or at least to avoid responsibility. One is now to blame the federal government, and the other one, of course, is to blame these new super regional boards.

We know full well and believe that this government is the one that is responsible for administration of health care, and we will hold this government accountable for the actions and future actions on what is happening in health care in the province of Manitoba.

The second point, as I illustrated in speaking to the motion prior, and that was that you are marginalizing the community involvement in our health care facilities and in future health care in the province of Manitoba by the creation of these super boards. We believe that if we want to have a healthier Manitoba, that the more we get Manitobans involved in the process, the better it will be. By marginalizing that community involvement in terms of being able to make some decisions by taking a sense of ownership at the local community level, we are not going to be able to, to the same degree as we are today, attract volunteers into the process, and we find indeed that that is unfortunate.

In a nutshell, this bill creates these regional boards. The regional boards are not necessary. It is virtually 100 percent duplication. The Ministry of Health does have the resources to work with the current CEOs and others to ensure that there is an overall plan. We believe that the government is responsible for developing that plan and that they should not try to pass off their responsibilities on such an important issue of health care.

To conclude, the best thing I can say is from the Liberal Party's perspective, our intentions are to hold this government accountable for all of the actions that are being taken with respect to the administration of health care in the province of Manitoba. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

* (1510)

Bill 52—The York Factory First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act

Madam Speaker: To resume second reading debate on Bill 52, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik), The York Factory First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act (Loi sur l'accord de mise en oeuvre de la première nation de York Factory relatif à la convention sur la submersion de terres du Nord manitobain), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I rise today to make a few comments on Bill 52, also known as the York Factory First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act.

Along with other members of this House, I was privileged to attend the signing ceremony that occurred last December 8 at York Landing. I will certainly never forget that chilly plane ride from Thompson to York Landing in the company of the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) and the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski). The weather was so bad I believe, in fact, that the airport in Winnipeg was closed, but we dutifully went to York Landing anyway, and we certainly enjoyed the hospitality we received.

On this side of the House, we are pleased that an agreement has been reached with the York Factory First Nation. I know that Chief Eric Saunders, the council and the elders have worked long and hard to achieve this

agreement. Unfortunately, some of the elders who have worked for years seeking to address past grievances, seeking to address injustices, are no longer with us, but their memory will always remain with us.

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

All of us know or should know about the social and human costs related to past hydro developments. We know that past dislocations of the lives and the cultures of the northern aboriginal people due to the hydro flooding cannot be rectified by a single dollar figure, by a single agreement. The damage was too deep for that. Although the agreement may not be entirely what the Split Lake people or the Nelson House people or the people of York Landing wanted or had in mind, still the communities need and deserve the funds that will flow from these agreements. And Norway House and Cross Lake too, although they have not yet signed flood agreements, need and deserve adequate funds to compensate those communities for hydro development damage done to them.

Times are tough and especially so in the North, and I am sure that the leadership and the elders of York Landing, despite their best efforts, have settled for this agreement, although it may not be the deal they originally wanted, but it is a deal they negotiated. I am sure, although the government sees it entirely as a deal, the northern people see it as much more than that. They see it as an extension of Treaty No. 5, as a modern-day treaty. It is regrettable, I guess in one sense, when dollar figures are finally negotiated, that the lawyers and the professional negotiators walk away with the lion's share proportionally and that the money, the full amount of the money does not actually go to the people who should be receiving the money.

Like other isolated northern communities, the members of the York Factory First Nation at York Landing are still suffering from the less than benign neglect characteristic of this government. Cuts in health care and educational programs such as Access have hurt these northern communities such as York Landing. Traditional trapping and hunting are greatly declining, and some of this is due to falling fur prices or because of animal rights activists and perhaps due to other factors, but some of this is due also to past hydro development. At any rate, there is

limited domestic fishing at York Landing now, there is poor quality of fish and, in fact, poor quantity, and I am sure this is related to previous flooding. In this respect I would like to mention the fact that, since both the provincial and the federal government bailed out of freight subsidies for fishermen, things have got even tougher for anyone wanting to fish in northern Manitoba.

In terms of trapping, the 310 residents of York Landing have access to only one trapline, trapline No. 13, which is allocated to the Split Lake resource area. As you perhaps know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the resource base of the people at York Landing is much closer to the coast, so they are living on very cramped quarters, and the Treaty Land Entitlement process, although in process, has not been completed which would give them a larger land base.

There are very limited economic opportunities in York Landing and this is partially due to isolation. In order for York Landing to have access to a road system they would have to get to Highway 280 at Split Lake, and that means that the residents have to travel in the summer across a lake by ferry. That takes two hours one way, and the ferry only runs three times a week. So you have to imagine that if you want to go shopping, if you live in York Landing and you want to go shopping in Thompson and you take off on Monday, you cannot get back until Wednesday. In winter, there is a rugged 38-kilometre winter road that connects York Landing to the road connection access at Split Lake.

What is really necessary and what would be most desirable and certainly would happen if these people lived in southern Manitoba is an all-weather road. This would give York Landing access to the rest of Manitoba, and this would involve the building of only 25 to 30 kilometres of road. It would also involve, if that were to happen, the use of a ferry, but this would be a very short-run ferry across a very narrow stretch of water. It would certainly help the people of York Landing have closer links with the rest of Manitoba. It would certainly significantly reduce food costs in northern Manitoba in that area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are cautiously optimistic about Bill 52. We know that, by itself, this agreement does not address all the negative consequences that the community has experienced because of previous hydro

developments, but it is a start. Beyond Bill 52, the provincial government still needs to address the long-standing previous neglect that has seriously hurt all northerners, not just aboriginal northerners. I am talking specifically about roads. We mentioned Highway 280, but certainly everyone knows about the sad flight of Highway 391, and I think the government must realize that without decent road connections how can there ever be serious economic development in northern Manitoba. The less than benign neglect of this government, its cuts to health and education programs, are well documented and they have hurt northern Manitobans.

It is in the interest of all Manitobans, especially southern Manitobans, to ratify Bill 52, and Bill 53 as well, as soon as possible. The agreements upon which these bills are drafted have been approved for some time now. In fact, the agreement upon which Bill 52 is drafted was signed over nine months ago in York Landing.

I will now conclude, knowing that some of my fellow northern MLAs, certainly the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), will also wish to speak on Bill 52 and that another northern MLA, I am sure, will wish to speak to Bill 52 in the near future. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I most definitely do wish to speak on this particular bill, both as a northern MLA and as the MLA for the York Factory First Nation, the community of York Landing.

I want to indicate to members of the House that certainly this is a significant bill in the sense that it marks a lot of work by all parties involved. Particularly, I want to pay tribute to the many people in the York Factory First Nation, who have worked on this since the signing in 1977 of the Northern Flood Agreement. I particularly want to pay tribute to one of the longest serving chiefs in the province, Chief Eric Saunders, who I have a very good working relationship with, the members of his council, the members of the councils that worked with Chief Saunders, and with the community in resolving this outstanding dispute.

I want to put a couple of remarks on the record, too, because I think one has to understand that the northern flood circumstances that we saw were not strictly the only difficulties faced by, the only challenge, faced by the

community of York Landing. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it should be noted that the York Factory First Nation, the very name of the band, is reflective of its history. It was originally located at York Factory, was relocated in the mid-1950s and relocated to an area that is close, of course, to Split Lake and at the time was considered to be a better location.

* (1520)

I want to indicate, too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are many people in the community who are concerned about the relocation. It is a relocation that does not receive the same kind of attention that some others have across Canada, but when one looks at the circumstances and the very difficult conditions that were encountered by the people of York Factory when the relocation took place, I think that has to be recognized.

There is also concern, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and I have done some research into this. I checked with the research that is available that indicates that many of the people in the committee at the time did not want to relocate. In fact, there was very clear indication that many of the elders did not want to relocate from their traditional area of York Factory, and I hope to be able to work with the community now that this matter has been resolved to perhaps re-open, before many of the elders that are remaining pass away and are no longer with us, the whole question of relocation, because there has never been a real acceptance of the fact that many people relocated in very difficult circumstances, very tough circumstances in those times. Many of the people in the community are concerned, for example, that the relocation was not because of the best interest of the community but because it was easier and cheaper to access medical care, that the federal government was looking more at its own cost than the betterment of the community.

I am pleased that one side element to this agreement, one component of the agreement, has been the allocation of various areas in the North, hold areas previously, now settlement areas under the Northern Flood Agreement, including land in York Factory. What is happening is many people from the community are now travelling to York Factory, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and have been trapping in that area, recreating many of the traditional patterns, traditional usage patterns. I think that is

something that is very, very important for the community because it has a long history. I must say, I have never been able to go to York Factory. I have flown over York Factory, but it is one of my own dreams to be able to visit York Factory, an area that has a great deal of significance for the people of York Factory First Nation and also for the province as a whole, because it was obviously one of the first areas of contact between aboriginal people and Europeans. It played a very important part in the fur trade. I look forward—and I do not know if the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) has had the opportunity to visit.

An Honourable Member: Yes, we were there together.

Mr. Ashton: Well, York Factory. I am talking about York Factory itself. The minister has, of course, been in York Landing itself, but it is something I would certainly like to see.

I want to once again, in conclusion, congratulate the community. I want to indicate that as in any agreement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are certain items which are agreed upon wholeheartedly and perhaps some others that are agreed upon reluctantly. I do not mean to take away from any aspect of this agreement, but I do want to point out that there is still a concern in this and other communities about the whole question of the status of this agreement, whether it is simply an agreement or a modern-day treaty. Notwithstanding that, the most important thing we can do for the people of York Factory First Nation, the residents of York Landing, I think, is to congratulate them on their efforts and hope that with the settlement, we can now see a new era of hope and opportunity in York Landing, a community that has been through a great deal. I hope that we can rededicate ourselves to that development in York Landing and perhaps some recognition of the many elders who are no longer with us who suffered the impacts of the flooding and those that worked on the negotiation of the Northern Flood Agreement originally in 1977 and throughout the years.

I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that rededication will include looking at some such proposals from the community to establish an all-weather road connection. They are currently served only by ferry and winter road. There is also a suggestion that has been brought forward by the neighbouring community of Ilford, the War Lake

band, suggesting putting a road between York Landing and Ilford, and I would like to point out that was originally a plan. Not only that, in 1977, the tenders had been left for that. The then newly elected Conservative government of Sterling Lyon cancelled that road.

Either route would give greater access to the outside world. In the case of the connection into Ilford, it would allow people in York Landing to connect directly to the bayline, and in the case of the all-weather road, it would allow people of the community to connect directly onto Highway 280 where it does access via Split Lake.

There are other questions in the community related to, most importantly, economic development. There are issues now related to some of the movement to self-government, particularly the health transfer. I know education is a significant priority of the community. In fact, I have had the opportunity to attend the graduation of the school this past summer, and that was certainly indicated at the time.

So even though this is a significant event, I hope that it will be taken in spirit as being a commitment by all parties involved to improvements for the community of York Landing, whether it be roads or in terms of health or education or the other items I have mentioned.

