



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**(Hansard)**

*Published under the  
authority of  
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay  
Speaker*



Vol. XLVI No. 61 - 1:30 p.m., Tuesday, October 8, 1996

ISSN 0542-5492

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Sixth Legislature**

**Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Party</b>
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, Clif	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	Surgeon 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

Tuesday, October 8, 1996

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

## PRAYERS

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

## Pharmacare

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

**An Honourable Member:** Dispense.

**Madam Speaker:** Dispense.

*THAT during the 1995 provincial election, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) promised not to cut health services; and,*

*THAT the Pharmacare program brought in by the former NDP government was the first in Canada and has served as a model for pharmacare programs in Canada; and,*

*THAT the Manitoba Pharmacare program has enabled thousands of Manitobans over the years to be able to stay out of costly institutions and to avoid financial ruin due to the high cost of necessary pharmaceuticals; and,*

*THAT previous cuts to Pharmacare have reduced the budget from \$60 million to less than \$50 million over the past two years; and,*

*THAT as of April 1996 the provincial government is slashing benefits, effectively putting a tax on the sick and reducing the Pharmacare budget by \$20 million; and,*

*THAT these cuts more than double the deductible for most Manitobans to over \$1,000 for most families, effectively ending Pharmacare for the vast majority of the population regardless of health.*

*WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Premier and the Minister of Health to consider reversing their plan to cut Pharmacare in 1996.*

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Corrections System  
Intermittent Sentences

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** My question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon). Judge Heather Pullan, in sentencing Mr. Dennis Williams, who has a record as long as your arm, including three impaired drinking and driving convictions, stated that the record is so bad that a message must be sent to Mr. Williams. It must get through to him.

It seems to me that going back weekend after weekend, depriving you of your free time, may have a significant deterrent effect on you. Judge Pullan sentenced Mr. Williams to three months in weekend jail. Unfortunately, Mr. Williams did not serve any time pursuant to Judge Pullan's decision of sentencing.

I would like to ask the Premier, given that his Justice department implements the sentences of the day, does he support the decision of his Justice department to not have Mr. Williams serve any time?

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** The issue of intermittent sentencing has been a very difficult one. When the judiciary sentences people, who I would make it clear are in fact free five days of the week otherwise to be in the community, when these people are sentenced to weekends we do want to accommodate them.

At the moment, however, because of the riot at Headingley we have been unable to for several reasons. One of the most important, of interest to members across the way, is a workplace safety and health issue, which is being brought, I understand, today to our correctional guards at the workplace safety and health committee.

The issue is that intermittent inmates are often targets for the bringing in of contraband into our institutions. It is not yet clear, because we do not have Judge Hughes's report, what part that may have played in the riot which occurred in April. So there is a workplace safety and health concern to make sure that any intermittent inmates are separate and apart from the general population.

Now members across the way are deciding that that is not a very important answer. It is in fact an important answer in terms of the workplace safety and health issues.

\* (1335)

**Mr. Doer:** With the greatest of respect, I think the Premier (Mr. Filmon) should start stating whether he supports the decisions of his Justice department instead of sitting down and ducking the issues.

This is a Minister of Justice who told us all through last spring that the Headingley riot had nothing to do with the TA decisions of government. So her word means nothing to the people of this province and to the members on this side of the House. That is why I will readdress this question to the Premier.

Given the fact that it was the Premier who was slamming the cell doors during the election campaign and putting bars behind his face during the campaign, does the Premier support the decisions of his Justice department to release, without serving any time, a Cory Sigurdson, a 20-year-old individual who has had two drunk-driving convictions in the last year, three times the blood level? Does the Premier support the fact that the Justice department did not have this individual serve any jail time? Does the Premier support that as the proper implementation of both the community respect for the justice system and the Premier's promise to the people in the election campaign?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Of course, the intermittent sentencing of people, whatever their offences or whatever they have been accused of, is the decision of the court. But it is very interesting to me that it is now that the Leader of the Opposition raises this issue when I, on May 28, 1996, in Estimates informed the House. What I am informed to the best of our information, to the best information coming to me, is that intermittent-sentenced individuals

are reporting to the Community Release Centre. They are being assigned community work assignments or work projects, and they are to the best of our knowledge completing those, working on those.

So this is not new information to members from the other side. I believe they have decided, perhaps based on a media report, to now become very concerned about it. This information was delivered to the House, is in Hansard, in May 1996.

### Minister of Justice Replacement Request

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, this minister on May 16 and all the way through May said that there had been no change in the TA policy based on the Headingley riot. Now she is fully contradicting herself, as she does every day in this Chamber.

**An Honourable Member:** . . . your own comments.

**Mr. Doer:** If the Premier wants to answer a question, why does he not have the nerve and the backbone to stand up and answer a question instead of ducking and covering and—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Doer:** I would like to ask the Premier, in light of the fact that defence lawyers are aware of this, cons are laughing about these decisions, judges are being undermined—as members of this community with children and families in this community, I am appalled and angry that people with these kinds of driving records are out on the streets and not serving jail time.

I would like to ask the Premier, will he fire this Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) and give us a Minister of Justice that has the capacity to tell us the truth in this Chamber and can implement and has the capacity to implement the sentences that judges are providing to convicted individuals in this province?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** I wonder what family the Leader of the Opposition is referring to. Is it the family—

### Point of Order

**Mr. Doer:** On a point of order, Madam Speaker, the Premier is imputing motives. I am talking about all our families. We all have friends, family, children, and we all should be concerned about it. I am talking about all our families.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable Leader of the official opposition did not have a point of order. It was a dispute over the facts.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, I was wondering whether it was the family that the Leader of the Opposition rented for his election brochure in 1988 that he was referring to. His sincerity lacks a little bit of resonance and truth.

The issue here is that we have to operate on the best advice given to us by the professionals who work for the Department of Justice. We do not try and play, we do not try and superimpose our values and our judgments on those of the people who are paid to give that advice and to exercise those—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, it is interesting how the members opposite know everything but they do not find out until there is a media report that tells them what they are supposed to know, and then afterwards they become these big advocates, afterwards they become these big experts, afterwards they become so knowledgeable, but before the fact they know zero. When the minister told them exactly what was happening on May 28—she has just read earlier from Hansard—they had nothing to say about it until it was raised by the media. That is how knowledgeable they are, that is how expert they are, that is how informed they are, and that is why they are on the other side of the House.

\* (1340)

### Corrections System Intermittent Sentences

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice.

Further to the case raised by the Leader of the Opposition, of Dennis Williams, at that sentencing hearing, the defence counsel made the submission to the judge that on a 90-day sentence he is going to be obligated to do those weekends. He will be more under the control of the government jail agency under an intermittent sentence than he would be under a straight sentence, and the judge went on to make the judgment that my Leader spoke of.

My question to the minister is, why, for goodness sake, did the Crown agree with the defence to the sentence? Why did the Crown not inform the court, and, indeed, why did the minister not inform this Legislature that the sentence given was a no-go?

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, there has been public discussion about the difficulty accommodating intermittent sentences. However, I am very concerned to learn that some members of the justice system have indicated that they were not aware. I have made sure today that there has been another statement issued from Corrections to all partners in the justice system of the difficulty accommodating intermittent sentences.

But, Madam Speaker, again, I will make it clear. This is not a choice or a path that we would have chosen. It is not the intention of this government to have intermittent sentences not in jail. We want them there. But the realities of the riot are such that there was another accommodation which had to be made affecting those people serving intermittent sentences, those people who—though the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has expressed great distress that they are out on weekends—these are the same people who are out five days a week working in the community, working in other areas. These are people that the court has sentenced intermittently. It is not our choice, but it is at the moment the position we are in.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, with a supplementary question.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** My question to the minister is, why did this minister thwart the deterrent given by the court, given by the courts on many occasions, you understand, dealing with intermittent sentences? Why did she exhibit this contempt of the court? Why has she covered up her

incompetence by hiding from the court the options that were available to the judges?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Madam Speaker, well, there was certainly, in no case, any contempt involved in this matter or any other. It is a well-known fact. I believe, if you asked many people across Canada, it would be very clear to them that Headingley Institution is not running at full capacity. It was very clear when almost three weeks ago I made the announcement on behalf of government that explained how Headingley would be redeveloped and that in that redevelopment plan, intermittent sentences would be housed separate and apart from the general population. It is amazing to me that the other side, who have spoken so frequently about their concerns around labour relations, they had no idea that this was a concern for our correctional officers, bringing intermittent inmates into the general population. It is amazing how that slipped their minds.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Would the minister, who has a new-found concern today about intermittent sentences, explain why she has not told her Crown attorneys to tell the judges that the sentencing option of intermittent sentences was not a go, that she was thwarting justice, that she was in contempt of the administration of justice in this province, Madam Speaker?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Madam Speaker, I will say again that there has been no contempt. There has in fact been a consequence to the people serving intermittent sentences. That consequence is one in which they report to our Community Release Centres. Through our Community Release Centres, with supervision, they provide a public service for agencies such as the Salvation Army. If they fail to report to the Community Release Centre, in the same way as if they failed to report to serve their jail time, there is a warrant issued for their arrest. So there is not any effort in any way to provide contempt.

I will just say again that if there was anyone within the justice system unfamiliar or did not know the current situation, that has certainly been remedied again today by Corrections, who have made it very clear this is the situation we are dealing with. It is known to correctional officers; it is known across the system.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, with a new question.

**Mr. Mackintosh:** Madam Speaker, the minister, by her instruction today to her department, admits to her incompetence and admits that she should have done this a long time ago. She has had five and a half months since the Headingley riot to get her act together.

I ask this minister, since when does she decide the consequences for a criminal act, rather than the courts of the land?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Madam Speaker, first of all, it always falls to Corrections. It is a long-standing practice in Corrections that they administer the sentence.

Now the member has some legal training. That is well known within the justice system; that is a practice that has been in place for many years. This is not a practice, that Corrections administers the sentence, new as a result of the Headingley riot. So the member continues to show how little he knows. However, I accept the fact that he attempts to ask questions that the public wants to have the understanding of, and so I am happy to explain that Corrections does administer the sentence to the best of their ability. The court provides the sentence; Corrections administers it.

There is an emergency provision within the act which allows for the issuing of temporary absences and accommodation other than a jail sentence in our Corrections Act. But, Madam Speaker, this has been an emergency situation; that is not new to anyone. We did not have the space in Headingley Institution. We are looking to have Headingley up and running as quickly as possible and to settle the labour matters, the health and welfare matters as well.

\* (1345)

**Mr. Mackintosh:** The minister now makes another argument about the lack of space. I ask the minister to explain to this House how she can say that she wants these intermittent-sentenced individuals in jail when she pulled the prisoners from the Saskatchewan jails last month—I understand, 31. I understand there are spaces in Stony Mountain; I understand there is Bannock Point sitting empty; I understand that there are facilities at Headingley, including the gym and Annex A. Why is she making that? There is no motivation on this part except they do not care about justice, Madam Speaker.

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Again, we hear from the other side who for several days in this session has attempted to make a point about their interest in labour relations and safe working conditions.

The member across the way knows very well that, as we move back into the population at Headingley, we are working with workplace safety and health committees. Workplace safety and health committees are identifying issues which correctional guards are concerned about, and we have to move step by step in order to have the repopulation of Headingley done in a safe way.

Now, I began my answers earlier today by making it clear that there does appear to be a concern around the role of intermittent sentencing and the bringing in of contraband into the general population. That issue has to be settled, and there has to be an acceptance by our correctional officers, by the workplace safety and health committees that they are satisfied when intermittent individuals are returned to the institution that they will be kept separate and apart or that we can guard against any bringing in of contraband. That issue is an important one to the workplace safety and health issues.

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for St. Johns, with a final supplementary question.

### Minister of Justice Resignation Request

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Can the minister possibly explain to Manitobans, explain to the victims, to the people, the likes of Mr. Williams, why it is that she did not tell her lawyers who represent her in the courts of this province to tell the judges that they had less options on sentencing than they believed, that they do not have a deterrent they think they have? Why did she not tell them? Will she resign?

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Our government's concern is in fact for victims and is in fact to make sure that people do receive a consequence when they are offenders and that Headingley Institution will be better able to deal with those offenders, whether they are high-risk offenders, where they are intermittent offenders, whether they are offenders who require some special protection.

Madam Speaker, we have had some changes in Corrections over the past while. I have spoken to the new ADM of Corrections. I have asked him to, very specifically in writing as well as verbally, make it clear if there was ever any misunderstanding. However, I do have to say that the Headingley riot is very well known. My comments in the House indicated several months ago how intermittent sentences were being dealt with. This really is not new, but if there was any misunderstanding whatsoever, the ADM of Corrections has told me that he has spoken by phone both to the ADM of Prosecutions, to the Court of Queen's Bench judiciary and that he will be following up in writing today.

### Corrections System Intermittent Sentences

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, my question again is to the First Minister. I asked the Premier about the case of Mr. Williams; I asked the Premier, the case of Mr. Sigurdson—both of whom were sentenced to jail time by the judge. In fact, the judge cited the need for deterrents, cited the need to take away the freedom of individuals, to provide deterrents to try to correct the unsafe driving conditions that threaten all of us.

I would like to ask the Premier, does he defend his Minister of Justice and the Justice department that he is responsible for, for allowing these people to have their sentences and not do any jail time? What does that say to the deterrents that the judges are ordering and sentencing in our criminal justice system?

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I think that the explanations that have been given by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) have adequately responded to the concerns that have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

\* (1350)

**Mr. Doer:** Madam Speaker, on May 16, in this Chamber, we asked a number of times on a number of occasions, is there any change in the temporary absence policy as a result of the Headingley riot. Of course, we were asking those questions on the basis of an alleged murder that had allegedly taken place with an individual that was released on temporary absence. The minister

said, my answer is no. She went on time and time again to say that there had been no change in policy.

Today there is a different alleged policy in dealing with a different set of circumstances with individuals that have been sentenced. We have even heard the minister say that contraband in jail can be a criterion for this minister to decide not to implement the sentences of courts and judges for individuals in the Manitoba justice system. Is that the justice system the Premier was promising during the election campaign, that if somebody may have contraband, they are not going to go to jail?

I would like to ask the Premier, is that the kind of Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), the ad hoc answers we get in the Chamber, that we can expect from this government, and when can we have a Minister of Justice that will have the confidence of the public and the confidence of all partners of the justice system?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, either out of ignorance or out of a deliberate desire to misrepresent, the Leader of the Opposition has taken the words of the Minister of Justice, which I heard earlier—and she said that the reconstruction of Headingley is going to provide for an opportunity to have these people on intermittent sentences in a separate place so they would not be mixed with the other inmates. That is what her explanation was. The member can choose either to ignore it or he can choose not to understand it, but the minister has again responded adequately to his questions.

#### **Minister of Justice Resignation Request**

**Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition):** Madam Speaker, the changing position of the Minister of Justice would appear to be hard to defend by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) or anyone else in our community.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier, how can he keep a Minister of Justice in place when the Minister of Justice was unable or unwilling to inform the judges of this province that the policy had allegedly changed for sentences, where the defence lawyers knew about it and were pleading out cases on the basis of the alleged government position, where the cons know about it and talk about, they would rather serve their time at home rather than serving it on weekends? How can the

Premier keep this Minister of Justice in place when she does not inform the rest of the justice system? I would like to ask the Premier again to ask for the resignation of the Minister of Justice and give us a Minister of Justice that can restore the integrity of the justice system for the people of this province.

\* (1355)

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, all through the time of the Headingley riot, information was being provided as quickly as possible, as thoroughly as possible. It is clear now that we did not always receive all of the information through the process. That is not new. Every day there was an attempt to provide the best information possible to members opposite, and when thorough and complete information was gained, then that also was delivered to the House.

But, Madam Speaker, I think the important issue here is this. We cannot go back and redo everything that happened in Headingley, but we do not ever want it to happen again. So this government has commissioned an independent inquiry that former Justice Ted Hughes will be doing, who will be looking at all of these matters.

I met with him on Friday. We will be looking at, right from the beginning to the end, including the issue of temporary absences, whether or not they were reasonably issued, whether or not there was anything that should not have been done that was done. That will be covered in the results of the inquiry and we on this side look forward to it.

#### **Canadian Wheat Board Government Position**

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster):** Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. What has become abundantly clear is that this government has been unable to represent the producers, the small family farms out in rural Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, that was demonstrated with the hog industry in terms of the movement towards the single-desk checkoff. It is demonstrated through the Canadian Wheat Board and the lack of respect that this government has demonstrated towards it. That lack of respect for the



rural farmer is clearly demonstrated by lack of actions by this government.

My question to the Minister responsible for Agriculture is, will the minister indicate what he believes with respect to the recommendations brought down from the Minister of Agriculture late last week with respect to the future of the Canadian Wheat Board?

**Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture):** Madam Speaker, the race for the Liberal leadership must be heating up in rural Manitoba, but allow me to answer as directly as I can.

