



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

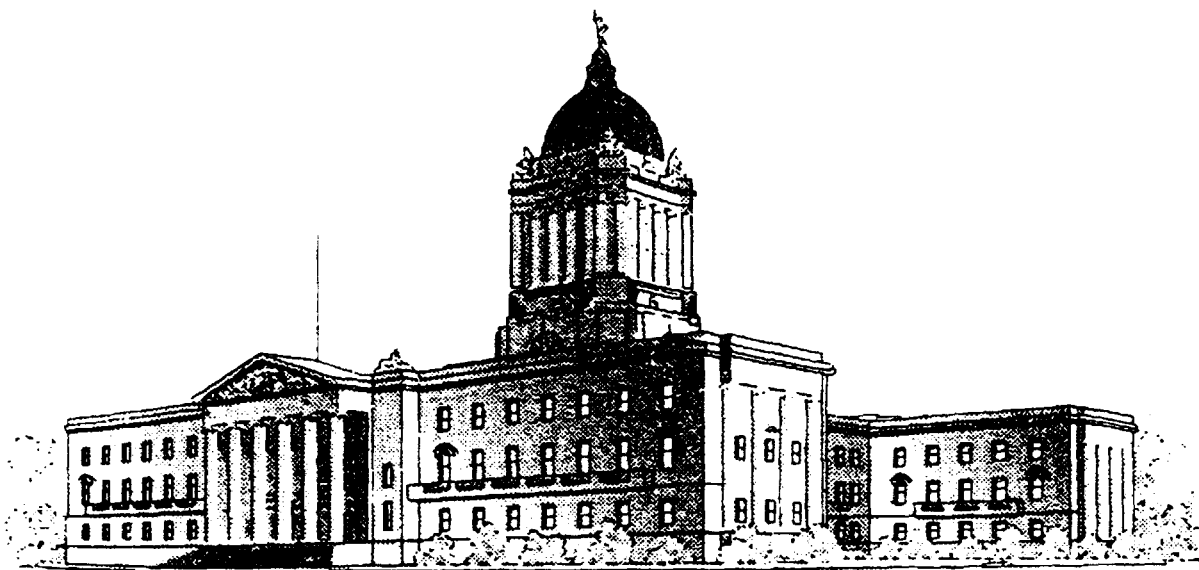
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. XLVIII No. 20 - 1:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 18, 1998

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 18, 1998

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Tina Chubaty, Darlene Martens, Paul Kler and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Tammy Hudson, Joyce MacDuff, Donna Stuski and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Minister of Health to put an end to the centralization and privatization of Winnipeg hospitals food services.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Winnipeg Hospitals Food Services—Privatization

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes). 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: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth that:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

WHEREAS the provincial government has embarked upon a project in which it is closing hospital kitchens

and having hospital food transported in from Toronto for reheating; and

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

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

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

* (1335)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have this afternoon twenty-two Grade 9 students from Sisler High School under the direction of Mrs. Carole Grier. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Winnipeg Hospital Authority Interfaith Agreement

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, yesterday I tabled a letter in the Chamber signed by the chair of the Concordia Hospital, Mr. Olfert, which raises the issue of the intimidating tone of the government dealing with the negotiations for the WHA which is scheduled to come in place in 13 days. It talks about disregarding the spirit of the interfaith agreement and talks about the fact that the government has, on the one hand, cut back the money for the hospitals, created the deficits, and then based on patient care, the hospitals have had to run deficits, and this matter is on the table. Peter Liba further goes on to say today that this government is engaging in financial blackmail in introducing and implementing the WHA, which is proposed to come in place in 13 days.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) first of all: will he ask his government minister to stop the intimidating tactics that are referred to by both Mr. Liba and Mr. Olfert, and further, will this Premier acknowledge and confirm and maintain the interfaith agreement that his previous minister signed with the faith institutions less than 18 months ago?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the essence of the interfaith agreement is to ensure that the principles of faith of the religious background of the four hospitals involved is maintained in the operation of their facilities. For example, abortions would not be performed in those facilities. Those are issues of faith. The issue here today is one as to whether or not the Winnipeg Hospital Authority would be the employing authority for staff which facilitates much better labour-management relations which facilitates the ability to move staff around the system as they are needed, which is a necessary tool to bring about the consolidation of programming which ultimately improves patient care. Surely to goodness we need to have those kinds of tools in place to provide the best possible service to the patients in those hospitals.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the real issue here is whether the interfaith hospitals can have any faith in

this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and this former Minister of Health and this Minister of Health. That is the issue.

I want to table today a letter signed by the CEOs of all four interfaith hospitals, Concordia, Grace, Misericordia and St. Boniface, signed by the voluntary chairs of those boards, saying that they are united on maintaining the interfaith agreement that this Premier's government signed less than 18 months ago. I want to ask the Premier: is he going to maintain his word that has been signed off on the interfaith agreement as part of the new WHA, or does he intend breaking his word with the faith institutions as alleged in the Concordia letter and alleged by the CEOs and chairs of the boards of these other four hospitals?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, in the proposal in which the WHA becomes the employing authority, the day-to-day operation of those faith facilities, the hiring and firing, the management of staff in programming and operations that they deliver will be delegated and ultimately still rest with those authorities, which is what the faith-based agreement provides for. The question of actually who is the employer of record on which is based the amalgamation of bargaining units, the negotiation of collective agreements and ultimately the taking down of the paper walls that prevent us today from moving staff around the system is really what the issue is. I do not believe for one moment that someone could make out the argument that it is an argument of a faith issue that the employer of record be the Winnipeg Hospital Authority versus one of those facilities. Surely to goodness, with the changes taking place at Misericordia, we do not want to see nurses laid off at Misericordia who are going to be needed at Concordia Hospital and St. Boniface and Health Sciences Centre. We do not want them laid off and forced to reapply for jobs like the Leader of the Opposition would like to see happen.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, it is this government that rejected the human resource deployment and retraining strategy chaired by Lloyd Schreyer years ago. We do not need any lectures from the Minister of Health after his government rejected a retraining and redeployment strategy that was agreed upon by all the employees. We do not need advice and weasel words from this minister. I asked a very simple question.

In October of 1996—I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon)—his minister, on behalf of his cabinet and his government, signed an agreement with the interfaith hospitals in Winnipeg. Will this Premier keep his agreement with the interfaith hospitals or as a condition of joining the WHA, will they have to amend or be forced to amend that agreement that his government signed? A very simple question.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, first of all, the faith agreement calls for control or management of their employees within the facility and the programs which they deliver. That will continue under the WHA. The issue is the employing authority on which all of the collective bargaining is based.

I can tell the member that we are in discussions with those facilities. The Misericordia Hospital really is a temporary issue, because they will be moving under the long-term care authority when the work is completed and will maintain their full employing authority. With respect to the other three facilities, we are having very good discussions with those facilities, and I am ultimately hopeful that at the end of the day all will agree to participate with the WHA as employing authority.

* (1340)

Physician Resources Pediatric Neurologists

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, over 2 percent of our population, over 23,000 Manitobans, suffer from epilepsy. Last November I wrote to the Minister of Health about the dismissal of a pediatric neurologist from the Health Sciences Centre, and to this date there has been no response from the minister. Now I have learned that the only remaining pediatric neurologist, an epileptologist, is leaving Manitoba at the end of May, leaving for the province of Alberta.

Since the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has interceded in the past to keep doctors in the province of Manitoba and since his current Minister of Health and his former Minister of Health have failed in the negotiations over the last two years to find other specialists in this area, I want to ask the Premier if he will—using his office—get involved in this situation to try and keep the remaining

epileptologist in the province of Manitoba so we can provide those vital services to the children of this province.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the member raises a very important issue, and I will endeavour to get an update on that status from the people involved who are working with it.

But I do find it interesting, the manner in which the member for Transcona asks his question, because on one hand, his Leader stood in this Chamber just a few minutes ago and talked about maintaining a structure in which the hospitals maintain their right to hire staff and take that responsibility. Then their member gets up in the House and says to the minister and the government: why are you not taking responsibility for it? That is exactly what the issue around employing authority is about, that an agency established by the government would have that particular responsibility. So I tend to see two different viewpoints on the issue of employing authority coming from the New Democrats.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, that is why five months ago I wrote to this minister about this critical situation then.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Transcona was recognized for his supplementary.

Mr. Reid: What do this Minister of Health and this Premier have to say to the over 20,000 people in the province of Manitoba affected by epilepsy? What do you have to say to them when the only remaining epileptologist in the province of Manitoba is leaving in less than two months? What do you have to say to them with respect to the treatment, since that doctor is on call 24 hours a day at the Health Sciences Centre, 24 hours a day at the St. Boniface Hospital and 24 hours a day on call at the Children's Hospital? How is this one person going to provide the services for those families?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, as I have indicated to the member, I will endeavour to find out the current status of that situation through the Winnipeg Hospital Authority. As one of the programs within that area, Dr. Brian Postl has that responsibility. I would say to the member, in many areas where we have lost specialists

or physicians, the WHA, the Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, that we provided additional dollars for and is in the process of recruiting—recruitment efforts, I imagine, are underway by the people who are responsible for that particular area. Our responsibility is to ensure the resources are there to do that within our collective agreements with the Manitoba Medical Association, and they take responsibility to recruit, just as the Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation has done with oncologists.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, Dr. Postl has told me that they have tried for two years to find—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Transcona that there is to be no preamble on a supplementary question.

* (1345)

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon) or the Minister of Health, anybody that can take some action to help these 23,000 Manitobans: how do you propose, as government, to help those families when Dr. Pillay is the leading pediatric neurologist in Canada with the process of vagus implants to help these 40 percent of the intractable cases, and he is going to be leaving the province of Manitoba? Saskatoon has three people that can do this type of work and provide treatment to these families. Why does Manitoba not even have one person?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I think the member for Transcona in his preamble indicated that he had spoken to Dr. Postl and that efforts have been underway for two years to recruit an individual to fill that post. So obviously we have people working on this who understand the field, understand what they are attempting to do and attempting to recruit, just as the Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation has been doing. In fact, yesterday I even met with one of the physicians that they have identified as a potential candidate who is visiting our province. I will do the same thing if we are able to identify those candidates.

If the member is asking that somehow we can produce a physician right away, well, they have to be identified and recruited, but as the member himself has admitted to the House, efforts have been underway by

the physicians responsible in this area, by the administrators responsible, to recruit, and efforts have been underway for two years to do that.

Health Care System Breast Cancer Screening

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, when 80 percent of women ultimately diagnosed with breast cancer wait 16 weeks for tests to confirm their malignancies, breast cancer services in Manitoba are in a state of crisis and violate international standards. Moreover, Dr. Blake McClarty's Winnipeg Health Authority solution contradicts the government's stated policy which is to close Misericordia as an acute care hospital which would, of course, fragment breast services. I want to ask the minister what immediate steps he will take to reduce the 16-week delay between the discovery of a possible malignancy and the test to confirm the malignancy. Women simply cannot wait 16 weeks, nor can their families.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for this very, very important question. I think this is a concern to all involved in the health care system, that a waiting system as long as this is certainly not acceptable to us.

I think if the member would read a little more closely, Dr. McClarty, who is quoted in the Winnipeg Free Press article, where he talks about the need for better co-ordination and the plans that he is now developing under the Winnipeg Hospital Authority to do just that—one of the components of the Misericordia changes that are going on is that it will be a centre for a variety of ambulatory programs that the WHA wishes to locate there. Those are decisions that they are making. I can assure you that the kinds of financial resources that the WHA will need to bring down this waiting list will be available, but what is critical is that the powers and authorities to bring about the co-ordination are in place. It is regrettable but her Leader today opposes one of those very necessary tools which puts Manitoba women at risk.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, it baffles me entirely as to how the minister can promote co-ordination of services—

Madam Speaker: Question.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, Madam Speaker, I do have a question. I would like to ask the minister how he intends to promote co-ordination of services at the Misery and retain the necessary expertise at the hospital when the hospital is going to close as an acute care centre and therefore will not offer surgery. He knows that expertise will leave this hospital with the fragmentation of services.

* (1350)

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, part of the whole process of regionalization, probably the key part is the ability to have one central agency that has the power and authority that it needs to be able to—

An Honourable Member: It used to be in the government.

Mr. Praznik: Well, the member says it used to be in the government. The government was never the employing authority that had the ability to move staff. We were just, as has been pointed out to me by the faith-based facilities, the funders. We were not the operators of the system, and that is the position that the New Democrats have taken, that government should just be the funder and we should allow hospitals to continue to provide service. We have rejected that model; we have moved towards a regionalized model, and in order for that model to work, the powers have to be in place to be able to move equipment, to be able to move staff, to consolidate programming. I know now that part of the ambulatory diagnostic process here—there have been discussions at the WHA about developing an ambulatory centre, and the Misericordia is one of the sites that has the potential for being that centre.

Ms. McGifford: My point was that you cannot have one-stop shopping when there is—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member was recognized for a final supplementary question. Please pose your question now.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister why Manitoba women had to wait for a

pre-election year for a mobile breast screening unit when Saskatchewan had one in 1991, and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) proposed such a unit in the early 1990s. Was it the fact that the volunteer unit finally shamed the minister into action, or is it just the pre-election window once more?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the point that the member for Osborne makes in her comment, as she rose, about how do you deliver one-stop shopping with 73 or something different shops, she is absolutely right. That is what regionalization is about, about pulling services together and consolidating them to get the best use of resources so that patient care improves. I would like the New Democratic Party—they may oppose how we implement it, and that is legitimate debate—to tell us whether they support the principle of regionalization or not. They cannot have it both ways.

Specifically, with respect to breast screening, Saskatchewan and Manitoba are very different provinces in our geography. We have a large centre with 650,000 people, another hundred thousand within a short drive, three-quarters of our population in one major centre. Saskatchewan is much more spread out. We have also learned a number of very important things from the Saskatchewan mobile program which should make the Manitoba program I think somewhat better in the way that we have learned from some of the mistakes that they have made in it too.

Urban Crime Prevention Staffing

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Yesterday the minister said words to the effect that you would never catch me engaged in patronage, I hope. Then he went on to say: “. . . that is not the kind of minister I am . . .”

In the face of this minister, in January, hiring the past vice-president of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba to the position of his urban crime prevention co-ordinator, my question is: is it this minister's policy now that staff or positions in the new Public Safety Branch will be hired without public competition from the senior ranks of the Progressive Conservative Party of Manitoba?

* (1355)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I will let the record speak for itself as to what I said. I trust that the people of Manitoba will look at the record rather than listen to the words of the member for St. Johns. I do want to indicate that, in respect of that particular position, I have made my position very, very clear. A person is occupying a position on a temporary basis. Indeed, I even believe the funding is coming from a different department. When that position is to be filled, that will be the subject of a competition.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who should listen to Manitobans who do not care if the person was there for two days or a term position or a temporary position—why is this minister hiring the past vice-president of the Conservative Party of Manitoba for a position involving very serious matters of public safety? Why is he doing that?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, I want to indicate that I had no part in hiring. I do not hire at that level. That is not my task to do that. We have officials who do that. I do know how the New Democrats did exactly that when I was a director under their department and under their rule, and they used to drop people into my department on a regular basis. Indeed, there are still people who were dropped in from political positions directly into the public service without any competition.

I do not take anything away from those people. I am just saying that they talk very, very differently from the way they act. I am telling you, Madam Speaker, that I do not act in the way they consistently acted.

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

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who has just confirmed to Manitobans what they already think and that he has no control over his department, tell Manitobans whether or not he had any knowledge of this hiring, a hiring I understand that came through some communications from the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman)? That is where this individual worked as his political assistant. Did he have knowledge of this position? What directive did this

minister issue when he found out then? We want to know.

Mr. Toews: I want to indicate that in respect of the hiring of that particular individual for whatever length of time she is there—and I understand it is for a brief period of time—that everything as I am aware was done appropriately and properly.

If there is any issue outstanding about whether or not there will be a competition for that position, I want to indicate to this House that there will be a competition for that position.

Crime Prevention Programs Government Support

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): My question is for the Minister of Justice. Tonight at a public forum that he and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) are holding, amongst the people planning to attend will be 14 participants of a program being run out of Valley Gardens, in the riding of the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), called Together for Change: Crime Prevention through Social Development.

This is a federal government program, \$140,000, a crime prevention program that is modelled after a very successful program that was run in The Maples for two years, and among the members of the advisory board are myself and the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli). What can the minister say to these participants on how he will support their crime prevention programs tonight?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I want to thank the member for The Maples for that question. I think one can see the difference between the approach from the member for The Maples and the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh). The member for The Maples is the kind of MLA who wants to work with his constituents to address the problems of crime. Indeed, the member for The Maples works beyond the boundaries of his constituency to ensure that all types of partnerships are created with respect to the issue of crime prevention. I want to, of course, know more about that particular program, but I certainly want to indicate that the ideas that member has come up with, to my attention, have always been

good and there has always been something good to take from those ideas.

* (1400)

Mr. Kowalski: My supplementary is to the minister. This is a federal government program. Will the province commit to emulating this program, as it has been successful for a number of years, as a model to be used in suburban Winnipeg?

Mr. Toews: Without wanting to make any commitments here because there is a civil service and a bureaucracy that does process all of these issues, I want to say here on the record, however, that I am very much in favour of any kind of community-based partnership to work with both government and the police. I want to assure the member that, in specific discussions that we may have in respect to that, he will receive the full attention of my department and indeed my own attention.

Mr. Kowalski: My last supplementary: will the minister then commit if he is willing to work with the community to funding for a full-time volunteer co-ordinator to work with youth justice committees instead of the part-time co-ordinator he now has?

Mr. Toews: I thank the member for that question. As he is aware, in the last year our government provided an additional \$41,000 towards the functioning of those youth committees. We want to ensure that our resources within the department are being used appropriately, but certainly I am a very strong proponent of youth justice committees. These committees have done a lot of good in our communities in order to reduce the amount of youth crime and recidivism. So I will seriously undertake that question and look to see what resources are available to supplement the resources we are already providing.

Pineland Forest Nursery Privatization

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, this government has a plan to privatize the Pineland Forest Nursery in short order. They now have a report, the Doane Raymond report, recommending the complete privatization of this special operating agency. The

employees of the Pineland Forest Nursery and people living in the area are very concerned that they are going to get the shaft from this government in this privatization. Would the Minister of Natural Resources support today in the House the employees in their bid for an employee buy-out, a real employee buy-out of this nursery?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, the member is well aware of the fact that the Pineland Nursery has been a highly successful special operating agency, and in fact, so successful that numerous enterprises in forestry across Canada have indicated that they thought it was unfair competition. In fact, the real success of Pineland Nursery is based on the success of the very people that the member is asking about and the dedication and the effort that they put into this nursery. Yes, we have been looking at what options are for the future of this nursery, but I can assure him that at no time will the best interests of the people who have made this thing work be endangered.

