

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, June 23, 1989.

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS AND TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table A Discussion Paper on Elder Abuse in Manitoba.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): I would like to table the Manitoba Hazardous Waste Management Corporation Second Annual Report.

INTRODUCTION OF BILL

BILL NO. 33—THE ECOLOGICAL RESERVES AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources) introduced, by leave, Bill No. 33, The Ecological Reserves Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les réserves écologiques.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, prior to oral questions, I would like to rise on a matter of privilege of the House.

I rise on a matter of privilege of the House and will follow my brief comments with a motion. The Rules of this House demand that Honourable Members present accurate and factual information in terms of their questions to the best of their ability.

Yesterday, very serious allegations were made by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) regarding the availability of air ambulance services as provided by the Province of Manitoba to residents in northern and remote Manitoba. Two allegations were made by the Member for Flin Flon.

First of all, that there were monetary considerations used in determining the availability of service to the particular client that my honourable friend, the Member for Flin Flon, referred to. That is not correct.

A second allegation was made by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) where he alleges that changes in air ambulance service practices may have contributed to the death of at least one northern Manitoba patient resulting in a close call in another instance. That also is false because there has been no change in the policy by which the air ambulance provides services to northern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, the air ambulance was requested by a doctor in Flin Flon. Simultaneously the air ambulance

was requested to provide a second medical evacuation—this time, the second instance, being a baby in Churchill critically in need of the air ambulance specialized services to provide that transportation. The baby was chosen to meet the criterion of the medical ambulance evacuation and this service was given. Upon returning from Churchill with that critically ill baby, a second case was asked for service of the air ambulance, this time of a critically ill patient in Thompson. That critically ill patient took precedence for the use of the air ambulance over the client referred by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), and that service was delivered.

* (1005)

In the interim, the individual in Flin Flon received commercial air flight and arrived in Winnipeg sooner than was possible through use of the air ambulance given the other two circumstances; that of a critically ill baby and that of another critically ill patient in Thompson having need of the specialized service of the air ambulance took precedence.

Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend, the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie), has erred and violated the Rules of this House in not having accurate information. He has alleged financial considerations. That is not correct. He has alleged a change in policy. That also is not correct.

Therefore, I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), that the misstatements by the Member for Flin Flon regarding provision of air ambulance services be referred to the Committee of Privileges and Elections.

Mr. Speaker: I will permit limited and strictly relevant debate concerning whether or not the matter has been raised at the earliest opportunity and whether or not the Honourable Minister has sufficient evidence that alleged breaches of privileges of the House have been presented.

The Honourable Member for Thompson.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I first raised the question as to the appropriate time which matter of privilege should be raised. I believe it would be more appropriate to be dealing with matters of privilege after Question Period, since Orders of the Day do take precedence over motions and including this matter. It has been considered legitimate in the past to raise matters of privilege and not violated the question of their being raised at the first opportunity after Question Period.

I then point to the fact, Mr. Speaker, that one of the clearest citations in Beauchesne and our Rules is that matters of privilege ought to be raised very rarely in this House. This is the second matter of privilege, supposed matter of privilege, that has been raised in two days by the Members of the Conservative Caucus,

and I think this one is quite clearly not a matter of privilege.

Beauchesne Citation 31(1) states very clearly that a dispute arising between two Members as to allegations of facts does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege. This is clearly a question over facts. I know I have talked to the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). He did, as was his responsibility, verify the facts that he brought to this House, both with the patient that was involved and with the doctor. The Member for Flin Flon clearly was fulfilling his role as a Member of the Legislature.

If the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) has some dispute over those facts or the policies that are in place, it would clearly be more appropriate to have that raised, if the matter was taken under advisement, which I believe it was yesterday, by the Acting Minister of Health, it would be far more appropriate for the Minister to be dealing with this in Question Period and not dealing with it as a matter of privilege.

In concluding, Mr. Speaker, I cannot think of a matter that was more clearly in violation of our Rules in terms of matters of privilege than this one. I would hope that Members of the House would think very carefully before bringing daily matters of privilege before this House. There are obviously clearly cases in which we should be dealing with matters of privilege, but not in this case. This is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Opposition House Leader): I would like to take a minute to speak about this too. A matter of privilege is an extremely serious matter and one that needs to be dealt with by this House in a context of the seriousness with which we uphold the rights and privileges of Members in this House.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that it is my belief that the Government is beginning to use this very important process to obstruct business of this House. This is the second time this week we have had a matter of privilege raised as a means of disputing questions of fact. There is no matter of privilege here. It is an abuse of the process, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is time that the Government was told that it should ascertain its facts before it comes forward, that it should bring forward to this House substantive matters of privilege when they occur, and if it wants to enter into debate, then it should use the proper forms for that. I think that this is completely irresponsible and should not be allowed to continue.