Certainly Minister Goodale's response on an issue where he knows there is no middle ground is in part in keeping with the position that the Manitoba government has repeatedly expressed, that the Wheat Board must change, a position that is supported by Manitoba's largest agricultural producers' organization, Keystone. He has adopted a number of measures within the ability of the Canadian Wheat Board to alter its pooling practices, to consider making available the spot and cash prices for certain portions of the wheat sold and marketed within the framework of the Canadian Wheat Board and, as well, has suggested, at his timing, perhaps later on this winter, to ask the producers for a further question with respect to barley.

Madam Speaker, I have generally applauded the minister's direction on this score, although he certainly has not satisfied anybody that is actively engaged in this debate.

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, actively engaged in this debate—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Inkster that a supplementary question requires no postamble, no preamble. The honourable member, to pose his question now.

\* (1400)

**Mr. Lamoureux:** Madam Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture tell rural Manitobans what this government's position is dealing with the wheat and barley with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board? Get off the fence, take a

position, represent Manitobans for a change, the producer.

**Mr. Enns:** The federal government, who has the sole responsibility with respect to changes to the Canadian Wheat Board, has taken very specific action. Minister Goodale searched the countryside to find what has been described on several occasions a blue ribbon committee of experts. They spent the better part of a year in asking and examining the operation of the Canadian Wheat Board. They came back with the recommendations that have been supported by this government from the day those recommendations have been made public.

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

**Mr. Lamoureux:** I am wondering if the minister will attempt to answer precisely whether or not this government recognizes the importance of the Wheat Board retaining its monopoly because it is in the best interests of the wheat farmer. Will he acknowledge that is in fact the case? Will he stand up for the majority of farmers in the province?

**Mr. Enns:** The panel's recommendations recognize the ongoing role of the Canadian Wheat Board and its single-selling desk authority which it recommended with respect to the largest business that it does, the marketing of our wheat, a position that we support. It also went on to make other recommendations which the minister who appointed the committee chose to ignore. We regret that.

### Corrections System Intermittent Sentences

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Yesterday, Mr. Dennis Raymond Williams alias Darrell Jesmer alias Dean Kay alias Ray Louison alias Douglas Asham alias Lou Louison stated, and I quote: It is all right with me. The guys, you know, do not have to do time. It is all right staying home and doing time on the weekend.

I would like to ask the Premier if he feels it is acceptable, due to his government's policy and the incompetence of his Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), that this individual is not serving time in an institution when between 1977 and 1996 he has convictions for impaired driving, breach of probation, failure to appear,

driving disqualified, possessing stolen goods, break and enter, resisting arrest, driving while suspended, violating parole, impaired driving, theft over \$1,000, possession of goods obtained by crime—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I am only up to 1980; 1981, impaired driving, break and enter, impaired driving, theft, mischief, failing to comply, theft, assault, abduction of his own kids, possession of weapons, theft—

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Ashton:** —possession of narcotics, theft under \$1,000, assault, uttering forged documents and driving suspended. Is this the policy of this government to allow individuals such as this to not be spending the time in jail that they were sentenced to by a judge in the province of Manitoba?

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. First, I would like to remind the honourable member for Thompson that we have some pretty explicit guidelines with relation to posing questions, and I would ask for his co-operation in adhering to those guidelines.

**Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier):** Madam Speaker, I have already answered that question.

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

**Mr. Ashton:** My apologies. I did feel that it was important to read the entire record into the record of this Legislature.

I would like to ask the Premier how he can say this, how he can suggest that he answered the question when the key question Manitobans are asking is, how is this government incapable of running a justice system that requires this individual to spend weekends in an institution as part of his sentence that he received in a court? How can he not have a justice system that achieves that here in Manitoba?

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, of course, the member should know that we on this side of the House are concerned. That has already been expressed by the

Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey). No, we do not like to have to make accommodations in dealing with people who have been sentenced in particular ways, but unlike the members opposite, we have to deal with reality. None of us chose to have the riot at Headingley occur. There was a major upheaval that has reduced our capacity. It has done many things obviously within the corrections system that have to be addressed. We moved quickly to call an independent inquiry to ensure that we had all the information available to us to deal with the situation. These are the realities of the situation that have to be dealt with by this government and they are being dealt with by this government.

Members opposite, they want to grandstand; members opposite, they want to deal in situations that do not deal with reality. This government is doing what has to be done to deal with an intolerable situation, and the minister has indicated the commitments that have been made with respect to \$10 million to ensure that all the circumstances that will prevail in future, we will have adequate answers and resources and accommodations for. But in this time that we are going through as a result of the aftermath of the riot, we have to deal with what we have to deal with, and that is precisely what we are doing, not taking the irresponsible position of members opposite that expect us to do miracles when we do not have the ability to do that.

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, it is not irresponsible to expect a convicted individual to spend time in jail for the time he was sentenced.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson was recognized for a final supplementary question.

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I would like to ask a final supplementary, if the Premier will now indicate that we are not dealing only with a matter of the incompetence in the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), but perhaps, in the 1995 election campaign, when we saw the Premier closing the cell doors, he did not explain to Manitobans that he was closing the cell doors to keep people out of jail, serving the time they had been sentenced to in Manitoba, individuals such as Dennis Williams, who should be serving his time behind bars on the weekends as was his sentence.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Filmon:** Madam Speaker, it is unbelievable that members opposite should be cheering for the fact that we had a riot at a major institution in this province, that it causes a disruption that nobody could anticipate, that nobody could deal with on the spur of the moment. We do not have a second jail waiting to move everybody into. We have realities to deal with. The irresponsible attitude of the members opposite, cheering on this situation, is the ugliest situation that we ever have to deal with in this House.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I asked the Premier to explain to Manitobans his election promise in terms of justice, and I would like to ask you not only to ask him to answer that question but to withdraw his comments. All we are seeking is a justice system that works in this province, something we do not have under this incompetent Minister of Justice and a Premier who did not tell the truth to the people of Manitoba in the 1995 election campaign.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I will take the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson under advisement to research Hansard and report back to the House.

\* (1410)

### Corrections System Intermittent Sentences

**Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan):** Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Notwithstanding all of the rhetoric we have heard from the Premier today, how can the Premier explain a Minister of Justice who has a policy where prisoners who are supposed to serve sentences get out and do not serve their sentences, when the judges who administer those sentences do not know that, when at least two Crown attorneys who are responsible for advising the courts of that do not know that, and when, clearly, the minister does not know when she in fact said on May 28 about intermittent sentences, she did not know whether or not those people would be getting TAs?

How does the Premier support this Minister of Justice when in fact the judges and the defence attorneys and no one in the system knew that these people were getting out?

**Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Madam Speaker, their release and how they were being accommodated was in fact talked about. Under what terms, exactly what terms, I made the commitment to speak further about. There is an emergency provision within The Corrections Act which allows for the use of temporary absences. That is in fact what has been happening.

I hear members across the way listing individuals' long records and so on. This is not what we would like either. This is not a position that anyone would like to be in.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Justice, to quickly complete her response.

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. So the members opposite should not make out that this is somehow a position that we support; it is not a position we would like to be in. It is a position that, as quickly as Headingley can become up and running and we have the agreement of the workplace safety and health committees, we will certainly be moving to change.

**Mr. Chomiak:** Madam Speaker, if we accept the minister's emergency situation, can the minister explain how it is that the judges who administer this justice, who sentence people to weekends, were not aware of this and how her Crown attorneys who sentence people and who made presentations in court were not aware of this emergency situation? Does this not suggest a complete lack of competence and capability by this Minister of Justice?

**Mrs. Vodrey:** Madam Speaker, again, I have spoken publicly about the way we were accommodating intermittent sentences. This is not a surprise. It is not a secret. But if there are members who did not know, who feel that they did not know—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I am experiencing great difficulty hearing the minister's response.

**Mrs. Vodrey:** If there are members of the community who feel that they did not know, then I am concerned about that too, and I made that clear from my answers very early on. If there is anyone who did not know about the accommodation, then we have acted to correct that today. [interjection]

Well, the members across the way say, you know, judges did not know and so on. Well, Madam Speaker, I think everyone knew about the Headingley riot, and I think everyone knew about the public statements.

But the important thing is that today, if there was any doubt in anyone's mind—because we did listen to others who say, here is who knew, here is who knew, well, I think it was fairly well known, but if there was anyone who did not know, we have acted to correct that today.

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

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Fire Prevention Week

**Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli):** Madam Speaker, today I would like to remind all of my honourable friends about a very important event that is taking place this week. From October 6 to 12 this week is declared as Fire Prevention Week in Manitoba and this year's theme, Let's Hear it for Fire Safety, is an important reminder for all Manitobans to check smoke detectors at home and at work to ensure that they are safe.

Events are taking place around the province in support of Fire Prevention Week. On Saturday, October 12, demonstrations of fire attack equipment will be occurring at the Gimli, Stonewall and Teulon fire halls where some live hose, proper fire extinguisher use and breathing apparatus demonstrations will occur. A large number of businesses within the Gimli constituency have recognized Fire Prevention Week as being an important event through their sponsorship of the event and in the advertising done by the fire department. I hope that all members of the Legislative Assembly will take advantage of this opportunity and make an effort to participate in

and support any Fire Prevention Week activities or events that take place within their constituencies.

It is important that Manitobans be aware of fire safety, especially the younger generation. The number of fires and fire-related death and injury statistics in Manitoba for 1995 are down from 1994. Smoke remains the leading cause of the majority of fire-related deaths. Careless smoking is the leading cause of home fire deaths, and children playing with fire is the second most common cause of home fire deaths. If all homes in Manitoba are equipped with smoke detectors in good working condition and are checked regularly, injuries, death and property loss can be greatly reduced. This week I hope that all Manitobans participate in Fire Prevention Week in some way and ensure that their homes are safe from the risk of fires.

### Violence Against Women

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Madam Speaker, women in Manitoba are under attack. Sexual assaults on women are escalating at an alarming rate. In the last two days there were two reported vicious attacks on women by men unknown to them, but it is not just random attacks that should be of concern to us.

We have also learned that gang rapes of young girls are often part of the initiation rites for Winnipeg gangs. These girls are used as sex slaves by gang members and are terrorized by the fear of retaliation if they tell anyone of their degradation, so they are doubly assaulted, first the physical rape and then the emotional fear of retribution if they share their humiliation.

Actually these girls are triply victimized: by the rape, by the intimidation and perhaps most reprehensibly by the inaction of the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) who also happens to be the Minister responsible for the Status of Women. She has the responsibility in both her portfolios to ensure that the women in Manitoba are protected as much as possible from violence. She has demonstrably failed despite repeated questioning by the opposition, and in the face of statistics and stories of women who have been assaulted, she has done virtually nothing.

She has done nothing to deal with the gangs that are terrorizing communities and young women. She has done

nothing to provide programming for victims of violence, both random and gang related. In fact, after the Headingley riot, dangerous sex offenders were let out on temporary absences. She had the authority to deal with this terrible threat to the women of Manitoba but chose to do nothing. She has proved incapable of addressing, other than by diatribes hurled at the opposition, the terror faced by women in Winnipeg and Manitoba. She has in effect turned a blind eye to young women who are already among the most victimized in our society. She is a disgrace to her positions and must be removed immediately. The safety of our women demands no less.

**Madam Speaker:** Before recognizing the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), I wonder if I might ask if those members having private conversations could do so either more quietly in the loge or outside the Chamber.

### Economic Growth

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans have a great deal to be optimistic about this year despite the negativity perpetuated by members opposite. The most recent provincial handbook published by Nesbitt Burns states that the Manitoba economy is on track for 2 percent growth this year, once more better than the national average. Farming output is set to rebound smartly led by gains of both prices and delivery. Farm incomes are poised for yet another year of double-digit growth. This year's earnings bode well for further spending on new farm equipment, of which Manitoba is a major supplier. Machinery shipments, for example, soared almost 45 percent in 1995 and early signs point to another banner year in 1996. Indeed, manufacturing now comprises 11.5 percent of the provincial economy, compared with 10 percent when the decade began. Food processing is Manitoba's largest manufacturing industry, and it is absolutely booming. Last year's termination of the Crow rate subsidy has sparked a flood of new agrifood facilities.

Nesbitt Burns stated, and I quote, the strides the province has made in diversifying its economic pace are evident in the rapid expansion of the service sector which has outstripped growth in the goods-producing sector in each of the past three years. They also praise our government for meeting the challenge posed by Ottawa's transfer squeeze head-on by, in part, streamlining government operations. They noted that Manitoba is the only province to have refrained from raising taxes over

the past decade and per capita government spending is the lowest in the country. Our province's economic performance has been repeatedly recognized and I am proud to be a part of a government that has ensured Manitoba remains an excellent place to work, live, raise a family and invest. Thank you.

\* (1420)

### Association of Bilingual Municipalities

**Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface):** Madame la Présidente, il me fait plaisir de mettre quelques mots pour un programme qui a eu lieu en fin de semaine au Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface. C'était le Forum Ouest qui avait été organisé par l'Association des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba avec le Conseil économique de développement économique des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba. Tout le programme fut très intéressant. Nous avons des membres présents de la francophonie des quatre provinces de l'Ouest et puis du Yukon. La journée a été divisée en trois différents ateliers qui semblaient très intéressants. J'ai assisté à celui du tourisme. Et puis il y en avait un sur les nouveaux marchés et la valeur ajoutée. L'autre était un atelier Info-techno.

C'était plutôt pour avoir des partenariats avec les niveaux de gouvernement. Le ministre responsable des services en langue française, l'honorable Darren Praznik, était présent et puis l'honorable Jon Gerrard, Secrétaire d'état de la Diversification de l'économie de l'Ouest du Canada.

Alors la chose qui est très intéressante pour l'Association des municipalités bilingues est très claire lorsqu'ils ont mentionné ici : «En vous aidant à réussir, nous assurons notre prospérité collective. Les municipalités bilingues du Manitoba constituent un atout provincial important qu'il faut entretenir et préserver afin d'assurer la vitalité culturelle et économique de la province. C'est dans cet état d'esprit qu'on a créé le CDEM, de façon à donner aux municipalités membres de l'Association des municipalités bilingues du Manitoba l'élan nécessaire pour qu'elles renouent avec la prospérité financière. Le CDEM regroupe des gens d'affaires chevronnés et possède le savoir-faire et les ressources qu'il faut pour que votre entreprise soit un succès. De votre succès dépend notre prospérité collective, de même que la survie à long terme et le dynamisme de nos municipalités.»

Merci, Madame la Présidente.

**[Translation]**

**Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to say a few words about a program that took place at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface last weekend. It was the Western Forum, which was organized by the Manitoba Association of Bilingual Municipalities with the Economic Development Council of Manitoba Bilingual Municipalities. The entire program was very interesting. We had francophone members present from the four western provinces and from the Yukon. The day was divided into three different workshops that seemed very interesting. I attended the one on tourism. There was also one on value-added and new markets. The other one was on information technology.

The purpose was to establish partnerships with the levels of government. The Minister responsible for French Language Services, the Honourable Darren Praznik, was present and so was the Honourable Jon Gerrard, Secretary of State for Western Economic Diversification Canada.

What is very significant for the Association of Bilingual Municipalities is very clear when they state here: "Helping you achieve business success for our collective prosperity. Manitoba's bilingual communities are an important provincial asset, one to be nurtured and preserved for the province's cultural and economic well-being. It was with this in mind that the CDEM was formed - to act as the spark for renewed financial prosperity in the member communities of the Manitoba Association of Bilingual Municipalities. The CDEM is staffed by experienced business professionals and has the expertise and resources to provide your business with the best opportunity to succeed and thrive. Through your success, we plant the seeds for our collective prosperity and ensure the long term survival and vibrancy of our communities."

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Minister of Justice**

**Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood):** Madam Speaker, Manitobans have all seen the image of our Premier

standing in a jail slamming the door shut to emphasize just how tough this government's policy on crime would be. Over and over, he and his election co-chair, the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), boasted about their toughness, but now Manitobans have had 18 months to see the reality of that boast. They see it in the failure of the Justice minister's policy on gangs, adult and juvenile, the failure to deal with the Headingley riot, the embarrassing aftermath of that riot when the Justice Minister boasted that those involved in the riot would clean it up—so three of them scrubbed a wall or two.

Manitobans saw the release after the riot of dangerous sexual offenders, first denied in this House and then finally confirmed. We saw press release after press release turn into the Casper initiatives, invisible to everyone except the government's spin doctors and the minister's overly active imagination.

Only yesterday, Madam Speaker, this less than forthright minister would not speak the truth that was obvious to everyone else, that over 18 months her own justice committee had never even met. Now we have the spectacle of a Justice minister that decides its serious offenders, drunk drivers, drivers with criminal records as long as your arm, need not spend any time in jail even when jail is a mandatory sentence. She subverts the court's duty to sentence. She fails to inform her own officials and the judiciary of her new policy. She defends her decision on the basis of there not being enough room when we know there is enough room.