In conclusion, I want to congratulate the people of York Factory First Nation and all of the people who were involved throughout the years from all levels of government, from Manitoba Hydro and from the community. It is certainly a significant event for the community of York Landing. Thank you.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just wanted to acknowledge support for this particular bill. I had the opportunity, primarily because the provincial minister responsible made some space available for me, to be able to fly out and be a witness to this particular signing ceremony, and it was very much appreciated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know that after the signing ceremony there was another ceremony that was performed where we got to see a lot of the heritage of a very proud, and justifiably so, people. It was the first opportunity that I had to be at Nelson House and have the opportunity to be able to meet—[interjection] At York Landing

[interjection] Well, York Landing—the remarks I am making are for both Bill 52 and Bill 53. This way I will not have to stand up for both.

Unfortunately, I was not able to be there for York Factory and the signing ceremony there. I am not really too sure in terms of the date if that was shortly thereafter or if it was prior, but I do know that there must have been a great deal of effort put in from all parties in order to achieve this particular agreement. Over the years I am sure there would have been a lot of discouraging moments and times, because this dates back for a couple of decades plus. It is nice to see positive pieces of legislation of this nature come through the Chamber, because it really highlights that at least some people have been hard at work in trying to be able to resolve some of the problems that are out there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was quite pleased to at least be one of the witnesses to this signing, not necessarily an official witness, but at least in the background watching such an important step for, in particular, the Nelson House First Nation. I know with individuals such as the chief and counsellors like David Spence, that we will see many more negotiations taking place to resolve the many other issues that need to be addressed within the aboriginal community.

With those few words, we are quite delighted to see both Bill 52 and Bill 53 and applaud the efforts of those people from the past who are maybe not with us here today, to those individuals that were there right from the word go to the end of the actual signing of both agreements, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and all those that were involved, hearty congratulations on an effort well done, job well done.

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

* (1530)

Bill 53—The Nelson House First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik), Bill 53, The Nelson House First Nation Northern Flood

Implementation Agreement Act (Loi sur l'accord de mise en oeuvre de la première nation de Nelson House relatif à la convention sur la submersion de terres du Nord manitobain), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on this bill, both once again as a northern MLA and also the MLA representing Nelson House.

I had the opportunity to attend the signing ceremony in Nelson House earlier this year, and I must say, I was one of the witnesses, in fact, witnessed the minister's signature, and I want to indicate it was, I thought, a very excellent opportunity to recognize the efforts of all the parties involved.

In fact, all parties were in attendance with the exception of one, and I will only make one brief comment indicating that I was very disappointed that the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs did not attend the signing. Apparently there was some dispute over this and, in fact, I know some concerns were expressed by members of the band, the band council about the dispute. In fact, Councillor Darcy Linklater wrote an open letter expressing his concerns, and I want to say that, because I think it was unfortunate, given the significance of this occasion for Nelson House, that all parties did not attend the signing ceremony in Nelson House.

The provincial minister was present, as were the Hydro officials. Certainly I was there along with the MLA for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), the MLA for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) was there. I think it was a very significant event and it is very unfortunate that that one element did perhaps distract somewhat from what was a very significant ceremony. I want to indicate too that what I particularly appreciated—

An Honourable Member: Where was Elijah?

Mr. Ashton: Well, the minister asked where Elijah was, and I think, to be fair, he was in South Africa at the time, not in Nelson House. I do not mean this as a personal shot at either the member of Parliament or even the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs. I would have

thought it would have been appropriate to have somebody there from the federal level, and I am just recognizing some of the concern that was expressed in the community.

I want to indicate too that what I thought was particularly appropriate was the tribute that was paid to past chiefs, councillors who worked on the original Northern Flood Agreement—in fact, a number of past chiefs were there—and also the many councillors, many elders in the community, many community members who worked so hard on the negotiations leading up to the signing of the Northern Flood Agreement in 1977 and the subsequent negotiations from that point on.

While there are obviously certain things that people would have liked to have seen that have not happened, it is still a very significant event, and the real concern I have, as I am sure everyone did, is that there were many elders who have since passed away who have not had the opportunity to see the realization of this dream of having this flood agreement finally settled.

I want to indicate, as well, that there are many concerns in the community, and I am hoping in the same spirit as I mentioned a few minutes ago that there will be a new direction involving Nelson House, the community of Nelson House, from other levels of government, perhaps in keeping with the spirit of the signing of this agreement, and I would hope it would start with Highway 391. One should be aware that Highway 391 is probably, along with maybe the highway from Cross Lake to Norway House, Highway 373, you could argue, which was the worst highway in the province? [interjection] In the country, says the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), who represents communities further north. [interjection] Well, there is some debate over whether it is a cow track or not. I think maybe a moose track might be more appropriate in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it is unacceptable that in the 1990s we have such poor conditions on northern roads. By the way, I want to stress that in Nelson House's case, that is the only access the community has. There is no airstrip; there is no rail line. There is only Highway 391. I travel into the community on a regular basis. I drive in just like anyone else. I would invite members opposite to look at Highway 391 and look at the condition it is in. I would also like them to identify

why we have such a poor highway in northern Manitoba. Perhaps it is in the words of the former Minister of Northern Affairs, the current Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), who in one of his more lucid moments in this House said, he suggested that perhaps that northerners did not vote right, reflecting on the fact that people in northern Manitoba have elected New Democrats with only one exception since 1969—one exception, 1977 to 1981, the former Conservative member for Thompson.

I am not just talking about this in a strict political sense. I think that the Conservatives have politicized the whole issue of northern roads. The reason I am saying this is that because the people of northern Manitoba—well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could use some more colourful language, but they have had it up to here. They are tired of being ignored. They are tired of governments such as this government taking the resources from northern Manitoba, as is the case with Manitoba Hydro, and with northern communities not only facing the results of that—in this case, Nelson House had the flooding; that is why we are dealing with the Northern Flood Agreement—they take the resources, but when it comes to getting the money back into northern Manitoba, that is another question. We have seen this government spend as little as 5 percent, in fact less than 5 percent, of the entire construction budget in northern Manitoba. That simply is not fair. All one has to do is travel the northern roads.

What I find particularly frustrating is that when there have been meetings held, and I give credit, by the way, to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) because he travelled—and I hope the Minister of Northern Affairs will hear this, and I hope that his colleagues will hear this, too. He travelled. Yes, he went to Nelson House for the signing of the Northern Flood Agreement, but he was at a meeting of northern leaders, community leaders, in 1995 at which the invited guest, the Minister of Highways, did not show up.

I must say I felt sorry for the Minister of Northern Affairs. He had to answer all sorts of questions on behalf of the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay). I know he was probably somewhat surprised himself because—

An Honourable Member: Maybe he should cross the floor.

Mr. Ashton: I do not know if we would want the Minister of Northern Affairs to cross the floor, but we know at least he took the flack, he took the heat for members. He was there; the Minister of Highways was not. Again this summer, meetings were held and there were a number of MLAs there from our side. In fact, the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) was there. There were a number of other northern MLAs who were present. I want to say once again it is unfortunate the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) does not see fit to go and deal face to face, head to head, with some of the concerns.

The Minister of Northern Affairs, I know he was somewhat distracted, but I was not critical of the Minister of Northern Affairs. You know, when you see what has happened, when people in Nelson House do not even have the most basic road service, what frustrates me is when there is no long-term plan. I must admit, this year there were finally some signs of hope. There was a \$3.5-million 14-kilometre upgrading west of Mile 20 but no long-term plan, no commitment to sealcoating that stretch next year, no commitment in five years to bring it up to date. There is a written commitment from the minister dated December 1995 to have a hard surfacing of the road but no plan, no plan whatsoever, and this is what frustrates people in Nelson House. People have absolutely had it up to here with having resource revenues taken from northern Manitoba and not even the most basic money put back in to do such things, the most basic of things, to build infrastructure and to build roads.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the sad part is that many people in the community of Nelson House, virtually every family has lost people due to accidents on the road. I am not suggesting that each and every accident was the result of the condition of the highway. Obviously, there are other factors, but I went with the Department of Highways a few years ago, and I got their statistics, not mine, their statistics, and it showed the level of fatalities on Highway 391 was three times the provincial average—Department of Highways statistics—that there were more accidents on that road. You just have to talk to anyone who drives on it on a regular basis.

I am not even talking about the cost to property, as well. Most trucks and vehicles that go on Highway 391, they do not last very long, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because they get literally ripped apart because of the condition of

the road, and the technology is there. The new sealcoat just south of Nelson House is far superior than even the sealcoat that was put on the Sawanee section just south of Leaf Rapids even a few years before. They are building tougher sealcoats to reflect northern conditions.

* (1540)

Give the Department of Highways the tools and they will do the job. Give them the funding and they will do the job. It is fine for us here to say that we have reached an historic occasion with the signing of the flood agreement, and I agree with that. This is historic, but will things have really changed if we sign this agreement and then we go and ignore Nelson House again, as this government is doing on northern roads? No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and what is particularly frustrating in Nelson House is that many of the early discussions involving the Northern Flood Agreement talked about such things as putting in road access.

They did, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was part of the whole package. People in Nelson House, after suffering because of the flooding of the Burntwood River, said that they wanted the most basic type of facilities that people had available to them. The road in Nelson House that was built in the early 1970s needed to be upgraded. Everybody knew that and I credit the government of the day for building it. It was certainly needed at the time. By the way, it was an NDP government. You do not have much difficulty figuring out which government has built highways in northern Manitoba in the last number of years because it is only one type of government. It is the NDP government, probably one of the reasons why people have elected NDP MLAs in northern Manitoba in every election except one in 1977 in one constituency—because we do not just talk about the North at election time, and when it comes to being in government or opposition, we put our words into action.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will tell you how bad it got in this past election. I realize I am getting political here, but, you know, the band sent a message to the Conservative candidate that he was not even welcome on the reserve, because of some comments made by the Premier (Mr. Filmon). That is how bad and that is sad, and I look to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) because I believe he has made a sincere effort with Nelson House to get into the community. He was

there for the signing, and I credit him for that, and he has taken an interest in the North Flood Agreements, but he cannot do it alone, and I look to other members across the way.

I thought at some point in time members across the way would at least make some effort. They routinely talk about it during elections and effectively hang their candidates out to dry each and every time there is an election. Their vote dropped to the lowest level in 25 years in northern Manitoba this time in Thompson—25 years, the lowest ever. I remember, I pointed to the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) and I said to the Deputy Premier, look at all your work in the North since Minister of Northern Affairs, and he pointed to the now-Minister of North Affairs and passed the blame onto the current Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik).

I tend to think that a lot of it started with the Minister of Northern Affairs who talked about not voting right, not the current Minister of Northern Affairs. I believe he has made a real effort, and I guess one of the reasons I am saying this today, and I mentioned this in my Member's Statement a couple of days ago was because it is symbolic with the passage of Joe Borowski this week, because I remember 1969. I remember being a kid growing up in Thompson. I remember when Joe Borowski said, enough of this, we are going to build northern roads, and he did, and he put a two-lane bridge across the Burntwood River, and he put in Highway 6, and he paved Highway 391, and, by the way, he built the Nelson House Road, as well, and we need that spirit back.