Mr. Struthers: If it is so successful, why then is this government bound and determined that this privatization will take place and when will this happen?

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, the member is asking a question that has not yet been answered. The fact is we are looking to the future for this special operating agency. It is running very much in a private sector mode and is competing nationally and internationally for contracts. In fact, one of its impediments may well be how many taxpayers' dollars are we willing to commit for future expansion and enhancement of that operation. So I would be interested in the member's comments. Is he suggesting that we perhaps bankroll them with another \$5 million?

Mr. Struthers: Madam Speaker, when the government divests this nursery, will it commit to an open process so that all interested parties can have a fair shot at buying this SOA, or will it do it in this government's usual fashion and do it in a very secret way to some of its own friends?

Mr. Cummings: Well, Madam Speaker, unlike the fascist thinking of the member for Dauphin, this

government is not going to infringe on the rights of those workers.

Point of Order

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, I am appalled at the language that I heard coming out of the minister's mouth just a moment ago, and I ask you to rule on the words that the minister just used, with reference to the member for Dauphin, here in this House, whether or not it is appropriate language to be used in the Manitoba Legislature. I ask you to ask this minister to show some decorum and withdraw the language that he has just used.

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

Mr. Cummings: Madam Speaker, I did not indicate anything more than the concern and the innuendo that the member for Dauphin was raising, and if he is offended by the term that I used, I will gladly withdraw it.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I thank the honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

Manitoba Hydro Community Facilities—Seven Sisters

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, Manitoba Hydro is in the process of selling off its properties in Seven Sisters townsite, including the recreational facilities which include the hall, the curling rink, the skating rink and the baseball diamond, to a private developer, even though the community has operated these facilities for over 30 years. My question to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro: why is Manitoba Hydro allowed to sell community facilities such as the hall, the skating rink, the curling club and the baseball diamond without the community's agreement?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Madam Speaker, that issue is under consideration at this time, and I think my honourable friend knows that. I will have further information as the information comes to me through Hydro.

Ms. Mihychuk: My second question to the Minister responsible for Hydro: can the minister explain to the people of Seven Sisters why there has been no consultation in this process at all to date? Why has there been no contact with the people involved?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, this is a matter that the honourable member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson) brought to my attention some time ago, and the matter is under consideration. What more can I say? This is a community facility that has been supported well by the community over time, and Hydro, as a good corporate citizen and responsive to the people of Manitoba who are its owners, will deal with it sensitively and properly as they always do.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, how much is Hydro going to profit off selling these community facilities, and will the minister commit to consulting the community immediately?

Mr. Newman: Madam Speaker, as I said, I will be looking into this matter and determining what course of action Hydro had planned, but the suggestion that Hydro will be profiting from this at the expense of the community is absurd. Hydro has a great interest in preserving what has been a very good relationship with that community, and I am sure will be acting accordingly in its conclusions as to what to do in this situation.

Public Housing Rent Increase

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): My question is for the Minister of Housing. When this government increased the rents for the thousands of Manitoba families that live in Manitoba housing properties to 27 percent of their income, they said the feds made them do it. The minister even went so far as to say that the federal government was advocating that the rents go up as high as 30 percent. I want to ask the minister to explain a letter that I have received from the federal minister of housing, that he has a copy of, that says, the federal government did not change its existing rent-geared-to-income scale, which is set at 25 percent. I want to ask the minister to explain, if the feds made him do it, why is their housing still at 25 percent?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Housing): Madam Speaker, I guess they use some figures sometimes, it is the interpretation and the direction that you want to take them as to how you word questions. But the 25 percent that the member is alluding to, I believe she is aware that applies for bachelor units. Our 25 percent is the same as the federal government. The allusion to the 27 percent, we have kept 27 percent over the last—well, since I have become minister, and I believe even the previous minister kept it at 27. We have not moved that figure in the last at least three to four years from the 27 percent. The federal government in some of its housing does have rent at 30 percent. So we are still maintaining our level of 27 percent and we have not moved it.

Ms. Cerilli: Can the minister explain, if he is insisting that the federal government is the one that has changed their policy, why the federal-managed units in Manitoba are at 25 percent of rent geared to income and his units are at 27 percent of rent geared to income?

Mr. Reimer: Our units for bachelor suites are at 25 percent. Our rent for family units is at 27 percent. It has been like that for years. Now the rent that the federal government is charging for their units, as I have mentioned, is up to 30 percent at times. They also use, I believe, the 25 percent for their bachelor units, and I believe they use the 27 percent, in some of their cases, for family units. I do not see any inconsistency in what the member is asking questions about.

* (1410)

Ms. Cerilli: The important issue here is when this government is over the more than 17,000 units currently managed by the federal government, will they raise the rents on those properties that are currently 25 percent of the rent geared to income? Will they raise that to 27 percent?

Mr. Reimer: I believe to answer in speculative tones is to—if we take over the federal offer, there is negotiation, as the member is well aware of, and I have made a point of keeping her abreast of the fact that we are in negotiation with the federal government. No decision has been made. There are a lot of ramifications, implications that we do have to take under consideration. One of the things, as she

mentioned, is the rent geared to income. Our rent geared to income has not changed, and in the immediate future, I do not see any change in that direction, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Radisson, with a new question.

Ms. Cerilli: On a new question, the same issue, Madam Speaker. I want to ask the minister, clearly they are negotiating agreement on taking over the federally managed housing properties. This is not speculation. Can he tell us today: are you putting in that agreement an increase in rent of those properties that are currently managed by the federal government to match your higher rents in the Manitoba properties?

Mr. Reimer: If the member was thinking that there was speculation, what I was referring to, we have not made any decision as to which way we are going to go with the federal government as to what is under negotiation. There are a lot of parameters and factions that we are looking at in regard to negotiations for the package. It is a very large and complicated structure, as she knows, that we are talking about—over 17,000 units that are spread out throughout Manitoba with different agreements, different arrangements with various nonprofit organizations. All these things have to be considered when we look at this devolution that the federal government is doing.

So it is still under negotiation. No decision has been made.

Urban Crime Prevention Staffing

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): To the Minister of Justice. In early January the minister created a new position in his department, a rare occurrence, of urban crime prevention co-ordinator. Is the minister seriously telling Manitobans that over the last three months and in the period up to the filling of the co-ordinator's position, he did not know that position had been filled by one Loretta Barrett or Loretta Marten?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, if this member for St. Johns wants a briefing on that particular issue as to how

that particular individual came to fill that position, I am prepared to have my staff sit down with him and explain exactly how that occurred. If he wants to do that, he is more than welcome to attend at my office to get all the facts before he puts false information on the record, as he is wont to do from time to time.

Mr. Mackintosh: Would the minister, who I know wants to move this behind closed doors and out of the way of the public, Madam Speaker, explain to Manitobans whether or not he had knowledge that that position was going to be filled and was filled by Loretta Barrett, and if not, why did he not ask?

Mr. Toews: Madam Speaker, without wanting to get into too many of the details, because I do not want to—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Toews: Well, I want to indicate that the position has not been filled and has not been filled on a permanent basis. That is something that will come about.

As I understand it—and I could be incorrect in this respect—at this point, the Department of Justice is not even involved in the financial aspect of the payment of that position that this particular person is occupying at this time. The position that the member for St. Johns is talking about will be filled in accordance with all the civil service rules and regulations pertaining to the filling of any permanent position. I do not know what else to tell him about that position.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Business Achievement Awards

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the winners of the recent Pembina Valley Business Achievement Awards. Rural business continues to play a vital role in the overall health of the provincial economy, and I am proud of the industriousness shown by my constituency.

Outside of Winnipeg, the Pembina Valley region is the largest centre of business and industry in the

province of Manitoba. Much of the industrial production in the Pembina Valley region is exported, some 70 percent outside of the region and of that more than 37 percent sold outside of Canada. These strong export sales are an indication of both the quality of the locally produced products and how competitive these businesses are on the world market.

I am proud that the Pembina Valley businesses have become successful players in the global economy. The presence of so many competitive businesses and industries in the Pembina Valley is critical to the health of the local economy as well. Were it not for the enterprising nature of these companies and their willingness to take risk, there would be no jobs. In fact, the businesses nominated for the achievement awards were responsible for the creation of 160 new full-time jobs in the past year. That is quite an achievement, and these companies are to be congratulated for their hard work and dedication.

Once again, I would like to extend my best wishes to the winners of the Pembina Valley Business Achievement Awards. It is a privilege to see so many firms dedicated to enhancing the economic well-being of our communities. They have set a fine example for all Manitoba businesses to follow.

Property Taxes

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, in 1992-93, this government raised taxes on all Manitobans by cutting the property tax credit and by broadening the sales tax base. In response to criticism, their own Federal-Provincial Relations Branch did a memo, which has been tabled many times in this House—and it is essentially public document now—showing that the increase was equivalent to an 11 percent increase in personal income tax, over five points of personal income tax. This year it has become very clear that the revenue from the special levy levied by school boards and school divisions throughout this province has increased by \$134 million since this government took office, and that is the equivalent of almost six and a small fraction points of personal income tax. This government has raised taxes on ordinary Manitobans, primarily through the property tax, to the equivalent of over 11 points of personal income tax, over 22 percent increase in taxes.

This government continues to maintain it has made no tax increases of any significance of any major taxes. They are misleading Manitobans who read their property tax and know that their taxes have risen because this government has cut its support to the public school system, a 22 percent increase in Manitoban's taxes as a result of this government's starving of the public school system and their cuts to the property tax credit and their broadening of the sales tax base. It is a shameful record for a government that claims that it has not increased taxes on Manitobans when, in fact, over \$225 million of tax increases have come from this Finance minister and his predecessor.

Farm Safety Week

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Madam Speaker, being an MLA of a constituency whose major industry is farming as well as being a farmer who has experienced a farm-related injury, I would like to draw the attention of all members of the House to a very worthwhile awareness campaign. Wednesday, March 11, marked the beginning of this year's Farm Safety Week, the theme of a national campaign which will highlight the idea of safe farming and smart farming.

I would like to share some startling information with members of this House. There are many farm injuries and fatalities which could be avoided if farm safety were made a priority, and by extension it became a habit that every member of the farming family was aware. Between 1991 and 1995 there were 503 deaths on Canadian farms. One disturbing statistic is that over 20 percent of these involved youngsters under the age of 16.

* (1420)

John Deere Limited, along with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, the Canadian Coalition for Agricultural Safety and Rural Health, as well as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, is sponsoring this awareness week. They remind us that the No. 1 rule for all farmers is farm safety.

Ms. Cathy Vanstone of Manitoba Agriculture reminds us that you can never be too careful. Each and every member of a farm family needs to be, and to practise, farm safety. I urge all Manitoba farmers to

take part in the National Farm Safety Week all year round and to inform themselves about the potential risks of working with farm machinery. It is my greatest wish that all farmers in Manitoba enjoy a safe and fruitful farming season in 1998. Thank you.

Brandon General Hospital

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, the city of Brandon is Manitoba's second largest centre of approximately 40,000 people. It has a major hospital, the biggest hospital outside of the city of Winnipeg, but regrettably it has lost many resources over the past few years. As the regional health authority director has stated in the press, the budget has been cut by \$6 million in the last few years, far more than it should have been, and as a result, that hospital today is not able to offer the same quality of care that it did a few years back.

Now very seriously we have lost the services of two pediatricians for on-call service, overworked pediatricians who simply decided that they could not carry on any longer. Madam Speaker, we should have four pediatricians. Everyone says that is the number that the Brandon General Hospital should have, but we have only had two and now we have zero. I have knowledge that as of today there are no pediatrician services on call in the city of Brandon, and as of now and throughout this week, people in western Manitoba will have to go to Winnipeg for this kind of service. I think it is a sad commentary on the state of the health care system in this province that you can only have one city with these types of services available when there is a crying need for this specialty to be available in western Manitoba.

I received a call from a father of a two-year-old boy who has leukemia, and he is extremely upset. He is extremely worried about the fact that he may need some very quick action and that this will not be possible, that he will have to take two, two-and-a-half hours to take his son to Winnipeg which may be a very critical time for him.

So, Madam Speaker, I regret very much that this minister has not resolved the situation and does not seem to be prepared to come to some solution in the very near future. Thank you.

Four-Day Workweek Resolution

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Madam Speaker, I rose last week to encourage members opposite to enlighten this House and Manitobans on the economic merits of imposing a 32-hour workweek. Unfortunately, they remain silent on this bold new initiative, so it is left to government members to discuss the latest economic enigma proposed by the NDP.

The resolution, passed unanimously by the NDP delegates, states in part: A shorter workweek would almost certainly help to reduce Manitoba's unemployment rate. While shorter-hour proposals have intuitive appeal, they are based on simplistic economic models. Business practices, as the NDP suggest, would start a negative chain of events. Competition would be reduced, businesses would leave—as they did in the '80s—jobs would be lost and the economy would crumble.

The Swan River Star & Times noted that the Leader of the official opposition, when queried about the proposal, has not yet explained how an employer can afford to pay employees the same for 20 percent less work per week and still remain in business. I should also note that no other NDP province, such as Saskatchewan or B.C., has adopted this labour legislation. As well, we need only look to the country of France, which implemented similar legislation, to see its impact. France's double-digit unemployment rate does not even compare with Manitoba's current 5.8 percent rate. I think not. Thank you.

Elk Ranching

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I would like to share with members of the House concerns of many people in the Swan River constituency, as well as people throughout the province, that being the lack of planning by this government in their plan to capture elk for domestication. You would think that after two years, the government would understand the problems related to capturing wild animals. Instead, this year we saw disasters when two elk died and a third was injured. Because the government was so determined to capture bull elk, they did not take the necessary precautions and

would not listen to the advice that was given to them that large elk should not be captured in one pen.

The program was supposed to get rid of depredation elk, but instead, this government decided to capture elk in the Interlake area, which is a herd that was established a few years ago and now is being destroyed because this government wants to have more elk for sale. The government made an announcement to First Nations that they would be doing the capture, but of course, because the government did not show leadership on this issue, that did not become a reality. Instead, we had illegal elk captured where the government did not take action. We had the Saskatchewan government aggravated with this government's action of setting pens close to the border.

Since it is obvious that the plan is not working, the government should listen to the people and do as they promised, and that is go back to the drawing board and consult the people before they proceed any farther. If they listen to Manitobans, it would be very clear to them that Manitobans do not support the capture of elk for domestication, and they would want the government to stop this plan immediately.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT RESOLUTION

Manitoba Legislative Task Force on Canadian Unity

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Concordia, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), that

“WHEREAS Manitobans strongly believe that Quebec is a vital and welcome partner in the Canadian federation; and

“WHEREAS nine premiers and the territorial leaders, meeting in Calgary in September, 1997, agreed on a Framework for Discussion on Canadian Unity; and

“WHEREAS after discussions among the leaders of the three political parties represented in this Assembly, the Manitoba Legislative Task Force on Canadian Unity

was established to consult Manitobans on the Calgary Framework and other issues relating to Canadian unity, and to renew the Manitoba tradition of building consensus on issues of Canadian unity; and

“WHEREAS the said Task Force, having heard from Manitobans through a wide variety of consultative mechanisms, reported to this Assembly with respect to the Calgary Framework and other issues relating to Canadian identity and values; and

“WHEREAS the Report of the Task Force concluded that Manitobans support the Calgary Framework; and

“WHEREAS nothing in the Calgary Framework is intended to derogate from any Aboriginal or treaty right recognized by law; and

“WHEREAS Manitobans have expressed their strong belief that better recognition of the rights and concerns of Aboriginal peoples is important to Canadian unity.

* (1430)

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

“1. This Assembly affirms that Quebec is a vital and welcome partner in the Canadian federation;

“2. This Assembly affirms that better recognition of the Aboriginal and treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples and full participation by the Aboriginal peoples in the federation are important to Canadian unity;

“3. This Assembly supports the Calgary Framework, with amendment to point 4, as follows:

“1. All Canadians are equal and have rights protected by law.

“2. All provinces, while diverse in their characteristics, have equality of status.

“3. Canada is graced by a diversity, tolerance, compassion and an equality of opportunity that is without rival in the world.

“4. Canada's diversity includes Aboriginal peoples and cultures, the vitality of the English and

French languages and a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world.

- “5. In Canada's federal system, where respect for diversity and equality underlies unity, the unique character of Quebec society, including its French speaking majority, its culture and its tradition of civil law, is fundamental to the well being of Canada. Consequently, the legislature and Government of Quebec have a role to protect and develop the unique character of Quebec society within Canada.
- “6. If any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces.
- “7. Canada is a federal system where federal, provincial, and territorial governments work in partnership while respecting each other's jurisdictions. Canadians want their governments to work cooperatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation. Canadians want their governments to work together particularly in the delivery of their social programs. Provinces and territories renew their commitment to work in partnership with the Government of Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians.”

Motion presented.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I rise with great pride to introduce the resolution which is standing on the Order Paper in my name. It is in my name because of formalities, but in reality it stands in the name of every member of this Legislative Assembly. I believe the resolution is a credit to our province and to every citizen who took time to participate in the consultations which led to it.

It is a particular credit to the members of the Manitoba Legislative Task Force on Canadian Unity. I want to acknowledge their contribution: for the government, my colleagues the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), who is also the Attorney General and member for Rossmere, the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed). Great

credit also goes to the members of the task force from the opposite side of the House: the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry). I am told that their contribution to the work of the task force was substantial and extremely positive.

Great credit should also go to the independent chair of the task force, Professor Wally Fox-Decent, who, I believe, is with us today in your gallery, Madam Speaker. With Professor Fox-Decent is Denise Carlyle, a member of the staff of the task force and the other member of the staff who I do not believe is with us, Eugene Szach, both long-standing public servants who contributed greatly to the drafting of the task force's report.

Recently, Professor Fox-Decent was awarded the Order of Canada in recognition of a distinguished career and many contributions to our country. Many of you know of his work as an academic and in labour arbitration. Some of you know of him as a prairie admiral who at one time led Canada's Armed Forces Reserves, but on three separate occasions in the last decade, members of this Assembly working with Professor Fox-Decent have produced consensus positions for Manitoba's vision for the future of a united Canada, positions which have been constructive, farsighted and extremely influential.

As many members recognize, much of the Calgary unity framework can be traced directly to Manitoba's call some years ago for a Canada clause in the Constitution to express what it means to be a Canadian, the identity and the values that distinguished our country from others, the features that made our parents and grandparents choose this country as the place to raise their children and the legacy we want to pass on to our own children and their families.

Madam Speaker, this resolution is indeed about the unity of Canada. It confirms what we already know, that Manitobans are proud Canadians and want our country to stay strong and united. This resolution also speaks to the rest of Canada and especially to our fellow Canadians in the province of Quebec. The first line of the resolution states: Manitobans strongly believe that Quebec is a vital and welcome partner in the Canadian federation.