Manitobans expect those people who are sentenced to jail for serious crimes to spend time in jail. So do judges, so do Crown attorneys. Now we have a Premier (Mr. Filmon) who will not finally do the right thing and relieve this failed minister of a burden which is clearly too heavy for her to bear. In failing to do his clear duty, the Premier impairs the integrity of the justice system, condones his minister's interference with the rightful role of the judiciary and fails all Manitobans.

**Committee Changes**

**Madam Speaker:** The honourable member for Point Douglas, with 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: The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh); the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) for the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk)—[interjection]

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I cannot hear the honourable member for Point Douglas, nor can the table officers.

**Mr. Hickes:** I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Economic Development be amended as follows: The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) for the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh); the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) for the member for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk); the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) for the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), for Thursday, October 10 for 2:30 p.m.

I move, seconded by the member for Broadway, that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: The member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) for the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar); the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) for the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans); the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) for the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), for Friday, October 11 for 10 a.m.

**Motions agreed to.**

## **MATTER OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE**

### **Lack of Incarceration**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a matter of urgent public importance. I move, seconded by the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), under Rule 27(1) that the ordinary business of the House be set aside to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the actions of the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) regarding the lack of incarceration of convicted people in this province.

**Motion presented.**

**Madam Speaker:** Prior to recognizing the honourable member for Thompson, I would like to remind all

members that under our subrule 31(2), the mover of a motion on a matter of urgent public importance and one member from the other party in the House is allowed not more than five minutes to explain the urgency of debating the matter immediately.

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, the reason we are raising this motion today is because I believe that if you were to truly ask members of this House, there would be a willingness of not only members of the opposition but, I am sure, many government members, to discuss the state of the justice system in this province, particularly the kind of situation that we see day after day with this Minister of Justice in which people who have been convicted of offences, sentenced to jail terms, are not serving that time in jail. I want to indicate why I feel we should be debating this matter.

Earlier in Question Period—and I want to apologize again for the length of time I took in the preamble, because it is difficult when you have that many sentences that this individual has received to outline in the short time period available to us.

Madam Speaker, we have a situation where an individual who has three impaired driving convictions, three driving while suspended convictions, an assault conviction, a theft conviction, a possession of stolen goods conviction, a parole violation, two break and enters, uttering forged documents, possession of a dangerous weapon conviction, an abduction of his own kids conviction, where this individual was sentenced to spend time in a correctional facility and where this individual now is laughing at the justice system. I quoted earlier his comments that he made: It is all right with me. The guys, you know, do not have to do time. It is all right staying home and doing time on the weekend.

Madam Speaker, we feel it is urgent to debate this matter because we feel that, while Mr. Williams, or whatever his current alias is, may feel it is all right, we feel that the majority of Manitobans feel that a sentence is a sentence and, in this case, that at bare minimum this individual should be serving the time and that it is no excuse from this Minister of Justice, and now the Premier (Mr. Filmon), to say that they cannot even run the justice system to ensure that this individual spends weekends in a correctional facility.

Madam Speaker, this is not the only individual in these circumstances. But what is particularly concerning is not only are there people such as Mr. Williams and others who are not serving their sentence making a mockery of our justice system, but this Minister of Justice, who repeatedly, going back to May of this year, has denied any change of policies whatsoever because of the Headingley riot, today now stands in the House and suggests that what is happening is strictly to do with Headingley. We heard the Premier use the same kind of argument.

Now, Madam Speaker, these new-found converts to the cause of workplace safety and health in our correctional facilities might want to consider the issue of public safety, and if they cannot run a justice system that ensures that Mr. Williams spends weekends in jail, they should resign, both the minister and the Premier.

Madam Speaker, this is an urgent matter because Manitobans have once again seen just how little they can trust this government and this Minister of Justice. I mention—and I have a copy of a leaflet here and I will quote from it. This is the Law and Order and Public Safety, and it says inside: We listened to you when you told us to be tough on crime.

\* (1430)

Madam Speaker, the Premier, Gary Filmon, stated: The safety and security of the public and the individual are vital to the quality of life you as Manitobans demand. You want to know your family is safe in your homes, in your neighbourhoods, in your schools and on your playgrounds.

Madam Speaker, how do they explain the fact that Mr. Williams is now doing time on weekends at home? Is that their "tough on crime"? I say that is absolutely unacceptable and I say to the members opposite, let us have a debate on this and then the Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) I am sure will be interested in what the constituents of Rossmere have to say about this particular matter. This government not only are they not tough on crime, they cannot even ensure that Mr. Williams spends his weekends in jail.

It is no excuse to suggest that because Headingley is in the situation it is that that is the reason. They know they

have a choice. They are in charge of the justice system. They can made arrangements with other institutions in the province and other institutions throughout the country. The bottom line is here, so long as we have the Premier defending this Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), who has shown through her actions on this matter that she cannot be believed anymore, I would submit to you that we cannot ensure the security of our citizens, and more importantly, the integrity of the justice system. When we have Mr. Williams and others laughing at the justice system we know that there is a serious problem.

So I would suggest to you that this is one of those times where it would be, I believe, in the best interests of the public of Manitoba if you, Madam Speaker, were to do the appropriate thing, decide that there is a prima facie case and let the House decide, because I believe it is not only members of the opposition but many government members who, given an honest choice about this, would decide to debate with us the very serious concerns about our justice system. So I urge you to give us the chance as MLAs to debate the system of justice in this province and in particular the incompetence of the Minister of Justice and the incompetence of the Premier who cannot even ensure the most basic sentence be served in this province. That is absolutely unacceptable.

**Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader):** Madam Speaker, at the risk of incurring your ire, I would submit that the member for Thompson spoke almost fleetingly at best about the question of the need for urgency. He is still ticked about what happened in Question Period. I would encourage my honourable friend that he should worry about his blood pressure a little better. It was getting fairly high I think during the midpoint of his address, but it is not a question of whether the member or all of the members over there are ticked or not, it is about the question of urgency, and there is no urgency or they would have raised this back in May of 1996 when the Minister of Justice explained to the justice critic of the opposition party in some detail as to how they were going to deal with the fact that after the Headingley riot there was only limited ability to house criminals or people sentenced to certain sentences in the justice system. So if this was so urgent, it should have been urgent then. They should have been standing on their feet then to raise the question of urgency, and they did not, as we heard during Question Period, because the press did not cotton on to this until just recently, and of



course, ergo, the members doing their research in the morning paper then found out about this and had to raise it as an urgent matter of public importance. It is not urgent.

Now, secondly, will in fact the public good be harmed if we do not debate this today? I submit, no, it will not. This has been going on for six months or more, and the public, in the minds of the opposition who have chosen only today to raise this matter, it obviously has not affected the public good up until this point, so I do not know what has changed between yesterday and today to cause that concern to harm the public good.

They refer to this person with 20 or so convictions and they listed them all in Question Period. The question is not whether this person should be out on weekends instead of serving his weekend sentence, but how did he get a weekend sentence in the first place? For somebody with that kind of a record, he should have been in there, I submit, a lot longer than just weekends.

But, Madam Speaker, the fact of the matter is plain. The issue with respect to the whole question of urgency and the whole question of public good has not been made; the case has not been made by my honourable friend, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). In fact, as I said, he hardly touched on it at all.

They are upset. Fine, let them be upset. They have done what they should do if they are upset; they should raise it in Question Period, they should raise it in Members' Statements, but it is not a matter of urgent public importance.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Kowalski) that he will be entitled to speak if the ruling is in support of the motion to have the matter debated immediately.

Is there leave to permit the honourable member for The Maples to speak to the urgency of debate? [agreed]

**Mr. Kowalski:** I want to thank the members of the Chamber for allowing me an opportunity to speak to the urgency of this matter.

Every day police officers arrest numerous people. Every day courts convict numerous people, and they are expecting those sentences to be carried out. Each day,

each hour, there are arrests being made, and justice is immediate. It needs to be done immediately, and there is urgency to send a clear message that in Manitoba if you commit a crime, justice will be quick and expedient and will be just. That is why this matter has to be brought forward and be dealt with as soon as possible.

There may be other opportunities sometime in the future, but this matter affects the lives of so many Manitobans, whether in Winnipeg, in rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba. Police officers, courts are working now to make our communities safer places, and unless we deal with this matter immediately, today there will be people arrested who will go to court tomorrow. Unless we rectify this situation we will be sending a message to the criminals of Manitoba that business is good in Manitoba. So this has to be dealt with now. That is why I support this motion wholeheartedly on behalf of our caucus.

### Speaker's Ruling

**Madam Speaker:** I am advising the House that the notice requirement for a matter of urgent public importance has been met. In order for the matter to proceed to debate, Beauchesne's Citation 389 states that the issue must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention, and Citation 390 states that the public interest must demand that discussion take place immediately. There must be no other reasonable opportunities for debate according to Citation 387.

The member has not used his opportunity to raise a grievance. He could also use the vehicle of a member's statement to speak to this matter. An Opposition Day motion could also address the issue. Based on the other opportunities available to the member and based on my assessment that the public interests will not suffer if this matter is not discussed today, I must rule the motion of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) out of order.

\* (1440)

### MATTER OF GRIEVANCE

**Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns):** Madam Speaker, I rise on a grievance. It is a preliminary matter. Little

did we know when we agreed to some rule changes that the new grievance procedure and members' statements would be used to supplant the ability of this House to engage in full debate. I can think of no time such as this when a debate is called for, in this province that we care so much about, and not just a grievance by one member or several members but full participation by the members opposite, something that the members opposite fail to understand the importance of, whether it is on bills and whether, right now as we look around this Chamber, this is not a government that has respect for democracy. It is a government that is so disrespectful of our system of government that it will pull the rug out from underneath the judges, the judges perhaps the most important institution that we have to protect justice, protect our freedoms.

Madam Speaker, we have heard today of a case that went before the Provincial Court, before Judge Pullan. My honourable friend for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) read aloud this person's record which reads like an index to the Criminal Code, read the aliases of this individual. Here is someone that this community has got to deal with and has been unable to deal with because the record tells us that. Judge Pullan looked at this individual and heard the submissions of the defence and the Minister of Justice's lawyer, the Crown attorney, and she said: It is clear to me that the previous dispositions imposed on you, Mr. Williams, have not been successful, you have not got the message in the past. And then she went on to say: I have got to find a way to get a message to you now. She said: I am going to impose the intermittent sentence because I take to heart what the counsel says. By the way, counsel included the minister's own lawyer who agreed to a joint submission on sentencing. She said: It seems to me that going back weekend after weekend as the seasons change, depriving you of your free time may well have some significant deterrent effect on you. She believed it. It was a considered judgment. She likely agonized over this. She said: I want to be the judge that changes your behaviour, I want to be the judge that can help ensure some public safety, I want to be the judge that puts effect to the government's rhetoric and intentions, and I believe they were rightful intentions, to make this province the toughest province on drinking and driving.

Well, this is not the toughest province on drinking and driving anymore. That ended when this Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey) decided on a little cover-up, and I

will explain that little cover-up. The little cover-up was this. Five and a half months ago there was a riot, a very tragic situation in this province, perhaps the worst prison riot in the history certainly of Manitoba. Many individuals were hurt, and it served I think to outline how the Minister of Justice has turned a blind eye not only to victims in this province but to the needs of offenders too, to change their behaviour, and most important of all are to those individuals who in the morning get up and leave their family and children and go to work in our correctional institutions. She turned a blind eye, and having done that, she came back and said, oh boy, these people are going to clean up, in fact not only going to clean up this institution, they are going to rebuild the whole place. That was a real doozie. Then she went on to make things worse. When we discovered that temporary absences were being granted, not on the basis of an application to the TA board, not because a proper risk assessment had taken place, not because there were proper controls and supervisions in the community, but because of the riot. But did the minister say, oh boy, extraordinary times, we had to take some tough decisions. No, this minister said everything is tickety-boo. What riot? It made no difference. In fact, we are tougher than ever.

Well, then in Estimates we got the minister to try and be forthcoming—because this minister, I am afraid, has been so careless with the truth—and we asked her how many people were really given temporary absences following the riot. She came up with a new number. We asked did those include those on intermittent sentence? She said, no, that is not even included there. She said those on intermittent sentence at the time were doing some community work.

Now, Madam Speaker, did the minister at that time say that people who had yet to be sentenced intermittently would never serve time? Did she say at that time that she had no intention of ensuring that the intentions of the court, the reasoned decisions of the court, would be put into practice, be put into place, be enforced by her department? Did this minister say that there was any change in policy? Did she say there was some concern about contraband? Let us take this argument of contraband that she came up with today. She said there is some concern about contraband coming into the institutions from intermittent convicts. Well, let us follow that to its logical conclusion. You know, there is

also concern about full-timers going in that are increasingly violent. Is she going to extend the pardons now to all prisoners because they pose some threat? We want to know how many people, how many convicts have been pardoned, because that is essentially what has happened here. It has been a political administrative pardon subverting, thwarting the court system and the reasoned judgements of judges in this province. We want to know how long this minister intends to keep people sentenced to intermittent time out of jail.

Our concern is this. What message does this minister give to Manitobans? She is giving a message that justice in this province is a joke. She is saying we are not serious. She was heard to say yesterday, and I think she got back to that argument today about, oh, there was just no space. Well, it is interesting, because the province of Saskatchewan, which was asked and gladly took in I believe over 30 inmates from Manitoba following the riot, would be more than happy to receive another request from this province. Have they received such a request? No. In fact, all of the inmates that had been sent to Saskatchewan have now been pulled back to Manitoba and plunked in Manitoba's institutions. If there is a space problem in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, it is as a result of a decision of this minister to pull people back from Saskatchewan institutions.

We have heard and suggested that perhaps the government should look at Bannock Point which I believe sits vacant. It is a correctional facility. I understood that it could house 40 to 50 inmates. I understand that Stony Mountain as of today has room for 34 inmates. I have heard that perhaps, if the minister would have rallied herself over the last five-and-a-half months to look at the issue of staffing of the correctional facilities, the Headingley gym and Annex A would be available for intermittent sentencing.

You see, the defence of the minister that there is no space does not wash. The defence by the minister that there should be no intermittent sentences served because of a concern about contraband is false. So what is the motivation for pulling the rug away from the judges? The motivation is incompetence—hardly motivation, but certainly an explanation. They do not care. She cannot run a department. She is a threat—I am referring to the Minister of Justice—to our safety, and she must resign.

She must be made to resign. If the Premier will not do it, the people of Manitoba will.

\* (1450)

But of all of the issues we have raised there is none more critical than the cover-up of the Attorney General, which led to her refusal to tell the Crown attorneys on sentencing to tell the court that the option of intermittent sentencing is no longer available. That was her ultimate duty, and that is her ultimate downfall. She refused. It was a cover-up. She did not want it out. And here were these judges like Judge Pullan, after agonizing and trying to change behaviour, trying to serve justice in this province, being thwarted by a minister when they made judgments—and I want to know how many they made—requiring people to serve time on weekends and, lo and behold, no time was ever to be served.

They did not have the options they thought they did. How much police work? How much hope from victims for justice? How much court time has been squandered by this Minister of Justice who decides to impose her own political agenda on the proper functioning of justice in this province by our courts? If there ever was a time for resignation in this province, in this country, it is now and we call for her resignation now.

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### House Business

**Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader):** With respect to committees on Thursday morning at 10 a.m., that is October 10, the Standing Committee on Economic Development will meet to consider Bills 14, 15 and 39.

Madam Speaker, on Tuesday next, the 15th of October at 7 p.m., the Committee on Municipal Affairs will meet to consider Bill 54, The Municipal Act.

**Madam Speaker:** On a clarification of House business, Thursday, October 10, 10 a.m., the Committee on Economic Development will meet to consider Bills 14, 15 and 39.

On Tuesday, October 15, at 7 p.m., the Committee on Municipal Affairs will meet to consider Bill 54.

**Mr. Ernst:** May we have a two-minute recess, Madam Speaker?

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave to permit a two-minute recess so the House leaders may discuss Orders of the Day? [agreed]

*The House recessed at 2:54 p.m.*

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**After Recess**

*The House resumed at 2:57 p.m.*

**Mr. Ernst:** Madam Speaker, it would appear that there is a problem with respect to next Tuesday evening for the Municipal Affairs committee, so that will not take place.

**Madam Speaker:** So the committee previously announced for Tuesday, October 15 at 7 p.m., Municipal Affairs will be cancelled.