We need that spirit back. You know, northern Manitoba has a lot to offer the rest of the province. Well, we are already paying a lot in the way of our mining revenues, our forestry revenues and hydro. All we are asking for is that same kind of spirit that Ed Schreyer and Joe Borowski and the other members of that first government, the NDP government in 1969, brought to northern Manitoba. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, not a month goes by during which I do not travel into communities and I do not hear someone say, the last time I remember anybody doing anything for the North is when the NDP was in power. They talk not only about the Pawley government. I was in Pikwitonei recently and people talked about when Ed Schreyer was Premier when he went to that community and, when the community

needed things, they went to that government, they went to Ed Schreyer, and things happened because the NDP cared about northern Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now is the time. We have a tremendous opportunity now to look to the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik). We have the signing of this agreement, and I know there are people in the community, and he knows, who do not agree with it not being a modern-day treaty in the interpretation of the government. I know that there is some concern on that, and I have talked to some people involved in the negotiating process.

This is a significant event, but why do we not treat it as a chance for a new beginning because as much as I suppose politically it is advantageous being a New Democrat when you have governments like this which ignore the northern roads and other significant issues, I would not mind if they even tried once in a while for even just the most crass of political reasons just to do something to bring us into fairness, give us a fair degree of help.

The Minister of Northern Affairs knows that people are frustrated over the roads, and I would think he would say that more needs to be done. I think even the Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay)—[interjection] There was a project. He is right and I acknowledge that. I acknowledged it. I think the minister will acknowledge, there is a long way to go, and he will note from my comments that I was not being critical of him per se. I think he has made an honest effort in northern Manitoba.

If the Minister of Highways would start by travelling in the North on the highways when there are difficult conditions—

An Honourable Member: In fairness, he had to find that \$4 million this year.

Mr. Ashton: And he found it. I am not being critical. I am just saying, you know, a journey starts with one small step, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one small step; I agree with him.

You know, I remember when the previous Minister of Highways went to Cross Lake, it is still part of the local mythology now. It is funny. He went in there and it was

one of the classic situations where the road was wet and he drove in. I believe he went in with his wife, as well, that time, but the only thing you could see out of the car was, there was this little windshield wiper just covered in mud. This, by the way, was the middle of summer, okay, and he met with the band council, and you know what he said? He said, this road is in pretty rough shape. He said, you know, we should do something about this. This was great. This was the Minister of Highways.

Everybody was saying, great, we finally, finally, have a Minister of Highways who is going to do something. Guess what happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) pulled him out of that portfolio a couple of weeks later.

Now, some people in Cross Lake to this day still think that Albert Driedger, the former Minister of Highways, was pulled out of that department because he probably dared to go to a cabinet meeting and say, you know, those roads are in bad shape. [interjection] Well, the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) says, it is not true. Perhaps he should explain to the people in Cross Lake why they are still waiting to get their road fixed now and why they have to go through periods like they did last year when the whole road was closed. I could spend most of the speaking time on this bill and other bills on the condition of the roads, because that is one of the grievances. We dealt with Northern Flood, let us deal with some of the other grievances in northern Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just want to finish off by saying that I think there is an opportunity in northern Manitoba. It is funny how sometimes you do not see that until you almost hit rock bottom. Right now in northern Manitoba we are faced with the situation where our roads are in terrible condition. Yes, there was a little bit of effort this year. I acknowledge that. We are faced with losing the Sherridon line. We are faced with losing the bayline. Our entire rail structure could be gone within a year or two.

Our Port of Churchill, there is no million tonnes of grain going through it like the Liberal government promised in the election. It is in desperate shape. We are seeing incredibly difficult situations in some way, but maybe you have to come close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to realizing what you have got, close to losing it before you recognize how important it is.

I do not want to lose our rail system; I do not want to lose our northern roads; and I certainly do not want to lose the economic impact for northern Manitoba and the rest of the province with our mines and our forestry and our hydro. But we are close to it. We lose the rail line, and we keep the roads the way they are right now—Lynn and Leaf are in a very difficult situation, and the minister knows that. We are in a situation where if that goes, what next? What about Gillam? What about Churchill? What about many of the northern communities? How are we going to expand mining in northern Manitoba or forestry or anything or hydro if you cannot even have a guarantee of infrastructure? It may be pulled out from under you by shortsighted governments. I believe that maybe out of the most adverse times you can get a sense of what is really important in this province.

I will say this, and I realize I have some personal bias on this, but if it was not for northern Manitoba, this province would be a lot worse off, not only in terms of economics today but in terms of the future. I believe, though, you cannot just take the North for granted; you have to do a lot more, you have to address the grievances. This is one grievance that has been addressed. I commend all of those who were part of dealing with this, but until we get decent roads, until we can keep our rail lines, we are not going to keep northern Manitoba at the level it is and we are not going to develop our future here in Manitoba. Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Bill 21—The Oil and Gas Production Tax and Oil and Gas Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik), Bill 21, The Oil and Gas Production Tax and Oil and Gas Amendment Act (Loi concernant la taxe sur la production de pétrole et de gaz et modifiant la Loi sur le pétrole et la gaz naturel), standing in the name of the honourable member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford). Is there leave that this matter remain standing?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: No, leave is denied.

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to put on record a few comments about this bill and about the oil and gas industry in Manitoba in general.

It is a pleasure to stand and speak to the bill. The bill is one that we are supporting. It makes the administration more expedient, more efficient, and we are for that, but what we are not for is jump-to-the-pump gas policies that the minister has proposed in the last couple of years. This is quite incredible, and just to put this in context, those were called jump-to-the-pump government policies by this minister in terms of oil and gas policies.

* (1550)

The fact is Manitoba has a diverse resource collection; part of it is oil and gas reserves. We wish we had more, but it is very limited, unfortunately. Although the minister would hope that we would have enormous reserves, I believe his imagination is probably greater than reality. In fact, Manitoba's reserves are estimated at about 10 years. That is a fairly limited amount of oil and gas. The people in Calgary tell us that we have a little puddle, and we are not taken all too seriously, but we are glad to be in the business, as well.

It employs approximately 250, creates 250 person-years. Those are not necessarily full-time work, but there are people working in the petroleum industry. There are actually less than 40 million barrels of oil and gas in Manitoba, and when you look at reviews of the oil industry, we can see a steady decline in Manitoba's reserves since about the mid-60s. That is a concern to us and it should be a concern to us. These are nonrenewable petroleum resources. They do not fall from the sky. They do not go over dams and we can recover the energy from these sources. Once it is extracted, it is through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I am going to put on the record, the concern here is that, in fact, Manitoba imports all of its nonrenewable energy sources from other provinces. The question becomes a matter of government priority and policy. If you look at, in fact, the department's mandate for the petroleum sector—let me just put this on the record—the objectives are to provide for and encourage safe, efficient development of Manitoba's oil

and gas resources in accordance with the principles of sustainable development. I am not sure that the minister heard that. In fact, I am not sure that the government understands the second part of this statement.

We are concerned about a limited nonrenewable resource being extracted as fast and furious as possible out of Manitoba. That policy was instigated by this government. That policy was encouraged actually by a freebie, a giveaway, grants to the oil industry.

Here we see a Free Press clipping that was, Free Money Talks. People in the oil industry are not familiar with handouts because it is, I mean, a competitive industry. In fact, the minister is quoted as saying, you know, we have to play with the big boys and we have to attract customers. Well, the fact is that the province is handing out a million dollars to companies hunting for black gold in Manitoba's tiny oil patch and Alberta companies are leading the rush for free cash.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am on the record as supporting mineral exploration programs in the North. We know that there are vast resources in the North that are not developed and we have significant potential. However, that is not the same situation for the oil and gas reserves in Manitoba. The reserves are fairly well defined, and what we are talking about in these incentives is rapid extraction of a nonrenewable resource, breaking the fundamental principle of sustainable development which the First Minister (Mr. Filmon), the Premier of our province stands up and says he supports.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the province kidding about sustainable development? Are these round tables that we participate in in all different kinds of sectors a joke? The minister has now decided he is going to extract the oil and gas reserves as fast as possible. That is why I call the minister the jump-to-the-pump minister. He will pump it out as fast as possible. That does not follow the principles of sustainable development, and it does not follow the objectives or the goals of the department itself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are my concerns. On the record, we are proud to have a diverse economy. Oil and gas is one sector that we can be proud of as a government, as an NDP government. We looked at sustained management of our resources, and there was not accelerated extraction. In fact, when you look at the

goals of sustainable development, under energy management it suggests, under Policy 1.2, that renewable energy resources shall be managed in a sustained manner while nonrenewable energy resources shall be managed so their productive life is extended. Extended, not shortened. Why would the minister want to create a policy that is extracting our nonrenewable resources so quickly? Obviously, he wants production values to go up, extraction to be up, so that he can stand up in the short term and create the so-called boom. He is basically a rhinestone cowboy; these things are not true gems. He wants to be shiny and brilliant, but the fact is he is exploiting our—it is black gold, and in terms of Manitoba's economy, fool's gold, because what you are doing is taking it out very quickly, you are not managing it in a proper way.

We see this not only in the oil and gas sector. We see in today's paper, in fact, that this government is going to go and mine Birds Hill Park. Why? Because this minister only supports glittery minerals, nickel, copper, gold—you see, the minister is encouraging. When it comes to industrial minerals he has fired, decentralized or removed every geologist dealing with industrial minerals, that includes sand and gravel. There are no energy or management resources, and that is what is a shame.

So in terms of Bill 21, we are happy to support the government which will make a more efficient and productive operation of the department, and we look to co-operate in that sector; however, we hope that the government and particularly this minister will get back to what is truly important, sustaining our nonrenewable mineral resources. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 21. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 33—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), Bill

33, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): I am pleased to speak today on Bill 33, which is The Education Administration Amendment Act. I would like to refer all honourable members, most particularly the government members, to the words that were put on the record two days ago by the Education critic, who very eloquently outlined the concerns that we have not only with Bill 33, but with all the Education legislation before us in the House today, but I will speak most particularly to Bill 33 itself.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are facing enormous challenges in Manitoba today as are all communities across the world. The challenges facing our society are almost in many ways intractable, it would appear to be. We are facing economic challenges, we are facing social challenges. We are facing challenges to every single one of the institutions that we have fought so long and hard for and that help define what we are, not only as Manitobans but what we are as Canadians.

* (1600)

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

One of those elements that we have always fought to maintain and to enhance is the public education system. A hundred years ago, maybe give or take, there was not a public education system per se. Public education was not perceived as a right; it was perceived as a privilege, and only people who could afford to send their children to school did so. At that point in time and moving forward through the late, late 19th Century and early 20th Century, teachers were also not given the kind of respect that they have earned over the past 40 or 50 years.