Madam Speaker, I could not have said it better. We want Quebec to stay in Canada, and we want the people of Quebec to know that this is how the people of Manitoba feel. Only a few years ago, we saw ample evidence of Manitobans' support for unity at rallies before the last Quebec referendum. I recall with great pride and still with a great deal of emotion being at The Forks with close to 10,000 people accompanied by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and many members opposite along with members on our side of the House.

We have seen plenty of evidence since that time in our mutual efforts to help each other during the Saguenay flood and the recent ice storm in Quebec and our own Red River Valley flood last spring. Even this past week, the welcome and the visible support which Manitobans gave to Guy Hemmings and his Quebec rink during the Brier was warm and genuine. I suspect the separatists would have been hard-pressed to explain the number of Quebec flags and the smiles and the encouragement that were visible in the Winnipeg Arena over the last week.

The separatists like to argue that the rest of Canada does not care about Quebecers and their aspirations. That is simply not true. We in Manitoba have strong historic ties with Quebec, and as Ontario's immediate neighbours, the book ends of our largest province, we have found much common ground over the years. That has been true in our 10 years of government just as it was when members opposite were on this side.

But, besides much common ground, we also have a strong sense of the threat to our country which the loss of Quebec would represent. The people of Quebec and other Canadians are already paying a heavy price for uncertainty. That price is evident in the national economy and in the level of our dollar. It is evident in the costs of financing and in the pattern of investment because, regrettably, business and financial markets worldwide abhor uncertainty and instability, and their negative reaction to the threat of separation has been a heavy burden for our young country and is one which we can only hope will some day be lightened.

Madam Speaker, before dealing with the specific provisions of the resolution, I would like to speak briefly about the events which led up to it. Only about

two and a half years ago, Canada stood at the brink of a crisis. I think that is the only appropriate word to describe what might have occurred if the Yes side had prevailed in the Quebec referendum of October 30, 1995.

Recently, information has surfaced about the separatist plans for a unilateral declaration of independence and for efforts to secure international recognition. I doubt that anyone in this House would want those circumstances to be repeated, because regardless of our feelings or views as to who would suffer the most economically in the event of Quebec separation, one thing almost all analysts and observers agree, every province and region in Canada would suffer to some degree. Therefore, I believe we can all feel that we have a duty as elected representatives to do all we can to ensure that when another referendum is called, if and when another referendum is called, Quebecers will choose overwhelmingly to remain in the Canadian federation. More to be hoped is that we would set aside forever the threat of another referendum.

One of the most important facts facing all of us on the eve of the last referendum was that the federal government probably would not have had the constitutional authority or the legitimacy to defend Canada's interests on its own. In our federation, the provinces would have had a major and critical responsibility as well. That recognition has had a large influence, I believe, on the thinking of a great many of my fellow premiers over the last few years. We know that Quebec separation and Canadian unity are not matters for the federal government alone to handle. We believe it is up to the other partners in Confederation to do all that we can as well. In part, that is why the provincial premiers and territorial leaders, with the exception of the Premier of Quebec, agreed to hold a special meeting in Calgary on September 14 of last year.

* (1440)

In Calgary, we agreed that one of the most important things we could do, in advance of the next Quebec election and another possible referendum, would be to try through grassroots consultation in our provinces and territories to build consensus around some of the key

values and principles which help make up our Canadian identity. We felt these could perhaps be recognized by Quebecers as a statement of common ground which would describe the kind of Canada they know and want as well.

We did not want to present our citizens with a fait accompli, anything but. That is why we called our agreement a framework and why we emphasized that we did not intend it to be exhaustive. We emphasized too that we were not trying to set out a constitutional language. Our Calgary communique also left it to each province and territory to determine the scope of consultation and the most appropriate mechanisms. In addition, it provided for two additional meetings. A First Ministers' meeting before the end of the year to deal with other practical, nonconstitutional approaches to reform the federation and, specifically, in cooperation with the federal government on social policy renewal, including health care and youth unemployment. Communique also specified that premiers and territorial leaders would meet with national aboriginal leaders in Winnipeg on November 18, 1997.

After my return from Calgary, I was able to speak with the Leader of the Opposition and the then Leader of the Liberal Party about options for consulting Manitobans on the Calgary Framework. Several very helpful ideas were advanced, and we decided to try to incorporate them into the all-party task force approach which had proven so successful in the past.

The resolution in front of us today is a direct result of those efforts. It combines the input of Manitobans from across our province to questionnaire responses, public hearing submissions, the Internet, and toll-free telephone services. As the task force report shows, there was also input from our young people in high schools around the province, and a great many members of this Assembly helped make that possible.

Again, I think we can all be proud of the results. In past years, efforts to find common ground on such fundamental issues have sometimes been seen as top-down imposed solutions. I do not believe that criticism could be applied in this case with any real credibility. Our consultations have been very much a grassroots effort. As the task force report points out, they have

been among the most extensive in Canada, if not the most. There should be little or no doubt that this resolution reflects the views of the vast majority of Manitobans. We are speaking to our neighbours across the country with one voice.

Madam Speaker, I would like to deal now with the individual clauses in the resolution. Significantly, the first clause, as I said earlier, is a direct message to our fellow Canadians who live in the province of Quebec. We are saying to them that we believe that they and their province are vital and welcome partners in the Canadian federation. Canada is where they belong, and Canada is where we believe they will best realize their dream of protecting their unique linguistic and cultural heritage.

The next three clauses deal with the September 14 Calgary meeting and our follow-up efforts here in Manitoba. The resolution reminds us that we have now established a tradition of building consensus on issues of Canadian unity, and that is a tradition that I hope will be maintained in years to come. As I said earlier, it has given our province a very strong and credible voice in national unity debates, and that is well recognized across the country. In fact, it is partly the success of our earlier task force efforts to build consensus, which has convinced other provinces of the necessity and the importance of grassroots input.

Many of my colleague premiers spoke to me about the strength of our position in Meech Lake and Charlottetown being the fact that it was (a) an all-party consensus and (b) it was based on province-wide consultations with broad input from the citizens of our province. So they tried in their efforts to emulate us, and I think that with input and suggestions from members opposite we have produced an even better method of consultation this time around. Earlier I pointed out, as well, that to a significant degree the Calgary Framework was inspired by our own province's proposal for a Canada clause to articulate the fundamental characteristics of our country, our identity and values as citizens of this most privileged nation.

The fifth clause, that is, the fifth WHEREAS, states unequivocally that Manitobans support the Calgary Framework; again, a clear and straightforward message. The next two clauses deal with the concerns and

aspirations of aboriginal peoples, both here in Manitoba and across our country. Again, I believe we can all be proud of the leadership on these issues that is being demonstrated in our province.

Earlier I referred to a special meeting of premiers, territorial leaders and leaders of the five national aboriginal organizations, which was held at my invitation in Winnipeg on November 18, 1997, to follow up on the Calgary meeting and the August annual Premiers' Conference. During the November 18 meeting, the national aboriginal leaders presented a consensus statement on the Calgary Framework and their own suggestions for discussing relationships between federal, provincial and territorial governments and aboriginal governments and peoples. Those presentations were referred to our own Manitoba task force, as members are aware.

At the same November 18 meeting, the premiers and national aboriginal leaders also joined in calling on the federal government to recognize its treaty, constitutional and fiduciary obligations towards aboriginal people, to acknowledge its responsibility to provide programs and services for all aboriginal people, and to end its policies of offloading these responsibilities to other orders of government. The premiers and territorial leaders also acknowledged that, in any future constitutional review process affecting aboriginal rights and interests, we will support the participation as equal partners of the five national aboriginal organizations. Madam Speaker, that commitment stands in the Winnipeg communique of November 18, 1997, and I reaffirm it here today.

Our resolution states that nothing in the Calgary Framework is intended to derogate from any aboriginal or treaty right recognized by law. The language of the Calgary Framework is not constitutional language, but this clause underlines the fact that, if the framework were to be adapted into a constitutional proposal at some time in the future, aboriginal and treaty rights would be protected.

The seventh clause, the final WHEREAS, also sends a very strong message to our fellow Canadians about Manitobans' views about the role of aboriginal peoples in the future of our province and our country. The resolution states that Manitobans have expressed their

strong belief that better recognition of the rights and concerns of aboriginal peoples is important to Canadian unity. That message has been heard and understood in our province, and, again, we hope it will be heard loud and clear right across Canada.

I should add, as well, that our resolution amends the wording of the Calgary Framework slightly to deal directly with a concern raised by aboriginal organizations about some of the original wording. The fourth clause of the Calgary Framework originally stated: "Canada's gift of diversity includes Aboriginal peoples and cultures, the vitality of the English and French languages and a multicultural citizenry drawn from all parts of the world."

While that wording was intended to convey the impression that Canada is blessed by its diversity, there was also a concern that these words might be misunderstood as downgrading the role played by aboriginal peoples and others, implying that someone or other was giving or receiving this contribution or characteristic to our nation.

I think, Madam Speaker, it demonstrates the danger of getting into too flowery or too colourful rhetoric or language when you are drafting resolutions. That was never intended to be so and, therefore, the wording has been changed in our resolution as it has in other jurisdictions.

* (1450)

Every one of our three Manitoba legislative task forces has placed heavy emphasis on the concerns of aboriginal peoples. They have also tried to ensure balance and fairness within the diversity that is Canada. In fact, equality of the provinces was one of the most important provisions of the original Canada clause recommended by our 1991 task force.

That recommendation is echoed in the Calgary Framework, as are so many others. The Calgary Framework also provides additional balance and certainty by stating that if any future constitutional amendment confers powers on one province, these powers must be available to all provinces. This principle of equality of treatment is essential to ensuring both fairness and the perception of fairness.

I believe we all recognize that not every national program should be exactly the same in every province. They are not today and they never have been. We have to have flexibility to recognize that we are a vast country with significant regional differences.

The main message here is that arrangements can differ, but the differences must be fair to all and consistent with the fact that all Canadians are equal and all provinces have equality of status.

That was one of the areas that required the most effort, the most discussion when we came up with the framework to balance the need and the necessity to recognize the unique character of Quebec, to recognize that what many people in Quebec have been telling us for a long, long time, the fact that they are different from the rest of the country in that their principal language and culture is French and that they were entitled to utilize the civil law code as different from the rest of Canada.

They have said over and over again: why is it so difficult for the people of Canada to recognize that we are different from the rest of Canada in a number of key respects? That is what was intended by choosing some language—unique character, in this case—for that purpose.

Certainly out west and in among many Manitobans, there has always been the absolutely strong and unwavering desire to ensure that the provinces remain equal, despite all of the other changes that we may make within our constitutional framework. That balancing of the unique character of Quebec being recognized with the assurance that the provinces remain equal was the central focus of much of the discussion.

The final clause in the Calgary Framework is a particularly important one for the future of our country. It is a clause with a direct and an immediate message, particularly to the Government of Canada. I would like to read the clause in its entirety: "Canada is a federal system where federal, provincial, and territorial governments work in partnership while respecting each other's jurisdictions. Canadians want their governments to work cooperatively and with flexibility to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation. Canadians want their governments to work together

particularly in the delivery of their social programs. Provinces and territories renew their commitment to work in partnership with the Government of Canada to best serve the needs of Canadians."

There is a strong body of opinion, which I support, that a great many of the traditional aspirations of the province of Quebec and, indeed, of other provinces and regions can be achieved through respect for the seventh principle, the federalism partnership principle, and through practical administrative reforms and better day-to-day co-operation between the federal and provincial governments.

It is no coincidence that some of the most important national programs were implemented during the era of co-operative federalism. It is those same programs which are now recognized as being among our most valued and tangible symbols of unity. The equalization program is one example, and our national health care system is another. Now we are introducing a new National Child Benefit, which is the most recent example of the benefits of a partnership approach. A partnership approach does not mean a weak national government, an erosion of standards or service levels across the country, or a reduction in the federal government's legitimacy and visibility, just the opposite.

The kind of partnership provincial governments envision, both in the social and economic policy fields, will see the federal government participating more actively and positively in consultation with the provinces, working to decide jointly on program priorities and financing them on an equitable and secure basis. That is the kind of approach we are hoping to achieve through our work with the federal government on a new national framework agreement on social policy as mandated by the First Ministers in December. It is also the approach we hope will be followed in designing new financing arrangements to ensure fairer sharing of the costs of health care across the country.

Before the federal budget, all premiers were saying to the Government of Canada: Do you believe that it is fair for the federal share of health care costs to be in the range of 15 percent when direct cash contributions from the federal budget are counted? We asked them

as well: Do you think it is fair that the federal share counting tax points is a third or less across the country? Now, in the wake of the federal budget, those questions are being asked again, and legitimately so. Federal transfer payment cutbacks and program changes, many of them unilateral, have undercut the very national programs that are so important to our country's economic and social fabric and to our identity and unity. The fact is that we should not need constitutional change to change the mindset that led to cuts and unilateralism. What we need is a commitment to co-operation and partnership. I strongly believe that kind of commitment would be as well received in Quebec as it would be everywhere else in Canada.

National commitments to other new programs would be equally positive in their effect. Renewal of the national infrastructure program would help all parts of the country, as would a national highways program. I believe there are some in the federal government who fear too great a commitment to genuine co-operation. That is unfortunate, and it is also shortsighted. Over and over again, Canadians have made it clear that they want their governments to work together co-operatively, not competitively, to improve the social programs that distinguish our country from others.

The federal government is wrong to try to set itself up as Big Brother. The issues facing our country are so large and complex and the interdependencies between our governments and the different parts of our country are so great that we must all buy into the partnership approach in a genuine way, not just selectively or grudgingly.

Madam Speaker, in approving this resolution, our Legislature will join those of other provinces that have expressed formal support for the Calgary Framework. In fact, I believe only Ontario and British Columbia, along with ourselves, have not yet approved resolutions. So far the premiers and territorial leaders have not discussed the next steps that might be considered to ensure that the messages in our resolutions, all of which are focused around the Calgary Framework, are conveyed most effectively to the citizens of Quebec.

The views and advice of Quebec federalists will obviously be of critical importance, and that includes

the new Leader of the Quebec Liberal Party once he or she is chosen. I believe the Calgary Framework will serve the new Leader well, because I believe it speaks eloquently to Quebec's traditional positions. However, whether it is time to try turning this language into a formal constitutional proposal is not all that clear. Many have argued persuasively that with a separatist government in power in Quebec there may be little point to engaging in such an effort. In fact, when we were meeting in Calgary, I read to my colleagues a letter that we had all received from the leader of the Quebec Liberal youth wing, who urged us not to turn this into a constitutional proposal until there was an opportunity for Quebecers to decide on the next government which would undoubtedly give an opportunity for the federalist side to put itself in a position of being able to deal in a fair and balanced way with the rest of Canada. He acknowledged that as long as there was a separatist administration in Quebec, no negotiations were possible under any proposals.

Some have suggested that since Quebec citizens have not had a chance for direct input, the federal government might consult on the Calgary Framework in Quebec or across the country including Quebec. That is a possibility which could be explored, but it would not make sense to duplicate consultations which we have already held.

It has also been suggested that the federal government might amend its own distinct society resolution from a few years ago to reflect the Calgary language. One of the many complications involved in reopening formal constitutional debate, as we all know, is that the federal government has loaned its veto to Quebec, a decision whose implications for future constitutional reform may be ominous.

A decision to turn the Calgary Framework into constitutional language would also require a reopening of other issues, I believe. One obvious issue is Senate reform, and aboriginal issues would be of great importance, as well, with, as I said before, national aboriginal leaders at the table. No doubt other issues would also come to the fore including minority language rights and Charter rights.

However, there are also important steps being taken outside the Calgary Framework which are ongoing and

which do not involve constitutional change, at least not now. The secession case now being considered by the Supreme Court is of critical importance in this regard. Manitoba and Saskatchewan both intervened in the case in support of the federal government and to stress the fact that any future secession negotiation would have to take place within the rule of law under the Constitution and with the involvement of the governments of the other provinces and territories, not just the Quebec government unilaterally, or the federal and Quebec governments bilaterally.

* (1500)

It goes without saying that we hope the Supreme Court's decision will help Quebec voters better understand the choice they are asked to make if and when another referendum is scheduled. I hope that the consequences of separation will also be made clear in other areas as well. Many Quebec citizens were sold a bill of goods before the last referendum, and we know that significant numbers voted yes on the basis of completely unrealistic assumptions about the kind of arrangements which might apply after secession. It is also essential that other Canadians continue to focus on these critical unity issues because our future, our children's future and indeed our country's future are at stake.

All Canadians need a better understanding of why unity is so vital to our future place in the world and to the quality of the lives our children can hope to lead. All Canadians need to understand the implications of issues such as the fair division of the national debt and national assets, the future of various interprovincial agreements including trading relationships and the facts about fundamental issues such as citizenship, passports, transportation and boundaries. These issues have to be addressed with reason and with honesty.

Some have talked about the desirability of national contingency legislation, legislation which would set out the parameters for any possible secession negotiation and perhaps also help spell out the heavy costs of the breakup of Canada. Perhaps that idea should be pursued at an appropriate time. If it is, provinces and territories should participate fully in the preparation of any such legislation.

For now, the next steps are not clear and a great many options remain to be considered. I expect premiers will be discussing the alternatives in the near future. Ultimately, I believe our best hope of building unity is by seizing every opportunity we can to make our country work better. With the efforts we are making to build practical partnerships and with the passage of this consensus resolution on the Calgary Framework, I believe we are taking some very positive and essential steps in the spirit of good will which has been the hallmark of Manitoba's unity efforts over the years. Again, I believe we can all take pride in this resolution and what it says to Canada about our shared commitment to our future.

So, Madam Speaker, I commend this resolution to the House, and I look forward with great interest to hearing the views of as many honourable members as possible. Thank you.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I, too, rise today to support the resolutions before the Chamber this afternoon. We do so, Madam Speaker, because it is our duty to do as much as possible to keep our country together and united. It is our responsibility to put all party politics aside if we can make any small difference to having our friends, our families, our neighbours be able to have a strong and united Canada that was passed on to us by our parents and by our grandparents before them.

I was writing down some notes to address in the Chamber today, just some thoughts, about this proposal and this resolution. I will not be going into the same kind of detail as the First Minister, but my comments will be based on my values, our values, and as I say, my extreme desire that this resolution, and it is a resolution, will make a bit of difference to those people in our country that reside in Quebec and want to stay in Canada and also those people in our country that want to see justice finally for First Nations and first peoples. Both those sentiments, I believe, are articulated in the resolutions before us in this Chamber.