* (1010)

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker it does not surprise me that Honourable Members opposite—

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

Mr. Alcock: The Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is pointing out that Members in this House are lying. That is clearly unparliamentary. I would ask him to withdraw it.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. I have not heard the remarks as stated by the Honourable Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock). I have not heard the remarks. Therefore you cannot ask the Chair to rule on such a matter.

The Honourable Government House Leader.

Mr. McCrae: Mr. Speaker, I propose not to dignify the comments of the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Alcock) by responding to them. The Honourable Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) referred in his comments to his feeling that somehow this matter should be raised at a different time or something like that, but I say to you that Beauchesne Citation 114 makes it clear, the importance of matters of privilege. That citation says, "By its nature a question of privilege is of such importance that it may be raised at any time." Standing Order 48 makes provision for the precedence of a question of privilege over all other business of the House.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I believe this is frivolous matter and the sanctimonious Member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) is imputing motives in this which are clearly not true—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. This is a very serious matter, and I have said I would allow strictly information that is relevant to the matter raised from the Honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

The Honourable Member for Flin Flon.

Mr. Storie: This is not a frivolous matter. This is a matter of a Member of the Legislature defending the interests of his constituents. If that offends the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) then that, Mr. Speaker, is too bad.

In my question, I gave the Acting Minister of Health the facts. Those facts were corroborated by individual reporters who contacted the patient, who spoke to the patient about the nature of her illness, the seriousness with which she regarded it and her physician regarded it, the fact that service was denied. I asked a legitimate question.

As we have seen services cut back in the North, and I got a letter from the Minister of Transport closing offices in Flin Flon. I asked the question: Is service being denied so this Minister of Health can save money? Is there a change in policy? I asked the question: Is there a change in policy that is going to sacrifice the health and safety of Northerners for this Minister's own political purposes? I asked a legitimate question. For this to be flaunted in the Legislature as a matter of privilege is an abuse of the rules and is an indication of the personality of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to thank all Honourable Members for their advice. We will take this matter under advisement. Order, please. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Speaker: Prior to oral questions, may I direct Honourable Members' attention to the Speaker's gallery where we have with us this morning Miss Agnes MacDonald, who is a chairperson of the Manitoba Council on Aging; Al Loveridge, president of the Manitoba Society of Seniors; Marguerite Chown, Manitoba Society of Seniors and Manitoba Council on Aging; Dorothy Hardy, Age and Opportunity; Carol Robertson, Executive Director of the Manitoba Society of Seniors; Laurence Wilmot, President, Creative Retirement Manitoba; Farrell Fleming, Executive Director, Creative Retirement Manitoba; and Gale Feindel Vice-President, Age and Opportunity.

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

Also this morning, we have with us from the Wellington School, twenty-three Grade 6 students under the direction of Richard Scrapneck. This school is located in the constituency of our Honourable Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray).

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

* (1015)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Seniors Directorate Accomplishments

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, as all Members are aware, today is Seniors Day in Manitoba. We would like to take this opportunity to applaud the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Downey) for opening up Government offices and for making the legislative grounds available for all the good events that will occur today.-(Interjection)- It gets better, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, my question to the Minister responsible for Seniors is a little different than the traditional question. Indeed, on other occasions, it might be a question appropriate to be asked by a backbencher of the Government Party. On this Seniors Day, I would like to ask the Minister to highlight the accomplishments of the Seniors Directorate over the last 13 months, excluding the very important announcement on elder abuse which we will be questioning in just a moment.

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I can always count on a backhanded compliment from my colleague, the Liberal Critic, and I take it though as a positive compliment, having Seniors Day in the Manitoba Legislature.

Let me respond to the Minister, and with all the respect in the world to the rules of the House, the accomplishments have been many. I would take the opportunity, at a later opportunity, to respond specifically to those and not abuse the privileges of the Members of the House and take all day answering that question.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, I threw my best lobbed ball but no bat was forthcoming.

Elder Abuse Discussion Paper Delay

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): The Discussion Paper on Elder Abuse, which was tabled this morning by the Minister, is eight months late. I have a very pointed question to the Minister. Will he apologize, today, to the seniors of Manitoba for not meeting that deadline, because if this Government would have met that deadline we would have action, not in the spring of 1990 as we now expect, but much earlier on, so that seniors who have been abused could have had earlier action? Will he apologize for the delay in that paper?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I have learned a long time ago from the seniors of which I have been associated, if an individual is wrong, that it is only appropriate to apologize. However, I was also taught if there was not need for an apology, then it was not necessary to give one.