The image of the school marm coming to a small community in Manitoba and being given a very small stipend, put up at the home of one of the residents of the community and being under enormous restrictions as to what they could say, what they could do, who they could talk to, even what they could wear, that image we felt had

no place in modern Manitoba history. However, I think it is not too far-fetched to say that some of the elements in the education bills before us today, before us in this session, most particularly elements in Bill 33, harken back to that earlier view of the role of teachers in our society and, by extension, the role of the public education system in our society.

Today, Madam Speaker, we no longer live in a largely rural community. We no longer live in a society where it took days if not weeks to communicate one with another. We no longer live in a society where the horse was the major means of transportation, followed closely by shanks' mare. No, we live in a society which is more complex than any before in our history, not only complex but where changes are taking place at the speed of light, literally. In the context of this challenging, ever-changing society we have put before us legislation that does not recognize those challenges, that does not try and work together to address those challenges, but rather we have legislation such as Bill 33 which has as its goal, one can only assume, a return to what was seen as the simpler days of yore.

Madam Speaker, it is a sad commentary on the government and it is a sad commentary on the potential and actual damage that can be caused to our public education system by legislation such as Bill 33 that this government not only introduces such legislation but speaks very eloquently or very forcefully in favour of this kind of legislation.

Our society as a whole is not only changing very rapidly and not only very complex but it is also very heterogeneous. We have even within the city of Winnipeg a range of communities, a range of neighbourhoods, a range of abilities, a range of challenges facing the students that reside in Winnipeg, and that is not talking at all about the challenges that face the children and the families in rural and northern Manitoba, challenges, I might add parenthetically, that have been exacerbated, not ameliorated by the actions of this government over the last eight years.

The challenges facing all of the school children, all of the parents, all of the administrators and all of the communities throughout our province are difficult enough without having to deal with the draconian, arrogant, authoritarian, antidemocratic legislation that is being put

forward in this House by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews).

Madam Speaker, what we need to face the challenges of today in our public school system, we need co-operation, we need interdependence, we need flexibility. If you read the words—[interjection]

Madam Speaker, much as I would like to respond in great detail to the comments just stated by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), I will forebear. Instead of what we need, which is interdependence, flexibility, co-operation and a basic respect one for another, what we have in the legislation before us, not only Bill 33, not only all of the other Education bills, but the Labour bills, the Health bills, virtually every major bill coming before this House is instead the act of an arrogant, uncaring government.

Instead of co-operation, instead of a recognition of the complexities of our society, instead of a recognition of the fact that not all children learn at the same rate, not all children enter school with the same background, not all children have the same calibre of home life, not all children are grounded in the English language as their first language, not all children have the benefits of what is available potentially in our society. Some children, yes, some children enter the school system with a great deal of preparation in their background. Many other children enter with many strikes against them.

What we need in our public school system is to recognize that fact, is to recognize that there are over 100 countries of origin reflected in the people of Manitoba, and many of the people who come from those countries are new Canadians, far fewer than there should be. I would challenge the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship (Mr. Gilleshammer) to do what he is supposed to do and try and expand the number of new immigrants to the province of Manitoba, but then I am out of scope in dealing with the elements of this bill.

Madam Speaker, instead of recognizing the current reality, as I have said before, this government is attempting to reintroduce a reality that never existed in the first place. It is a vision of their fevered imaginations. It is a vision of a family and a community that never existed in reality, pockets of it did, yes, but we have always had a heterogeneous society. We have

always had challenges of a social nature, challenges of an economic nature, challenges facing us, and, up until this legislation was introduced and up until this current government was first elected, the public school system more or less reflected that.

The public school system and the stakeholders in that system more or less worked on a co-operative framework. They were more or less working together. There were, of course, conflicts. There always are conflicts when you are dealing with a complex system like the public school system, but, Madam Speaker, the basic philosophical underpinnings of our understanding of the role of teachers, students, parents, administrators and government in the public school system were working. Not now. With the implementation of these bills before us in the Legislature this session, that basic understanding, that basic sense of co-operation, that basic willingness to work together has been, or will be, destroyed, destroyed not through a mistake on the part of this government.

* (1610)

The member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) in her comments several days ago said that she could not believe that the legislation before us was a result of, and I am quoting, Tory vindictiveness. Well, I do not know if members opposite are aware of this, but I am not as charitable in many ways as my colleague the member for Wolseley. I do happen to believe that there are elements of vindictiveness in this legislation. There is also, as my colleague from Wolseley said, an ideology that shines through this. This is very true. Now, as I have stated before in the House, every single member here has an ideology.

Ideology is not a bad concept. We all have it. It is the base for our values. It is what frames what we do and what we think, our goals, our objectives, and, hopefully, it is consistent. I can say that the ideology driving the Conservative government in the province of Manitoba today is an ideology based on vindictiveness. It is based on antidemocratic ideas. It is an ideology that has no place in a modern community just before the 21st Century.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): So values have no place in a modern community.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, values have a basic place, and if the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) had been listening to me, he would understand that what I am saying is that, yes, you are. The legislation you are producing in the House today in this session is very clear. It is consistent. It is based on an ideology. I am saying that that ideology and the values that frame it and the outcomes of this legislation are negative to the people of Manitoba. I am being very consistent. The minister—
[interjection]

The Minister of Agriculture states that I think my ideology is correct and his is incorrect. Yes, more or less, and I am sure the Minister of Agriculture feels exactly the opposite. What I am trying to do is to say that this bill—and the other legislation that goes along with it—exhibits some negative, nasty, mean characteristics that do not benefit and will not benefit any of the members of the education community.

Madam Speaker, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) spoke two days ago just after the member for Wolesey, our Education critic, had put her words on the record. I read his comments, and I was quite interested by what he had to say. One thing the member for Turtle Mountain said is that Bill 33, and I quote: “. . . is certainly going to ensure that our schools are responsive to the communities that they represent.”

Well, I wish that were the case, but I think we have shown and will continue to show in our deliberations in this House, and I know that the presentations at public hearings will show, that this is exactly what Bill 33 is designed not to do. The schools are not going to be able to be responsive to the needs of the community because the minister takes on an enormous amount of control. I do not understand. This government talks about accountability, it talks about democratization, it talks about decentralization, it talks about responsiveness, and everything in its legislative package this session negates all of those principles.

Those principles that this government talks about are principles that the public education system by and large espoused and acted on for 40 or 50 years before this government came into power. So the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) is exactly 100 percent wrong when he says this legislation will allow schools to be more responsive. It is going to put schools throughout

Manitoba, schools in the inner city of Winnipeg, where there is 90 percent new Canadians, where there is 80 percent aboriginal students, where there is 75 to 80 percent single families, where virtually every child comes from a family below the poverty line, where there is a turnover rate of 25 to 30 to 50 to 70 percent each year. Those schools are in the city of Winnipeg.

Also in the city of Winnipeg are schools where the average family income is \$80,000 or \$90,000, where most of the children come from two-parent families, where English is the first language, where those children have had every benefit before they come to the school system. Does the minister's power that is in Bill 33 reflect this diversity? Absolutely not.

What will happen to our public school system with the implementation of Bill 33 is that the minister's vision will be the vision that is imposed upon every single public school in the province of Manitoba, whether it is in Shamattawa, Thompson, Leaf Rapids, Minnedosa, Dauphin, Steinbach, Winkler, North Kildonan, inner city, whether it is Rossmere. It does not matter what community, the vision of this current minister or her successor will be the vision that will be imposed upon those schools.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am appalled by that because I do not agree with the vision of this current Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), but I also would be appalled if this were legislation that we were bringing in, because I do not think any one individual has the right to impose their vision, their view of what constitutes education, of what constitutes the role of teachers, of what constitutes how you assess program. No one individual has the right to impose that vision on a multiethnic, multi-socioeconomic-strata, multidimensional community such as we have in Manitoba. It makes no pedagogical sense, it makes no sense from a fairness perspective, it makes no sense in any way, shape or form.

We are not talking here about whether or not children should be literate, numerate and understand the role of themselves in a society. What we are talking about is the fact that the Minister of Education can determine through regulations what is going to be tested, how it is going to be tested. Teachers will not have the authority. Teachers will not be able to reflect the needs and the status of their students under this legislation. The Minister of

Education (Mrs. McIntosh) will determine whether teachers in Grade 3 can use portfolios as part of their testing process, their evaluation process. The Minister of Education will be able to determine exactly how many minutes a day will be spent on every single element of the curriculum.

This is a rigidity that has no place in modern society. I do not care whether you are in the education system, the health care system, the corporate system. This government talks about the need for flexibility. This is the most rigid, the most authoritarian, the most draconian, the most dictatorial kind of education. [interjection] Madam Speaker, would you please call the minister to order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Barrett: If the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) wants to put his comments on the record, he can jolly well do it on his own time, not on my time. He can obey the rules of the House, which he has absolutely no intention of doing. [interjection] The member for Wellington is also a former teacher, thank you very much, in the south side of Chicago in the early '60s.

Madam Speaker, the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) also made another statement in his speech the other day that I thought was interesting in the context of our view of Bill 33. He says, quote, the ability to be flexible is certainly more prevalent in today's world than ever before.

* (1620)

You know what, Madam Speaker? I agree with him, but the problem is that the legislation in Bill 33 does not allow for any flexibility. I am sorry, I misspoke myself. Yes, there is flexibility. There is flexibility in the person of the Minister of Education. That is the only place where there is any flexibility. Everybody else in this system is going to be subservient to the Minister of Education's (Mrs. McIntosh) view of education.

As I have stated before, that is frightening. It does not matter from which side of the political spectrum you are coming; you cannot have that kind of centralized authoritarian control in a system that must be reflective and flexible if you are going to have a good education system.

I think the members opposite will be sorry to learn—and I am convinced that this is what is going to happen if this legislation passes. I hope the members will listen to the presentations at public committees and will listen to our concerns as raised in the House here. If this legislation is passed without significant amendments, without significant changes, then very soon we are going to find—I do not care how you test. I do not care if you test very flexibly and reflecting the diversity of our population. I do not care if you do as the Minister of Agriculture would like to do and go back to the 1930s and test completely on rote, completely on a very narrow curriculum that does not reflect at all the diversity of the modern life.

What we are going to find is, as a result of legislation such as Bill 33, those test results, however they are determined, are going to be reduced. They are not going to grow, they are not going to increase; they are going to be reduced. You know why, Madam Speaker? Because you cannot destroy the elements of a public education system the way Bill 33 and the other bills do without the fallout being felt, and it going to be felt by the students. It is going to be felt by the teachers. It is going to be felt by the parents and, ultimately, and not very long from now, ultimately by the community as a whole.

The Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the ministers on the government side talk about the need to have an educated citizenry. Well, they do not talk about it like that. That is how we talk about it. They talk about having people who are ready to go to the workforce and educated specifically as IBM—oh, I did not mean to say IBM. Pardon me, Madam Speaker—as Bob Kozminski wants. [interjection] I will not say, air tickets to Brazil, and I do not want to talk about Atlanta. I would like to suggest that I think that I am not alone in this, that the feelings about the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) have changed greatly since he was first put into that position.