I want to thank all the Manitobans that presented their views at the public hearing process. I want to thank people that sent their material in on the surveys, and I want to thank anyone who participated in any way, shape or form in classrooms and our other venues

on this proposal. I think it is safe to say that the people who did participate in the process were very, very positive towards the proposals. I think it is also safe to say that many Canadians feel that everything is okay in terms of the country and have not thought a lot about this proposal. So, on the one hand, I am happy about the positive response that our committee members obtained; but, on the other hand, I am realistic to know that we have to continue to work at it that just by passing this resolution tonight or tomorrow will not in itself bring the kind of security of our country that we would like to have as we go into the 21st Century.

I want to thank the members of the committee. I want to thank the chair, Wally Fox-Decent. I have served on a committee with him before dealing with a Meech Lake proposal. I know he has done valuable work with the Charlottetown Accord and the proposal of the Manitoba response, and he again brings great dignity and compromise and consensus to the work that has gone on with the committee report that is before us in this Chamber.

Now Wally will know that we thought that we should use a different process and some different ideas this time around because we were very, very worried about the fact that the Charlottetown Accord was overwhelmingly defeated in Manitoba by the public through the plebiscite that was held. But wanting some new ideas or new proposals in place for this process in no way, shape, or form takes away my great admiration for the Chair's skills and abilities and my long-term admiration for his ability to bring consensus on a very difficult situation. I want to congratulate him for the Order of Canada. I do not know how many awards he has received. I do not know how he carries them all in his house. He has to build a bigger house. Certainly they are very worthy, he is very worthy of receiving those awards.

I want to thank the staff members, Denise Carlyle and Eugene Szach, who work with the committee. I remember getting advice from the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) when we were in the Meech Lake process. I remember sometimes we got advice from one lawyer one way, I think on the fifth floor of the conference centre in Ottawa we were getting advice left on one ear, we were getting advice from one lawyer, and right on the other ear, we were getting

advice from another lawyer. Then we were getting accused of breaking up the whole country. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) will remember those interesting times.

We will all, of course, remember the interesting time when an eagle feather really solidified the feelings of First Nations people that even though some of the compromises had been made in Meech in Ottawa that it was totally unacceptable for us to proceed without dealing with First Nations and first peoples in this country.

We have, all of us, a lot of us have had some very, very interesting challenges to deal with on this issue. I want to thank, as I say, the staff members of this committee and the elected members that sat on the committee. I first of all want to thank our own members, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson). We thought the comments made after Calgary that First Nations people—we felt that they were left at the train station without being involved again. The comments that were made by Matthew Coon Come that night on television, a person who is a strong federalist and a leader of the Cree in Quebec, we felt his comments in dealing with the Calgary accord meant that we had to take a strong stand consistent with the stand and traditions we have taken on Meech in this Chamber.

We were particularly pleased that the member for Rupertsland and the member for The Pas would join that committee as the members from this party, because we recognized that there were many other First Nations people that wanted dramatic changes in Calgary but, at the same time, it was extremely difficult to participate in a process after you had been left, as they say, on the platform, off the train.

* (1510)

I want to thank the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry) for his contributions to this committee, the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), and the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews). Do I have all the correct committee members? I better check my book, because I thought Merv Tweed was on there—Turtle Mountain. I want to thank all members for their participation on the committee. The proposal before us followed a very similar process to the past. I have always supported in

this Chamber an all-party way of attempting to deal with the differences we have and the values that unite us as Manitobans and as Canadians.

I was looking through some speeches the other day on dealing with the original establishment of our country. Of course, the country was established with a set of contradictions in the BNA Act and a set of compromises and a consensus that moved us forward.

I believe it was George Brown that said in 1864 in the Canadian assembly, on June 22, 1864: on the unanimous endorsement of a coalition aimed at a new vision of Canada, the many party alliances are one thing, but the interests of my country are another. Let us try to rise superior to the pitifulness of party politics. Let us unite to consider this question as a great national issue in a manner worthy of us as a people.

Turning to the French members of the assembly, Brown concluded: it is little sacrifice to me to accept this compromise. It is comparatively little even for the member for Sherbrooke, but it is a great thing, a most bold and manly thing—I use his words, not our words—for saying Etienne Tache and for the member for Montreal East to take up this question and reach this compromise.

Of course, in today's language, we would say we would not use that outdated term, but we would say it is good for Canada to unite across party lines in a resolution and a vision for our country that will keep us united.

I, therefore, support the all-party process, and I support the resolution that is before us that is made up of Calgary, that is made up of the Winnipeg Framework Agreement with first peoples that participated in that process, and that is made up of the hearings that took place in Manitoba. It is a product of all three—both documents and processes—that took place. It is a consensus, Madam Speaker, and it is an important consensus for this Legislature. I believe it does send a symbolic message to the federalists in Canada and the federalists that want to keep a united Canada in Quebec. I believe that it, again, says to people that we are a tolerant province that wants to reach out to keep our country united and wants to reach out with this

resolution, which is really a symbol of good will from this Legislature to First Nations people and to the people of Quebec, who believe in a strong united Canada.

I recall, as the Premier has mentioned, the breakdown of Meech, the breakdown and defeat of Charlottetown, the re-election of a separatist government in Quebec, and, of course, the referendum that we almost lost as a nation in Quebec a couple of years ago. I recall with great pride the vote of the Inuit people—98 percent—to stay within Canada. I recall with great pride the vote of 98.5, I think, of the James Bay Cree to stay as part of Canada. I recall that rally that was in Winnipeg after those two referendums and before the vote in Quebec on the Monday night. I recall the 10,000 people at The Forks, and I thought it was fitting that it was at The Forks where, of course, 6,000 years ago first peoples located. At the same time we were speaking about a united Canada, there were people from the Mathias Colomb Band concerned about housing and issues that we still have to address in this Legislature and have to address in Manitoba.

But I was absolutely proud to join the Premier, the federal minister, and the mayor at The Forks, and the 10,000 other people speaking out for a strong and united Canada. I often thought, why do we wait until the last minute to express our views? Why do we wait to the last minute to have those exchange students from Quebec speak in Manitoba and get that kind of response that could be played back in the province of Quebec, people to people, as a national issue?

I think we got very complacent. I remember watching a member of the business community in Quebec during the referendum period saying: We do not just want to win this next referendum in Quebec; we want to humiliate the separatists in this vote. I thought it got really quite dangerous when the federalist side got arrogant, in my view, got out of touch, and risked a great deal in terms of the strategy that we had, of saying there is no problem, no worry and no threat or risk. In fact, I even recall a lot of federalists—this is not partisan—who were telling everybody two months and three months before the election: Do not worry. It is not going to happen. No vote is going to vote to separate this country.

It reminded me of a conversation I had with Rene Levesque back in the '70s, where I did not think he could even get elected anything, being a separatist. But a year and a half later he was Premier of the province of Quebec.

We should never underestimate the strong nationalist views in Quebec, and we should never miss an opportunity to give the federalists in Quebec an opportunity to stay in a strong and united Canada.

So I hope that this resolution and the resolution dealing with first peoples will help that and assist that as a symbol. I recognize, over many resolutions that we have had in this Chamber, that there have been compromises made between the political parties on what has come forward because there are conflicting views in this Chamber, perhaps. There are also conflicting views about the vision and future of this country, but we have no conflict of views when it comes to providing a strong and united Canada as a legacy for our children and for our grandchildren in the future.

We have gone through a tradition in this province where we joined Confederation based on the compromises that were made in the BNA Act and the Manitoba Act that came after it. We have of course been the leaders in many of the abilities to bridge the visions of provinces that want strong provincial rights versus the federal government maintaining strong national powers and ability to redistribute wealth, programs and opportunities in our country.

The Bracken Commission, Madam Speaker, years ago, and the Bracken Report years ago, I believe—and I am just going by memory now—was one that was trying to deal with some of the western provinces and the impact of the Dirty Thirties versus the power and strength that provinces like Ontario had in terms of the provinces, and I think we eventually ended up with the Rowell-Sirois, which eventually led to equalization in this country, which was, in my view, the ability of Canada to evolve as a tolerant and fair nation that has the ability, through a strong, national government, to redistribute wealth and opportunities and resources from those provinces that have to those provinces that need. That still, in my view, underlines the absolute essence of Canada as a federal state and why we are

different and, in my view, better than our friends to the south of us in terms of the ability to have a compassionate society not just in words but in action through our Constitution and our various forms of governments, federal and provincial.

That is why, Madam Speaker, I felt much more comfortable actually. I did not like some of the provisions of Meech Lake. All of us had difficulty with certain parts of it. We tried to get five amendments, I believe, in the Meech Lake report and of course we were left till the last minute to get those, and we were unable to get them. Finally, the former member for Rupertsland took the action he did, and rightly so. The Prime Minister said: I chose the date to roll the dice. Well, somebody else stopped him with a very dramatic showing in this Legislature.

I know the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and I had warned the federal government months ahead, months ahead we had warned the federal government, do not take the Manitoba process for granted. Do not think we will just come in here like Ottawa and pass a resolution in one day. All of us may have different agreements or disagreements on the substance of Meech, but none of us would be willing to sacrifice the rights of individual members and their right to speak out for their constituents in this Chamber and to have the rights of the public of this province participate in the process that took place during the Meech Lake period.

* (1520)

We had warned the Prime Minister, and I know that the Premier (Mr. Filmon) had warned him when the Clyde Wells' intervention was getting some attention. It was an interesting day. The Berlin Wall was going down in Europe, and the wall of delay was going up in Canada in terms of constitutional creativity and constitutional evolution. I thought it was tragic too that shortly thereafter the Charest committee was established.

There was a compromise on first peoples in that report. There was a compromise on some of the odious parts that we felt on spending powers. But, of course, that was dashed by Lucien Bouchard, and by that time the Prime Minister had rolled the dice and had risked, in my view, the process, because we were united. We

were united in our resolve to the federal government and in phone calls we had from some pretty high people at that time—and I will not quote any sources—telling us to compromise our rules. I think the request was made to forget our rules, and all of us said we would not. The Premier and I will recall that call from St. John's, Newfoundland.

The Charlottetown Accord I supported to some degree—and I know the public did not—but again we had the articulation and the strong language on equalization in that document. It was a very, very positive statement on the ability, the entrenchment of equalization because the more and more and more we move in Canada to some of the values being more Darwinian, the more and more I am worried that provinces like British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario and potentially Saskatchewan which is getting close to being a have province in terms of the equalization—although the oil revenues are down a touch, I am sure that will not be the case in the next year, but I think that this issue of equalization is not one which we can always take for granted.

It always surprises me, Madam Speaker, why the people of Quebec do not appreciate the issue of equalization, but I guess we are dealing with emotion in terms of language, culture and sovereignty as opposed to just finances, and we should remember that because Quebec is a net recipient of over a billion dollars.

But that accord was defeated, Madam Speaker, and I respect the will of the public in terms of its decision on that referendum.

But I would say, Madam Speaker, that in approaching this Calgary document and this resolution that we should be mindful of the tradition in this province that is, I believe, articulated in the Charlottetown proposal that was signed by members of this Legislature and is also a tradition of past governments and I believe of future peoples in Manitoba, that we should be, in this Legislature, the protectors of a strong national government. Whether it is Bracken or Roblin or Schreyer or Lyon or Pawley or this Legislature and this Premier (Mr. Filmon), we have to maintain the torch of a strong national government that has been passed on from political party to political party, from premier to premier.

When this resolution deals with the Calgary resolution and it deals with the amendments, appropriately so, for First Nations, I believe that the future of Canada will be in the programs that make a difference to all Canadians, whether they are Manitobans or Quebecers or people from Saskatchewan or Newfoundland. It is the programs that we are able to deliver in an equal way to all our citizens that will keep our country united, in my view, way beyond the Constitution or the resolutions or the little spats that take place in our country.

So I say with the strongest conviction I can that we have a lot of work ahead of us in maintaining our national programs and therefore retaining the reasons to stay in Canada, and I would join with the Premier (Mr. Filmon)—I think the cuts in public health care and public post-secondary education are working against a strong and united Canada. I think they are working diametrically against what this country is all about. I want a strong and united Canada first as a national priority, not third, fourth, fifth. I want a strong and national government.

We are in a situation now where programs like medicare are funded by the federal government under 20 percent in provinces, and we are getting lower and lower and lower. What is to stop a province like Alberta, B.C., Ontario from saying, well, it is down to only 10 percent, but you are telling us how to run our health care system; we are out. We are out.

So I say when we pass this resolution, I believe the underlying tone of views across all political parties in this province, all political parties in this province, this Keystone Province, this province that has brought the compromise between the people in Alberta that were suffering in the '30s to the people in Ontario, this province that brought that equalization compromise and consensus to Canada, I still believe that role is still with this Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the government and the people in this Chamber as we move into the next century.

That is why the issue of national programs and the support for national programs—and I know that members of the Liberal Party agree. I know they believe in a strong medicare program. It is not an issue that it started under Mulroney. You know, we could all

get back and forth on this. Regrettably, we have never had the chance to be a national government, but you never know, we are not peaking too early in terms of the support.

I believe that is a very, very important part of our discussions today, and we have to make sure that in the debate on this resolution that we continue the fight for strong national programs supported by a strong national government. I really believe as we start counting up the so-called fiscal dividend in this country, we should make sure in this Chamber that we return to a strong national health care program supported in a real way by the federal government as the most meaningful duty we can achieve for our country beyond words, but allowing all Canadians—Quebecois, Manitobans, members from British Columbia—to get equitable services in a tolerant country.

Madam Speaker, I also believe that we have to stop sleepwalking into the next referendum campaign. I hope we are able to elect a federalist government in Quebec in the next provincial election, which is four years in September of this year. I was worried about the timing of the intervention of the federal court to the Supreme Court, because I was worried about the separatists again using that in Quebec to receive another mandate. But I do support the belated effort of the federal government to go to the Supreme Court, and I do support the province of Saskatchewan and the province of Manitoba in the intervention at the Supreme Court. I think it will be very important for the people of Quebec to know what the rules are in the next referendum campaign.

I do not believe that courts solve political issues. I do not believe courts in themselves can deal with issues of democracy, but I do believe that this back and forth—it is 50 percent plus one, it is not 50 percent plus one, the province is divisible, it is not divisible, the Crees have rights, which I believe they do internationally and nationally—I believe that those issues should be clearly upfront before any kind of further vote. I, therefore, support the provincial government in its intervention and in its activity. I support the Saskatchewan government, and I support the Cree of Quebec in this intervention before the Supreme Court.

I want to say to the government that we support the resolution before us. It is not a constitutional

amendment. It is a resolution. It builds upon previous action in the Constitution. It is the federalist premiers coming forward with a resolution to the Chambers of Canada, federalist premiers of all political stripes. It recognizes the Section 35 of First Nations people and it supports in its additions here in the Manitoba Chamber, the Calgary Framework and the Winnipeg Framework, the addition to the Calgary Framework and the changes to Point 4 that the Assembly affirms the better recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights of aboriginal peoples, and full participation by the aboriginal peoples in the federation are important to Canadian unity.

* (1530)

Madam Speaker, when we had the first Constitution of Canada, it was a consensus and a compromise. Those of us who believe in a strong central government know that the weakening of the federal government is going on under the existing Constitution. So I say more than anything else, it is a matter of public and political will to return us to the strong programs, just like medicare was established on the basis of political will to begin with. It was a provincial program started by the Douglas government in Saskatchewan. It became the model of the country. It became adopted by provinces and by the federal government, and it became a program that was supported by 50-50 funding under the existing British North America Act.

I say that under the existing act, we can have a strong national government with strong programs. Regrettably, under the existing Constitution, we can see a continued weakening of the federal government and a weakening of programs provided by the federal government through provincial governments to the citizens of our province. The 1982 agreement, repatriation, protects the Charter of Rights and further protected under Section 35, a proposal that was made by former Minister of Justice Romanow and former Premier Blakeney and supported by the other nine premiers in Section 35, a nonderogation clause which was further amended to deal with equality of women under First Nations treaties in the later '83-84 period.

It is interesting to note as we speak to this resolution today how this week alone, the Charter of Rights, when it was attacked by the notwithstanding clause in the

province of Alberta, the rights of individuals, the rights of people that are most vulnerable in our society under the Charter of Rights, the attempt to override those individual rights was totally rejected by the public of that province, and the government correctly withdrew that proposal under the Charter of Rights.

We have, as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said, a resolution before us which is not a constitutional amendment, and I think that makes sense. I think this makes sense because there is constitutional fatigue. The Premier is correct. I think it does make sense to proceed with a resolution. A future constitutional amendment would for this country again require, in my view, in this province and in Manitoba continued and strong recognition for First Nations people. It would have also a major debate on the Senate in this country. We believe the Senate should be abolished.

The First Minister, I hope, would start looking at that option in light of what also was going on in terms of the country. We have abolished the Senate for this Chamber and, of course, I think it has been a good move. We would also have a debate if a constitutional proposal was here about the role of a strong central government versus further delegation of powers to the provinces. I think a constitutional proposal would be fraught with difficulty in this Chamber and fraught with difficulty in our province, so I support the resolution.

The Premier has put this forward and articulated on the individual points of this resolution. I believe that the resolution is an act of good faith to the people of Quebec that are federalists. I note that the separatist Leader, Bloc Quebecois Leader, said that it would not make any difference in Quebec. I believe it will make a difference to those people that want to stay in Canada but certainly want to ensure that their language, culture, and civil law are protected in the future and are recognized as something that must be protected as a small portion of the North American population that is primarily French speaking.

I also know this Chamber has fought for minority language rights. We support the minority language rights of people in this province, for Francophone citizens in this province. We have tried in the past to provide services and language rights to the minority in this province because it is just and right. It is consistent

with the Manitoba Act and it is also very, very much the mirror of what we would expect for English minority rights in the province of Quebec.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that in passing this resolution of good will that this is an attempt to reach out to the people of Quebec. I believe it demonstrates again that Canada is a tolerant and fair country that wants to stay united from sea to sea to sea and that we will pass this resolution as an act of good faith for the people of the province of Quebec, and we will pass the further resolution dealing with First Nations people.

I conclude by saying that the strength of our country is in the strength of our people. The strength of our programs and the strength of this province is in our vision that we are a tolerant province. We are a fair-minded province, but we are a province that will fight for strong national programs to be delivered in a fair way to all our citizens across this country.

Thank you very, very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the members of the committee that have worked so hard on our behalf. Again, I want to thank all the members of the committee. You were the ones spending Saturday at the Franco-Manitoban Society. You were the ones spending evenings going up north and going to various communities across this province.

It is a tough job to take these resolutions forward, but you have performed an admirable accomplishment with this consensus report, and the people of this Assembly should be proud of the work you have done and the resolutions you have put forward today. Thank you very, very much.

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Madam Speaker, I will be speaking in French, and just for a few minutes so that other colleagues will have a chance to speak.

First of all, I would like to congratulate and thank the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) and the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) for tabling and supporting this resolution tabled in the Chamber today.