**Mr. Ernst:** Would you call Bills 67, 17, 18, 26, 32 and then the balance of the bills as listed in the Order Paper?

**DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**

**Bill 67—The Manitoba Telephone System  
Reorganization and Consequential  
Amendments Act**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume second reading debate on Bill 67, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister responsible for the Manitoba Telephone System (Mr. Findlay), The Manitoba Telephone System Reorganization and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi concernant la réorganisation de la Société de téléphone du Manitoba et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

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

**Bill 17—The Government Essential Services Act**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume second reading debate on Bill 17, on the proposed motion of the honourable

Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), The Government Essential Services Act (Loi sur les services gouvernementaux essentiels), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

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

**Bill 18—The Payment of Wages Amendment Act**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume debate on second reading on Bill 18, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), The Payment of Wages Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur le paiement des salaires), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

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

**Bill 26—The Labour Relations Amendment Act**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume second reading debate on Bill 26, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews), The Labour Relations Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les relations du travail), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

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

**Bill 32—The Council on Post-Secondary  
Education Act**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume debate on second reading, Bill 32, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), The Council on Post-Secondary Education Act (Loi sur le Conseil de l'enseignement postsecondaire), standing in the name of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

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

To resume debate on—the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. The honourable

government House leader. [interjection] For a moment, I thought you wanted to debate.

\* (1500)

**Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader):** Anytime the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) wants to debate, Madam Speaker, I am more than willing to debate him.

However, to make your job a little bit easier, I would suggest you call Bills 49, 70, 36 and 33 in that order.

**Madam Speaker:** Would the honourable minister please repeat that—49, 70—

**Mr. Ernst:** 49, 70, 36 and 33.

**Madam Speaker:** Thank you.

#### **Bill 49—The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act**

**Madam Speaker:** To resume second reading debate 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 Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), who has 27 minutes remaining.

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

**Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James):** Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I get to rise to speak to Bill 49, The Regional Health Authorities and Consequential Amendments Act, which basically will establish regional health authorities. I have comments specific to the bill, and I also have some history that I wish to share in terms of the whole concept of centralization versus decentralization.

The concept of decentralization is one that I support. However, it would be evidenced by this bill, not one that this government is willing to take action on. In fact, it is a very serious debate. We can have a form of decentralization which actually empowers communities

or we could have what is presented as decentralization but, in reality, is not.

There are many arguments for and against this type of governance. Centralization can be an effective way of governing and decentralization can be an effective way of governing. The overwhelming reason sometimes for moving to decentralization is the fact that it removes the direct accountability of those who are responsible, in this case, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and the Health department and this government that make the policies and financial decisions that will ultimately have to be carried out by the regional health boards. When those cuts come from the top, the people who will have to be accountable or part of it will then be diffused to the regional health boards.

The reason that this seems to be the overwhelming argument for this model is clear in the model presented by the bill, which does not provide any true local empowerment to the community; therefore, although it may look on the surface as if we are going to a decentralized, local empowerment model, in fact, what we are doing is centralizing power and diffusing some of the accountability, making it easier for the government to implement their drastic health cuts, the cuts of hospital beds, possibly closures of health facilities, and moving the responsibility of that from directly being on their table to the regional health boards.

Madam Speaker, locally I would like to talk about what I was familiar with in the Winnipeg School Division. We looked at a model of decentralization that included creating actually school advisory councils well before the government ever heard of such a thing, and it is fairly ironic that we see this government is taking up that model. Actually, in the education governance model, I would argue that in fact what they are doing is smoke and mirrors, that the local councils have virtually no power, and that in effect what they are doing is they are setting up another level of bureaucracy or another level of governance that really cannot be held accountable for those actions because they have no power to influence them.

But, when we looked at potentially decentralizing, the important question becomes, is the government prepared to turn over some of that power to local communities. Are they willing to, for example, look at elections? Are

they willing to allow the community to select people that they have faith in? Unfortunately, when you look at the bill, that is not the case. In fact, what we have seen are the regional health boards being appointed and no evidence in this bill of future elections. A huge disappointment. Are they willing to actually empower local communities? Apparently not. That is a sincere disappointment, a critical factor that needs to be considered, and I am sure that this government has looked at the consequences. They want to have their people on the boards. They want to have the control. There are many other parts of this bill that are clearly centralizing, and that would be consistent with the overall philosophy, one of talking about decentralization, talking about local communities, but in reality making them scapegoats for what the government intends to do in terms of further health cuts, deregulation, user fees and breaking down our universal public health care system.

When governance is discussed, there are many agendas that can be played out, and the fear of some jurisdictions to moving towards decentralized power is not having the ability to basically control exactly what these local governments and, in this case, a local regional health board will do. In fact, the government can be criticized for being completely inconsistent. In fact, when we look at local governance, we saw a large debate for many years about the possibility of school divisions being amalgamated. The decision in that case was because, I believe, of a very strong lobby of local communities to stay those changes, to look for voluntary amalgamation, to try to deal with it in a more co-operative approach.

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

What we see here is fairly arbitrary, decisions for boundaries on regional health authorities, massive boundaries which are going to be difficult to respond to local needs. What we see is a proposal that is before its time. We have not had the opportunity to discuss in detail as we did with schools boards and successfully argued against the government's so-called changes. What we have here is a bill being proposed that is going to force local boards and other health governance structures into a model that they are not ready to accept.

We have not had full debate. The government is anxious to bring forward legislation that is not well

thought out, that is not ready to go on the books, that has not been consulted with the people in the community, and we are asking them to hold back. It pre-empts the process. What you have done is brought forward a piece of legislation that is not supported by the Manitoba Health Organizations, not supported by health care workers, not supported by the support workers in health care, not supported by the local governing boards of the hospitals here in rural Manitoba, not supported by the religious organizations that run the hospitals such as the Grace Hospital.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems to me the only people that do support this bill are sitting on that side of the House, and I would ask them to reflect on that. Give it some time. Allow the people of Manitoba to look at whether this is a model that is going to work. Apparently not. The government has not been successful in getting the partners in health to adopt this model, and indeed it raises serious concerns about the validity of this structure.

\* (1510)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill will establish large—as I said, large—regional health boards, regional health authorities, and the boards which will basically govern these authorities. What it does in reality is add another level of bureaucracy, and that is a shame. We do not need to add further levels of bureaucracy. If you are trying to empower local communities, the goal is to make it more efficient and more effective, and the question would be whether this bill will in fact do that.

The bill itself also makes no provisions for elections of members, and the record for appointments has been dismal, to say the best. The number of female board members is woefully under represented. Accusations of political appointments mar the legitimacy of the process. In the North, we understand in a board of nine people, three are former Tory candidates. Even if this was by coincidence, it would seem highly unlikely that that was a legitimate process, but even if it was, it would raise the suspicion of doubt. That is surely not what this government wants. If it really believes this is a legitimate process, if this is a legitimate bill, that is exactly what it does not want to do. It does not want to be in a process where it is appointing certain people that may not represent the community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, although the minister tries to assure the House that we did not have representation from aboriginal organizations or from women, I have to ask, in the North, 50 percent of the people in the North are female, and so I would ask that there would be some sort of justice, justice on the committee. What type of recruitment and searching was done to ensure that the boards were fairly representative of the people in the community?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would not want to think that it was the Tory membership list that was consulted. No. You would like to consider that it was a sincere process, and one way of doing it is by trusting the people and allowing local elections. Something that this government is not prepared to do. Something that this government has no indication of putting in the bill, and something that Manitobans are asking for. We are very disappointed, and so is the Manitoba Health Organizations, which has presented its concerns forward to the health community and to the government.

The Manitoba Health Organizations is a nonprofit, nongovernment provincial organization of health agencies. I would like to quote from their report which basically sums up the bill as: The degree to which all decision making is centralized in the ministry appears to contravene the publicly stated position of the government to delegate decision making to regional health authorities.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a provincial organization that represents a broad spectrum of organizations and various workers comes out with such a strong statement, it was one that is weighed with considerable thought. This is an organization that must have some Tory members, probably fewer every day, but it is a representation of the whole province that is dealing with health care. So for an organization—I think it is particularly significant having worked with the provincial trustees association, having worked with other provincial organizations—to come out with such a strong condemnation of this bill and the implication that what it really does is centralize power and basically set up regional health boards is truly astonishing, because they want a working, sincere relationship with the government of the time. They want to co-operate and ensure that the legislation that we have before us will work, but the concerns that they express in their paper are sincere and are very serious.

Basically, the quote that I just read out talks about the smoke and mirrors that Bill 49 is actually purporting to do. It is centralizing power through a number of means, and I will discuss a little bit later, while at the same time pretending, or giving the illusion, that we are empowering local boards. What they have done is actually, probably, intensified or even centralized further the power of the minister and the government in terms of health care while diffusing the blame for the cuts that they are inevitably going to make, given their record, and they are going to diffuse the blame for the cuts and the problems to the regional boards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only is that unjust, it is unfair. Regional health boards do not have the power to tax, and I am not one prepared to say that they should. Our health care system is supported by taxes, and it needs to be that way. It needs to be universal. There are principles that we believe in and share; the majority of Manitobans and Canadians believe in a universal health care system with the principles identified in the health care act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we search in the bill for the principles to be upheld, and we wonder why they are not. Are they articulated in this bill? No. Should they be? Yes. Is this province committed to maintaining the principles of a universal health care system? We would hope so.

But the reason for it not being there is not by mistake. This bill has been constructed by the government, prepared, platformed for the people of Manitoba. It was not an omission by error. It is an omission by planning. That is not acceptable to Manitobans. That is not acceptable to this side of the House. We want a commitment, and we will ensure that Manitobans maintain a public health care system that is universally accessible.

One of the reasons to further question the sincerity of the government is that it actually has clauses speaking to fees. The question there being, what fees for what services are they talking about? Why are they articulating or not articulating what they speak of? The Manitoba Health Organizations has also clearly condemned this section of the bill, as it further facilitates to deinsure the health services in Manitoba.

One of the more ominous or scary parts of the bill is the provision of a commissioner, an appointment by the

minister, or really by the government, a commissioner-czar who has been the story in the recent newspaper has discussed, a person who will be given extraordinary powers such that we have not seen in other legislation, and we must question the motivation, the reasoning, the rationale for such an appointment.

How does the creation of such a commissioner-czar with these almighty powers go with the concept of decentralization and providing local communities with decision making? We do not buy it, and neither do the people of Manitoba.

\* (1520)

You are including it in a bill. You are trying to mislead the public by suggesting that this is indeed a way of empowering local communities when, in reality, you read the act, it says in terms of the commissioner, the government may appoint, and provides them with the ability to do so, that this commissioner may make recommendations, any recommendations, when it relates to labour relations in the health care sector.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have a process that is well established in Manitoba and has been working fairly well where we have two sides of a labour issue working together to come to a mutual settlement. We do not have a process where we have a dictatorial system which will dictate which side wins without the both sides agreeing to go into the process. Neither side, in terms of health organizations, is willing to accept this provision.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, not only does this commissioner make recommendations, the commissioner's decisions are final, an unprecedented move. This is not open to questions, not open to review in any type of court, agency or other appeal mechanism. This commissioner has extraordinary powers and no demonstrable public accountability. That is a serious concern to this side of the House. It is a serious concern to the labour movement. It is a serious concern to everybody who works in the health care sector, but will this government listen? We hope so.

However, the construction of the bill, the timing of the bill, the way that it is being presented to the public makes us suspect, and the fact that members on the other side are busy in their own personal conversations or reading

newspapers or, you know, not interested in participating in debate, the government has no interest in this debate, but for the record, I put our concerns on the table.

I have put our concerns on the record, because we know that Manitobans want to discuss this legislation, that it is serious to them. Although it may seem trivial to the members opposite, it is important to Manitobans to talk about these bills and the impact of these bills on their lives—I think it is very unfortunate that the members on the other side have decided to withdraw from public debate of such important legislation—and challenge them to express their opinions and put on the record where their government stands, to explain to the regional health boards, explain to the Manitoba Health Organizations, explain to the hospitals in Winnipeg—to the Grace, to the St. Boniface—why this legislation should be supported.

We hear nothing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear nothing from the other side and we ask, why? They show no interest. They have a platform. The concern is—and we hope it is not true—that they are not listening. They are not listening to Manitobans because they have got a preset agenda and they are willing to push it through. Hopefully, that type of arrogant government is not one that we see from that side of the House, that indeed what we are going to see is some significant amendments or preferably the withdrawal of this bill until we have full, open public hearings on the whole concept of the regional health boards. The people of Manitoba do not wish to take the blame for the Tory cuts. We do not want local communities to be set up by this legislation to be the ones to, in effect, take the blame for the government's proposed and inevitable, it would seem, cuts.

The plan is clearly one which is a centralizing model. Not only that, it contradicts public statements that the minister made and this government has proclaimed or pontificated to support. What it actually does is centralize control and it is basically unfair to regional health authorities and it is unfair to hold regional health authorities accountable for the cuts that the minister makes, for the cuts that the Premier makes, for the cuts that the Filmon government makes. It is unfair for the Filmon government to hold local health authorities accountable because they have no true power. Not only is this centralizing as a model of governance and putting considerable—it is moving the decision making nowhere but upwards into the minister and putting the blame onto



local authorities. But it is also doing it in a sneaky manner, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If you look at the further parts of the legislation, many parts of it are going to be determined by regulation. Regulation and more bureaucracy, that is going to be the legacy of the Filmon government, that is going to be the legacy of this government that should be looking at more efficiency and more effective governance, but what we have is more regulation, more closed doors and, instead of transparency, what we have is closed-door, centralized policy making through regulation.

In fact, the other day the Fraser Institute, a think tank, a fairly right-wing, I would say, think tank, submitted a report on the case for less regulation in government. The move by this government for more and more regulation clearly goes against the concepts of open, accountable government that the Fraser Institute is calling for, is what the people of Manitoba are calling for and is what we are calling for. The way to govern is through legislation to be up front and not through the back door through regulation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also another area of serious concern, the fact that there is no defined appeal process to this legislation, there is no reference in this legislation to an appeal process, which again we do not believe to be a small error. Perhaps they just forgot to write in the clause. Hardly. This is again a construed piece of legislation done to definitely manipulate the health care process so that the Filmon cuts can be implemented while local boards take the blame.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have many serious concerns about the Regional Health Authorities bill and governance. I have articulated but a few of the concerns that we have had that are also articulated by the Manitoba Health Organizations, and I do hope that the government on that side, although they are still busy in their own personal conversations, will have the time to read those briefs, will have the time to perhaps look at some of the suggestions our side of the House has presented. In fact, we would like to spend some time debating this issue.

Our critic for Health has made just a few questions, a few questions. We have a few questions about the Regional Health Authorities bill, and I believe it only took our critic a few minutes to think up a hundred

questions about the regional health bill, and it is not surprising, since there seems to be a clear contradiction between what the verbiage of the government is, local empowerment and the reality of the bill, which centralizes decision making and reduces transparency rather than making open and accountable legislation, as Manitobans want. Thank you.

\* (1530)

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The member for Swan River who has 27 minutes remaining.

**Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, the legislation that is before us is one that is causing great concern for many people, not only in rural Manitoba but across the province. I want to take this opportunity to put forward a few comments with regard to this bill and the impact that it will have on people and the concerns that have been raised by many people that I believe this government must address.

When you look at regionalization and if it is to be considered a better way to deliver health care services and improve the delivery of health care and improve the relationship between the boards, and then you would say that regionalization is a good thing and it is something that many health experts across the country are saying that it is something that we should be looking at, and if regionalization is an attempt to empower the public and democratize the process and give better health care services, then it is certainly something that should be considered and is being looked at and something that we would support.

When we look at this piece of legislation, that is not what this piece of legislation is doing. In fact, this piece of legislation is offloading the responsibility or setting up boards that are supposed to have responsibility of delivering health care services in rural Manitoba and, in fact, probably in urban Manitoba. But in reality under this bill, the minister has a tremendous amount of power. In reality it does not give the public more power. It brings more control through the minister and it is centralizing the powers rather than empowering the communities to have better health care services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of that we feel that this is a bad piece of legislation and one that should be

withdrawn. It is dictatorial in the provisions of its powers and as I say will not improve the way that health care services are delivered. There are many concerns and I go back to—the decision to move towards regionalization was made, and it came from the recommendations of a committee that was the northern and rural task force on health care. They came forward with this decision, but they put forward many recommendations, recommendations that were supposed to be mandatory but in reality that has not happened.

One of the biggest concerns is the recommendation put forward that we would have elected boards, and that is what happens in other provinces, but the first boards were supposed to be appointed and from then move towards elected boards. When we look at this legislation there is no provision to have boards elected. They say they may be elected and, of course, that causes us great concern, and it causes a greater concern when you look at the first boards that have been elected and what the structure of those boards is. When you look at them it looks very much like, in many cases, it is who is who in the Tory membership list or perhaps who was a candidate for the Tories and that is a real concern. Good Tories have been appointed chairs of the boards by this government.