But back to education. If we allow Bill 33 to go forward, the teachers in the province of Manitoba in the public school system will be severely hurt. They are going to be hurt, not because the minister is going to be breathing down their neck every day personally, but the impact of Bill 33 will be to narrow, to pinpoint the amount and the degree of flexibility that the teaching profession is going to have in dealing with their children, Madam Speaker..

This is not inconsistent with some of the other elements in some of the other education bills before us. I have heard from someone who has the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) ear that what they really want to do is reduce down to the number of rankings for salaries for the schoolteachers and start everybody at Class 1. Do you know what a Class 1 schoolteacher earns in the province of Manitoba today—and there are only two or three of them currently in the province of Manitoba today because we recognized up until now the need for highly educated people to be working with our children. Do you know what a Class 1 teacher earns today? About \$22,000 a year, and you know what this individual said to me when I queried him on this? He said, well, given the job market today and given the fact that young people want to teach, they will be willing to teach for \$22,000 a year.

This just reeks of what the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) chose not to say was the basis behind this legislation. It reeks of vindictiveness. It reeks of saying, who is the enemy here? Who are we going to scapegoat? Who are we going to scapegoat for our decisions that have taken \$47 million out of the public school system and added how many million dollars to the private school system.

Well, heaven only knows, we cannot have special needs teachers. We cannot have teachers' aides in our inner-city schools, because there is no money, but, by golly, Ravenscourt gets that \$28 million bucks so it can get a Zamboni for its hockey rink. I like those priorities. Those are very clear priorities on the part of this government. They are reflected in everything, every decision they have made since 1988. They are reflected throughout the legislation before us in this session.

The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) also says, what is wrong with being accountable to a system that is out there before them, and I would like to say that there is nothing wrong with being accountable. What the member for Turtle Mountain also says is, what is in Bill 33 are simply guidelines. They are simply guidelines. Well, he must not be reading the same piece of legislation that I am reading. Bill 33 does not provide guidelines. Bill 33 gives an incredible amount of power to the Minister of Education to do whatever she or he wants to do, to determine how students will be assessed, how long they will teach each subject each day, what elements can be involved in the assessment process.

It eliminates, cuts out completely or almost completely the school boards. School boards have a much diminished role. Parents have a much diminished role. Where is the role of parent councils in this process? We do not even know. We are going to be voting on Bill 33 without even knowing how the minister is going to implement this legislation. We are really buying a pig in the poke with this piece of legislation.

Madam Speaker, I know that my time is nearly up. I just would like to conclude by saying that this legislation, as I have stated before, along with the other pieces of legislation in education, health care and labour, shows the people of Manitoba the clear vision of this government, and in one way, the positive about this is that nobody after this session is concluded will have any question at all about where this government stands on the issues that are important to the people of Manitoba. It will be abundantly clear where they stand on the issues of public education, where they stand on the issues of health care, where they stand on the issues of fair labour relations. It will be abundantly clear to the people of Manitoba.

It is also going to be abundantly clear to the people who might want to move to Manitoba and are going to take a look at our days lost to strikes and take a look at the comments made by the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) and take a look at the draconian legislation such as is in Bill 33, and they are going to say why on earth would I want to come to Manitoba. There is nothing here for me. There is nothing here for my children. There is nothing here but a narrow, negative series of negative nattering nabobs of negativism, as the late and unlamented Spiro Agnew once said. [interjection] Definitely not my hero.

At any rate, Madam Speaker, with those words I certainly hope that the government will do the right thing and remove Bill 33 from its legislative agenda this session. Thank you.

* (1630)

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, is there a willingness of the House to call it 4:30? [interjection] I am asking the Speaker for the purpose of private members' hour.

Madam Speaker: There is one minute remaining. Is it the will of the House to call it 4:30? [agreed]

As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

The hour being 4:30 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), Bill 200, (The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'assurance-maladie), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Bill 201—The Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), Bill 201, The Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act (Loi sur le jour de solidarité à l'égard des autochtones), standing in the name of the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing? [agreed]

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I would like to speak on Bill 201, Madam Speaker.

I wanted to speak on the Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act to urge members of the House to consider passing this particular act. I want to indicate that we have raised this issue previously. We had hoped to have it passed before the actual day this year, but because of some of the difficulties in getting any agreement at that time, there

was no decision made. I think it is important that we get this particular act passed.

We are dealing with a situation now where the federal government has recognized the day in June which has become known as Aboriginal Solidarity Day. We in this House I believe have the opportunity to go one step further and recognize it through this particular act. It is I think pretty significant when the members of the Legislature in this Assembly do make any kind of statement, Madam Speaker, but I think it would be doubly important to the aboriginal people of this province if we were to pass this particular act.

As I look in this building, this beautiful building, I am often struck by the fact if one was to walk in this building at times, one would perhaps have some difficulty recognizing the significant role that aboriginals played in this province. It is quite interesting that there are probably more in the way of ancient Roman and Greek symbols in this building than there are symbols of our aboriginal heritage. I recognize that was very much the style of the day then, a classical style of the early 20th Century and in 1923 when this building was finally built.

But, Madam Speaker, I would urge us to perhaps go one step further in the 1990s when we finally do recognize the important historical role of aboriginal people, that we perhaps start by trying to transform this building in certain ways and also, perhaps through this act, transform the mentality that we have developed in this province that somehow treats history—I know it was the case in many history books—that it almost only started at the time of European contact. Obviously, that is not the case. There have been many centuries of human settlement in this province and a long history of the many aboriginal peoples in this province, and I think that is really the spirit behind this bill.

I want to stress, too, that we feel that title, Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act, is indicative of the day which is currently recognized and is an important statement. It is not merely a recognition of aboriginal people; we are not talking about cultural recognition per se. It is a much stronger statement. I think it is important we make such a strong statement to aboriginal peoples at this point in time by passing this act. I would strongly urge the government to consider at least putting this bill to a vote. I think that is the least we can ask for.

I look forward to the comments of the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) on this particular bill. I commend him for his initiative in indicating his willingness to speak on this particular bill, and I look forward to this support because I know he as an individual is concerned about our recognition of aboriginal people, and that is what this bill is all about. I look forward to perhaps the Minister of Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik) making a similar statement.

I think, Madam Speaker, it is important to stress there are no financial implications; this is not something that is a budgetary item. What it is is a clear statement by members of the Legislature that we recognize the historic development of aboriginal people, and not only that, but the importance of aboriginal people today and the need to deal with the many concerns of aboriginal people to make sure aboriginal people are part of the mainstream here in this province.

With those few words, I would strongly urge the government to allow us to have a vote on this bill, move it through second reading, and, hopefully, have it passed at this session of the Legislature.

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

Bill 205—The Dutch Elm Disease Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), Bill 205, The Dutch Elm Disease Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la thylose parasitaire de l'orme), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), who has 11 minutes remaining.

Is there leave to permit the bill to remain standing?
[agreed]

SECOND READINGS—PUBLIC BILLS

Madam Speaker: Bill 202, The Home Care Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant la protection des soins à domicile et apportant des modifications corrélatives).

Bill 203—The Public Assets Protection Act

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I move, seconded by the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), that Bill 203, The Public Assets Protection Act (Loi sur la protection des biens publics), be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, I want to outline to members of this House, who do have a copy of this bill but perhaps have not considered this matter for some time, that this bill would require one basic thing of any government that was looking at selling off any Crown corporation; that is, we do the same thing that would happen in the private sector. When you look at the sale of either part of or all of the assets of a company, you put it to a vote of the shareholders, and the shareholders of our Crown corporations in this province are the people of Manitoba.

Obviously, Madam Speaker, this is related to the sale of MTS. I want to use the sale of MTS, the proposed sale, as an example of why we need to consider having this kind of legislation in this province. Just look at what happened. Has there been a vote on the sale of MTS? There has not. The provincial government in the election said nothing about selling MTS. In fact, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was on record as saying that MTS was not for sale.

Consider then, Madam Speaker, the fact that afterwards we asked the Premier whether MTS was for sale, and he said no, the first question I asked in this House after the election. He said, no, we are not looking at selling it. The Minister responsible for MTS (Mr. Findlay) in September said there is nobody talking about selling off MTS other than the opposition and the opposition critic, myself as the MTS critic.

Madam Speaker, it was not until December that we learned that they had appointed a number of brokers. It was not because they announced it to the House out of their own initiatives, because we learned through our contacts in the community that this was happening. At that time they said, well, maybe we are going to consider selling it off. It is interesting because they said they were looking at it. We did not at that point trust them, and I

do not think anybody could trust them. We went around the province and we asked people what they thought. More than 50 municipalities passed resolutions, including the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities and many of the communities across the province, passed resolutions opposing the sale of MTS. [interjection] The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) says, did they vote right or wrong? A lot of them were in areas represented by members opposite. I would be prepared to table the list of communities again when we get into debate on MTS to show people that there was province-wide concern expressed.

But, you know, many people got involved. They phoned the minister. They phoned the Premier (Mr. Filmon). You know what they did, Madam Speaker? They sent out a letter to people saying there will be a public debate on this issue. They said there would be public discussion before any decision is finalized.

I arranged a meeting along with concerned residents in the Westman area, where we called the shareholders' meeting on MTS. One individual got up, he is a senior citizen, and he said, you know, I have a letter here, and he waved the letter. He said they said there will be a public discussion and two weeks later they announced they were selling it off. No public discussion. No discussion, period. They said they were selling it off. He said—well, he used the word "lie." That is the term he used.

Madam Speaker, I realize we have some restrictions on our use of language, but he was very incensed, a senior and this is, by the way, from the NDP community of Killamey, I believe, Killamey, Manitoba, you know, with a strong NDP tradition—[interjection] Well, perhaps that may change too after this. There may be an NDP tradition.

Well, it is interesting. The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) laughs because there are a lot of people concerned in Westman about this particular issue. [interjection] Well, he says not once they hear the truth. Obviously, Madam Speaker, they are not hearing it from this Deputy Premier. He would not know the truth on MTS if he tripped over it, or if he found it on his travels to Brazil. He does not know the concerns about MTS. The Deputy Premier and the rest, they were so confident in their position, that what did they do? They did not hold a single public meeting. They made the decision in

the cabinet. They did not discuss this with one Manitoban outside of the cabinet and Mr. Stefanson, the CEO of MTS.

Madam Speaker, they did not even have the confidence of going to their own backbenchers until they had made the decision. If I was a government backbencher, I would have told them right then and there that no matter what the issue was, they do not have the right to operate that way. I hope that some of the backbenchers will speak out, if not in this House, then speak out internally because I know they were not consulted.

* (1640)

So what are we going to do, Madam Speaker? What are we going to do about that situation? This is not democratic. This is a corporate decision-making system. Here we have the CEO of the corporation, one Mr. Filmon, with a board. He is the chair of the board too, I guess, and we have the board, which is consisting of the cabinet here, and they make decisions for one million Manitobans. The heck with the rest of the caucus on their side, let alone the Legislature and, as for the people of Manitoba, look at what they have done on this case.