J'ai eu le plaisir et le privilège de siéger au Groupe de travail législatif du Manitoba sur l'unité canadienne. Premièrement, j'aimerais remercier Monsieur Wally Fox-Decent qui était le président du comité avec son

personnel, Madame Denise Carlyle, Monsieur Eugene Szach, Laura Gareau, Gilles Marchildon, Marie Dary, Linda McConnell et Linda Christian.

Et ensuite j'aimerais remercier les collègues de la Législature qui étaient membres du comité. C'était un comité qui était, je crois, très fructueux afin d'accomplir ce qu'on était partis faire. Premièrement, c'était un comité qui était là pour écouter les Manitobains, les Canadiens, afin de savoir ce qu'ils voulaient, ou bien qu'ils voulaient faire entendre au Québec pour leur laisser savoir que nous, les Manitobains, on a besoin du Québec pour garder ce beau et grand pays ensemble, et puis nous les avons besoin et ils nous ont besoin.

Et puis si on a écouté les commentaires qui ont été faits dans les présentations, c'était très clair. C'était présenté avec passion, avec émotion, et puis ils ont indiqué qu'est-ce qu'ils voulaient d'un Canada fort et puis ça était par plusieurs reprises dans les présentations. Alors, ce sont des commentaires qu'après le Cadre de discussion de Calgary et puis que notre Premier ministre avait participé, et puis il a été très apprécié, j'en suis sûr, puisque c'était pas son premier échec de comité sur l'unité canadienne. Mais, c'était très clair que ce Cadre de discussion de Calgary n'était pas un document constitutionnel mais c'était pour faire entendre le Québec des autres provinces canadiens de qu'est-ce qu'on voulait. On voulait les garder avec nous.

J'ai eu le plaisir de voyager dans le Québec depuis trois ou quatre années, et puis dans les provinces maritimes, et lorsqu'on rencontrait ces gens, tous voulaient garder le Canada ensemble. Et puis, certainement, on a rencontré des séparatistes, mais même eux n'étaient pas sûrs s'ils voulaient se séparer. C'est "quoi ferait une séparation au Québec?"

* (1540)

J'ai eu le plaisir d'aller à Edmonton il y a deux semaines à l'Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française. La province de l'Alberta s'est joint à l'Assemblée internationale des parlementaires de langue française. La communauté francophone en Alberta est très forte, et puis lorsqu'on a parlé à plusieurs députés d'Alberta qui parlent la langue, il y a qui sont francophiles et puis qui ont

démontré l'intérêt et le vouloir de travailler en français. Mais, par exemple, ici, la Société franco-manitobaine a affirmé que la reconnaissance de la dualité linguistique au point 4 serait mieux exprimé par la reconnaissance explicite des communautés linguistiques minoritaires dans tout le Canada.

Oui, la Société franco-manitobaine, d'autres organismes franco-manitobains, ont fait des présentations au comité. C'était très important. Mais certainement ils n'ont pas peut-être vu toutes leurs présentations mais on ne pouvait pas mettre toutes les présentations dans le document. On a souligné les points primordiaux qu'on semblait vouloir que ça ressort quand même, les questions qui avaient intéressé les présentateurs. Alors avec ces présentations, on les a toutes en record. On ne pouvait pas, vu que ce n'était pas un document constitutionnel. C'était très important de souligner les points saillants que les communautés—c'est de même avec les Autochtones et puis leurs présentations ou les communications qui ont été faites par les deux collègues, le député de Le Pas (Monsieur Lathlin) et puis le député de Rupertsland (Monsieur Robinson)—je crois que c'était des présentations et des recommandations très claires au niveau de leur communauté autochtone et puis de même façon avec les présentations de la communauté francophone.

Donc je représente un bon groupe, un grand nombre, et puis dans les prochaines délégations ou comités constitutionnels dans l'avenir que ces comités francophones, autochtones, seront à la table pour négocier afin qu'on ait un grand Canada uni, comme le Premier ministre (Monsieur Filmon) et le chef de l'opposition l'ont mentionné qu'afin d'avoir un grand Canada qui fait que les gens du Canada soient unis et puis avec ces commentaires que je fais cet après-midi, j'appuie le Cadre de discussion de Calgary et puis je suis sûr qu'on sera plus à l'aise dans l'avenir lorsqu'on passe des messages très clairs au Québec qu'on veut les avoir et puis, eux aussi, j'espère que c'est de la même façon puis qu'on sera un grand pays uni dans l'avenir pour nos jeunes enfants.

Et à ce moment aussi j'aimerais remercier les écoles qui ont accepté d'entendre les députés dans différentes circonscriptions. Moi, je remercie le Collège Louis Riel à St-Boniface de m'avoir fait entendre différentes présentations, ce qui étaient très fructueux puisque je

pense que j'ai appris beaucoup plus d'histoire en écoutant ces jeunes et puis l'émotion, la passion aussi de ces jeunes qui démontraient qu'ils voulaient un Canada uni, et puis ils regardaient à leur avenir et puis c'est à nous aussi de faire certain que ce Canada sera là pour nos jeunes dans le futur.

Avec un grand appui avec la déclaration du Canada, je remercie encore une fois le personnel et le président du comité avec mes collègues et puis je suis sûr et j'espère qu'on a bien représenté les 56 collègues de la Législature. C'était notre but. Merci beaucoup.

[Translation]

I had the pleasure and the privilege to be a member of the Manitoba Task Force on Canadian Unity. Firstly, I would like to thank Mr. Wally Fox-Decent, who was the chairman of the task force, with his staff, Mrs. Denise Carlyle, Mr. Eugene Szach, Laura Gareau, Gilles Marchildon, Marie Dary, Linda McConnell and Linda Christian.

Next I would like to thank my colleagues of the Assembly who were members of the committee, which was, I believe, a very fruitful committee as regards accomplishing what we had set out to do. Firstly, it was a task force that was there to listen to Manitobans, Canadians, in order to find out what they wanted, or what they want the people of Quebec to know, to let them know that we in Manitoba need Quebec to keep this beautiful and great country together, and that we need them and they need us.

If we listened to the comments that were made in the presentations, that was very clear. It was stated with passion, with emotion, and they told us what they wanted. They wanted a strong Canada. Many times during the presentations we heard this. So those comments on the Calgary Framework, and that our First Minister had participated was very much appreciated, I am sure, because it was not his first involvement with a Task Force on Canadian Unity. But it was very clear that this Calgary Framework was not a constitutional document, but was intended to convey to Quebec what other provinces in Canada wanted. We wanted them to remain with us.

I have had the pleasure of travelling in Quebec in the last three or four years, and also in the Maritimes, and

when I would meet people, all of them wanted to keep Canada together. And certainly we did meet some separatists, but even they were not quite sure if they really wanted to separate. It was, "What would separation do to Quebec?"

I had the pleasure of going to Edmonton a couple of weeks ago to the International Assembly of French-Speaking Parliamentarians. Alberta has joined this assembly. The Francophone community in Alberta is very strong. We spoke to several MLAs from Alberta who speak French, some are Francophiles, and they showed an interest and a desire to work in French. But here, for example, the Société franco-manitobaine affirmed that the recognition of linguistic duality in Point 4 would be better expressed by explicitly acknowledging minority linguistic communities throughout Canada.

Yes, the SFM, and other Franco-Manitoban organizations, made presentations to the task force. It was very important that they did so. But they may not have seen all of their presentations included, but we could not include everything in our document. We emphasized the main elements that seemed to come out of the interests of the presenters. We have all of these presentations on record. This report was not a constitutional document; it was very important to underline the salient points that the communities presented to us. It was the same thing with the aboriginal people. Those presentations, and what we heard from our two colleagues, the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) and from Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson)—I believe that those presentations and the recommendations were very clear as regards the aboriginal community and the same was true of the presentations of the Francophone community.

So I represent good group, a large number, and in future delegations or constitutional committees, these Francophone and aboriginal communities will be at the negotiating table in order to have a great Canada, a united Canada, as the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) and Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) have mentioned; in order to have a Canada where the people are united. So, with these comments that I am making this afternoon, I endorse the Calgary Framework, and I am sure that we will be more comfortable in the future when we send a very clear message to Quebec that we

want them with us. I hope that they feel the same way and that we will be one great, united country in the future for our children.

I would now like to thank the schools that heard MLAs in various constituencies. I would like to thank Collège Louis-Riel in St. Boniface for enabling me to hear a number of presentations; it was very helpful. I think that I learned much more history by listening to those young people, and the emotion, the passion of those young people, showing me that they wanted a united Canada, and they were looking toward the future. It is up to us to make sure that this Canada will be there for our youth in the future.

With great support for this Canada declaration, I once again thank the staff and the chairman of the task force and my colleagues, and I am sure, I hope, that we have represented our 56 colleagues of this Assembly well. That was our goal. Thank you very much.

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, this resolution arises out of the recently issued report of the Manitoba Legislative Task Force on Canadian Unity. This task force was established in October of 1997, after discussions among the leaders of the three parties represented in the Legislative Assembly. I want to stress that all three parties in the Assembly were represented on the task force. The chair was Mr. Wally Fox-Decent, whose previous achievements have been referred to and certainly include an ability for building consensus among Manitobans on important issues including issues of national unity.

I want to thank the Premier (Mr. Filmon) for appointing me as one of the three government members on this task force. I also want to thank my fellow colleagues on the task force, the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson) and the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

To a large part the success of this report is directly attributable to the organizational support that the task force received from Ms. Denise Carlyle, Mr. Eugene Szach, whom I had the pleasure of working with as a public servant, Ms. Laura Gareau, Mr. Gilles

Marchildon and administrative support in the form of Ms. Marie Dary, Ms. Linda McConnell and Ms. Linda Christian. I want to thank them very much for their involvement and their work and their support.

The primary mandate of the task force was to consult Manitobans on the document known as the Calgary declaration or the Calgary Framework, a seven-point statement. This statement was an attempt by premiers, the nine premiers excluding the Province of Quebec to place Canadian identity and values into the form of a document and together with the two territorial leaders to craft a response to the national unity question, what does it mean to be a Canadian. There may be many who see the document as flawed. There may be many who see the document as not necessarily reflecting the reality of Canada today, but I think it is a very important document in the sense of attempting to define what it means to be a Canadian, what values we share in common.

This is not an exercise which unfortunately has been all too often left in the hands of simply lawyers or politicians. This is an exercise that requires the input of all Canadians. The premiers and the territorial leaders placed in the document points dealing with the equal status of the provinces, the equality of individual Canadians and the importance of diversity and accommodation as Canadian values. Point 5 specifically acknowledges the unique character of Quebec society and the role of the Legislature and government of Quebec to protect and develop that unique character within Canada.

The framework is not a constitutional document, but in time it may serve as a discussion paper for other discussions, whether they are constitutional, whether they are administrative arrangements, whether they are other new and innovative ways of addressing the concerns about keeping Canada together. Its purpose is to encourage discussion among all Canadians to explore our identity as a nation and the values that keep us together as a federation.

* (1550)

Madam Speaker, in order to determine the views of Manitobans on the Calgary Framework and other issues relating to Canadian identity and values, the task force

implemented a wide variety of consultative mechanisms. Every residence in the province received a householder containing an explanation of the framework. The same questionnaire was completed by many high school students and others after a presentation on behalf of the task force in various high schools throughout the province. I myself had the opportunity not only to speak in schools in or near my constituency, particularly River East Collegiate, Miles Mac Collegiate, but also in the rural areas. I had occasion to speak in Shoal Lake and in Rosburn on this issue, and in each of those schools I found attentive students, students concerned about the future of their country, their future.

Many members of the Assembly participated in similar endeavours, and as a task force member I appreciate their contribution. The task force also held public meetings on the Calgary Framework in nine communities throughout the province.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank each and every Manitoban who participated in this task in one way or another. The response from Manitobans was enthusiastic and plainly demonstrated their concerns about national unity. Over 15,000 completed questionnaires were returned to us, and over 100 Manitobans made presentations at our public meetings. In total we had over 20,000 contacts with Manitobans during our consultation. The report that the task force issued analyzes in considerable detail the response of Manitobans to the Calgary Framework and other issues relating to Canadian identity and national unity. Manitobans strongly support the Calgary Framework.

About 78 percent of the respondents to our questionnaire expressed the opinion that the seven points of the framework reflect our country's fundamental values and characteristics. While many expressed concern over one point or another or indeed how accurately those values were being reflected in our present institutions in our country, I do not think that there was a dispute among those 78 percent that those principles, in fact, represented for them what it meant to be a Canadian. Almost half of the respondents indicated they did not dislike any of the seven points. The public meetings of the task force showed the same degree of approval for the Calgary Framework. This overall support and the particularly high number of

respondents who approved of the framework as a whole necessarily involved strong support for the statement relating to Quebec's unique character within Canada. The report of the task force concludes that Manitobans support the Calgary Framework and strongly believe that Quebec is a vital and welcome partner in the Canadian federation.

The consultations of the task force also indicated that Manitobans believe that resolution of the national unity question will require proper recognition of the role of the aboriginal peoples in Canada. Our questionnaire specifically inquired whether better recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights was important to national unity, and most respondents told us it was. In the same spirit of reconciliation, the task force has concluded that full participation by aboriginal peoples in the federation is important to Canadian unity.

Finally, the task force agrees that the Calgary Framework does not place proper emphasis on the role of the aboriginal peoples. In particular, the phrase "gift of diversity" in Point 4 was not seen to be appropriate in relation to the aboriginal peoples, and consequently we have recommended deleting the words "gift of" from Point 4.

I know that the issue of Canada as a nation and the issue of a strong nation is something that concerns Canadians very deeply. It is something that concerns me very deeply as well. But, in my opinion, to be a strong Canadian nation does not mean that everyone must be required to be exactly the same. Strength does not require identical traits, identical programs. What it does indicate to me is that we need programs that are responsive to the needs of our people wherever they are in Canada. The country, as a political organization, is there to serve the people of Canada. Our institutions and our programs must be responsive to the reality of the differences in Canada. I know the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) specifically made reference to the historical differences in Canada from the beginning of Confederation.

We all recognize that Canadians, in terms of our legal rights as individuals, should be equal. As provinces, however, we all entered into Confederation under different terms and conditions. If one looks at the constitutional arrangements, we know that Quebec

entered Confederation on very particular terms. Ontario entered on different terms. Indeed, our own province of Manitoba entered Confederation on very different terms in order to recognize the very different reality that we had here in Manitoba in 1870. There was a concern in 1870 about the existence of the Metis people here, their very legitimate concerns that they would be overrun by a larger group of people, so our constitutional document protected those rights in 1870, recognizing that we need to be sensitive to those differences.

We see that same pattern of rights, obligations, and differences with each province that entered Confederation. Each province had a particular strength to bring into the Confederation. So those who say that Canada is simply a question of the federal Parliament setting the vision and each province carrying out that federal vision as dictated by the Parliament of Canada are wrong.

* (1600)

Each province, from the beginning of our Confederation was recognized as an equal partner in Confederation, not just vis-a-vis the provinces, but vis-a-vis the federal government, federal Parliament. Each government, each legislative assembly, each parliament was recognized as being equal to another, but each had a separate role to play, and together, through co-operation, this federation would work.

What troubles me over the last 40 years that we have seen in Canada is a loss of that vision of co-operation, a loss of that sense of partnership between the provinces and the federal Parliament.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

It is a serious loss, not just in terms of political theory, but in fact this, in my opinion, is what is spawning the concern in Quebec, and this is what is driving the forces of separatism in other parts of Canada: the failure of successive governments, federal governments to recognize that equality and that partnership. We need to remind all of the partners in our Confederation that we are equal partners, and that we need to work in co-operation, because without that

spirit of co-operation, without working together, all of our individual rights, all of our rights as cultures, whether they are the people of the First Nations, whether they are the Metis and whether they are the English or the French or more recent immigrants, all of those rights disappear when our federation disappears.

Without our federation, our individual liberties are meaningless. Our individual liberties are found in the context of that strong co-operative federalism that we need to encourage.

Mr. Acting Speaker, perhaps the most powerful question that was asked of me during this debate was not a legal question, was not a political question; it was a question asked by a young schoolgirl, who said you have talked about why we as a country should adopt this as a resolution in order to stretch out our hands to people of Quebec, but why do you personally believe we should adopt this? That is a difficult question. That is the question that each and every one of us as Manitobans, as Canadians, needs to ask ourselves, because unless we answer that question personally for ourselves and come to a conclusion about the answer, we will not achieve unity.

I know for myself that my father came to this country in 1926. He was an orphan; together with his brother, he came with his uncle and their family, escaping the ravages and brutality of the Soviet Union where his parents had been murdered. They came here to Higgins Avenue at the CP station without knowledge of the language, arriving in a foreign country looking for a new beginning.

We look back as a family, and we see how much this country has given. It is a country that has welcomed my people. It has welcomed countless groups of people, and sometimes, as newcomers to this country, we have forgotten some of the people who in fact welcomed us. I speak specifically of our First Nations people.

I know that this country has never stopped giving. It does not always do things correctly, and I do not always agree with it, but I know that the experience of this country in our world has enriched our world and continues to enrich our world.

There are issues that we need to address, that we will continue to address, but I believe that it is a unified Canada that is the most capable instrument of ensuring that that legacy of giving, that legacy of problem solving continues. So I want to say, as a member of this Legislature, that there is room for the people and province of Quebec. There is room for the people of our First Nations, whether they are in Quebec or whether they are in other parts of this great federation. There is room for all types of people, and there is room for more. We need more people, and the way we can assure ourselves of more people is by continuing to maintain and build the institutions that have made this the best country to live in.

So, with those few words then, Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to support the resolution that we are recommending to this Assembly. I want to say that this Assembly affirms that Quebec is a vital and welcome partner in the Canadian federation, that better recognition of the aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples and full participation by those people are important to Canadian unity, and that the Assembly supports the Canadian framework as I have outlined earlier. Thank you very much.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise to join with others in this Assembly to discuss this very fundamental resolution, the Calgary declaration, as it is often referred to, and noting as my Leader (Mr. Doer) has noted and as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has noted, that basically this is a statement of principles. It is not a constitutional amendment per se. It is not a constitutional document per se.

I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the premiers of this country for their work on this matter, and, of course, also our legislative committee, all the members of the committee and the staff, Mr. Wally Fox-Decent and his staff, for all of their efforts in bringing together our resolution here and putting together the background material and, indeed, helping the Legislature and the government obtain the views of Manitobans to make an input into this whole process.

* (1610)

I guess some premiers were a little hesitant at first in going forward with the Calgary declaration. I believe,

in particular, B.C. Premier Clark was a bit hesitant, because he did not want to get involved in a constitutional wrangle again, and he felt that it might not be that productive. But, on the other hand, he reviewed it and reconsidered and said, well, this is really something that we can support, because it is really a declaration of intent, a declaration of the value of the country, a declaration that, hopefully, could send a positive message to Quebec. He also noted that it was not a product of back-room dealing, because he was very critical—whether he is right or wrong—his view was that Meech Lake ultimately and Charlottetown, there were shades of back-room dealing, and that was one reason why these particular constitutional amendments did not succeed.