I have another concern, and that is that there is no gender balance in these boards. It is really strange that this government, who would like to have the people believe that they are open and understanding, could not find women to sit on the board. Within my region and the Swan Valley Region, I think the Parkland Health Board, there are two women I believe appointed. Out of a board of 15, surely there must be women who are willing and able to serve on this board, but this government has chosen to ignore them. When we raised the issue with the minister he said that, well, they put out the call for applications, for people to submit their names for the board, and they had lots of applications from the area but they chose to only appoint those who appeared to have ties to the Conservative Party or the majority of them.

I am also concerned that in those areas where we have a large aboriginal population, and my constituency is one of those, the Parkland regional health authority will be responsible for delivering services to many aboriginal

people that again there is one aboriginal person appointed. My colleague for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) indicated in his constituency, in that area where 50 percent of the people are aboriginal people, the number of aboriginal people appointed to the board is very, very low. So I think that the minister should have been more sensitive to the needs of the people looking for true representation of the population when he was making the decision to appoint these boards rather than looking at who was friends of the Conservatives to be on the board, that he had truly considered all people. If that had not worked, if they did not get enough applications, they should have gone back to the drawing board, just as we believe they should go back to the drawing board with this bill.

There are many flaws in the bill. Many concerns that have been raised. One of them is a representation, and the fact that boards will not be elected, they will be appointed by the minister. The other is the power that has been given to the minister under this bill. Rather than empowering the people, this legislation gives more power to the minister. The minister has power to overrule the decisions of the board. For example, right now, the regional health boards that have been appointed, even though there is no legislation to make them legal, CEOs have been hired and the regional health boards are putting forward their plan. The fact is that these boards could put all their annual plans together and the minister has the power to overrule everything that they have done.

So, rather than empowering people, it is giving more power to the minister. We believe that there are so many flaws in this bill that in fact the government should withdraw this bill. They should go back to the people and consult and put forward, after consultation, a discussion paper. Let the public have input and then bring forward a piece of legislation that will really meet the needs of the people, a piece of legislation that will indeed empower the people of the communities to deliver better health care services, a piece of legislation that will allow local people to make decisions on what kind of services they want. I would hope that the minister would take to heart the recommendations that have been put forward and make a decision to withdraw this piece of legislation and go back to the public and listen to the public and bring forward a better piece of legislation that will indeed improve our health care delivery system in the province.

I have to ask, as well, whether this government is treating rural and northern Manitoba different than they are the city of Winnipeg. We have a bill that outlines how health care services are going to be delivered in rural Manitoba, but then just recently after the bill was introduced they began reworking the system and then they came up with the idea of a superboard for the city of Winnipeg.

We have to ask, will this superboard for the city of Winnipeg come under this bill or is it going to be under another piece of legislation? If those superboards in Winnipeg come under this bill, certainly it is going to require huge amendments to the bill.

\* (1540)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the big concern is here that you cannot have one piece of legislation for the city of Winnipeg and a different piece of legislation for the rural part of the province. That is what this government has not spelled out, and that is, how will the new superboards for the city of Winnipeg be handled under this legislation?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is also a concern about, what is the role of the existing hospital boards that are there? What is the role of the CEOs that are in place in the existing hospitals? Are we going to have now a superboard, and I look at rural Manitoba, where there is going to be a chief CEO for the whole area and then there is going to be chief executive officers for each hospital. What is the role of the existing hospital boards? Do they have any power?

The advisory committee recommended that there be district health councils established in each region, a certain number of them established in each region, and that is one of the mandatory recommendations. How are these district health councils going to be established and how are they going to be funded?

That was one of the concerns that was raised by the women's institutes, that there are district health councils who are the lowest level that would be closest to the people, but there is no funding in place for these district health councils to operate. They in fact felt that they would be quite useless without any funding. So I think that the government has created a real mishmash here and has really no direction, has given no real direction to the

people of Manitoba as to how all of these people are going to fit in to deliver a better health care system. In fact, you have to wonder what the responsibility of any of these boards or councils are when the minister has the discretionary power to overrule any decisions that these people put forward.

I guess the other concern that we have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this bill does nothing to support the public health care system, and it is clearly a plan, it fits with the plan by this government to move towards privatization. Whether it be in home care or whether it be in rental of equipment, personal care, we see that there will be a move towards privatization and, within this act, there are specific powers that have been given to the board to charge for health care services. That is completely unacceptable and goes against the five major principles of health that we are supposed to be following in this province.

It appears that this government is more interested in following the model that is in New Zealand. In fact, they sent their senior staff to New Zealand to look at their model on how health care should be delivered and is the model they are following rather than following the standards that we are supposed to be having in this province.

The other concern, and I raised this in Question Period the other day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is, what we have seen in recent months with this government recapturing surpluses, the retainable surpluses that hospital boards were allowed to keep in order to provide additional services in the hospitals, or if they had a shortfall they could use these surpluses, and they were given the assurances that this money would not be taken from them. Now we find that the government is proceeding along this path and is recapturing the retainable surpluses from the boards. Those boards who were following the government guidelines and living within their budgets—although it was very difficult to live within those budgets, they chose to do them—now those boards who have done this are being punished, and those funds are being recaptured to run the establishment of the regional health authority. That was not what was set out in the guidelines and that was not what was proposed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many problems with the bill, and I think the one that we want to especially

emphasize is the dictatorial power that has been given to the minister, a minister who is able to overrule or amend any proposals that are put forward. In fact, as I said, the new regional health boards are putting forward plans right now, but in actual fact if the minister does not like the plans, they—

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Anyone wanting to carry on a conversation can do so in the halls or in the loge. I am having great difficulty hearing the honourable member with all the chatter that is going on, so if we could just tone it down or take it outside.

The honourable member for Swan River, to continue.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for that, and I would encourage the members of the government side to listen to what we are saying on this bill, because they have chosen not to speak on these very important issues, and many of the rural members know that the implementation of this legislation will have a negative impact on the delivery of health care in rural Manitoba. I am quite disappointed that these members would not take this opportunity to speak up for the people that they represent and put on the record any concerns that they might have with this legislation. This is a major bill and there are parts of it that we said that could be supported, but surely the government members must have heard some concerns within their community—

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The honourable Minister of Labour, on a point of order.

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want the member to know that if I have concerns I have raised them with the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), and the Minister of Health has responded in very strong and admirable ways.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable minister did not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The honourable member for Swan River, to continue.

**Ms. Wowchuk:** I appreciate that that member wants the opportunity to put some comments on the record on these bills, because I understand that they are not allowed to do so, but since he has got a direct line to the minister's office, I would hope that the rural members and the urban members as well would want their constituents to know that they are speaking up for them on a particularly important issue, as important an issue as health care to Manitobans, that they would want something on the record rather than have just a private meeting with the Minister of Health to do this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in previous years when there were bills that were before the House, backbenchers and members of government did put comments on the record, and you would think that on an issue such as this, an issue that could completely change how our health care system is delivered, an act that could allow the use of user fees, something that Manitobans are completely opposed to, a bill that will result, if passed without amendments, will change health care, that these government members would want to have the opportunity to put some comments on the record before we see an Americanization of our health care system. We know that that is the direction the government was going in when they spent millions of dollars on an American consultant to tell us how to do this. This is just their plan being laid out.

Another area of concern, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this bill gives the Minister of Health the authority to essentially become a mini-Minister of Labour, dealing with Health matters regarding labour issues such as bargaining units determination and collective bargaining. This is really quite appalling and something that the workers in the health care field are very concerned about, that we would have the Minister of Health taking on that kind of responsibility. The Minister of Labour (Mr. Toews) should also be concerned about this as well, a Minister of Health taking over jurisdiction of labour issues.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many concerns with this bill. It is in our opinion not a good bill. It has not been well thought out and is one that should go back to the drawing board, because it is very complex and wide-ranging. There are wide-ranging issues. I have outlined a few. There is the issue of the election of officers that the minister has backed off on. There is the issue of now

giving the ability for the health boards to allow for charging for services. There is the issue of the minister taking over and becoming really a mini-Minister of Labour. There is the issue of—[interjection] Of course. The member says, then maybe we will have a minister who will speak up; that may be not a bad idea.

\* (1550)

There has to be assurances that our health care system remains a nonprofit health care system, and this legislation does not ensure that. This legislation moves us towards user fees. This legislation will allow for additional pressure to be put on workers in the health care field. This legislation will allow for privatization of many more services, and we saw the letter that went to all the hospitals the other day where they are going to end the contracts for the lab and imaging departments and affect many people who are working.

So the government is on their ideological horse and moving forward to a right-wing agenda, which is not in the best interest of Manitobans. If we were really interested in people, we would be looking at empowering people and giving them the opportunity to have more say in how health care is run. We would be moving towards a preventative health care system. There are many things that could be done without this piece of legislation, and I would urge the government to look at ways that we could deliver a better health care system.

We put forward a healthy child proposal, many steps that could be taken to improve health care for children. But destroying the home care system, destroying our Pharmacare system and putting pressure on workers and privatizing labs is not the best way to deliver health care services. Creating a superboard, another level of governance within the health care system, is not the way to deliver a better health care system in this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are things that the government could be doing, but what they should be doing is withdrawing this piece of legislation, putting forward a discussion paper, consulting with people, consulting with experts who really believe that we should have a universal health care system and put forward a better document than we have here. But, above all, we must ensure that our health care system is preserved, and those people who built this province have the opportunity

to get the services we need and that our aboriginal people have the services that we need, that we put forward policies that will ensure that we have healthy children in this province to carry forward.

We saw some real examples yesterday here in the House of people who are lost within the system of this government because they have cut back on so many programs, and that is all part of keeping children healthy in this province. This government has certainly failed the children of this province and is now failing all of the province when it comes to delivery of health care services, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I urge the government members to look at this bill and those who have taken the opportunity to talk to the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) on this issue that they urge him to recognize that this is wrong. We can have regionalization, but it has to be regionalization that will empower people and bring it back to the grassroots but will not be a system that with changes will destroy the system that we want so much in this province and one that we on this side of the House will fight to ensure that we have. Thank you.

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Broadway (Mr. Santos), that debate be adjourned.

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **Bill 70—The Animal Care Act**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), Bill 70, The Animal Care Act; Loi sur le soin des animaux, standing in the name of the honourable member for Burrows. No? Okay.

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be the last member of our caucus to speak on this bill, and then we are prepared to pass it through to committee.

As my colleagues the members for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) have said, we are generally in support of this piece of legislation, and I am going to speak in support of some of the processes that went into this legislation.

We like very much that there are stiff fines, that the fines have been increased in some cases tenfold. We feel that this is important to act as a deterrent, hopefully, for people from mistreating animals, both agriculturally and in personal ownership and in organizations for animals for sale. We also hope that it will act not only as a deterrent but that it will send a message to people who are convicted under this legislation that this is a very negative thing to do and that they will be punished severely for transgressing the elements of Bill 70.

Parenthetically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish that there were stiffer penalties for construction companies who allow their workers to face serious danger in the workplace. I wish there were severer penalties for people who have been convicted of driving offences, as we heard in Question Period today. So I think the government's record in this regard is checkered. However, in the context of Bill 70 it is good to see that those fines have been stiffened.

There is going to be a definition of standards for animal care and quick intervention to rescue animals from pain and suffering. I think that is a very positive step. We do need standards of definition for animal care, and we do need to have quick responses to rescue animals from pain and suffering.

Again, I compare the positives in Bill 70 with what currently happens with women who have been sexually assaulted in the province of Manitoba. There is no standard hospital protocol for dealing with women who have been sexually assaulted in the province of Manitoba. We have standards for the care of animals, in Bill 70, but we do not have any standards for the care of women who have been sexually assaulted, in hospitals, again an interesting display on the part of this government as to what is important and what is not.

This piece of legislation also requires the licensing of commercial dog and cat breeding operations. I think, as a result, several years ago, of several very disturbing items in the media, this legislation has come to pass and not a moment too soon. We hope that the government acts as quickly on the concerns that have recently been raised in the media dealing with young women who are being used as sex slaves in gang initiation, gang rapes. There does not appear to be much concern about that nor, again, other areas in the justice system.

The thing that I would like to spend a couple of minutes talking about, in a very positive way, is what the minister has said has been the process—

**An Honourable Member:** You cannot do it.

**Ms. Barrett:** The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) says that I cannot do it. I never avoid a challenge. You just watch me. Watch my lips support.

What struck me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I was reading the background and most particularly the press release about Bill 70, was the carefulness with which it appears the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) structured this bill, the procedures that he went through in order to make this bill as good as possible.

He talks about the regulations and that the regulations are going to be developed by government and industry, based on established codes of practice. This is great. This is the way it should be. You go out and you talk to the people who are actually working in the field, you go out and you talk to the people who are bringing the concerns to you. You work together. You work collaboratively on defining the regulations, and because I said I was going to be positive, I am not going to make another parallel example which has just sprung to my mind. Much as though I would like to, I will not do it. Perhaps the government members can come up with one or two examples on their own.

The regulations are supposed to ensure that the standards that are applied in these areas are realistic, practical and easily updated to keep pace with new developments in knowledge of animal care. This is the way it is supposed to be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, working together with people to put in place regulations. As we all know, for many pieces of legislation, the real impact and the real import of those pieces of legislation is not felt until you get to the making of the regulations. In some cases, in some of the legislation before us this session, the regulations are virtually the entire bill, so the regulation process is incredibly important because that is how the principles that are embedded in the bill become realized. So we appreciate and approve very much of the process that the minister appears to have undertaken in order to develop these regulations.

\* (1600)

Again, the section that deals with puppy mills appears to have been based on some very good negotiations or discussions. The minister states that he worked with the Winnipeg Humane Society, the Union of Manitoba Municipalities, MAUM, the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association, the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council, the Consumers' Association and the Canadian Kennel Club. This, again, appears, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be the way that bills should be produced and regulations should be implemented, working collaborately with the groups affected to come up with the best possible legislation.

So, while I would like to say that my colleagues for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) and Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) have made the constructive suggestion, I think, that perhaps the sections dealing with farm animals and animal husbandry could better have been dealt with in a separate piece of legislation and the areas dealing with things such as puppy mills and that kind of thing would best be separated out, but with that small concern aside, we are prepared to pass this legislation through to committee and will be supporting it. Thank you.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading on Bill 70. Is it the will of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

**Some Honourable Members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** Agreed and so ordered.

#### **Bill 36—The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act**

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aide sociale et apportant des modifications corrélatives, standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hicke).

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

**Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, in my comments about Bill 70 I was quite positive and

supportive of the process that this piece of legislation undertook and the elements of it. I am afraid, however, that I am not going to be able to be nearly as positive in my comments about Bill 36. Bill 36 is not a good piece of legislation. It is not a good piece of legislation with its elements, and it certainly is not a good piece of legislation if you relate to the underlying principles that show through loud and clear in this piece of legislation.

The minister said that there were two or three major reasons for introducing Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. Then she proceeds to outline those two or three goals of this legislation. Well, I would suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this legislation fails on all of the principles that she has outlined, and I will go through those in some detail. The first thing the minister says that Bill 36 will do is improve services to clients. I do not know how she can say that this is going to improve services to clients. The basic element, or one of the basic elements in Bill 36 is the elimination of the two-tier system in social allowances. Currently there are two tiers in Manitoba, one for the city of Winnipeg and one for the rest of the municipalities and cities and areas in the province, and the aim of Bill 36 is to bring those together into one tier.

Now, the concept of a one-tier social allowances is not in and of itself a negative, however the concern that we have, and a concern that I would suggest is founded in a great deal of reality, is that the one tier that the government is going to choose to implement is going to be the provincial tier. The reason that is a concern for us, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the provincial social allowance system is not nearly as good on a number of scales as the City of Winnipeg social allowance system.

One of the bases that we agree with is that it is important to try and assist people to get off social assistance. It is important to try and break the cycle of poverty. It is important to try and ensure that families do not have to look towards a life only of continued reliance on the social assistance network. We all want that. This legislation does not help to bring that goal about, however.

I will give a couple of examples of that. Currently, the City of Winnipeg provides for its recipients to get bus passes so that they can physically go look for work, they can go have job interviews, they can have a degree of

mobility, provides, in certain cases, for additional funding for work clothes. It is one thing to say you are going to go out on a job search; it is quite another to have clothing that is adequate to the task. We all know how important personal appearance is when making application or having an interview for a job. If you do not have at least a decent basic wardrobe, your chances of getting a job are that much further reduced. The city recognizes this reality. The city also recognizes the reality that its basic welfare allowances do not always allow for the individual to be able to get clothing to be able to effectively go out and look for a job.

The city welfare system also recognizes a very important idea, very important reality, and that is that many people on assistance have children. They have children who are not always in school. So the city welfare allows, in certain cases, for individuals, when they are going out on job searches or when they are taking training programs, to have some support to cover child-care expenses so that their children are not forced either into unsafe conditions on the street or to be looked after by people who are not trained nor are, in some cases, competent to watch out for them.