They made the decision and now they have spent \$400,000 to try and persuade the people of Manitoba that they, the appointed, illustrious cabinet of Manitoba, knew so much about this issue, that they were right, the people were wrong. They were so brave, they had to spend \$400,000 doing it.

I want to ask anyone, is that the democratic system? I mean, do we want to adopt the corporate model? Is that really what we want? Is that any way to run a province? Is it right, morally, ethically or politically to sell off a Crown corporation that we have owned in this province, that was built by generations of Manitobans since 1908, and turn around, after having said in an election that you do not want to sell off MTS, making a commitment not to sell it off, and then turn around a few months later and say, oh, well, things have changed.

Well, the only thing that had changed is that they were not in an election and were not going to use the lie of not selling off MTS. The only thing that changed was now, firmly entrenched with a majority government, they figured they could get away with it. You know what?

They will not get away with it politically, I can tell you that, unless some of the government members stand up and vote for their constituents, particularly rural MLAs because, believe you me, it is a concern.

I am getting calls all the time from people who are saying they are Conservatives and they do not agree with this. Go to any coffee shop in Manitoba, go to any coffee shop in rural Manitoba and ask people what they think about the way the government is dealing with this. Ask them two questions, and you know what, I will say this and I will say this to the member opposite, the member for LaVerendrye (Mr. Sveinson), just ask them two questions.

Ask them what they think about selling off MTS and ask them if they think they should have a vote on the sale of MTS. Because you know what, Madam Speaker, everybody I have talked to in rural Manitoba says, you are right. They did not raise this in the provincial election. The least they should do is have a vote on this. Put it to a vote. Have a referendum on it if you want. Have a plebiscite. If you do not want a referendum, have a plebiscite. A plebiscite is where it is not binding. But ask the people of rural Manitoba where they stand on this.

You know what, the members opposite know this to be the case. Listen, I have been all across rural Manitoba and my own constituency, which is northern Manitoba. In fact, I am going to Portage la Prairie tonight, by the way, where more than 250 people have signed ballots saying they do not want to sell off MTS. I have had people in pretty well every constituency, they phone me and they say, you know, I do not support your party but I support your position on this, and you know what they say? Everybody agrees, put it to a vote.

I say, Madam Speaker, this government's action on MTS proves that we cannot trust them. I saw the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) today ask the Premier about Autopac, and it scares me to see the Premier of Manitoba say, we have no intentions of selling off Autopac. That is what he said about MTS. You know, when you have lied once, when you have lied twice and when you have lied three times about something, do you expect people to believe you on a fourth?

I mean, the fact is, they told the people of Manitoba in a fraudulent election campaign that they were not going

to sell off MTS, and it is on the chopping block. So we need to protect our public assets. We need to protect it from the types of government of this nature who think that they can tear up the history of this province, who think they can turn their backs on Manitobans, who think they have the God-given right to say one thing in an election and turn around and do another thing completely.

I have said right from the start with MTS, put it to a vote. If the majority of Manitobans think we should sell it off, let us do it. That is the democratic decision. If you had campaigned on that in the election and you had been honest with the people of Manitoba, you know what, I might have said, you have a mandate. I still think there should be some other process. But you cannot morally, ethically, you cannot say one thing in an election and then tear up something that has benefited Manitobans, particularly rural and northern Manitobans since 1908. You know, the bottom line here is an issue not just about our Crown assets but about our democratic process. I do not think any government has the right to destroy something that has been in place of that nature, to make such a dramatic decision without even the barest of processes in place to ensure some democratic discussion.

This is the government. They have not had a single public hearing on the sale of MTS. They have had a few meetings by invitation only with municipal officials. There has not been a meeting. They will not debate it. The minister responsible for the sale of MTS, I have challenged him already. I will debate him anywhere, any time on the issue of the sale of MTS in any community in Manitoba. I will do it in his own constituency if you want to start there, but they will not do that. They will not debate it. They will not hold public meetings.

They sure will not hold a vote on it, and do you know what? To the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), you know what? Go to your constituents and ask them if they think they should have a vote on the future of MTS. You know what? You go to your constituents, ask them if they think they should have a vote on the sale of any Crown asset. You know what they will say? The vast majority of people will say you bet, they are our assets, we are the shareholders, we should have a say. You know what? I am arguing again, I am saying that if the people say sell off MTS, you know what? I will fight against it but I will accept it.

But there is something missing here. I quite frankly am really concerned about the future direction in this province. I do not think any government, I do not care what political stripe, has the right to make a decision that is as binding as this with no mandate, no discussion, no vote, nothing, Madam Speaker. Right now, with this government and the assembled group of cabinet ministers, that being the decision, and perhaps the CEO, the chair of the board, because my understanding is it did not even go to the board. In fact, the minister confirmed that. The board of MTS did not even have a say over this. They do not have the right to do that. You know what? MTS and the Crown assets of this province, they do not belong to Gary Filmon and his group of cabinet ministers. They belong to all of us. We are the shareholders, and we should have the right to have a say over its future.

I say how can you trust this government if you cannot trust them on MTS? How can you trust them with Autopac or Hydro or any of the other Crown assets? What is at stake? Well, we all know how much we benefit from MTS, from MPIC and Hydro in terms of low rates. I challenge anybody, particularly rural members, go to any area of this country and see what a private phone company provides in the way of service. There are only three areas in the country where you have virtually no party lines anymore, and I will name them for you. One is Alberta, and it was AGT which up until 1990-91 was publicly owned that got rid of the party lines. The other is SaskTel which is publicly owned. The other one is MTS which is publicly owned. Look at the major reinvestment that just took place in terms of rural service. Who invested in rural service of Manitoba? MTS did. Publicly owned, once again. Look at our rate structure. Along with Saskatchewan we have amongst the lowest phone rates. We have amongst the lowest Autopac rates in the country. We have got the lowest hydro rates pretty well in the world.

Madam Speaker, the bottom line is here, we benefit. But it is not just a question of that. In the future, I ask, what is going to happen to our province, a small province of one million people, when we do not have the control of our own destiny that the ownership of our Crowns gives us? We have much greater say over that direction when we have MTS keep the financial resources, its headquarters, its staff, right here in Manitoba. If you read what is happening now, the government is going to allow

that to shift, 25 percent foreign ownership of MTS as a quick example.

This affects all of us and it means, to my mind, the fight over Crown corporations like MTS is more than just a fight over our Crown assets; it is a fight over the future of this province. First and foremost, it is the fight to ensure that we have at least some semblance of democracy. You know, democracy is not about having an election every few years and lying and cheating your way in terms of issues like the Jets and MTS and then having four or five years of majority to go and ignore the people of Manitoba. Democracy is about listening to the people in between elections, as well.

And you know what? When it comes to the sale of Crown corporations, I say to you, Madam Speaker, democracy requires that you do what any private business would have to do, consult with your shareholders. They are the people of Manitoba.

* (1650)

I say to the members opposite they have no right to sell off our Crown corporations, and they should also recognize that governments change. I will say on the public record, as I am sure many other New Democrats will say, do not think that you can tear up the history of Manitoba as you are doing right now because the next government, which will be an NDP government, will repair the damage you have done to MTS and other areas. And I say to members opposite, do not take rural Manitoba for granted anymore. You cannot ignore them on issues like MTS or the Wheat Board or the many other issues as you are doing.

I tell you what. I throw this as a challenge to any rural MLA. I challenge any rural MLA to debate this in their community, this bill, this issue at any place, any time. Perhaps some of the MLAs will show some courage, the kind of courage we are not seeing from the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the cabinet, and I hope they will then explain to their constituents where they stand and whether their constituents should have a vote on the future.

The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) should talk to people in his own community because you know it is easy to sit in here and say, oh, I know my com-

munity, my constituents. I challenge you: we will have a fair debate, and we will let people decide on 203 and the future of MTS instead of sitting here in your private rooms and deciding. You do not have the ability—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): I would like to place a few comments in respect to this bill before the House. I would just like to register a few comments as to why this side of the House cannot support that bill.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Morris has been recognized to speak to the bill, and I am having great difficulty hearing him.

Mr. Pitura: One of the comments that was raised by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) was that the backbenchers were not consulted with in regard to the MTS privatization. I would have to say that they were consulted and that they were brought into the discussion right along the way.

The reaction was that, in terms of the overall analysis of the Manitoba Telephone System, upon the analysis that was given by the Crown Corporations Council's annual report at last fall's committee meeting, it was definitely pointed out at that point in time that MTS was one of the very high-risk Crown corporations that this government had to contend with. The reason I say that and from that basis on that report, then the study went forward to take a look at Manitoba Telephone System to see if indeed it could be maintained as a Crown corporation or what other avenue it could be done with the corporation in order to make it viable.

MTS over the past number of years has accrued a liability of in excess of about \$883 million. With assets of about \$1 billion or slightly over \$1 billion it gave a very high debt-equity ratio to MTS, which made it very difficult for that corporation to be able to leverage capital in the money markets to be able to rapidly change to the needs in new technology and to be able to stay competitive within the telecommunications market.

The telecommunications industry in this country is changing rapidly. The regulation on communications systems is now open for competition. So now MTS,

having a monopoly for the past number of years, has now been thrust into the marketplace where it has to compete to be able to exist. In order to compete, it has to be able to be in a position to respond to ever-changing needs in technology and to be able to adopt them and to adopt them quickly. So it needs to have financial strength in the corporation to be able to do this. Sitting at equity of about 20 percent just would not allow it to be able to adjust to the demands that were being thrust upon it with the deregulation. The number of years that it has operated has been very successful. It has successfully been able to retire the pension funding liability. It has been turning a modest profit but in terms of the future, it has to be able to adjust.

If Manitobans were going to be able to continue to operate the Manitoba Telephone System, Madam Speaker, No. 1, a large portion of that \$883-million debt would have to be written off. Secondly, a large portion of credit would have to be extended to MTS in order to make it viable again, putting the taxpayers of the province at a very high risk in regard to being able to get the Manitoba Telephone System back on its feet. That does not say that over the number of years that in the future, MTS still is a small Crown corporation with regard to everybody else that is in the field. It is one of the smaller corporations. That is not to say that in the next decade that even if it is being operated as a Crown corporation, we would not be forced into a position where the corporation has to be divested and then at that point in time there would not be any equity left in the company to recover.

Even the telecoms, as they are referred to across this country, they have all, except for Saskatchewan and then Manitoba, gone to some sort of privatization. That is why I say, Madam Speaker, that this bill in regard to this piece of legislation is not going to be able to address those concerns, because you have to make decisions quickly. You cannot possibly use that legislation properly to go back and go through this whole process, because decisions have to be made quickly if the problems occur. That is why we have a Crown Corporations Council to be able to identify the positives and the negatives with Crown corporations. If we go on the basis that council can make the adequate input to government, that is, determine which of the Crown corporations are viable and functioning well, which of the Crown corporations we have that are having some

difficulties, they identify that and then it is up to government to be able to decide in which direction it wants to go.