The Meech Lake effort, as we very well know in this province, came to a halt in this Legislature. We appreciate and know the position of the Premier of Newfoundland in his opposition, but I believe it was this Legislature which finally caused the Meech Lake process to stall and therefore led to the defeat of the Meech Lake constitutional amendment. It was a very exciting time indeed, one that aroused a lot of emotions, one that involved us in various strenuous rules' procedures, and one that, as the Leader of the Opposition said, was carried out in a very democratic fashion, that we would not break the rules, that we would abide by the rules of this Legislature and proceed on that basis.

Of course, in that way, one member of the Legislature, namely, Mr. Elijah Harper, at that point, was able to stall some of the discussion by simply saying no to allowing our rules to be put aside for expeditious debate of the resolution. There were some others of us who would have said no, I believe, if Mr. Harper had not said no at the point that he did. I do not want to get into that detail, but the fact is that it was a very emotional time here. Indeed, that was very well demonstrated by the fact that we had virtually thousands of people outside of this Chamber, outside of this building, milling around on the lawns of the Legislature at the time. Of course, the galleries were filled, and we had native people demonstrating in various ways, singing and with their dancing and drums. There were a lot of farmers, and there were a lot of people from the North. There were people from all over this province who were here for different

reasons opposed, all opposed to the Meech Lake Accord. I guess, ultimately, by causing its defeat in this House we did really reflect—I truly believe that we reflected the opinions and the views of the majority of the people of Manitoba at that point.

Well, of course, then, we had the Charlottetown Accord, and that was put to a referendum of the people of Canada. Again, it was overwhelmingly rejected across the country; even Quebec rejected it—I believe every single province. I may stand to be corrected on this, there may have been an exception, but I believe every province in this country, the majority of voters in every province of this country rejected it for various reasons.

I have always had trouble with the Meech Lake approach and, indeed, the Charlottetown approach because I am one who believes very much in a strong, central federal government for the future success of this country. I believe in co-operative federalism. Certainly, I believe in the very important role that provinces have played and should continue to play, but I do not wish to see the erosion of a central government, of a federal government. I do not believe that it is in the long-term interests of Canada, and I think that is a majority view in this province.

Of course, we had all the native issues and the natives' concerns as well. Some of these issues—the concern for a strong national government, the concern of native rights—were among those major objections that people had in this province to what was being proposed in Meech and also in Charlottetown.

Anyway, this approach is much better. What we are doing here is sending a signal to Canadians and particularly to the people of Quebec that we believe that they and the rest of the country together can and must go forward as one united country to develop this nation for the welfare of all of its citizens now and in the future. There are cynics among us who believe even if the Meech Lake Accord was passed or indeed the Charlottetown Accord was passed that the separatists, once in power in Quebec, would not have been satisfied anyway and that separatists will only be satisfied when they have a complete, separate nation, total separation, total legal and constitutional separation from the rest of this country. No matter how well

intended the drafters of the Charlottetown Accord were, for example, no matter how much authority Charlottetown would give to the Province of Quebec, this would not have been satisfactory.

Incidentally, it is interesting that the federal government is now proceeding to make changes in the delivery of federal programs anyway without any constitutional change. I guess one example comes to mind, and that is employment and training programs, which are being transferred from Ottawa to the provinces. I have some problems with that particular move, because I believe that there is an economic advantage in having a central authority in charge of employment and training programs in the sense that we should facilitate as much as possible the movement of people in and out and around the country to opportunities where they exist.

I felt that that could be done best in a central, co-ordinated fashion. I am not suggesting for one moment that the provinces should not take a role in employment and training, by no means, but I think a central co-ordinating body is best for bringing about maximization of employment of Canadians. At any rate, I just observed that the Chretien government is now curtailing the federal authority by administrative means.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

I have a bit of a problem with the resolution when it refers to the equality of all provinces. It sounds great, but I feel that in reality, as much as we would like to have equality, they are not equal. How in your right mind could you believe—and I do not mean this as any criticism of the people of that province—but how could you honestly believe that Prince Edward Island should be equal, let us say, to the province of Ontario or B.C. or even Manitoba? I mean, they are a very tiny province, a beautiful place, a lovely place, great people, but surely as a province they do not measure up to the province of Ontario, where 120,000 people could easily be equated to one medium-sized city in that province or where the whole province of P.E.I., the entire population makes up only, say, 15 or 20 percent of the Winnipeg population.

At any rate, I have some concern about that and also about No. 6, any future constitutional amendment

confers powers on one province. Those powers must be available to all provinces. I guess this is what the dilemma is. Even if you had a federal government that was willing to give Quebec some extra powers to satisfy the people in the province that they need these additional powers to maintain their culture, their language, their traditions, the federal government is being stymied by the opposition of the other provinces. I guess it is referred to as asymmetrical federalism, where you try to evolve a system, where you give a bit more power to Quebec to satisfy its needs, but you do not give all those same powers to the other provinces because then you dilute, in a very significant way, the central government authority.

I am not saying I have all the answers on this. I am not saying that the intentions are not, indeed, good in the resolution itself, but I do have some concerns about this whole process. We can talk about it, it sounds fine, but, when you analyze it, I wonder whether we are really being realistic here.

At any rate, there are those who think that if Quebec could only be given certain powers, that this would be the solution. Then, of course, as I said, if you gave the same powers to all the provinces, you would soon very much weaken the central authority.

* (1620)

I often wondered what would have happened if the Yes side had won in Quebec in the last Quebec referendum. It was very close and it could have been a victory for the Yes side. But—and this is strictly my view; it is not the view of the New Democratic Party or indeed of the caucus—it is simply my view that even if the Yes side had won the referendum, that they could not just simply take off and depart and leave Confederation. As that old song or that old saying goes, it takes two to tango, and you simply cannot say, sorry, we are walking away from Confederation; we are going our own way. It does not work that way.

As a matter of fact, it is my own view as a—I am not a lawyer, I am not a constitutional expert by any means, but it is my view that Quebec cannot unilaterally withdraw from the Canadian confederation. I guess the federal government has now taken this matter to the Supreme Court for a decision, but I believe that it is

simply not in the cards that you, Quebec or indeed any other province, cannot leave the Canadian confederation.

In fact, there are people in my constituency, and I have talked to other Manitobans, who get very cynical about why does Quebec want to leave anyway because it is doing very, very well in Confederation. It has prospered, it has grown, and some people would get very upset when they think back about some of the advantages Quebec has which we would have thought were unfair to the rest of the country.

I think of the CF-18 episode when my colleague the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) was ready to quit the Conservative Party or to want to change the name of Progressive Conservative when the Mulroney government gave the CF-18 contract to a Quebec company, even though a Winnipeg company offered a better deal and offered a better price, a lower cost.

Of course, the people that I have run across who are very cynical about the role of Quebec also note that we seem to be always getting Prime Ministers from Quebec. We had Mr. Trudeau for years. Of course, there was Mr. Clark, but he only lasted a very short time, and I guess John Turner a very short time. Then along came Mr. Mulroney from Quebec. Ms. Campbell was there for a very, very short time before she was defeated by Mr. Chretien and the Liberals, so we seem to have had a long string, many, many years of Prime Ministers from Quebec and, of course, many strong ministers from Quebec.

I am not critical of any of these people in terms of their ability, in terms of their legal right to be Prime Minister, but those people in my riding who get a little upset about Quebec wanting more think of the fact that Quebec has had the privilege of having the Prime Minister come from that province year after year after year and indeed many strong ministers appointed from that province and indeed being seen to be a recipient of federal government favours that we do not seem to be able to get in Manitoba.

I also have to remark that it is very strange that we have this feeling of separation when we seem to be living more and more in a global village because of changing technology. More and more are we brought

together by improvements in communication, improvements in transportation. We are indeed becoming one world. The world is shrinking culturally and socially, and yet we seem to have these separation movements bubbling up in various places of the world and now, of course, including in Canada, and it is very strange to understand why this is happening.

At any rate, I believe that the federal government has been relatively weak; this particular government has been very weak in terms of dealing with the challenge of the separatists. I think it has to take a greater leadership role. More recently, they have been more active and more aggressive, but I believe that Mr. Chretien has to be criticized, as he has been by people across this country, for almost dropping the ball during the Quebec referendum, that he almost lost the game, almost lost the vote, although as I have stated earlier, I do not think, in my judgment, that would have led to the separation of Quebec.

I just do not believe that a province can vote to leave and then, bingo, it is over. I just do not believe that, and, of course, in the United States, that is not in the cards either. I guess it is in their Constitution that no state can withdraw from the American union. Of course, they had a civil war in the mid-1860s over that particular issue of separation, the North against the South.

Having said that, and having said how important this is, when you talk to people and ask them about constitutional change, they seem to be very uninterested, and this is not a burning issue in most people's minds. They are more concerned about health care, education, jobs, you know the real things that affect their lives, and constitutional change seems to be rather remote and abstract. So it is very difficult to get people to give you opinions. Now I know the committee has worked hard and has got opinions, and that is fine, and I have congratulated them, but I notice in my constituency, at least, I cannot get too many people interested in debating this or wishing to discuss it, although when you get going into it, they then usually bring up their complaints about Quebec and wondering in exasperation just what more does Quebec want from the rest of the country.

As I have noted and as the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) has noted, this is not a constitutional change

document that we are looking at. I also would note that even if and when we ever get to a constitutional change, that cannot take place very simply in many parts of the country. I know for instance, in British Columbia, there has to be a referendum. There will be no change in the Constitution, no approval, unless the people of B.C. vote on it. I think that use of referendum in these instances is wise, and I am pleased to see that B.C. has that particular requirement.

Unfortunately, I do not think that this declaration is going to have much impact on the separatists in Quebec. It is a message of friendship and of hope to the people of Quebec. We certainly would hope that it will make Quebec feel more at home in the federation, but I am not so sure that those who wish to separate will at all be affected or at all be influenced by it. This whole issue of constitutional change, one just shakes one's head about trying to get some things changed in the Constitution.

Leaving the Quebec issue aside for a moment and taking one issue that was brought up earlier this afternoon, and that is the Senate, you know, what to do about the Senate, I have had a view ever since I was at university that the Senate should be abolished. That was the best thing to do with the Senate. The Triple-E Senate people talked about, when you think about it, it is not a very good way to operate a government. It would seem to me it would make government even more unnecessarily complicated in Ottawa and indeed would not be as democratic because the Triple-E was effective, elected and equal. That would mean that small provinces would have as much authority to block things or to influence government as the bigger provinces. By bigger, I mean those with more population, and of course Quebec would never agree to it. I do not think you would ever get unanimity on Senate change, so I guess it is an institution that is going to be around for an awful long time.

But this is something I agree with Brian Mulroney. Brian Mulroney said he would abolish the Senate. I thought that was great because I think that is a good way to go. If I could see some real positive use for a Senate, I would certainly be backing that, but I just do not see that. I was very pleased to hear Mr. Mulroney say that he would abolish the Senate if he could.

* (1630)

Just in conclusion then, I think that the BNA Act, the British North America Act, has served us well. It has had some change from time to time, but basically I believe it can stand as it is. I guess when it comes to the Constitution, I am the ultimate conservative. I want to conserve what we have. I want to preserve the status quo because I think the BNA Act has shown that it has enough flexibility, that it can allow enough flexibility in this country, and we have evolved from the time that the act was first passed by the British Parliament.

I think of the fact that the residual powers were supposed to be with the provincial government and not the federal government, and yet over the years the federal government has seemed to acquire more and more power for different reasons, including the fact that we went through two world wars. That has stimulated that, and I guess maybe the Depression of the 1930s has brought that about.

This, I guess, occurred in some instances in the United States too. I am sorry. I guess I stand to be corrected. The residual powers were with the federal government. It is the United States where the residual powers were with the states. At any rate, the fact is, because of two world wars and because of the Depression, the federal government has acquired the amount of power and programs that it has today.

So in my rambling way I want to indicate that we support the resolution. My Leader has said most of what I wanted to say anyway. He has very well put forward the position of the caucus. The resolution is meant to send a positive message to Quebec. Hopefully when it passes here—I suppose the vote will be perhaps by tomorrow—it will then go, and the public of Canada, the public of Manitoba, the public of Quebec will know that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba unanimously supports this resolution and that we support it with every bit of good will towards the province of Quebec, that we want the province of Quebec to stay in Canada, that the Quebec people, the Quebecois are an important part of the Canadian population and that they should continue to be this important and vital part of Canada, this nation to the north. Thank you.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to rise to speak to this resolution which, of course, I support.

I was very honoured to be a part of the task force. I was part of the task force in 1991 and again this time. I would like to say I enjoyed working with all of my colleagues the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), the member for St. Boniface (Mr. Gaudry), the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), and the member for Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson).

We were on a fact-finding mission, but I have to say that sometimes when members go out on fact-finding missions they sometimes learn about themselves, which I think is a very good thing, because when you have something like an all-party task force, sometimes you need to take a close look at yourself, you need to make sure that you understand where all of us are coming from. I think that is one thing that our task force did. We obviously spent a lot of time together, but we also listened very carefully to what each member of the task force said.

So on top of learning about what Manitobans had to say about Manitoba, about Canada, about Quebec, about First Nations issues, we also, as I say, learned about other viewpoints which sometimes I think we tend to put aside because sometimes we become so partisan that we only think that there is one viewpoint, and that one viewpoint is our viewpoint.

I would also really like to say what a privilege it was to work again with Wally Fox-Decent as the Chair. Many members have already remarked on the fact that he has been the Chair of all of our constitutional task forces. His work as a mediator, as a person who works for the good of Canada, has been recognized in his Order of Canada, a recognition which he received not too long ago.

I would also like to acknowledge the great deal of work that people such as Denise Carlyle, Gene Szach did. It was difficult sometimes trying to schedule meetings. I think again we sometimes tend to forget that there are logistics that are part and parcel of this. It is not just a matter of whipping around the province.

Somebody has to put everything in place before we can do that.

Now, the Premier (Mr. Filmon), the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) and others have spoken at great detail on some of the background and on the very specific parts of the resolutions, so I think maybe I might take a slightly different tack, because some of the things that I think need to be said are already on the record.

So I would like to talk a wee bit about the process. As members have already said, this was a different kind of a round. It was not a constitutional round. I remember the last time it was a constitutional round, and I thought I knew my Canadian history, but I really did not know my Canadian history. I remember I went out and I bought a Canadian constitutional law book. It was called Hogg and it was by Hogg, and it was some 1,100 pages of small print.

An Honourable Member: Did you read it?

Mrs. Render: Yes, I did read it, and the footnotes were in even smaller print. But this time, as our Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the members opposite have said, this was not a constitutional round. This was a round really to find out what Canadians—for us, what Manitobans—thought about Canada, what we saw as our identity, what we thought about unity and how we saw all the parts fitting together in a federal union.

At our very first meeting, our task force spent a fair bit of time just trying to figure out how we were going to reach out to Manitobans, because as some of the members have said this afternoon sometimes there are other issues that are top priorities. Health issues are always priorities. For some people it may be justice issues, so not necessarily is everybody focusing on unity issues. So we wanted to make sure that we heard from as many Manitobans as possible, and we knew that we could not rely just upon our public hearings, that we had to reach out on a broader basis.

So this is why we had such things as a telephone line; we had a fax; we had the Internet, phone-ins. We went out to schools, and, of course, we had the householder. Now, the householder, we spent a fair bit of time just putting that together because, again, we had to make

sure that when it reached people's homes, people did not take a look at it and sort of say, ah, what is this, and toss it in the garbage. We wanted to make sure that we captured people's interest and that they were going to take the time to read this householder and, more to the point, take the time to fill it out and send it in.

The very first page I think was very significant, and the title of it says Your Canada-Your Voice. Make Yourself Heard. Too often in the past people have said, oh, it is always top-down decisions; it is always the politicians who make the decisions. This was our attempt to say to Manitobans, this is your opportunity to tell us what you think. So that is why we called it Your Canada-Your Voice, and we invited people to make themselves heard.

Again, we spent a fair bit of time fleshing out the content of the householder. Naturally, we wanted to put in the Calgary Framework, so that people knew what this was all about, so that they understood why the discussion had come about, why the premiers had gotten together and what they had put together as a framework, not a constitutional document but as a framework. So that was right smack in the centre of the householder, so that everybody knew what this Calgary Framework was all about, and as the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and others have said, there were seven points.

What we did, too, with the seven points, is we wanted to make an explanation, so that we were not just putting down the points. We wanted to give an explanation because I think too often sometimes we think that if we put something down, well, naturally, everybody is going to understand exactly what we mean by that. We did not want to make that assumption, so we put a brief explanation under each of the points.

We also gave a wee bit of a background—why are we doing this—and we were very definitive. Canada's unity is at stake; that is why we were doing it. There had been a referendum, a referendum with a very close vote, a referendum that saw us almost lose one of our provinces. So we felt that this was very vital, and we made no bones about the fact that this was a critical issue.

Then at the back of the householder, we asked a number of questions. Again, the questions were fairly

specific. The first question was: Overall, do you think that the seven points of the Calgary Framework reflect our country's values and characteristics? There was a yes and no box, but people also had the opportunity to add to that if they wanted to do more than just check off a yes or a no.

* (1640)

Then we asked them: What are some of the points in the Calgary Framework that you particularly like? Do you dislike any of the points, was question No. 3. Question No. 4: Do you feel anything should be added to the seven points? Question 5: Do you think that better recognition of the rights and concerns of aboriginal peoples is important to national unity? Question 6 was: What do you think is Canada's best quality? Because again we wanted to make sure that people remembered we were talking about Canada as a whole and not just focusing on ourselves as Manitobans. Seven, the final question was: What does it mean to you to be a Canadian?

Now, we do have a document, the Report of the Manitoba Legislative Task Force on Canadian Unity. This was a consensus report. It is not too long; it is a little over 40 pages. I am sure that some of the public will take the time to read the document, but I do not know that the public will take the time to read any of the presentations that were made. So I would like to read into the record again just some of the presentation to give people a flavour of what Manitobans were saying to us, because there was a real similarity to what we were hearing.

Before I forget, one of the things that I would like to mention is that in this particular round of our visits out to the various communities, the setup of the room was different. The last time, we had a table that was at the front of the room where all the task force members sat and the public and the presenters sat on the other side of the table, usually quite a few feet or quite a few yards distant. It was almost like, we are up at the front, separated, listening out there. This time, the whole setup was different. The setup was more like a circle quite often or a square circle, if there is such a thing as a square circle, if you can make square circles with rectangular tables.