I would, therefore, like to say that we have to look at a little bit of history in this province as to who the Government has been over the last 15 years out of 20 years in Manitoba. It has not been a Progressive Conservative Government. We have had one year to deal with a very serious crime, which is elder abuse, a very, very sensitive area, because of the family members and the care givers who are very much involved. It is very sensitive. It is one which is very serious and one which has to be dealt with in full consultation, which I have been doing and will continue to do with the discussion paper. I think our record is very good, and we will stand by that.

Seniors Directorate Initiatives

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, with a supplementary to the Minister, the Seniors Directorate has been given an increase of \$7,300 in the fiscal year Budget announced by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) only a few weeks ago. What bold new initiatives does the Minister intend to announce when \$7,300 is the extent of this Government's commitment to the Seniors Directorate announced with so much hope and fanfare over a year ago?

* (1020)

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I do not accept the premise which has been established or tried to be established by the Liberal Critic on Seniors.

Mr. Speaker, however, one has other solutions than the Liberal solution of backing up the Brinks truck to every problem that comes on the horizon and spend the hard-earned money of our seniors, who are taxpayers as well. I believe that there are resources available. There are programs within the seniors' organization that have to be enhanced. The discussion paper will lead to identifying where we can better use current Government resources and identify the need

where additional resources are needed. We are committed to do that, to redirect and to look towards the commitment of new resources where they are required, but we do have to make sure that we respect the taxpaying seniors who want us to use that money in the most effective way.

Bill C-22 Challenge Manitoba Society of Seniors

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): With a new question for the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), the Manitoba Society of Seniors has launched a court challenge to the federal drug patent law. Manitoba seniors are concerned that the new law which extends the drug monopolies to 10 years will not only result in increased drug prices for seniors and the infirmed, but is also unconstitutional.

The Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has refused to intervene on behalf of the MSOS declaring that they can make their own arguments. Will the Minister respond to the thousands of Manitobans who have petitioned this Government and go to bat for the seniors of this province instead of protecting the interests of the multinational drug companies?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The Honourable Member raises today a matter which has been the subject of correspondence between himself and myself, and he will have my response on his desk regarding the question he raises today. The fact is I have great confidence in one Arne Peltz, who is acting for the seniors in the court challenge. I cannot understand why it is the Honourable Member for Fort Rouge would like to have two lawyers standing, one after the other, arguing the same things. I just do not quite understand how the involvement of the Department of the Justice could assist in any way except to be repetitive.

Bill C-22 Constitutionality

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, we have moved a very far distance right now. The Minister of Justice has said there ought to be no repetition of the arguments. Is the Minister of Justice therefore agreeing with the arguments put forward by the MSOS and its lawyers that the drug patent legislation is indeed unconstitutional and that the drug patent legislation will lead to higher drug prices for seniors in Manitoba?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The matter of the constitutionality of the legislation will be the subject of argument before the court, and the court will make its decision in due course.

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the Minister of Justice's reply. We will look forward to the arguments he will make on behalf of MSOS.

Pharmacare Budget Increase

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): With a final supplementary question to the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), increasing drug prices is among the most important issues facing seniors in Manitoba today. We see in the Government spending Estimates for this year that the Pharmacare budget will be increased by \$10.4 million, some 25 percent over last year. I would like to ask the Minister how much of that increase is a result of increased pharmaceutical prices?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, to attempt to answer my honourable friend's question, I can provide him hopefully more detail as we pursue that in Estimates. A certain portion of the significant increase in the Pharmacare Program is because of increasing prices in the pharmaceutical field, as has been the case for many, many years. As new prescription drugs come on the market and are approved in our formulary list, they drive the price of the Pharmacare Program up. Mr. Speaker, there is also an increase in the volume which is a significant contributor to the costs of Pharmacare.

I want to share with my honourable friend a couple of initiatives. One of them we just approved this past week, not a new initiative. This has been ongoing since the Pharmacare Program came in. That is the approval of a new drug formulary for the Province of Manitoba, in which some 28 new pharmaceuticals were approved for use and prescription and coverage under the Pharmacare Program. Some 10 previously approved prescription drugs were deleted from the list.

Now that formulary allowing the substitution of drugs is estimated to save an estimated \$6 million in terms of the prescription costs. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we are implementing January 1, 1990, the duplicate prescription process whereby we hope to constrain and very much reduce the abuse of narcotic and addictive pharmaceutical prescriptions in an effort to contain cost and protect health.