The other matter, Madam Speaker, in terms of the government of the day in this province is that the electorate puts people here to represent them and to make decisions on their behalf in the best interests of the majority or the people of the province of Manitoba. With that there goes the responsibility that some of these decisions have to be made by government in that respect. So with respect to the Crown Corporations Council there to make the reports, government must act on it.

With those few words, Madam Speaker, thank you very much.

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

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PRIVATE BILLS

Bill 300—The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College Incorporation Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), Bill 300, The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College Incorporation Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Collège biblique Catherine Booth de l'Armée du Salut), standing in the name of the honourable member for St. Norbert.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, I just wanted to take a minute or two to comment on this particular bill. You know, the Salvation Army has done many fine, wonderful things in the city of Winnipeg, in fact in the province of Manitoba over the years, and I acknowledge that this particular bill means a lot to the member for St. Norbert as it does for members, no doubt, on all sides of the House and of all three parties inside the Chamber.

I know, with the bill, a private member's bill that I had introduced regarding health care, one of the things that I

have been pushing for is to get the government actually to say a few words on my bill, believing that I did not want them to stand it indefinitely. Therefore, I do not feel that it would be appropriate for me to stand this particular bill indefinitely because it is a bill, obviously, that does merit going to the committee.

Madam Speaker, with those very few words in support, in principle, of the bill because of the Salvation Army and the many wonderful things it has done, we are prepared to see it go to committee. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is second reading, private Bill 300, on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), The Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College Incorporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi constituant en corporation le Collège biblique Catherine Booth de l'Armée du Salut. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Order, please. Is it the will of the House to call it 5:30 p.m.? No? Leave has been denied.

To resume Private Members' Business, Proposed Resolutions.

* (1700)

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 11—Agricultural Safety Nets

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render),

WHEREAS Manitoba's provincial government recognizes that our farmers are a vital source and are major contributors to the provincial economy; and

WHEREAS the farming industry is subject to conditions of nature that have an impact upon the success

of a farming operation in ways that are not experienced in traditional businesses; and

WHEREAS the federal government has reduced the federal farm safety net envelope from \$850 million in 1994-95 to \$600 million in 1997-98; and

WHEREAS a stable level of federal funding to safety net programs is imperative towards ensuring that these programs are adequate and effective.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that all members of the Legislative Assembly urge the federal Liberal government to restore and maintain funding levels to farm safety net programs so that Manitoba's farmers can be adequately insured against the many unpredictable occurrences they face.

Motion presented.

Mr. Pitura: Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to present and invite debate on Resolution 11, the Agricultural Safety Nets, to all members present. Our government has long recognized a tremendous positive impact our farmers have on the Manitoba economy, as well as the Canadian economy.

Manitoba's farms are the foundation of the province's economy. One in seven, or approximately 14 percent of all employment opportunities within Manitoba owes its existence to agriculture. Those Manitobans involved in agriculture are leading the way in the new world economy, diversifying and growing to meet the challenges, have an ever-changing marketplace. Our farmers are proving that they can compete in a world market and compete successfully.

Conditions in the agricultural industry have improved significantly in recent years with crop producers enjoying the largest gains with an almost 20 percent increase in cash receipts in 1995, Madam Speaker. In fact, total farm cash receipts from crops, livestock and direct payments increased 0.7 percent last year. The farm sector's ability to absorb a huge decrease in direct payments and still record a small increase in total receipts indicates how much stronger this sector has become in recent years. I believe all members present recognize the unique and often unpredictable situations our farmers must work under. Their livelihoods are subject to the

whims of mother nature to a degree unmatched in any other sector of the economy. Drought, hail, insects and disease all have a direct negative impact on our farmers and by extension on the rest of us, yet they still persist and overcome.

The federal government has been on a path of major withdrawal of support for agricultural safety nets, a path I am sure that the members representing the Liberal caucus would find shocking and deplorable. Not too long ago, the member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) stated in this House that, and I quote: My Liberal roots are not as deep as my Manitoba roots, and I have lived in Manitoba all my life by choice, and that will always come first. That will be my first consideration.

So I would encourage him, along with other members of his caucus, to give voice to their support of our Manitoba farmers and contact their counterparts in Ottawa to denounce these shortsighted actions. The federal Liberals' now infamous red book of broken promises stated: Farm families need long-term programs to assist them in securing their future.

So how has the federal government achieved this goal of securing farmers' futures? Well, since the early 1990s, support by the federal government has plummeted. Support for our farmers has been reduced from a high of \$3.2 billion in '91-92 to \$1.1 billion in '95-96, \$728 million for this year of '96-97 and will settle at \$631 million in '98-99. This represents a decrease of over 70 percent. Can any other sector of the economy relate to such a complete withdrawal of support by the federal government? The largest reductions have primarily occurred due to the elimination of the GRIP program, a loss of \$1.4 billion. Farm support and adjustment measures, FSAM, a loss of \$960 million, and NISA incentives, Net Income Stabilization Account, a loss of approximately \$250 million. The main safety nets that remain are the Net Income Stabilization Account and the Enhanced Crop Insurance Program. These programs provide some protection against yield risks and to cyclical downturns that characterize the industry, but they do not provide the price protection that was provided in the past.

During this same period, our farmers have taken on additional obligation with the federal government's elimination of the Western Grain Transportation Act or

the Crow, which reached \$726 million in '92-93. Manitoba farmers have witnessed their federal safety net support cut out from underneath them. At the same time, Manitoba farmers have experienced the largest increase in freight costs as the federal government dropped its freight assistance and removed Canadian Wheat Board pooling.

Our government has responded to this continued loss of federal support for our farmers. Our government has managed to cope by introducing the Enhanced Crop Insurance Program this crop year to protect producers from potential yield losses. In the process, our government has made a three-year commitment to enhance crop insurance to ensure a measure of stability and safety nets for our farmers. The Enhanced Crop Insurance Program, operating with the Net Income Stabilization Account program, will now replace the Gross Revenue Insurance Plan.

Under the Enhanced Program, all crops insurable under crop insurance will continue to be insurable, whether it is red spring wheat, canary seed, parsnips, fenugreek, timothy, lentils or sweet clover, to name a few. The producer is still afforded the option of deciding to insure or not and at what level. Coverage is offered at 50 percent of the long-term average yield with no premium charged to producers. However, producers will have the option of selecting higher coverage up to 70 percent or 80 percent on any eligible crop. The saving to Manitoba farmers will result from there being no premium for the basic 50 percent coverage and the producer paying only a portion of the additional coverage. The remainder will be paid by the governments of Canada and Manitoba. Producers will have the option of insuring all or a portion of their crop and can select from the different coverage levels.

Our government has been able to offer farmers a good long-term tool for farm business management and during these times of fiscal restraint I am extremely pleased with the quality of program we have designed and are able to offer our farmers. Our government successfully negotiated transitional assistance of approximately \$30 million over three years, 1995-96 to '97-98, which allowed for the introduction of enhanced crop insurance. This program is considered the model for many provinces considering changes to their current crop insurance programs, a point I think that Manitobans have a right to boast about.

Our government has continually been at the forefront of initiatives designed to benefit farmers. I would like to relate back to the fact that many of our producers in this province have acted on national safety net committees and have had valuable input at that level and in determination of safety net programs across this country. I would just like to relate one potential safety net program, I believe, that needs to have discussion in the future because in three years time the Enhanced Crop Insurance Program is going to be at a point where something is going to have to be needed to replace it.

* (1710)

I would just like to comment on a report that was done by Sid Gordon and Bob Hopley when they were part of the Grains 2000 study group and the report that they had put forward in terms of crop cost insurance. It is a program, I believe, that all members in this House should have a look at and study because it has some merits in regard to being able to provide a safety net support to prairie farmers, whereby not necessarily their yields are covered or missing bushels are paid for out of their crop, but rather their input costs are covered with regard to producing a crop. Where this comes to fruition or to a higher level of exposure is where we see that this last year where fertilizer prices have increased, fuel prices have increased and so on. This type of a program, Madam Speaker, will be able to address those higher costs on a sliding scale and be able to give producers coverage. So I think it is something that probably in the future, before the three years are up on this other program, that we as Manitobans probably should have a look at.

I would also like to pay respect to the predecessor of our present Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Glen Findlay, because it was his foresight and vision that the GRIP program in this country actually got off the ground and more specifically for the operation of the GRIP program in the province of Manitoba. I would like to pay tribute to him because that was a very valuable program and a much needed program at the time.

The grain industry, at the time of the creation of GRIP, was in difficulty with increasingly depressed prices for farmers, and our government, committed to the well-being of our farmers, designed the program with a specific start and end date. Improved market prices,

reduced federal support and mandated removal of trade barriers under GATT contributed to the demise of the program. The design of the program was so successful, Madam Speaker, that when it concluded after its five-year mandate and after having provided approximately \$800 million worth of benefits to producers, it had a surplus. That surplus will be returned to the producers as well as to both levels of government.

The federal Liberal government has left farmers with NISA or the Net Income Stabilization Account. NISA is a voluntary program designed to give farmers improved, long-term income stability on their farms. The program has been developed through a partnership of federal and provincial governments and farmers. Farmers deposit money annually into their individual accounts, and they receive a matching contribution of the federal government and the provincial government at 2 percent and 1 percent respectively. To encourage participation, farmers receive a 3 percent interest bonus over and above the competitive rates earned on their deposits at their local financial institution. Qualifying commodities vary by province, but generally include most agricultural commodities except those covered by supply management such as the dairy, poultry and eggs.

While the NISA and Enhanced Crop Insurance Program offer farmers some protection against yield risks and the cyclical downturns that characterize the industry, they do not provide the price protection that was provided in the past. All members here present will agree with me when I say that our farmers are among the most productive in the world and are integral to Manitoba's economy. Farm incomes can and indeed are more often than not volatile and require risk management programs that are not available to other industries. The federal government's resources are necessary to provide sufficient, long-term safety nets for our farmers and are needed to ensure the industry can maintain in a productive and stable manner right across this country, Madam Speaker.

While the New Democratic Party has a spotted record at best when it comes to their commitment for farmers—for example, their refusal to support our farmers during the 1991 grain handlers' strike—I am confident that members of the official opposition will support this resolution. This confidence comes from remembering that the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) stated,

and I quote: If farm programs are to be successful, we believe that they should be national programs.

I would therefore offer this resolution to members opposite as an opportunity to clearly indicate that, despite the lacklustre efforts in the past towards our farmers, they do believe in the agricultural sector and a need for such federal funding. So I would call upon all members to support Resolution 9 and urge the federal Liberal government to restore and maintain funding levels to farm safety net programs so that Manitoba farmers can be adequately insured against the many unpredictable occurrences they face. Thank you.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I thank the member for bringing forward this resolution on agriculture because it is, as he has said—and I want to agree—a very important industry in this province and contributes tremendously to the economy of this province. We often hear the saying, the way farming goes is the way the rural community goes and, in fact, the city. When we have a poor crop or low prices in the farming community, we see ramifications throughout the province. In fact, you hear the news and read in the media this last while about the anticipation of the farm dealers and the business community when they look at the crop in southern Manitoba that has just recently been harvested in anticipation of the money that they are going to make.