What that did was that it put us, as I say, in a circle kind of position, and people who did not think that they wanted to present found themselves quite often drawn into the whole conversation. I think that happened because we were all sitting around. We were in a group, rather than separated by a table up at the front and presenters somewhere else down the room quite away from us.

Again, a lot of credit has to be given to our Chairman because of his warm, inviting manner, the fact that he said right out front, this is not a constitutional issue, this is an issue about Canada. He said: we want to find out what you, the residents of—if it was Gimli that we were at or Portage or Thompson or Norway House, wherever it was—we want to know what you think about our identity as a country. What do you think about our values as a country and what do you think about the Calgary Framework as a whole?

So he was very inviting in the way he started the proceedings. Yes, there were people who signed up and who had written presentations, but very, very quickly after the written presentation, as the questions came out from members of the task force, other people around the table, simply because they were sitting at the table, they leaped in too. Sometimes they asked a question, sometimes they added a comment.

So as I say, Madam Speaker, even though there were people who had specifically signed up to make a presentation, in actual fact, the people who had come out to listen to the presentations, virtually every single one of those people also made a presentation. They were drawn into the circle, into the circle of talking about Canada.

Now, let me just give you a sense of some of the things that were said. The very first presenter in Gimli, Mr. John Felsted—let me find part of the quote here that I wanted to talk about—says: “I've given some very careful consideration to the prospects of the division of Canada. I suggest that the civil chaos that would ensue and throw our nation into civil, physical and financial upheaval would last for decades. Amongst the problems would be thousands of Quebecois suddenly without livelihood as they would no longer work for federal institutions, the Armed Forces, RCMP or the diplomatic corps.”

He suggested that the possibility of Quebec separation was simply—the words he used were “a political toy rather than a practical option” because the people that he spoke to, the residents of Quebec—he said: I found that they have the same concerns as I do, as my neighbours and my friends and my family's. All of us are concerned about increasing utility prices, the shortage of jobs, the cost of kids' clothing, the future of our children in an increasingly technical world, the loss of respect for artisans and those who labour physically, tax burdens, government waste and crime. I would strongly suggest to you that the people of Canada, including the residents of Quebec, are unified, even though our political servants are not.

So, Madam Speaker, I thought that was a very interesting comment from him.

If my memory is correct, he was part of the Canadian Forces, and he said that during his lifetime he had the pleasure of meeting many hundreds of members of the armed forces from every part of Canada, obviously people who had served in both world wars, in Korea, Cyprus, and the Middle East and numerous other places around the world. He said not once had any of these—and he called them proud and dedicated men and women—ever hinted that they served anything other than Canada.

He wanted to bring that point home, Madam Speaker, because he said it did not matter from what part of Canada these people came to serve, they were serving for Canada. They were not just serving for their small town, small city or their particular province. They were serving for Canada. He went on to say, very eloquently I thought: Past generations of Canadians have died, have fought, have served for us, every one of us, to ensure our right to live in a democratic society, to ensure that that right is maintained, to ensure that we would have the opportunity to settle our differences in a lawful, thoughtful, rational and democratic fashion, rather than civil strife, bloodshed and tyranny.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), in his remarks this afternoon and during the course of the task force hearings, remarked on the fact, as I believe the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) also did, that in 1867 when the four provinces came together, they came together with different ideas of what Confederation

should be all about. There was conflict, but out of that conflict rose enough consensus to put together a country which became known as Canada.

So that was one of the things we talked to our presenters about. Did they know that each of the provinces, when they entered Confederation, quite often had different demands as their reason for coming into Confederation, because I think quite often we Canadians, we have this idea, me too, me too. If you get it, then I must get it too, and we forget our own history, that P.E.I. came in with a certain demand that they wanted a link to the mainland. B.C., of course, came in with the demand that a railway be built out there. Manitoba came in with specific demands, too, to recognize the demographics of our population.

So we did not come in all having the same kinds of powers, and I think we have to remember that, and those are also some of the things that we discussed as a group. We asked questions of our participants. Some of the participants knew those facts, and we talked about them. We talked about the fact that quite often Canadians do not recognize, do not remember their history well enough to realize that Canada was put together by having a compromise position, that we were not all going to come in with the same kinds of powers.

* (1650)

I found it quite interesting that we had quite a few Canadian Forces people make presentations, and I wondered whether that was because being a part of the Canadian Forces usually means that you are posted in various places, not just across Canada but right across the country. Sometimes when you move out of your own small location and are forced to live elsewhere, you expand your vision quite a bit. Particularly if you leave your country and are posted overseas, you recognize very quickly what an absolutely fantastic country Canada is. The Canadian Forces people who made presentations all remarked on that.

Here is another comment. This is a Mr. Ron Hall, again from Gimli. He said that he had lived in Quebec for three years in the heart of separatist country. He said he had two children born there. That was 30 years ago, he said. He said at that time he was in the RCAF, living with the French community.

Now, the area that he was in, the Lac St. Jean region, he said, was widely noted to be a very vibrant separatist area, possibly due to the fact of poor communications with the outside world. He went on to talk about the fact that people, human nature being what it is, like to keep to themselves. He said: this is sad. He said too often people do not have the chance, whether it is money or inclination, or lack of inclination, perhaps I should say, to travel and see the rest of the country.

One of his suggestions, he said: I am a member of the Rotary Club, and one of the things we do is, we have an exchange of students all over this world. He suggested, he said: I think it is about time that we started exchanging with Quebec. Let them, as students, see something of our country, maybe even into the young, adult years, because they have not had the opportunities to travel, maybe through lack of money or lack of will to travel, I do not know. He said: but I think clubs, education authorities, even governments could look at this educating our young people in Quebec. He said: notice that I am using the word "our." It is not a separate country. He said: and I do not want it to stay that way or even be that way. He said: I am an immigrant myself. You can tell that from my voice, but I am passionate about this country. I would not go back to live in Europe even though things have changed drastically. This is my country and Manitoba is my home.

So one of the themes that came through was this idea of communication, this idea of exchanges, and quite a few presenters talked about the fact that when they had the opportunity to travel it really broadened their outlook, and they wondered if part of our problem is that we were into this we-they kind of thing and also into this idea, well, if they get this then we had better get it too.

We had a presentation from the Reform M.P., Mr. Hilstrom, and it was quite interesting listening to his presentation. He also talked about the differences of each of the provinces that came into Confederation. I gathered that, like all of us, sometimes we need to have our eyes opened or given a little rap on our back to make us think, but he was of course a brand-new M.P., and I guess some of the first things that he had to deal with was what he called the Newfoundland school

question. He talked about that, and he talked about the fact that there were seven religious denominations that were part and parcel of Newfoundland when Newfoundland joined Canada. Of course, as we all know, there was that debate in Parliament not too long ago.

So it was interesting listening to Mr. Hilstrom talk about the differences that they had to think about at the federal level and how to deal with that. That was another province other than Quebec.

Now, we also held hearings in St. Boniface. One of our presenters was a Rod Guay, Rodrigue Guay. He was the past president of the Youth Provincial Council and currently the president of the National Federation of Francophone Youth. Some of the things that he emphasized again I thought were interesting and reinforced very much what other presenters were also suggesting. He supported the Calgary Framework. He felt that it was a step forward, but he felt that Canada and the provinces must go beyond just simply this statement of principles and act in a concrete way to reinforce the Canadian fact. He had some suggestions, and, of course, as politicians, all of us, when we get phone calls from our constituents, we all like the phone calls that say, yes, I like what you are doing, and not necessarily do we like the phone calls that say, no, I do not like what you are doing. But, if they say, I do not like what you are doing, and this is my suggestion or this is my idea for fixing it up, that is just fine and dandy. So this particular young man said, I have got some ideas, and here they were.

He said his particular group believed that Canadians were ignorant of the other areas of the country. You can see again, Madam Speaker, this theme that is once again coming up that so many of our presenters talked about that we seem to be so ignorant of what was happening in other parts of the country. He, too, recommended that the Canadian government—and I am quoting—should put more efforts into the creation and promotion of programs that would create links among people in Canada. We could increase exchange programs for young people. We could make a campaign like the famous Heritage Minutes to brag about the differences and the unique characteristics of Canada.

One of the members of his board even went so far as to suggest that each province and territory should be designated as the official host of Canada for one month of the year. During that month visitors from Canada and other provinces would be allowed some privileges; for example, he said fiscal deductions for expenditures related to that trip, and special rates from airlines or trains with government funding. He said, why not? Are we not to the point where the unity of Canada deserves an investment? It has been said we should not make of this a campaign of just talking or waving about Canadian flags. Pride does not come from the fact that we have a flag in our hands; being proud comes from our own experience in Canada. And, enriched by this experience, we will on our own wave a flag, a Canadian flag. So that was from a Franco-Manitoban here in the province.

Again, the same theme was repeated by one of the senior citizens that we heard that day in St. Boniface. This was a Mr. Rene Toupin, who was representing the Federation of Franco-Manitoban Seniors in the Assembly of Canadian Senior Citizens. Now, this particular group works together to put senior citizens and young people in touch, and their mandate is more to try to overcome that generation gap. He did not come to make a presentation to us necessarily on the constitutional issues; he came to talk about the work of his particular group and how that group worked in the schools and put seniors and young people together. But, again, it was that theme once more. He said, why can we not put people together, the seniors and the young people not only to overcome that inter-generational gap, but to overcome the ignorance that we have about what is happening in our country, about what other provinces mean, so that we do not think about that other province as a "them," and we, of course, as a "we"?

He talked about the hardening of people towards each other, and again he was talking about this inter-generational gap, but he says it is the same thing that is happening right now with unity. We have this hardening of our heart. So, Madam Speaker, as I say, this was a senior citizen who—this particular group has worked very successfully to put young people into schools so that these two groups got together, but again his suggestion was trying to bring Canadians together. He talked about the fragmentation of our whole country

and the isolation. Of course, when you have isolation, as he says, that is when you get this hardening and this "we" and "them" kind of mentality that comes about.

I will just make one more reference to a presentation—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render) will have 12 minutes remaining.

* (1700)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Madam Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., time for Private Members' Business.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 5—Professional and Technical Accreditation

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that this resolution on Professional and Technical Accreditation

“WHEREAS human beings, considered as any country's most important resource, are not merely a material factor of production, but are instrumental to achieving non-tangible values of fairness, freedom and individual self-actualization; and

“WHEREAS recent immigrants to Canada and to Manitoba tend to possess higher than average levels of education and skills that contribute to the enrichment of Canadian diversity essential to securing a position of competitiveness in a global economy; and

“WHEREAS there are some new Canadians who settled in Manitoba, and elsewhere in Canada, who brought with them professional and technical education, skills and training which they are unable to use in Manitoba or elsewhere in Canada; and

“WHEREAS there are institutionalized social structures in Manitoba and in Canada of vested self-interested and self-governing groups of professional and technical persons who collectively are exercising almost absolute autonomy to the extent that the federal,

provincial and municipal levels of government have practically abdicated the inherent public regulatory power of the Crown over the education, training, internship, admission, disciplining and other related processes connected with the creation, empowerment and operations of professional and technical associations, societies and organizations; and

“WHEREAS the utilization of the professional and technical education, skills and training of new Canadians would, without many social costs, be immediately beneficial to Canada in general and to the Province of Manitoba in particular.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to consider implementing an enlightened policy of formal recognition and accreditation in meritorious cases of the professional and technical education, skills and training brought into Canada by new Canadians; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly ask the Provincial Government to consider holding public hearings to elicit the opinions and views of Manitobans, including new Canadians, on the desirability of forming formal Governmental Accreditation and Licensing Boards for each of the new self-governing professional and technical associations, societies and organizations; the Boards of which should have membership drawn from the respective and related professional and technical groupings, the Provincial Government, and lay members of the general public to ensure that members of such Boards will be trustees of the general public interest of all, instead of being privileged guardians of vested, self-governing groups.”

Motion presented.

Mr. Santos: Madam Speaker, I wish to speak on three ideas: first, that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights; second, there now exists artificial rules, often institutionalized, that destroy equality of opportunity and rights, resulting in unfair treatment and oppression of some disadvantaged groups in society; and third, it is the moral duty on the part of every group, all groups, to join together and restore the opportunity and rights of any group receiving unjust

treatment, to protect and secure the equality of opportunity and rights of all groups and all human beings.

The first statement came from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which Canada is a signatory. It states that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. *Tout le monde est né libre et égal en dignité et droits.*

The Constitution Act of Canada in Section 6(2) says: “Every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of permanent resident in Canada has the right . . . (b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province” subject to certain limitations. To say that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights is not to say that all persons are or can be equal in everything, in ability, in merit or in possessions, because different talents, different resourcefulness, different labour, virtue, and even chance are continually creating differences among people.

To say that all human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights means that everyone shall have liberty without handicap, without hindrance, to become what such person can possibly become. To say that all human beings are free and equal in dignity and rights means that there shall be no deprivation, there shall be no barrier that will be imposed upon them by any group acting in the name of society to prevent such persons of the minority group from realizing and developing the best potential among their members.

The ideal of equality of all human beings may take the form of legal equality, may take the form of political equality, social equality, or even economic equality. Legal equality means equal treatment before the law. Political equality means equal treatment in participation in government. Social equality means equal treatment in participation in social affairs of life. Economic activity means equal treatment in participation in the economic affairs of life, including the earnings of one's livelihood. All types of equality imply equality of treatment and equality of opportunity.

The second proposition states that there now exists artificial rules in our province that destroy that equality of opportunity and rights, resulting in unfair and unjust treatment, resulting in oppression of some

disadvantaged group by some self-interested and privileged group in society. What would be an example of such self-interested and privileged group in Manitoba or elsewhere? For a clear example we point to the self-governing, self-regulating professional associations, including the legal associations, medical associations, whatever associations of a professional nature. What would be an example of an artificial rule that destroys equality of opportunity? A good example will be the rule that, unless you are a graduate of an accredited Canadian medical or legal school, you cannot even qualify to take any examination to be admitted to any practice in any of those societies.

I have, for example—is there an example of why that destroys equality of opportunity? I know that there is a rule that says only medical doctors can administer anesthesia in hospitals in Manitoba. But in the United States there are schools of anesthesia and there are nurses who spend two years specializing in anesthesia. They are nurse anesthetists; they are specialists. They are certified nurse anesthetists. They come to Canada, they come here, and they want to exercise their specialty, their profession. They cannot. They are not medical doctors; they are excluded by the rules. Yet these are very technically qualified, competent people. You see that deprives them the opportunity to exercise their profession, their means of livelihood, all because of this artificial rule.

Who designed the rule? The medical doctors. For whose benefit? For the medical doctors. Who enforced the rule? The medical doctors. Who controls entrance in all the medical schools? The medical doctors. All of these are clear that these are a special privileged group in our society excluding fellow human beings from earning their livelihood and their profession despite the constitutional guarantee that every citizen or resident in Canada can pursue their means of livelihood anywhere in Canada. That is effectively destroyed.

* (1710)

The third proposition states that it is the moral duty on the part of us, every one of us, no matter what group we are, to join and restore the opportunity and rights of any group receiving unjust treatment; otherwise we cannot protect the ideal of equality of opportunity and the rights of all groups and all human beings. Whatever

justification, whatever advantages that may have arisen in the past out of the perpetuation of this specially favoured and highly privileged group, it is increasingly evident now that no rationalization, no arguments can reasonably be said to be invoked to support this unequal opportunity if there is to be real equality of opportunity among all Canadians. This is a violation of the basic rights of human beings.

This is a violation being done not by government but by self-governing groups who are exercising powers of government. That is abdication of governmental responsibility. We should acknowledge that the rights of all groups are assured only by the fact that every group enjoys equal right of opportunity in equal measure in our society. All groups need to know that the rights of all are endangered when the rights of any one group are taken away. After one group is destroyed or frustrated, another group logically becomes the next victim of these exclusionary tendencies. There will be no harmony, there will be no peace in society the moment any group perceives that they are being deprived of their basic equality-of-opportunity rights.

Every group, jealous of its rights and prerogatives, should join with other groups and endeavour to restore the rights of any group receiving unjust treatment, because in doing so justice is served and all groups are safeguarding themselves from similar arbitrariness and tyranny at some future time.

We are now at the crossroads of a transition in time. We cannot enter into the new century closing our eyes to this obvious inequity and injustice of excluding and not utilizing the professional and technical education, skills and training of new Canadians for the narrow and vested economic self-interest of those who at present are in control of education, training, internship and admission into the various professions associated with social prestige, status and economic benefits.

We must understand one another and learn to work together by combatting all practices, whether institutionalized or not, that degrade and divide us, that set us up, one group against another. We must cultivate respect for the dignity of each individual, that each one may be able to realize that human beings are similar and equal in more ways than they are different regardless of culture, language or racial origin. We

must appreciate that fairness, justice, tolerance, respect for one another are vital if we are to live together in harmony and peace in this new age to come.

As the economist Kenneth J. Arrow has stated, the basic element of the good society is the centrality of others. It has two aspects, concern for others and respect for others. Concern without respect is at best paternalism and can lead to tyranny. Respect without concern is the frozen world of extreme individualism, a denial of the intrinsically social nature of humanity.

Let me say that no matter how you justify it, if any group in society is in control of a vital function and acting like a government when it is not a government and has this capacity to make rules that exclude other citizens for their own benefit and interest, it results in discriminatory and unjust treatment that cannot be justified even under the Constitution or any other law or even under the universal declaration of human rights, because these are so artificial, so clear that they are self-serving kinds of rules. Unless you are admitted to their group, you cannot exercise any of these professions that have the benefit and enjoyment of social respect and prestige and economic income, but they are all equally entitled to such opportunity if by reason of their training, their education, their skills, they have laboured so much.

Many people from other places that came to Canada have already the skills and training and specialty and, yet, they are unable to exercise this because of the self-serving rules of the self-governing professional societies in this province and many other provinces in Canada. This is discrimination on the basis of excluding them and not having them realize their full potential as professional human beings who already spent a lot of their time and life and training in order to develop these knowledge and skills and, yet, they are unable to exercise these. This is discrimination in a so-called democratic society where we say equality of all opportunity.

Where is that equality when you cannot even qualify to take the examination to prove yourself that you are capable of doing an essential basic function? And why should any one group monopolize this professional opportunity among themselves, excluding others because they came from outside and cannot by logic be

graduates of Canadian accredited schools that they run themselves? Is this not discrimination? You tell me.

In conclusion, let me restate the three basic propositions. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Second, there are rules so artificial that exist now and are often institutionalized that destroy that equality of rights and opportunity, resulting in unfair and unjust treatment and oppression of some disadvantaged group by some self-interested and privileged group in society, and it is the moral duty on the part of all of us, particularly in a Legislature like this, that have the ultimate authority to rectify this inequity and injustice, to do something about it, or else we will be shirking our responsibility to provide the environment of equal opportunity and rights to all the citizens of this province. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to speak about this very serious issue on behalf of Manitobans, the recognition of international credentials in our province.