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): I would also like to pay tribute to seniors on Seniors Day. We are glad the day was reinstated in terms of the legislative invitations and seniors, and would pledge our continued support for seniors 365 days on health, pensions, elderly abuse, transportation, housing and the clawback on pensions and its effect on seniors in the future.

* (1025)

Solvit Resources Inc. Clean-up Procedures

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings). Last Friday, there was a huge explosion at the Solvit Resources, and we have found that this corporation in St. Boniface was operating not with the licence but with approval from the Department of Environment in July of 1988.

I would ask the Minister two questions: Is the Minister satisfied that the corporation was operating in accordance with the approval his department gave? Secondly, is the Minister satisfied, on behalf of Manitobans, with the clean-up procedures that are now in place for this major environmental situation that developed last week and the potential danger with that explosion that took place in our province?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the explosion and the cause of it obviously are still under investigation. There have been some questions raised that are yet unanswered, and whether or not there was compliance with the right to operate that they were given, I think it is too soon to pass judgment on some of the details.

At the same time, I would also like to indicate in response to an adjacent issue that we have indicated to the company if they wish to begin operations again they will have to reapply for a permit to operate or licence to operate. As well, in terms of the clean-up, it has been indicated to me this is a very long and slow process. I have not had any problems indicated to me in terms of the clean-up, but that it will be an extended and slow process because of the work of the Fire Commissioner investigating the explosion.

Mr. Doer: I await the answer of whether this company was indeed operating under his department's approval.

Toxic Material Dumping

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister inform Manitobans why toxic sludge in the clean-up operation, almost 60 barrels of toxic sludge has been dumped on the ground in such a way that it is leaking into the environment, into our ground area? It has been so copious in nature or capacious in its size, that the four-wheel-drive Bobcat truck could not even drive over the sludge that is on the ground now and leaking into our environment. Is he satisfied on behalf of Manitobans of that part of the procedures for clean-up?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): I will not pass judgment on the details of what the Member is talking about because I am not aware of that condition, but I can assure you the first thing that was done in terms of the response at the time of the accident was to place checks to make sure there was nothing getting into the sewer system that would cause problems and ultimately end up in the rivers of this province. If there is something that is being handled in an inappropriate manner and allowed to dissipate into areas that it should not be at this time, we will certainly be prepared to take action. I appreciate the information.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, then I would ask the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) why his department is allowing and approving disposal of some of this waste and toxic material into the McPhillips settling ponds, which ultimately does go into our water system, which should be covered under the new Environment Act,

which the Government has waived with the deal with the city, and why the Government and the Environment Department is allowing barrels which are not being treated to be dumped in the Brady Landfill Site with toxic materials still as residue in those barrels, again contrary to any environmental practices, why this is going on as part of this environmental clean-up with this toxic—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order, please. There is a question there.

* (1030)

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, if the Member is alleging that there is something in the barrels other than solvent, then that is a very serious allegation. If that material is being disposed of in an inappropriate manner by those responsible for the clean-up, then I want to know about it and I want to take action.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, that is why we have been saying for months that the new Environment Act should be in place, because the McPhillips settling ponds, the Brady Landfill Site were referenced in the Minister's own briefing notes as breaches of the law, and to carry it on with this explosion I think is absolutely intolerable.

Investigation

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): My question to the Minister is, will he initiate a full investigation, an independent investigation under Article 39(1) of The Dangerous Goods and Handling Transportation Act, which allows for powers of evidence, so that the public can find out the true conditions of why that explosion took place, whether that company was following the rules of the permission that his department provided, and the disposal of goods into our environment, whether they are sound and consistent with the law? Will he initiate today an independent investigation to which I think the people of Winnipeg are entitled?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the information that the Member has brought forward regarding the disposal of the material, and whether or not the disposition of that in the landfill has anything to do with the imposition of the city under The Environment Act is absolutely incorrect. If it is being improperly disposed of, that is a breach of the law anywhere under any circumstances.

Seniors Education Program Co-ordination

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): The seniors population in Manitoba, as is true across our country, is growing in numbers. There are more and more individuals 55 and over seeking educational opportunities. As stated under the Creative Retirement letterhead, Mr. Speaker: "(1) older people have a need for meaningful activity, they want to do more than play; (2) older people want to learn; (3) many older people did not have the benefit

of much education in their youth or the enriched education of today."

There is a wide variety of sources: the public schools, the universities and colleges, the various Ys throughout our province, Manitoba Society of Seniors, Creative Retirement, etc., etc. Can the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach) tell us what attempts have been made by his department to provide co-ordination of these programs?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, seniors within our society have much to contribute to the education process of our society as a whole, and I think we all recognize that in this House.