There is a great deal of flexibility, not only in these elements in the city welfare system, but unlike the provincial system, the city welfare system allows for the front-line social worker, whose clients these people are, to make these determinations by themselves. The worker can decide if some assistance for child-care expenses or work expenses or a bus pass is something that will help this individual get a job and break the cycle of poverty. In the provincial system, you have to go to the director or sometimes the assistant deputy minister or, in some cases, the minister before you get these kinds of approvals. It is much more flexible in the city system.

\* (1610)

Another element that is different between the city system and the provincial system is the level of education of the workers themselves. In the City of Winnipeg, at least 50 of the front-line workers have social work degrees. That means they have a basic knowledge of the principles of social welfare, they have had course work in interpersonal relations, they understand the system and they have a basic concern and caring for their clients. That is not to say that provincial social assistance

workers do not care for their clients, and I do not want that to be left on the record at all, but there is a higher level of training on the part of the city workers than there is on the part of the provincial workers and, perhaps, going along with that, an understanding of how they can network with other organizations and groups to facilitate people getting off social assistance.

Another element that the minister spoke of in her remarks introducing Bill 36 was that this would reduce administrative duplication. Well, yes, I guess you can say that by definition, ultimately, if you go from two systems to one system, a certain amount of administrative overlap will be eliminated. However, I do not believe Bill 36 in itself provides for, nor do I believe that regulations and funding will provide for, the costs associated with the transition from two systems to one system.

There are different computer systems in operation here. There are different protocols in operation here. Who is going to decide the protocols for determining which clients get access to child care and bus passes and other additional funding? Who is going to decide whether the front line worker can make those determinations or if it has to be at a higher level? Who is going to decide which computer system is going to be implemented? Who is going to do the transition of the computer systems?

I will admit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to abject ignorance on the part of the computer process. I do know, however, the difficulty that is entailed with going from one system to another system or putting two separate systems into a third system. It takes a long time. The Department of Family Services has been trying to implement computerization, and they still have not completely done it.

This is going to be an enormously expensive proposition, enormously expensive in terms of money and enormously expensive in terms of time. Who is going to pay for that time? Who is going to pay for the release of or the hiring of people who will implement the computer transition? Nothing is said. All the minister says is that it is going to reduce administrative expenses and administrative duplication.

Well, as I stated, yes, ultimately it may do so, but there is going to be a fairly lengthy transition period, and if the history of this government is any indication, there will be



absolutely no resources provided to the social assistance system in order to facilitate that transition.

There are not only separate programs and procedures and protocols and computer systems, but there are also three separate unions that represent the workers in the two systems, in the municipal system and the city welfare system. Who is going to determine which union represents those workers?

If Bill 49 is any indication, there may be through regulation a czar appointed by the minister to make that determination singly and alone. Even if Bill 49 is not the template for this particular process in Bill 36, there is still an enormous question. How are you going to integrate three separate unions with three separate contracts and three separate representative systems into one system? Who is going to make the determination? How are they going to work together? Are there any resources being put in place to assist in that transition?

The government may not care for unions, but the reality of the fact is that there are union representing the workers in the social assistance field. They must be taken into account. Those procedures must be looked at, and the rights of those union members must be respected at all costs. So I am putting the government on notice that we will be observing very carefully how it implements the transition from two-tier to one-tier when it comes to workers' rights and the unions that represent them currently.

The minister also states that this Bill 36 will avoid situations of fraud or abuse. She does not explain this in any detail at all, and I am not quite sure I understand how Bill 36 is going to have as a result a reduction in fraud and abuse. I am afraid, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am not likely to get an answer to my question, because the government refuses to debate these bills of import. We are asking questions that members of the public are asking, and we are not getting any answers, not an unusual situation for this government. Assuming that there is a protocol going to be put into place, there is something in Bill 36 that we cannot find that is going to help reduce the situations of fraud or abuse, why does the minister continue to pick on this particular problem? Every study done in Winnipeg, in Manitoba, in Canada, in North America, in every developed country in the world, every single study says that at a maximum there is

a 3 percent chance of fraud or abuse of the social welfare system.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

In virtually every situation where governments have put in place procedures to try and catch those abusers, the procedures themselves cost more money than they recover through situations of fraud or abuse. Again, it is an indication of the pettiness, if I can say it, of this government to highlight in a bill of this importance the situation that is really a very small and negligible problem, far less of a problem than the transition elements that I have spoken of.

Madam Speaker, the minister also says that Bill 36 will help emphasize employment. Well, again, where? How? This government over its six-plus years in—no, eight years—in office has done nothing to increase the opportunities for people to work, most particularly people who are on social assistance. They have done nothing but decrease those opportunities. They have taken programs and have eliminated them or not funded them. They have chosen not to fund programs such as the Parent-Child Centres that were proven through their core area five years of existence to be an excellent preventive program, proven to give mothers and other parents opportunities to network one with another, to give their children an opportunity to interact with each other, to learn how other families work and overcome problems. They did not fund the Parent-Child Centres.

They have cut the Human Resources Opportunity Centres. They have been totally eviscerated. These programs put upwards of 90 percent of their recipients to work. What have they replaced them with? Programs such as Taking Charge!, which was 18 months late in getting off the ground, which has had a number of people make application to the program and who have been turned down. We do not know much about the Taking Charge! program, but we do know that even if it worked at optimum it would not begin to replace the programs that this government has eliminated.

There are 41,000 social assistance cases in the province of Manitoba. Not all of those cases are employable. Many of them are not. This government in Bill 36 and in statements that the minister and others have made in the House seems to assume that, No. 1,

every single person on social assistance, every case, if you will, every family, can work. That is a false assumption, and it is a patently false assumption. The other assumption that bills such as Bill 36 make is that there will be jobs for these 41,000 cases. Well, Madam Speaker, we know that is not true. When the government cuts the programs, the training programs, the education programs, the social interaction programs, all the programs that can assist social assistance recipients to get the training, to get the background to enable them to make application for jobs and be seriously considered for jobs, how can they expect the social assistance recipients to be able to compete in a job market where there are 5,000 fewer jobs today than there were a year ago?

\* (1620)

In a job market where jobs that used to be seen as entry level jobs or jobs for kids in high school, as afternoon, after work jobs such as in the fast food industry, these jobs are not being taken by high school students or being able to be jobs for social assistance recipients as entry level jobs. Many of these jobs are currently being taken by university graduates or they are being taken by seniors who have had their programs and their supports cut back to the extent that they have to go back out into the workforce. There are not jobs available even for people with high skill levels. There certainly are not jobs available for people who are on social assistance and have low levels of education achievement or training or other skills.

Another requirement is that you will no longer have assistance if you are—or you will be required to go to look for work if your children are over six years of age. Now, I assume that the basis for this is that kids are in school and therefore their parents, usually their mothers, have nothing better to do but then to go out and look for work. Well, I refer back to my earlier comments about the fact that in many cases the parents do not have access to child care. They do not have access to the equipment that they need to be able to effectively do a job search. They do not have telephones. They are not able to access telephones, and I would like to know how many jobs you think you could get if you did not have access to a phone so a potential employer could call you back. Not very many.

The minister says that people want to work. Well, this is absolutely true; there is no denying that, but there are not the jobs and there is not the training and the support

available for many of these people to get off social assistance. So for the minister in Bill 36 to punish these people because of cutbacks that they themselves have undertaken as a government is rather unfortunate and will have devastating impacts on many people. When the minister says people want to work, I think she is assuming that everybody, even in a full job market, would find work.

I think the Prime Minister of Canada in effect has redefined what full employment is when he recently said do not expect the unemployment level will get down below 8 percent in the next few years. That is, the structural unemployment level is now 8 percent according to the federal government. A few years ago 8 percent would have been considered an unacceptably high level of unemployment. Well, we are almost at 10 percent. In some places, we are at over 10 percent. In some parts of Manitoba, we are at 95 percent unemployment.

People are not unemployed because they do not want to work; they are unemployed because they do not have the skills necessary to compete for their jobs. They are unemployed because there are not any jobs available. There are also people who in our society, given the structure of our economy, are not going to be able to find work, even if the unemployment rate were down at 2 percent or 3 percent, as it was several years ago.

There are still people who will be unable to find work. Those are people who have physical and mental challenges that preclude them from the workforce. Perhaps many of them should not be precluded from the workforce and would not need to be precluded from the workforce if we had programs in place that would help them discover and live up to their potential, but the reality is that there are a number of people in these 41,000 cases, these 41,000 families, who are not going to be able to find work, and this government is punishing them. This government is going to say, I do not care what your physical constraints are, I am not going to give you a bus pass to go. I am not going to give you a support like Handi-Transit, which, by the way, is being severely reduced due, in no small part, to the reductions from this provincial government to the City of Winnipeg for transit.

It is just a punitive piece of legislation that does not reflect the reality of Manitoba today and does not even

reflect the optimum reality of a Manitoba that was not governed by a Progressive Conservative government. It is just a nasty, negative piece of legislation.

Funny, the minister talks about the change from—a language change. It is not going to be called The Social Allowances Act anymore; it is going to be called The Employment and Income Assistance Act, and she makes a fairly strong statement about that. This is the same minister that several years ago changed the act dealing with the status of women. She changed the Manitoba Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act to the Manitoba Women's Advisory Council. I was critic of this minister at the time, and I was critical of this minister at the time, when she made that change, because I stated then that language is important. It says a great deal about what we feel and think, and it reflects our values.

Now the minister said, it is not important. It is not important; it is still doing the same thing. Now the minister is saying that we are changing the title of this act because language is important, because we want to go from social allowances, which I think she meant to mean welfare, to employment and income assistance, somehow thinking that that is going to make the reality any different. Well, language is important. The language that has changed in this act, the fact that she has changed the title of this act, speaks volumes.

First of all, I do not think the new title reflects the actual impact of this piece of legislation. It is not going to help people find employment. If the government does not make massive changes to this legislation, it is going to make it more difficult for people to find employment. As far as the income assistance part of the new title, no, this is not going to do the same thing either. It is going to make it more difficult for people to get income assistance. It is going to reduce the amount of income assistance they get. It is probably going to mean that all families with infants a year old or less are going to have a severe reduction in the amount of money they are going to have to feed and clothe their children, their infants. It is the complete antithesis of employment and income assistance. So the minister is being not straight with the people of Manitoba if she says that this is a positive act.

Also, just briefly, on the language, social allowances. When the minister eliminates the word “social” from this piece of legislation, I think also what she is saying is that

we no longer have a social contract one with another. We no longer as the state have a responsibility to ensure that all of our citizens have the basic necessities. When you take the word “social” out of legislation and out of titles and out of the language, you are removing from our culture, if you will, something that has been part of the Canadian mosaic, the Canadian cultural mosaic since the time of its inception, and that is the concept that we are a community, that we are responsible for each other, that we are not just an amalgam of individuals, but we are a society.

This is a dreadful piece of legislation, Madam Speaker, and at committee we will be voting against it. With those few words, I am putting my comments on the record. Thank you.

**Madam Speaker:** As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

The hour being 4:30 p.m., time for private members' hour.

\* (1630)

## 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 Northern and Native Affairs (Mr. Praznik).

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 honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

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

#### **Bill 203—The Public Assets Protection Act**

**Madam Speaker:** On the proposed motion of the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), Bill 203, The Public Assets Protection Act (Loi sur la protection des biens publics), standing in the name of the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

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

#### **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).

### **PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS**

#### **Res. 16—Equalization of Hydro Rates**

**Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson):** Madam Speaker, by leave, I would like to move the following resolution.

**Madam Speaker:** Does the honourable member for Thompson have leave to propose Resolution 16? [agreed]

**Mr. Ashton:** I move, seconded by the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), that

WHEREAS Manitoba Hydro provides hydroelectric power to Manitobans throughout the province; and

WHEREAS electricity is an important public utility; and

WHEREAS many Manitobans are frustrated over the current rate structure of Manitoba Hydro that results in residents of certain areas paying more for hydroelectric power than those in other areas; and

WHEREAS this results, particularly, in rural and northern Manitobans paying more for hydroelectric power; and

WHEREAS many Manitobans feel that this variance in rate structure is unfair; and

WHEREAS prior to the last provincial election the then Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro indicated that the government was preparing to change the structure in light of these concerns; and

WHEREAS no action was ever taken by the provincial government on this matter.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that Manitoba Hydro and the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Praznik) consider reviewing the current rate structure in light of the need to ensure equitable treatment of all Manitobans regardless of where they live.

**Motion presented.**

**Mr. Ashton:** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to move this resolution on behalf of the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), and I want to thank the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) for seconding the resolution.

I want to put on the record that this is a very important concern, particularly in northern Manitoba, but I would suggest to you as well that throughout rural Manitoba it is very much a similar concern. One has to, I think, start from a recognition of how our hydro rates are structured. They are structured on the basis of the size of the population of the community served and the area served, the population density. Now what that results in is we

have a number of rate structures and, coincidentally, it results in the city of Winnipeg paying the least for hydro. It results in some of the larger communities, my own community being in the second tier, and other rural communities and northern communities paying the most for hydro.

I want to indicate, Madam Speaker, that I believe this is a very easily corrected problem because it would not result in a dramatic increase in rates for anyone. The fact is it is really a marginal difference and it is really something that is symbolic to many rural and northern residents of an unfairness. Now I want to stress again why people are so concerned about this and why it is a particular concern in northern Manitoba. I do not think it requires much to recognize the fact that much of our hydro comes from northern Manitoba.

Apart from the Winnipeg River system, most of the large dams that have been built, virtually all of the developments of the last 35, 40 years have been in northern Manitoba. I must say it is particularly frustrating for people in communities such as Gillam or Bird, which are right next to hydro sites, or Split Lake or Nelson House or York Landing or Cross Lake or Norway House, all communities that have been affected by flooding from surrounding hydro dams, to be paying more for their hydro than people who live in the city of Winnipeg. I would suggest to you that there might be some who would suggest that it should be the other way around, but we are not proposing that.

We are saying that here we have a public utility and here we have an opportunity to use a very good asset of the province of Manitoba, our Manitoba Hydro, and bring in an equitable rate structure that is fair to all Manitobans regardless of where they live. Now I want to stress that this is not the first time we have raised this issue. I have been raising this issue time and time again, in fact, I have gone to the Public Utilities Board. I went as the Hydro critic for the Manitoba New Democratic Party officially to propose that we have equalization of hydro rates. I also want to indicate my understanding—and I can speak for the New Democratic Party and I also believe the Liberals are on record as supporting equalized hydro rates—it is only the government right now that is holding this back.

**Some Honourable Members:** Shame.

**Mr. Ashton:** Now it is even worse. I know the members on our side are saying “shame.” It is even more frustrating than one might imagine, because we have had indications in the past that this was going to be corrected. The former minister responsible for Hydro, Don Orchard, people remember the former member for Pembina, a very outspoken member who was known mostly for health care issues. But you know, he was the minister responsible for Hydro and had committed very clearly to many communities and committed in the committee of the Legislature that we were going to have equalized hydro rates. Now what happened, Madam Speaker?

**An Honourable Member:** He did not run again.

**Mr. Ashton:** No, I was not asking what happened to the member for Pembina. I know he is very busy right now working on behalf of one of the private consortiums looking at our lab system, the privatization of our health care system. But I wish him well, I wish Don Orchard well. I know he was a very active member of this House, to say the least, Madam Speaker, very involved in debate.

Mr. Orchard said that there would be equalization of hydro rates, but what happened was there was another kind of equalization that took place that pre-empted this with Manitoba Hydro. What they did is they brought in some changes that brought down the relative spread between business and residential rates, so they equalized business and residential rates to a greater extent but did not proceed with the equalization of hydro rates.

Now I want to put this in perspective again, because was it that they were in difficult financial straits? Well, no, Madam Speaker. If you would look at the situation with Manitoba Hydro because of the development of our hydroelectric resources in this province—and I might add since 1969 every single one of the developments that have taken place have been under New Democratic Party governments. But I will just give you the most recent, and that is Limestone.

Limestone is producing a tremendous profit for the province of Manitoba. There were some members in this House including the current Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) who was then the critic for hydroelectric power, do you know what they wanted to do a number of years ago? They wanted to buy

hydro from the United States instead of developing Limestone.

You know, I think it is interesting how we have time, with even the few years that have passed now, just a decade, to reflect on the fact that they were wrong, they were dead wrong, and that Limestone is now making a profit. Now how is that relevant to Manitoba Hydro's rate structure? We should be using some of that profit which is there, which is on the books with Manitoba Hydro, to equalize hydro rates. We do not have to increase anybody's rates in the province of Manitoba to equalize hydro rates. We can take the revenues that are available and correct this injustice.