First of all, let me say that our province owes much of its growth and its prosperity to the contributions made by immigrants throughout our proud history in our province. The skills, the knowledge, and the expertise that newcomers bring to their new homeland have a significant impact on our economy, on our communities, and on the quality of our lives in general. Manitoba has greatly been enriched by the cultural, social, and economic contributions that generations of new immigrants have really so generously made.

In recognition of the importance of immigration to the continued growth and expansion of our province, our government has actively promoted the advantages of Manitoba as a prime destination for immigrants. Just to remind all members, in 1996, the Canada-Manitoba immigration agreement was signed, and the immigration agreement does provide for a much more active role for our province in the development of policies and programs which impact on the recruitment and the selection of newcomers. I believe that this agreement will be an important tool in addressing our labour market priorities while maintaining our long-standing commitment to the reunification of families

and the protection for the world's displaced and persecuted peoples.

* (1720)

We have recognized the importance of assisting immigrants to settle and to integrate into our communities. We have programs such as adult language training, orientation and information sessions as well as employment counselling. They have been funded and delivered both by the provincial governments and the federal government to facilitate the transition of life in Canada. It is well known that the career aspirations and the professional success of a growing number of immigrants and Canadians with credentials attained outside of Canada are very closely linked to the assessment, the recognition and validation of their studies and their work experience undertaken abroad.

The assessment of educational and occupational credentials is an essential first step for individuals seeking recognition of their qualifications for purposes of entry into the labour market or the pursuit of ongoing post-secondary education. The increasing mobility of our labour force and the need to make educational qualifications portable across provincial and international borders are factors contributing to a widespread concern about procedures used for assessment. In Canada, there is no central national agency responsible for credentials assessment. Education is a matter which falls within provincial jurisdiction; however, post-secondary institutions, such as universities and community colleges, are given full autonomy with respect to their admission criteria. Provincial governments are responsible for establishing the legislative framework which regulates many professions and trades through various occupational acts and regulations.

The professional and occupational associations are given authority and the responsibility to establish minimum licensing and entry requirements. They also are responsible for codes of conduct, for disciplinary measures to deal with situations when these codes are breached. In determining licensing and certification requirements, professional and occupational associations are required to ensure that the process is open, transparent and nondiscriminatory. The overall

purpose of occupational regulations are in fact to protect the public from harm resulting from improper performance of a related service.

For some professions, such as engineers and physicians, national associations have a mandate to assess credentials, although it is the provincial licensing bodies which retain the right to determine licensing and certification requirements. This is an area of great complexity and diversity of policy and practice in the areas of credential assessment and recognition, and it has generated a number of attempts to clarify the process and to determine how access to education, access to professions and trades, can be improved. I think that is one of the important issues which we are talking about today. In some provinces governments have established credentials assessment services, but others are still exploring the needs in this area.

I am very happy in Manitoba to say that a working group was established very early when we took office. In December 1989, this working group was established and it was to look specifically at the issues of recognition of immigrant credentials and also experience. The member, in his resolution, refers to a need for consultation, and I would like to reassure him that way back, almost 10 years ago, in fact, there was a broad spectrum of consultation with stakeholders to look at the current process which we have in place. The working group distributed sets of questionnaires to professional and trade associations, licensing and registering bodies, multicultural, ethnocultural organizations, educational institutions, individuals, and Manitobans. The surveys were in fact very insightful in gathering a broad cross-section of information from the perspective of various individuals affected by this issue.

The findings that were developed from the report further indicated that the issue of foreign credential recognition requires a co-ordinated approach to ensure that standards are maintained and that individuals who meet acceptable standards are in fact given the opportunity to work in their field of education or professional or technical training and expertise.

Madam Speaker, a number of initiatives are underway in Manitoba at the moment to assist with the issue of recognition of credentials. The first is in fact the Credentials Recognition Program, which assists

qualified professional or technically trained immigrants or recently naturalized Canadians in gaining recognition for education and work experience obtained outside of Canada.

I think it very important to note, wage assistance is paid to employers who provide work experience related to the client's educational background. Assessment assistance is provided to clients in high-demand occupations to help them with the costs associated with formal assessments through their professional associations. Assistance is also provided for obtaining translation and verification of international credentials, preparing documentation for affidavit purposes, and the delivery of workshops for clients on subjects such as the job search. In 1997-98, in that fiscal year, I am informed that approximately 150 clients registered with this program.

Madam Speaker, the next service which has been offered currently through my department is a very key one. It is the Credentials Assessment service. This service assists clients to prepare to complete documentation of their international credentials before submitting them to the accrediting body. The Credentials Assessment service facilitates the credential assessment and recognition process between applicants, professional licensing associations, and academic institutions by providing relevant information, direction, and also referrals on alternative career paths. The services have continued to yield positive results for individuals with international credentials.

I believe that our government has been proactive through this branch in its approach to the disseminating of information pertaining to the assessment of international credentials. Various mediums are currently being utilized to ensure efficient assessability and availability of information. Information sheets outlining the accreditation processes in 40 trades and 31 professions are available on the divisional home page on the Internet and are distributed in hard copy to prospective immigrants to assist them in making informed decisions about their careers and job prospects, sometimes before coming to Manitoba.

Similarly, for immigrants already residing in Manitoba, they now have access to information to assist them in making a decision about pursuing their original

professions and trades or in fact exploring some alternate careers.

Madam Speaker, the Citizenship Division also has been active in working in the federal-provincial working group on access to professions. Through that working group, Manitoba has been advocating and supporting initiatives to disseminate relevant provincial credentials assessment information to prospective immigrants through overseas immigration posts. The division has also been an active participant at annual national forums regarding the prior learning assessment, which I think is really an important process where a person can in fact receive some assessment and perhaps credit for previous work experience or previous learning experience which may be very important for them as they look at the credentialing process. It is considered another means to allow skilled individuals to move into jobs that may have required some type of formal certification or regulatory requirement. This prior learning assessment model can be used for immigrants who were, in fact, not able to produce the formal documentation in support of their professions or trades.

Also, for several years, a division representative has served on the management board of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, and this representation facilitates the discussion of issues surrounding international credentials with key stakeholders.

* (1730)

Madam Speaker, we also have the Settlement and Adult Language Training Branch of the division, which provides programming in support of the recognition of international credentials. We also have workplace language training provided by the branch in support of career development of newcomers. In the past year, I understand, 51 workplace language training classes were provided for adult immigrants in support of their work ensuring employability, increased job efficiency, safety and allowing industries to meet international certification standards.

Our government is attempting to assist people who have credentials from outside of Canada, outside of Manitoba to utilize their education, their skills and their

training. It is not a process that has been completed yet. It is a process that requires us to continue to work with the professional associations, with the trades associations and continue to find more ways to assist the new immigrants into actually pursuing their career that provides them with satisfaction.

As I said at the beginning, one of the issues which always has to be addressed—and I believe the member would find it hard not to agree—is one of safety and one of consideration that in fact standards have been met. So, Madam Speaker, we will be continuing to work with both the professional associations, the trades and immigrants who chose to settle in Manitoba, because they are in fact a major asset to our very vibrant, multicultural society.

Madam Speaker, we will continue to be working with our policies to encourage people in this area because it is an important one. Since I have been elected, I have had a number of presentations brought to me by people looking for information and that is the other thing we will be endeavouring to continue to provide: the most accurate information available to assist people in this area. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): I listened with interest to the resolution that has been presented by the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) with regard to accreditations and with professional people. I have some serious concerns with what he is proposing here although I do not have any difficulty in supporting professional people who immigrate to Canada or come to this province from other countries. I do have some difficulty with the suggestions that he is offering in terms of—as a matter of fact, the way I interpret what he is suggesting here is giving some special consideration to these people. If we follow what he is suggesting in this resolution, my interpretation is that they would be given special considerations which I do not believe is right from that aspect.

I think that where we do differ, Madam Speaker, is a matter of philosophy, I guess, in terms of our own direction as government but also as individuals. I think we have different minds in terms of our philosophies. I read this resolution and what stands out to me is the fact the honourable member in his resolution is

proposing more control as far as government is concerned. I guess that is really where the difference in my philosophy is, that as far as these professions are concerned, I think that the more involvement that we as government have, I think there is considerable difficulty that is going to come from this. I think that the integrity of this whole aspect in terms of immigration and the professions that police their own members is one that is extremely important from the aspect of control and one that I do not think that government has got the capacity to do with the way that these professional boards or organizations offer in policing their own professions.

I think that we are talking about not only the matter of immigration of these—when people emigrate from other countries. We are talking about professional integrity. I am not saying that government is not going to be able to offer that integrity, but I do not know that we want the bureaucracy as far as this government is concerned to control that integrity within those professions.

Madam Speaker, I belong to two organizations that police themselves, and as a matter of fact, in one, in the real estate profession, when I first started in real estate in the early '70s, government had a very large control over the operations and the testing and the requirements for members who wanted to be affiliated with and be a part of that business. The thing that I found over time was the real estate industry took control of the direction and the licensing and the education through that whole profession. They were more strict and more controlling of the people in that profession. The interesting aspect of it was, it was not to the benefit of the people that were in there, but it was to the benefit of the public who were using the services.

I think that this is the same thing. Whether it be doctors or lawyers or people who are coming from other countries, they have a requirement and a standard to meet. I think that what the honourable member is suggesting here—as the mover of the resolution, he even suggests that what we are doing here in Manitoba or in Canada is discriminatory towards these people. I say, I do not see that at all. I think it is absolutely the opposite, as a matter of fact, because I think that we in this province, in terms of what we have been advocating and assisting when immigrants do come to this country, I think that they are offered a considerable

amount of opportunities to qualify and to meet their interests and to carry out whatever professions are available to them, and definitely there are standards there. I think that the standards are there for a reason, and those standards will vary from one jurisdiction to another or one country to another. I think that is a fact of life.

The honourable minister has indicated in her remarks that maybe we could do things a little bit better in terms of informing people before they immigrate to this country and to this province what their requirements will be as to where they want to end up. From that aspect, I think that we can always do more in terms of helping with that.

In terms of this resolution, Madam Speaker, I think that the honourable member is suggesting the wrong approach here. Merely from the fact that I see in my own experience here with the different professions, I know that the Manitoba Law Society or the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons set down some pretty strict guidelines in terms of what the requirements are. That is really important because I think that we have to remember that it is for the interests of the people who they are going to serve, and I do not think government can adequately do that. I would sooner see the organizations and the professions serve and set the criteria as far as the respective associations are dealing with.

* (1740)

The professional and occupational associations are given the authority and the responsibility to establish minimum licensing and entry requirements and codes of conduct and disciplinary measures to deal with situations where these codes are breached and, in dealing with that, I think that is something of great importance. I think that by allowing those organizations or those professions to carry that through makes those professions stronger within their own right. When they become stronger—and I am not saying that they go beyond legislation. Legislation is there. The province and the government of the country put those guidelines in through legislation, and I think that the control is good, because the people who are going to benefit, as I have indicated, are the people who are going to be the ones who use those services and utilize

the benefits that those professions have to offer. For some professions such as engineers, dentists, and physicians, national associations have been mandated to assess credentials, although the provincial licensing body still retained to the right to determine the licensing and the certification requirements.

In summary, the evaluation and assessment process is overseen by various authorities including academic institutions, accreditation boards, and professional occupational regulatory bodies. I think that if we look at the complexity of this and the diversity of the policies that are brought into the different professions—I know that we are only maybe talking not about a lot of professions. We are talking mainly about the professions like doctors and dentists or professions that I guess really require a real control on the qualifications and meeting the standards that are set down.

I think that as far as government involvement would be involved, we would see this watered down considerably, not that I do not have faith in the government as such. I do see a problem. I have seen the benefits of the organization's involvement, and I find that the more government is involved in these things, the weaker that organization becomes, because then everything is turned over to government. If we consider what we would have to do—you know, I am looking at this from the common-sense approach. I am not looking at this from the technical aspect; but, if we were to look at the whole picture here in terms of what we would take if we were going to follow the orders of this resolution, or what the mover, the honourable member is advocating, if we were to bring this forward, the different criteria and the regulations in the various professions that are out there that would be affected by this, we would need a bureaucracy that we just could not handle. We would have a minister for every different profession that was out there and layers and layers of government, and I do not think the people in Manitoba—that is not what they are looking for. That is not what the people in this country are looking for.

Honestly, I wonder, you know, why the need for this. I think the honourable member certainly has given this considerable thought. At least I hope he has, and I think that he is approaching this on the basis that he wants to do the right thing for the people whom he is speaking for, but I think from the aspect of what we

want to do in terms of government, it is that we are serving all the people in the province of Manitoba and not just a few people. I am not downplaying the people who immigrate to this country because I respect and I have been involved with many of these people in terms of our involvement in immigration at a very community level, and I know the hardships they experience, but I think the more we tend to do for these and the easier that we make it for them, then the problem just magnifies, and I do not think that is the answer here.

So, Madam Speaker, in closing, I must say that I do not share the honourable member's view, and, as a result, I could not support this resolution, but I would like to thank you for the opportunity to put these few remarks on the record. Thank you.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Good afternoon, Madam Speaker. It is indeed an honour once again to rise in this most honoured House to address the resolution brought forward by the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos). I must say that although I appreciate the sentiments brought forward in this resolution, I am speaking against the resolution.

The resolution has good intent; however, this province has an extremely good track record, and this government over the past 10 years has shown that it indeed welcomes immigration and most certainly within that immigration, professionals.

I would like to perhaps just go and provide a little bit of background in regard to this. Canada is indeed a very proud nation, and I am sincerely a very proud Canadian. This land of ours is recognized by the United Nations as the country of choice, a country that is recognized worldwide as being one where one can come and work, play, raise a family and do most anything without fear and discrimination.

I take great exception to the use of the word "discrimination." Discrimination has many contexts. One, indeed, does discriminate in every facet of one's decision-making process within their day-to-day life. However, within the connotation of discrimination, one can indeed recognize differences, and once those differences are recognized, if you treat one badly based

on those differences, then indeed one could be considered in that connotation to discrimination.

However, I would like to more or less recognize the word "discrimination" in recognition and to mark the differences within us all, and, indeed, differences make this country what it is today. Not all of us are the same, and that is our strength. Strengths and weaknesses in everyone, once they come together in harmony, indeed strengthen and provide for this country and indeed provide for the foundation to which this country is world-renowned.

* (1750)

I might just want to add in regard to immigration, this country and all the people herein outside of the First Nations people were once upon a time immigrants to this land of ours. My grandparents immigrated from a land that was undergoing tremendous political unrest. They came to this land looking for safety and security and peace of mind and indeed they found it, however, not without a lot of trial and hard work. This nation was built on their sweat and toil. My grandparents are extremely proud of this country today. They see that the fruits of their toil have come to fruition and thereby providing their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren a place in which they can run free and enjoy and be able to participate in any occupation or profession to which they choose. That is indeed the foundation for freedom; the freedom of choice. I am very proud of having that choice, and it has been something that I have grown to very much respect my grandparents for providing to me. All of us must recognize what we have today and what has been sacrificed for that end.

Personally, I sincerely believe in education and its importance within our society. The professionalism within our trades and all occupations is one that I have spent a good portion of my life devoted and dedicated to, not only within support of our children that are within the educational system but as well as a public school trustee. I have always welcomed anyone that was looking to Canada to come and experience the benefits of Canada and to grow and succeed. Outside of the education field, we have welcomed individuals into this land on training programs and provided the experience that one can only gain by coming to another

country. Through the international agricultural student exchange program, we have had students that are seeking a professional life within agriculture come to Canada and experience what Canada has to offer and to learn from those experiences and then taking back to their own country a piece of Canada and, hopefully, that will provide for their own country's prosperity.

Personally speaking as well, one can remember the Vietnam War and the turmoil that went from that country and spilled over into Laos. Laos spawned many individuals to immigrate to Canada. We sponsored dozens of individuals through our church to come to Canada. We brought them into our home, we provided employment, and we saw to their basic needs. The government of the day provided for additional assistance. I believe it is much enhanced today by this government that we have here today in Manitoba.

These individuals were professionals in their own country of Laos. They were teachers, they were dentists, they were doctors. They came to this country, but they also, when they arrived here, did not take anything for granted. They did not come to our country expecting that they could pick up where they left off in their own country. They knew that this country had a lot to offer, but they wanted to come to this country and earn their accreditation so that they had the respect of the people of Canada. All opportunities were afforded them to do just that. These individuals are very prosperous today. They have taken their rightful place in our society and indeed are participating in our society through their own professional experiences. They have, as well, provided to Canada a broader base of which we have benefited, from not only their professional skills but their personal skills as well. They have broadened my horizons personally, and, most certainly, I am very appreciative of that.

One must also understand within this resolution the scope and the magnitude which we are addressing. You speak of discrimination, but this discrimination, even though I do not agree with it, even if you took it to the absolute proliferation of your resolution here, does not affect as many people as sometimes we are led to believe. There is only 20 percent of our professional trades that are garnered by technical or school accreditation or an association accreditation or a

professional organization accreditation. That also is far less in numbers within the workforce as well. Having said that, I do not want to minimize it, but I do want to understand the scope and the magnitude when we speak of a particular topic.

I am very proud of this government's accomplishment because over the course of 10 years, we have recognized and very quickly addressed the needs of individuals coming to this country and certainly not only that of professionals but those persons wanting to come and fit into our society. The Credentials Recognition Program in which this province is participating provides training assistance and financial assistance to immigrants so that they can understand and be able to help with their assessment and their needs that they must address to provide for their accreditation. As well, when you are looking to get your accreditation, you must have your experience within the workplace, and workplaces within Canada are different. We have different labour codes that I am very proud of, and we provide for wage assistance to companies willing to employ those individuals so that they can garner the experience needed for their accreditation.

As well, we as legislators have a responsibility to all persons that we represent within this great province of ours. We must not take for a moment that responsibility lightly. We must guarantee that the professionals to which we provide accreditation are indeed to that professional standard that our citizens have come to expect. We cannot take second place in any facet because that is what makes this province and this nation indeed the one that everyone recognizes in the world.

So, essentially, although I have said that I am not supporting this resolution, I commend you for your particular—I do want to credit you for bringing this forward to the House today.

I might just give a past history to reinforce the dedication and commitment that this government has shown towards immigration to this province of ours. Very quickly, when we came into government, we recognized the needs and worked co-operatively with other provinces and the federal government in a working group to recognize the needs of immigrants

and the credentials and experience that they would need to garner to become professionals and recognized professionals in our country.

In 1992 we went one step further and adopted the report and established the Immigration Credentials and Labour Market Branch, which indeed came under the auspices of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship under the honourable minister. Indeed, I am very proud of the way our government has come forward and following then in 1996 that we have furthered that commitment

shown. We want to welcome anyone to this province to be able to prosper.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) will have two minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 18, 1998

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