So it is unfortunate that the federal Liberal government has reduced the amount of funding to safety nets in this province. It is also unfortunate that there are many other aspects of agriculture that have been neglected by the federal government, but, Madam Speaker, this government is not completely pure and innocent on this either. When you look at the budgets, last year the budget for Agriculture was reduced by 10.7 percent. The year before that the Agriculture budget was reduced by 6 percent. So this government has not been as completely supportive of the agricultural industry as they would like us to believe.

In fact, if you look at what is happening in this province, we are losing out on agriculture research to a great degree, partly because of federal cutbacks, that is true. The federal government has cut the funding to research, but I do not believe this government has been aggressive enough in attracting research dollars to this

province. We look at the university in Saskatoon, and it is becoming the centre of research for agriculture. We have lost the research at Morden Research, loss of research in Brandon with regard to the hog industry, and I think that this government has to be much more aggressive.

The member talks about national safety net programs, and, yes, I do believe that we do have to have national programs, that programs should not be split up and have one province negotiating a little different than the other or getting larger pots of money from the federal government. I am quite disappointed that we do not have a national program. We heard the government talk a lot with respect to the safety net and crop insurance, and that seems to have fallen by the wayside. There does not appear to be an effort on the part of the government to have those national standards brought in.

Madam Speaker, farmers are under a tremendous amount of pressure right now, facing many increased costs, in particular, transportation costs, which have resulted from the changes made by the Liberal government to abandon the Crow benefit that was there. That is not the only impact that we are facing. We see what has happened with the railways, and the abandonment of railway shifts more costs onto producers. As a result of the change to the Crow and the railway subsidies and the privatization of railways, but in particular because of the Crow benefit being reduced, we have to look for a cheaper way of transporting our grain to market.

We know that studies have told us that the Port of Churchill is a cheaper access to market, to international markets; and, although we have had lip service from governments, we certainly have not seen the amount of grain that you should be seeing through that port. In fact, I believe, Madam Speaker, that this year we only saw two ships come into that port. So we heard lots of talk during the last federal election about how much grain was going to be put through the port. We had a committee established to increase trade through the Port of Churchill, and then we see that the lines are at risk and maybe the whole Port of Churchill is at risk. That is a great blow to the producers of Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, there are other things that government must be concerned with with respect to farmers, and we have to look at what happens to input costs. It is

unfortunate that as soon as the price of grain goes up a minimal amount, we see the fertilizer and the chemical companies jack their prices up. When you look at it, the bottom line that is returned—it is unfortunate that with the increased grain prices, that in the end with the increased costs of fertilizer, chemical and machineries, it will be the producers who will not have a great increase in their return.

* (1720)

Madam Speaker, the member talked about protection for farmers. One of the protections that farmers do have and which has served farmers very well over the years—the grain producers, in fact—is the Canadian Wheat Board. As a result of the Canadian Wheat Board, farmers have got a fairer return for their product. They have pooled their resources and there has been better equity across the country than there has ever been, but this government criticizes the federal government for what they have done or lack of support for farm safety net programs, but this government has been very silent on their position for the Wheat Board, which is a very important issue as far as safety nets go for farmers. Just as we have the hog marketing board, which is a real benefit to the hog producers in this province, this government has not been fair in listening to producers to ensure the safety nets that are there. So the government, on one hand, is criticizing the federal government for their lack of support for farmers.

I agree with them on that. I think what the federal government has done to agriculture is wrong because they have reduced the budget to a minimal amount of what it was, and for the importance of the industry, we should criticize the federal government and encourage them to recognize the importance of the industry and increase the money into the safety net programs. They should be doing that, but the government should also recognize the error of their ways. This government talks about the enhanced crop insurance, that it is a very good enhancement program. That is not what I am hearing from the producers, and I will look very closely to what the returns are to producers and look for the final report from the crop insurance as to what the participation has been and at what level.

The member talked about the GRIP and it did serve a purpose. It did get money into the hands of farmers, but

it could have been also a better program, there is no doubt about that. Now there is a surplus—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I am experiencing difficulty hearing the honourable member for Swan River.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, the member across the way talked about GRIP. There is a surplus in that program, and we look forward to seeing whether the government is going to return the portion that belongs to farmers to farmers, and whether they are going to put their portion and call for the federal government to put their portion into agriculture research which is much lacking in this province. We have to have research. So we look at this safety net program and that is one thing, but what farmers do not need is the dual marketing of wheat. What we need for this government to do is stand up and say to producers, we support the Wheat Board and we will not have the single-desk selling part of the Canadian Wheat Board destroyed.

Unfortunately over the last couple of days, we have raised this issue many times with government, but they continue to sit on the fence. They will not join with Saskatchewan to fight Alberta in their challenge to destroy the Wheat Board. We need this government, farmers need the government at this time to take a strong position.

Madam Speaker, the agriculture industry is very important to the economy of this province. The agriculture industry needs government to support them with research. If the research is there and the opportunities are there, farmers will continue to produce the crop for export of high quality that we are always known for, but this government cannot say that only the federal government is to blame. They are to blame with what they have done.

The federal government is wrong in what they have done in reducing safety nets. That is right, but there are more things besides safety nets that are affecting the farming economy, and there are very important issues facing the farming economy right now. One of them that has been highlighted in the last week has been the Wheat Board, and I am very disappointed in the members across the way to say that they do indeed support dual marketing. They are not listening to the producers of Manitoba. They are forgetting, they are not looking at

the studies that have been done to indicate that dual marketing is bad and will put less money into farmers' hands.

Point of Order

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Yes, Madam Speaker, I think it is important to note that we are debating the relevance of farm subsidies as prescribed previously by Ottawa and the reduction of farm subsidies by resolution and the support of those subsidies.

We are not debating the relevance of our position on the Canadian Wheat Board. This government supports the Canadian Wheat Board, the maintenance of the Wheat Board. We want it changed only.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Emerson, I would remind the honourable member for Swan River that she was straying slightly from the principles of the resolution that she initially started to debate.

* * *

Ms. Wowchuk: The resolution talks about farm safety nets and supports from the federal government, and I recognize that the farm safety nets are important. The federal government has not fulfilled their responsibility and has let farmers down, but there are many other aspects of support for farmers that we have seen degraded, that the member who introduced this resolution spoke to about, particularly the Crow benefit. Along with the Crow benefit, the Wheat Board is also a very important issue that is a support for farmers. It is very important that we have something that we worked for very hard.

Madam Speaker, yes, the federal government has reduced their budget. It is wrong that they have reduced it, but it is also wrong that the provincial government has not recognized the importance of the agriculture industry and has reduced their budget over the last two years by some 16 percent.

In a true commitment to agriculture, those funds should stay with the agriculture industry. It is a time of diversification, a time when the industry has to change.

The supports from government should be there. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure—it is unfortunate that I will not have the time to say everything I want to say about the good government that we have in Ottawa. I was ready to support this resolution here, but then I realized there were a few omissions, and there should have been more. There

was lacking in there where this government has not done enough for the farmers of Manitoba

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) will have 14 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, September 26, 1996

CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Presenting Petitions

Rail Line Abandonment
Wowchuk 3779

Reading and Receiving Petitions

Manitoba Telephone System
Wowchuk 3779

Tabling of Reports

1995-96 Annual Report for Culture,
Heritage and Citizenship; 1995-96
Annual Report for Franco-Manitoban
Cultural Centre; Annual Report, Freedom
of Information Act
Gilleshammer 3779

Annual Report, Civil Legal Services
for year ending March 31, 1996; 1995-96
Annual Report, Department of Justice
Vodrey 3779

Leaf Rapids Town Properties Ltd.
financial statements; Annual Report,
Manitoba Decentralization
Derkach 3779

1995-96 Annual Report, Ministry of
Agriculture; 1995-96 Annual Report,
Manitoba Farm Mediation Board;
1995-96 Annual Report, Manitoba
Crop Insurance Corporation; Annual
Report, University of Manitoba Faculty
of Agricultural and Food Sciences
Enns 3779

1995-96 Annual Report, Ministry of
Highways and Transportation
Enns (for Findlay) 3779

1995-96 Annual Report, Fiscal
Stabilization Fund; 1995 Annual
Report, Crown Corporations
Council; Report of Amounts Paid
to Members of Legislative Assembly
for year ending March 31, 1996
Stefanson 3779

Annual Report and Financial
Statements of Venture Manitoba
Tours Ltd. to March 31, 1996
Ernst (for Driedger) 3780

1995-96 Annual Report, Department
of Government Services
Pallister 3780

1995-96 Annual Report, Manitoba
Family Services
Mitchelson 3780

1995-96 report, Department of Labour
Toews 3780

Oral Questions

Health Care Workers
Doer, Filmon 3780
Doer, McCrae 3780

Teaching Profession
Friesen, Filmon 3781
Friesen, McIntosh 3781

Labour Relations Act
Friesen, Toews 3782

Labour Board
Reid, Toews 3782

Autopac
Lamoureux, Filmon 3783

Labour Relations
Ashton, Toews 3783

Minister of Labour Ashton; Toews	3785	Bill 52, York Factory First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act Jennissen	3797
Home Care Program Chomiak; McCrae	3785	Ashton	3798
		Lamoureux	3800
Drug Program Information Network Chomiak; McCrae	3785	Bill 53, Nelson House First Nation Northern Flood Implementation Agreement Act	
Extreme Fighting Cerilli; Ernst	3786	Ashton	3801
Rural Stress Line Wowchuk; McCrae	3786	Bill 21, Oil and Gas Production Tax and Oil and Gas Amendment Act Mihychuk	3805
Canada Pension Plan L. Evans; Stefanson	3787	Bill 33, Education Administration Amendment Act Barrett	3807
New Year's Eve 1999 Celebration Barrett; Reimer	3788		
Members' Statement		Private Members' Business	
		Debate on Second Readings—Public Bills	
Police and Peace Officer Memorial Newman	3789	Bill 201, Aboriginal Solidarity Day Act Ashton	3812
Canadian Wheat Board Struthers	3789	Second Readings—Public Bills	
Francotonne Gaudry	3790	Bill 203, Public Assets Protection Act Ashton	3813
		Pitura	3817
Misericordia General Hospital Radcliffe	3790	Debate on Second Readings—Private Bills	
Rail Line Abandonment Wowchuk	3790	Bill 300, Salvation Army Catherine Booth Bible College Incorporation Amendment Act Lamoureux	3818
ORDERS OF THE DAY		Proposed Resolutions	
Debate on Second Readings		Res. 11, Agricultural Safety Nets Pitura	3818
Bill 49, Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act Lamoureux	3792	Wowchuk	3821
		Gaudry	3824