I want to suggest to the government that they should consider this again. We have a new minister. We have a minister who I am sure can reflect upon what the commitment was that Don Orchard made. I still remember when we received that commitment in the committee of the Manitoba Legislature looking into Manitoba Hydro. I just ask the government why they will not act on it. This is not a cost to the taxpayer. It is not a cost to the ratepayer. Manitoba Hydro is making money. It is making money from—

**An Honourable Member:** Just like MTS.

**Mr. Ashton:** Well, just like MTS, but I do not want to get into that because I will be spending a lot of time on MTS later on, and I do not want to reflect on the irony of the fact that once again our publicly owned hydroelectric company is making this profit, Manitoba Hydro, not a private company but a publicly owned public utility.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, we would not even be able to debate this, the rate structure of Manitoba Hydro, if this government was to proceed to privatize Manitoba Hydro like it is doing with the Manitoba Telephone System. That is one of the great things about public ownership of our public utilities. We as MLAs who represent our constituents in this Legislature have the opportunity to speak out on issues like this. I mean, if we had a privately owned hydroelectric company, does anyone expect that they might even think of equalizing hydro rates? I would suggest they would probably turn around and do the complete opposite. This is what is going to happen, we know, with the Manitoba Telephone

System. But Manitoba Hydro would probably be faced, as a private company, with higher rates in rural areas.

\* (1640)

You know, it is publicly owned companies like Manitoba Hydro that brought in the hydroelectric service that many rural and northern Manitobans have today. As recently as a few months ago the minister announced the long-awaited development of direct-line hydro power into Pikwitonei and Thicket Portage. That is because we have a publicly owned Manitoba Hydro that has a commitment, has a mandate, to serve Manitobans wherever they live.

So, Madam Speaker, there is an opportunity here to correct one of those irritations that is out there that frustrates many people outside of the city, and I look to the minister because the minister represents a constituency from outside of Winnipeg himself and, I think, understands the concern. There is no complete logic to this because, as I mentioned, it is based on density of service. Manitoba Hydro is only looking at the cost of service based on the assumption that the hydro rate itself is a fixed rate.

It does not make any sense, because the density of the—[interjection] No, the density of the service, not of the government. The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), I think he is getting ahead of me in this. But they only look at that. They treat hydro as if it sort of appears at the delivery level to the retail customer at the same cost to everyone, and I admit there are resources that come from the Winnipeg River system which the City of Winnipeg had investment in, but, you know, the vast majority comes from outside of the city of Winnipeg.

I am arguing here for rural Manitoba, as well, Madam Speaker. I am not saying, just because the hydro just happens to be located in northern Manitoba, that rural residents should not be included in this. I want equality for everyone, and I want to say that sometimes in frustration there are people in the North who wish there was a big tap set up on the hydro that we could just turn a little bit once in a while, just let the lights flicker a little bit just to remind everyone where that hydro comes from, but we would never do that. We would never do that.

You know, we may get the short end of the stick time and time again. [interjection] Well, the Premier of

Newfoundland, he would turn off the tap. We would not. We are proud to be part of the province, Madam Speaker, and we think a lot of the future of Manitoba lies in northern Manitoba. Do you know what? Do not take our generosity for granted, though. I mean, we are getting a little frustrated with not getting the roads back and the services and the rest of it. Do you know what frustrates us in northern Manitoba? It is that we have to pay more for our hydro than the city of Winnipeg does. We have to pay more than the city of Winnipeg does.

Madam Speaker, this is about hydro; it is about rural and northern Manitoba. I think the bottom line is it is a strict issue of fairness, and I will tell you what. I bet you, if you go to anybody in the city of Winnipeg and ask them a straight question, do you think you should have lower hydro rates than people in rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba, do you know what—I think people in Winnipeg are pretty generous, and they have a great commitment to this province—I think they would turn around, and they would say, they should get the same fair treatment as everyone else.

Do you know what is ironic, Madam Speaker? On the Manitoba Telephone System, under this government, they are eliminating the one area where rural residents pay less. We used to pay less outside of the city for phone service because that is based on the reverse principle. If there are more customers, you pay more, so the city of Winnipeg had more customers, and people paid marginally more. That is being eliminated now as the government has moved from its 10-rate structure down to a three-rate structure, and as it moves into privatization, it is probably going to go in reverse, where rural Manitobans and northern Manitobans are going to pay a heck of a lot more, a heck of a lot more for phone service. So MTS has been sort of corrected by the government. It is one thing they do not advertise in rural Manitoba, that people are paying more for their phone service now.

But, you know, if that has been corrected on the one hand—rural Manitobans are paying more; northern Manitobans are paying more—is it not only fair that the same thing be corrected in reverse on Manitoba Hydro. I look to the minister, and I look to members of this House, because, quite frankly, we brought this resolution in. If the members have any difficulty with even the slight criticism of the provincial government, I make a suggestion. I think we could probably amend that. We

could probably remove that section and put it to a vote because I look at the members who are listening to this debate right now, the majority of whom are rural members on the other side. I am sure that, if we took out maybe that reference, they could support this motion as well. I will be interested to see what their comments are.

I know the Liberals will support it. They are already on record in supporting equalized hydro rates, along with the NDP. There are two parties in this House that are, and I really think most individual government members are. Madam Speaker, if we do not have enough time to debate this issue today, I am sure we can bring it back at some other point in time. There are a number of other issues we are hoping to bring back in terms of private members' resolution, the one last week on AECL being a good example. We are hoping to get back and have votes on a number of resolutions, hoping to negotiate that. I think this may be a good example where we can do that.

So, with those words, Madam Speaker, I look forward to the comments of members opposite and particularly from the minister, because I think he has an opportunity to correct a historic injustice, a symbolic injustice, but something that irritates a lot of rural and northern Manitobans.

I think the ball is in his court, and I look forward to hearing his comments and hopefully the support of other members in this House on the government side for what I feel is a very excellent resolution that has been drafted by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin). Thank you.

**Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Energy and Mines):** Madam Speaker, I do not know who on the opposition benches said, cheaper power, cheaper power. I think we all would like to have lower energy costs than what one has today, although in Canada Manitoba Hydro has the lowest published rates in the country and certainly the continent. Canada, generally, is one of the lowest rates in the world. So we enjoy the great benefit of some of the most reasonably priced electricity in the world, and that has been a great advantage to us.

I certainly appreciate the resolution moved by the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and the comments of the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) obviously advocating a position for those who live in areas that have less density and, under Manitoba Hydro's rate

formula, which contains three particular zones based on density, and density affects the cost of putting in lines, putting in the infrastructure and the resulting profitability of those lines compared to areas with higher density, but I would like to put the member's comments in a context.

I have been Minister responsible for Hydro now for a little over a year, I have been Minister of Northern Affairs since 1993, and I continually see or hear what I believe to be a lot of the mythology that surrounds hydro service in this province. This mythology, and we have heard the member today speak about, this is a northern resource and we would sometimes like to stop the power to the south, and it has been, you know, a great advantage to the southern part of Manitoba and somehow something special is owed, but if one follows through the logic of that, the water—[interjection] The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says, equal, but based on the density, his own constituents in the city of Thompson have the same density level as other parts of the No. 1 zone or whatever it is and have the same rates as those in areas with similar density, as do Flin Flon and The Pas. So the density area applies equally across the province. There are some issues in the North with respect to areas not serviced by land line, and I am going to address those a little bit later in my remarks, but there is a fairness.

The same zones apply everywhere across the province. They are based on density, what it costs to bring service into a particular area. So when the member says they want fairness, what he is really asking is that those people who have very low density, where the cost of bringing in that power is much higher than in areas with the greater density, be subsidized, in essence, by those other people. There is some of that now that takes place. There is some of that that takes place now, but the idea of the zones was to level that somewhat to ensure that there was some fairness in density.

There is not one of us rural members who have not had from time to time individuals come who wanted electrical service taken out to an area that is a mile or five or six miles from the main line, and we are looking at \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000, \$30,000 bills, and said, why is this? This is unfair. We should have this put in. Then you look at their usage and you find out it would take 100 or 200 years to pay for the line. Well, if you are saying we should do that, and that is not what the member has been talking, but if one says we should do that, then you are

asking all of the other ratepayers to pay that cost to bring in a line that really the economics of it are somewhat marginal. So we have to be careful.

The member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) knows that. We have had mutual constituents who have wanted service into particular sites at a huge cost with very often seasonal demand. Well, you cannot expect everyone else to pay for that, so when the member asks for fairness, yes, the rates are applied equally all across the province.

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), his constituents in the city of Flin Flon are in the lowest price zone based on the density again. [interjection] Well, perhaps I am wrong in that particular case, but because of again the high density, I gather.

\* (1650)

But, Madam Speaker, the point I would also like to make are that these rate zones have been in place for many decades. They have been in place through various governments, and members of the New Democratic Party, who represented the northern seats in the Pawley administration, did not change those rate zones either, so to stand in opposition to say that, I think, is somewhat unfair. When they had the power, when they were on the government side of the House, they did not change those rate zones. The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), I do not know if he lobbied or not, but he was not able to convince his colleagues to do that.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about Limestone, and I want to talk a little bit about development, and I want to talk a little bit about the development of hydroelectricity.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. I am experiencing some difficulty hearing the honourable Minister of Energy and Mines.

**Mr. Praznik:** Madam Speaker, let us not forget, as I was saying earlier, the members for northern Manitoba often make this point, that the electricity is in the North, it belongs to northerners. Well, the water that flows through the dam that generates the power flows from the United States, it flows from Alberta, from Saskatchewan, from Ontario. Is it their water? Do people say, we are going to hold this water up to make our electricity? It



becomes somewhat of a nonsensical argument, when you look at it logically.

Also, in the development of hydroelectricity, we have thousands of sites across northern Manitoba and other—[interjection] Well, the member mentions flooding. Communities that were flooded that New Democrats in government were not able to resolve, I am pleased to say that today four of the five communities have resolved their issues, either have got agreement or are in ratification, and one we are in heated negotiation, but it is this government which has settled those issues at a very, very significant amount of money.

Madam Speaker, members ask about the agreement. Well, it is signed, ratified by the voters in those areas, and the money has been taken—[interjection] Well, if the members were so good and so well-meaning, why did they not settle it when they were on this side of the House? Why did the northern members who are New Democrats not get it settled? They could not get it settled. They did not get one, not one Northern Flood Agreement settled while they were in power. So let not one member be fooled by that very empty rhetoric on hydro.

The second point I make is, all of those dams in northern Manitoba were developed with somebody's capital ultimately loaned to Hydro and guaranteed by all the taxpayers of Manitoba. We have hundreds of potential hydro sites in northern Manitoba. They are not developed unless there are capital investors prepared to invest, and the dollars that were loaned by Manitoba Hydro to build them are guaranteed not by northern taxpayers only but by all taxpayers of the province of Manitoba through the provincial guarantee.

Members can talk about owning Hydro. Let us not forget what the debt-to-equity ratio of Manitoba Hydro was when the New Democrats left office—98 percent. We own 2 percent of the utility—2 percent. I think we are down now to about 91 percent debt-to-equity ratio, so—[interjection] Well, the member wants to talk about Limestone. This party did not oppose Limestone, it was the timing of Limestone, and I will just tell you, if you look at the profitability of Manitoba Hydro—

**An Honourable Member:** There he is, wanting to buy power from the United States.

**Mr. Praznik:** Well, the member says about buying power from the United States. We buy and sell power in the United States regularly. We do it regularly. And the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who pretends he knows a lot about hydro, should know that in the whole development scheme of hydro, building a dam, there is a time to build one as your demand increases so that you can maximize your revenues, and during that cycle of development there is a period where the province's traditional thinking in Hydro is in that importer of power until the demand or capacity of the dam can be used to a certain point that justifies its construction. So the member likes to, you know, come out with an anti-American comment, buying hydro, what have you.

All of these things have a proper time to be built to maximize the benefit, and I think if you look at Limestone, it was built prematurely and probably done for political reasons, probably built when it was to win a general election, and that is not the way you should be building hydroelectric dams. If I remember that debate correctly—I look to my colleagues—that was really the issue, not building it. It was the timing of the particular dam, just like Conawapa. You cannot build Conawapa today unless you have the customers for the power. So we deal with a great deal of mythology in these debates.

One last point that I would like to make on this issue, the member talks about utilities and hydroelectricity, I must say, in a way that is not reflective of a whole change going on in the electrical industry in North America. Electricity is going through a revolution. It is no longer going to be a utility as we know it. It is becoming a commodity, and it is in a competitive market today with natural gas, cogeneration. The member asks if we will sell it. I dealt with that issue in a speech in this House. At the current time there is not a logic behind selling it, but there is a demand to ensure that we are reforming and reorganizing Hydro and positioning hydroelectricity to take advantage of the opportunities that are there. [interjection]

The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) says we are going to sell it, I know. Well, you know, if I thought for one moment that she knew anything about the electrical revolution in North America, I would treat her comment seriously, but I do not think she does because, quite frankly, it is evolving and happening. Manitoba Hydro has some huge opportunities ahead if we move to take

advantage of that, and that is as a public utility, and I have never said anything differently, although the member for Wellington might like to imply that. But we have to take that on, quite frankly, and deal with it.

I would also like to point out, Madam Speaker, in the few moments remaining to me that one of the great differences in hydro rates in northern Manitoba has not been the kind of rate structure the member talks about, but it has been the diesel generation rate versus land line, and this administration, my predecessor the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey) with great effort and work was able to put together the deal into the north central hydro line, which is now under construction, to bring land line power to nine communities.

Again, the New Democrats did not do that. Secondly, I have had the pleasure of putting together the arrangements in the last year that will bring land line power to the communities of Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei. Well, how they vote is a different issue, but the fact is, we are doing the right thing, and this government is the one that has settled Northern Flood Agreements, has brought in land line power to a variety of communities and is ensuring that Manitoba Hydro remains a strong, competitive utility in this province, and I am very proud of the efforts that we have managed to achieve. Thank you very much.

**Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism):** Madam Speaker, I would yield if the members of the opposition want to speak at this particular time, and I would be prepared to speak afterwards as long as I do not give up my time for speaking now that I have been recognized. Is that an agreement of the House that I were to let them—

**Madam Speaker:** Is there leave of the House to permit the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism to speak after the honourable member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen)? [agreed]

**Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this Chamber today in order to put a few words on record in support of the resolution put forth by my honourable colleague for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and introduced today by my honourable colleague for Thompson (Mr. Ashton). I know that other

northern members and indeed the entire caucus will support this resolution.

The member for Thompson has most eloquently expressed the need for the equalization of hydro rates across the province of Manitoba. Many rural and northern Manitobans pay considerably more for hydro than do the residents of large cities such as Winnipeg. The excessively high hydro rates are particularly onerous for northerners. There are enough handicaps for those living in northern Manitoba without adding to these handicaps by forcing extraordinarily high hydro rates on northerners. Our food prices are much higher than in the south, our gasoline prices are higher, our roads where they do exist are often in deplorable condition.

\* (1700)

Many of our small communities are not even in fact serviced by roads or by hydro lines. These communities have to rely on diesel generators, as the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik) just mentioned a moment ago. That type of electricity is indeed costly, and it is very limited and not always reliable. For example, in some communities it is not unusual for a family living in a small house to pay hydro bills in excess of \$600 or \$800 a month in the winter. In some places only a few small appliances can be plugged in. Dryers and washers are off limits. Electric heating space heaters are not allowed. Power outages are common. Fluctuation in power levels often damage or destroy motors in freezers and fridges. And this happens to those Manitobans who ironically are least able to pay. The story is much the same whether it is Brochet or Lac Brochet or Tadoule Lake or any other isolated northern community, and it would also include isolated communities such as Sagkeeng First Nation.

Certainly basic justice concepts would suggest that the First Nations people would at least be given special consideration when it comes to the setting of hydro rates. Much of the territory of the First Nations people was flooded and destroyed, traditional hunting and fishing and trapping were negatively affected. Yes, there have been some flood agreements, as the minister mentioned, but First Nations people in northern Manitoba, some of the poorest people in northern Manitoba, pay some of the highest hydro rates in this province. That is a fact, as I mentioned before, not necessarily just in northern

Manitoba but also sometimes in rural Manitoba and other isolated places. And this does not look like justice to me, Madam Speaker.

Why should those who live in northern Manitoba in remote isolated communities, often in cramped, small, poorly insulated dwellings, be forced to pay the highest hydro rates in this province? And where is the hydroelectric power produced? We know it is produced in northern Manitoba; we know it is produced in our own backyard. There is something terribly ironic about those who can least pay for the power have to watch the spectacle of the power being produced in their own backyard.

**An Honourable Member:** But you would not shut it off.

**Mr. Jennissen:** The honourable member says we would not shut it off. No, we would not let the southerners freeze in the dark. That is because we are compassionate human beings up North. We have learned to share our ideas and our wealth, and we have learned a lot of that from our First Nations brothers and sisters.

There is something fundamentally unjust about this state of affairs, however. Certainly as Manitobans, we are well aware of the importance to our economy of a renewable resource such as hydroelectric power. Hydroelectric power is Manitoba's nearest equivalent to Alberta's oil, but this important public utility, as it is now structured, is based on population density, and I think this does not act in the best interest of all Manitobans.

Northerners and rural Manitobans in general, and aboriginal Manitobans in northern Manitoba in particular, are paying more than their fair share. This is especially hard to take when the Hydro utility had a net earning of more than \$70 million last fiscal year. The Public Utilities Board has granted further rate increases of 1.5 percent in 1996-97 and 1.3 percent for 1997-1998. In fact, in the next two years we are expecting an extra \$30-million-profit.

Yes, Hydro does have a large debt, we do not dispute that, but it is also setting record profits. Northerners are not averse to paying their fair share, but when all factors are weighed and factors such as the following would have to be included, an environment that has been damaged by

hydro development, isolation, a high cost of living, difficult access to health and educational services, then it becomes obvious that changes in the present hydro rate structures are desirable.

Northerners, almost to a person, believe that because hydroelectricity is produced in their backyard, they should get a break. And not because we as northerners want preferential treatment, we have never been that antidemocratic or antiegalitarian, Madam Speaker, but because it is difficult enough to survive in northern Manitoba without the burden of extra high hydro rates, artificially set, I might add, and determined in southern Manitoba. Unfortunately, southern Manitoba and southern Manitobans do not always realize that northern Manitobans are angry and frustrated with rates, with its rules and regulations that always favour the south. The North is different from the south, in case anybody has not noticed that, and, therefore, my colleagues and I are always pleading with the members opposite to recognize northern realities.

When it comes to roads or health care or education or hydro rates, we need northern guidelines, not southern guidelines. We are not asking for extras, we are asking for an attempt at equality, if not total equality, at least an attempt at equality. But what do we get, Madam Speaker? Here are some examples: cutbacks to health services in the North, cutback of \$4.5 million to three northern hospitals, and supposedly that is to mirror the cutbacks in the south, again treating the North as if it were like the south. The pain is to be distributed equitably across all of Manitoba.

But this is not so. When you cut a northern hospital, you hurt an entire region, a huge region. You cannot go to another hospital. If you hamper the efficiency of, for example, the Flin Flon Hospital, the nearest hospital is at least 150 or more kilometres away. I can also add that this government cuts or limits educational programs such as the Access program, New Careers, BUNTEP, hurting the students, precisely those students in the North and often aboriginal students who most need help.

When funding to upgrade northern highways is reduced year after year allegedly because of southern guidelines connected to population density, once again northerners feel they are left out in the cold, that they are left stranded. [interjection]

And, yes, the honourable member mentions Highway 391. We have a lot that needs to be done on Highway 391. It is no different with hydro rates. As always, northerners pay much more than someone would in Winnipeg. Never mind that the electric power is produced in our own backyard, never mind that we are already paying much more for food, for clothes, for gasoline, never mind that it is our hydroelectric power that keeps the city lights burning. Yes, northerners have noted the irony. While Winnipeggers are using northern electricity to explore the electronic highway, northerners are bouncing around on real bad gravel highways, if they even have highways. Many of them do not even have roads.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, what we are asking for is the equalization of hydro rates as a form of justice. Actually northern Manitoba should pay lower hydro rates than places such as Winnipeg. It should not be based on population density. We should certainly not pay more. I have difficulty with the logic that determines that a bottle of whiskey costs the same in northern Manitoba as in Winnipeg, yet, a litre of milk is much more expensive in northern Manitoba, and a kilowatt-hour electricity is much more expensive in northern Manitoba.

That state of affairs has to change, and the sooner, the better. Northern Manitobans are impatiently waiting. They have been promised equalized hydro rates before. They would like to see at least one promise honoured by this government. They could start with the equalization of hydro rates. That would be a good place to start. It is long overdue. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**Mr. Downey:** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak to this matter. The issue of hydro always does cause for interesting debate in this Chamber, and I hope the member that is the sponsor of this resolution takes the opportunity to read the debate, as one would think it would be important to in fact understand where the people come from in this Legislature, so I encourage that to take place.

One should not get into a hydro debate in this Chamber without bringing a little bit of history to the floor and to talk a little bit about some of the things that have happened in Manitoba Hydro.

Manitoba, Madam Speaker, is very fortunate, blessed with an abundant supply of water that flows from western

Canada, from the northern United States and from parts of Ontario through our systems to generate electricity in the North. Of course, it is the lowest cost in North America, it is environmentally friendly, and we believe and I believe as Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism that it is a major form of energy that will continue to feed the future job growth for the province, that will feed the economy. Of course, it is important that we preserve it and look after it.

It is also important to point out that a former Premier and a former government that was known at one time of being pretty strongly rurally based but had also connections to the Liberal Party, and I take my hat off to the former Premier D.L. Campbell, who was the Leader of the government in Manitoba that provided rural electrification for the people of Manitoba. It really, truly, provided revolutionary changes to the lifestyles for rural Manitobans and particularly the women of rural Manitoba who struggled and worked with some of the less than advantageous forms of energy, whether it was cook stoves, forms of pumping of water by the old hand-pump system, but it truly revolutionized Manitoba.

I want to publicly again acknowledge the contribution of Mr. D.L. Campbell as the individual who was committed to bringing rural electrification to Manitoba. He did so, Madam Speaker, without plunging the province into or the hydroelectric utility into tremendous debt.

\* (1710)

I as well want to acknowledge a former Premier of this province of whom I am of the same political stripe who had the vision, with him and his government, of which my colleague the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) sat as a member of that government when the Honourable Duff Roblin proceeded to see the opportunities that the tremendous water power of the North provided, the opportunities for Manitoba to be a major player in the energy field and in fact had the vision to further proceed and to develop that energy source as a major driver of our economy.

Then, of course, Madam Speaker, one could acknowledge the New Democratic Party, who almost, in several cases, bungled Manitoba Hydro. At every turn of the way, the history books clearly point out the bungling of

Manitoba Hydro by the New Democratic Party and plunging it into debt.

So we have got to make sure the history books are clearly recorded properly, and that, I think, is what we should talk about, the way in which the Honourable D.L. Campbell provided rural electrification, the Honourable Duff Roblin further developed the vision and the electrical activities in the drainage basin to give that whole energy source to the people of Manitoba, and then of course the disastrous years of the New Democratic Party that bungled it. Most other parties build; the New Democratic Party, in most cases, bungles. So we have the history now laid, Madam Speaker, and we can give several examples of precisely what has happened.

I want to as well say, Madam Speaker, I can appreciate the member opposite wanting to change the policy. I would suggest that he should tell the people in the North and the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), where he was for 16 years or where the New Democratic Party was for 16 years when this policy was being carried out in the North. Was he ineffective? Did he not care about the North when he was a member of the sitting government, or is it just a good political opportunity now to again raise an issue for his own political benefit?

I would give him the benefit of the doubt, but he is known to speak sometimes more politically and in his own interest than he is genuinely interested in benefiting his constituents. I think here is a prime example where the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) had how many years to change this policy, and what did they do? Absolutely nothing.

So it clearly points out that he is presenting this, the New Democratic Party are presenting this, solely as a political issue. They probably, I guess, feel some way that they are speaking on behalf of their constituents, but it all comes back to a political motivation.

Madam Speaker, on that whole issue and Manitoba Hydro, what has this government done to ease some of the problems that northern Manitobans have felt with Hydro and Hydro policy? It was this premier, Premier Filmon, it was this government, the Progressive Conservative Party that started the conclusion of the

flood agreements that were outstanding for some many years that they were in office. It was signed in 1977. There was progress made till '81, and then it went on the backburner. It was not until 1988 that this government under Premier Filmon that proceeded to advance the settlement and the resolve of the Northern Flood Agreement, not a New Democratic Party, not the member for Thompson, not the member for Flin Flon, but this party who they say just care about southern Manitoba and do not care about the North. Let that one be put aside.

Madam Speaker, Grand Rapids, how many people are aware of the fact that for many, many years the New Democratic Party kept telling the people of Grand Rapids that the government, Hydro did not owe them any money and, yes, legally and technically the government of Manitoba and Hydro did not owe them any money for flood damages. But you know what? It was the compassion of the Conservative government, it was this premier, Premier Filmon, that said to Manitoba Hydro, let us relook at the Grand Rapids settlement. You know what? It was relooked at. You know what? There was over a \$20-million settlement paid by Manitoba Hydro under a Progressive Conservative government and Premier Gary Filmon, not a New Democratic Party. Let the record show who are the compassionate people that did not take the legal advice that the NDP party were sitting on. We took the moral high ground and resolved the issue. It was not the New Democratic Party.

Madam Speaker, what were one of the other major issues? I have got about a 40-minute speech. Could you tell me how many minutes I have left?

**An Honourable Member:** Seven.

**Mr. Downey:** All right. I will really have to go to work on this, Madam Speaker.

We were elected in 1988, and what did we see? We had some nine communities in northeastern Manitoba that were a hundred miles from the major generating stations producing all this electricity that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) talks about. Well, those nine communities in Manitoba, Madam Speaker, are living in less than desirable conditions because they are not connected to the main transmission system. They are generating out of diesel fuel power that could give them 15 amp service, and that had to be dealt with.

The NDP did not have time, did not have money or did not have the desire, apparently, to resolve what is an outstanding issue for those many native communities in northeastern Manitoba. This government, Madam Speaker, proceeded to work with the federal government, to work with Manitoba Hydro. We put some money on the table to say we want to see those people have their systems put in place so that they can have the kind of standards that the rest of society have in Manitoba. Yes, it is a \$117-million project of which Hydro, the federal government and the Province of Manitoba committed to, and, yes, it is being built under my colleague, the current Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Praznik), and I am darn proud of it to be part of a government that has proceeded.

Do you think for one minute the New Democratic Party would stand and admit that these kinds of things had to be done? No, Madam Speaker. No, they would not stand. They would say, oh, look, we built Limestone, we built Jenpeg. Well, we know that Jenpeg was the biggest boondoggle that this province has ever seen. A commission of inquiry clearly said that the people of Manitoba were misinformed about the building of Jenpeg and how unnecessary it was. Yes, a commission of inquiry clearly pointed that out, and, yes, they talk about building Limestone. While the Liberals called it Lemonstone, we supported the building of Limestone, but it was, again, the timing of the building of Limestone. Yes, it created jobs. It showed the people of the North—and by the way, most of the people hired by the New Democratic Party at that time did not come from northern Manitoba. They imported them from British Columbia and from all other provinces. They, quite frankly, were leaving the perception this was for the North, but, quite frankly, the North got very little benefit.

Madam Speaker, there is one very extremely important point that the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should appreciate. It was the Progressive Conservative Party under Premier Filmon and this government, my colleagues who are sitting here today, that took the 7 percent sales tax off the use of electricity in industrial and manufacturing developments in this province. In his own back yard. The member for Flin Flon should stand and say thank you to this government rather than standing to criticize us about inequities and unfairness. How much money did that save his community and HBM&S for the

removal of the 7 percent? How much did it save the Thompson Inco process? Seven percent. It saved them hundreds of thousands of dollars right in their own community, and they do not have the integrity to stand and give credit where credit is due.

Well, if they were genuinely honest and fair members of the Legislature and give credit where credit is due, they would stand and do it, but they continue to demonstrate how strictly narrow partisan they are and how perception-oriented they are. It is time that the people of Manitoba clearly understood what the NDP stand for. They stand for self-preservation, cling to power and to perceive the people of Manitoba something that actually is not.

Well, Madam Speaker, I do not know how much time I have left. I have another—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Downey:** I clearly believe that if these members opposite were truly as interested as they should be, that they would make a presentation or representation to the Public Utilities Board. It is the Public Utilities Board that establishes and controls the rates in the province of Manitoba. It is the Public Utilities Board that make the final decisions, and I would ask, have the members opposite considered taking it to the Public Utilities Board? If they have not, why have they not? Why are they bringing it to the political arena in the Manitoba Legislature if it is not for the sheer purpose of trying to again paint this government as doing nothing for northern Manitoba? It does no good for the harmony of this province to stand and politically try and draw lines between different regions of our province. That is the problem with Canada. There are too many people trying to say that they have their own interests, that they want to make sure that they are looked after first and separate from everyone else.

\* (1720)

The member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) should take a look at all the benefits and the balance of which has been introduced by this government for the people of the North who use Manitoba Hydro, and being a fair person, I would think he would, at some point in his political career, which may not be that long, as with the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), as with the member for

Thompson (Mr. Ashton), stand in their place and demonstrate that they have the integrity, that they have the fairness and that they do recognize that this government, Madam Speaker, is a government for all the people of the province.

This government is not just for one region. This government has taken strong action to support the people of the North in the use of hydro, whether it is in process, whether it is outstanding claims that he and his government had the opportunity to solve or the issue of zoning and that type of—the issue of the resolution that they could have dealt with during their term of office. So their arguments, their purposes are very narrow and very shallow, and I truly believe, when the history books are written, it will clearly demonstrate that it was the Progressive Conservative Party that were builders of hydro and builders of this province. Of course, it was the New Democrats that were the bunglers, as everything else they have touched in relationship to public administration. Thank you, Madam Speaker, I have enjoyed very much my opportunity to speak.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Madam Speaker, it is difficult for me. I do not have the history and the background to speak with passion the way the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) has been speaking. However, I would like to put a few comments on the record, and I will try and be very brief in these comments because I know my honourable colleague the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) would like to also have an opportunity to put a few comments on the record.

I have been listening intently for the last number of minutes to some of the comments that were made on the whole area of the equalization of Manitoba Hydro rates throughout the province. I can speak from experience in having been involved in several enterprises where we, in fact, in the southern area, were looking at getting hydro moved into some remote areas, as we call them remote, and really it was no different there than some of the comments that I have heard so far. We also needed to pay extra dollars for the lines to come in, and I would say that, from our perspective, it made sense. The cost of putting in the lines was given to us. It was our expense. Certainly, we realized as well the number of years, as the honourable minister mentioned before, it would take to pay back the cost of putting in those lines. So that became our expense. I would simply like to put on the

record that as there are individual needs, certainly these costs have to be borne by someone. So that is also happening.

The minister also mentioned that Manitoba Hydro maintains three rate zones, and these rate zones are intended to reflect differences in the costs to distribute electricity to areas of different population densities. The rate zones are: zone 1, which is Winnipeg, that is the legal boundary; then zone 2, which is a medium density, and that is 100-metred services or more, with a line density of at least 15 customers per kilometre of distribution; and then they have zone 3, and that is the low-density area, less than 100-metred services outside other rate zones. Towns and villages are typically within zone 2, and rural residences and farms within zone 3. Then, of course, rates are based on the kilowatt-hour usage for customers and are applied in exactly the same way throughout the province.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that this is something that the minister has been trying to say, that there is not equality in that sense throughout the province, and no one is being segregated out and treated in a different way.

The government has taken substantial steps in the past few years to build transmission lines to remote communities because they provide better electrical service and are more economical over the long term than operating diesel generating facilities, and the minister was speaking about the cost of having the generating stations going as well. Manitoba Hydro users in these northern communities will have a hydro rate reduction as a result of this, and this government, also, by its strong action to provide transmission service to remote northern communities, supports a fair rate structure for all Manitoba Hydro customers that fairly reflects the costs of providing the service.

Madam Speaker, as I indicated, the lines that need to be put into remote areas are put in at a cost, and they have to be borne by someone, and so it is important to note that these costs are picked up and, again, as I indicated, through the different zones, the zones 1, 2 and 3, and that is how the levels are determined.

Through major capital projects and substantial improvements in service, this government has proven its commitment to the people of northern and rural Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro studies show that while revenues from Winnipeg residential customers recover about 100 percent of the fixed cost to serve them, revenues from the rural or the zone 3 customers recovers only 80 percent of the cost, so most of the difference is due to the higher cost of rural distribution.

Madam Speaker, this is something that has been in existence for many years, and I guess if we were looking at dealing with an ideal world, with an ideal situation, certainly it would be nice to have those costs equalized throughout the province. I submit to you that we do not live in that kind of an ideal world and so, therefore, that is not possible.

Then again, the lower population density increases the cost of distributing electricity, so the zone structure is the method Manitoba Hydro uses to address these cost differences. In fact, the rate differences do not fully address the differences in cost to serve lower-density customers.

Madam Speaker, I recognize that my time is almost up and so, with that, I would simply like to put on the record that certainly on an ongoing basis the intent is there to

continue to give as low a cost hydro to all those who need it within the province, to all the users in the province, to try and give them the cost that is the best possible. Thank you very much.

**Madam Speaker:** Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) will have nine minutes remaining.

The hour being 5:30 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

### ERRATUM

Volume XLVI No. 60 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, October 7, 1996, page 4016, last paragraph, first column, reads:

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** Will the minister commit to her view of the provincial firearms . . . .

Should read:

**Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples):** Will the minister commit to a review of the provincial firearms . . . .



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, October 8, 1996

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