We have within our society many teachers who have retired and would like to contribute to the education process of students, because they have much to offer. I have met with some of the seniors groups throughout the province, not only in Winnipeg but also outside of the city. Certainly I am encouraged by the fact that these people would like to return to our schools to talk to students and to be able to share with them. In addition, we are providing some additional grants to the Creative Retirement people so that they can contribute to society, and so they can continue to enjoy their retirement years through educational opportunities that may be available to them.

Mrs. Yeo: Mr. Speaker, I did not hear any discussion about co-ordination.

Program Funding

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): Since 1984, Creative Retirement has actually received less funding in real dollars despite the tremendous increase in the activities. If the Minister is truly concerned about the needs of our seniors, will he assure that additional dollars are forthcoming, either in the budget of Adult Education or from his own discretionary funds?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I do not have any discretionary funds that I can throw around to a variety of groups. I have to tell you that I respect that the senior citizens of this province have much to contribute to our society, but we do have to match the dollars that we have available to us and the resources of this province and make sure that they are allocated equally and in a balanced form. We in this Department of Education are doing all we can to ensure that, in fact, the senior citizens within our society do have access to our educational facilities and are able to contribute to the process of development of this province.

Creative Retirement Manitoba Education Program Funding

Mrs. Iva Yeo (Sturgeon Creek): The western division of Creative Retirement is growing in need but decreasing in the ability to provide learning activities in places such as Souris, Oak Lake, Foxwarren, etc.

Will the Minister review the funds allotted to these Manitobans in support of the philosophy of lifelong educational needs?

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, if we take a look at our province as a whole, those are not the only communities where we have senior citizens. Senior citizens are an important part of every single community in this province. Creative Retirement is an organization that started in the City of Winnipeg and certainly is an important element in the community, of this city. It would also like to expand into all of the communities in this province and has done some very, very good work. I think we have to ensure that senior citizens, right through Manitoba and all our communities, have an opportunity to access our educational institutions, to access the resources that we have within the divisions right through the whole province to ensure that they can contribute fully to a developing society within our province.

Personal Care Homes Parainfluenza Deaths

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, in April and May, 34 nursing home residents lost their lives because of complications from parainfluenza. When I first raised the question on June 8, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) stated that the spread of influenza was not a public health issue, and I quote: "The common cold is not a public health threat." At the Canadian Public Health Association Conference this week in Winnipeg, Dr. Ellis, a senior specialist with the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control in Ottawa, revealed that influenza reaches epidemic levels in nursing homes, and that the 80 percent of deaths from flu each year involves seniors. My question is, will the Minister now please withdraw his statement in this House and reassure the seniors that he cares about their health and he will make it mandatory for reporting of any deaths because of parainfluenza?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank my honourable friend for this question because it allows me to again indicate the processes that were followed in those unfortunate deaths. I stand by the statement that the common cold cannot be deemed a public health threat. I think, as a medical doctor himself, he would have to agree. When the common cold added to the complicated medical circumstances of a number of those residents and stimulated a condition called parainfluenza, the homes took, in consultation, in conjunction with the medical officer and staff at the Manitoba Health Services Commission, a number of precautionary steps, including restriction of shared staffing between facilities to prevent the spread of the common cold to those other facilities, including restrictions of admissions so no new patients would be exposed, including the isolation as much as possible within the home, those suffering from parainfluenza to prevent its spread within the home.

It was contained fortunately to the two homes only and to two other deaths in a personal care home in Dauphin. Mr. Speaker, every step to protect those

residents was taken by my staff appropriately, to assure the safety of the residents of personal care homes.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order.

Parainfluenza Reporting

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is in total contradiction with specialists in the field. It is very clear that one of the most effective ways to deal with this problem is by reporting the outbreak of influenza to the general public and to the nursing homes because they share the staff. They share the visitors.

Mr. Speaker, my question is, will he now make it compulsory for nursing homes to report all the deaths and the parainfluenza outbreaks a mandatory regulation in Manitoba?

* (1040)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, let me deal with one issue my honourable friend has just raised in terms of the sharing of staff between homes. In those homes, that exactly was curtailed in order to prevent any unfortunate spread of the common cold and the resulting parainfluenza, that was done. That is why I assure my honourable friend that the best medical advice in the department was followed in this case. It is unfortunate that a number of residents have died as a result of the common cold and the complication of parainfluenza.

Mr. Speaker, on the broader issue of reporting of all deaths in personal care homes, that was suggested, it is my understanding, in 1984 by the Chief Provincial Coroner. That is currently under investigation by my department with my colleague the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) to see if that is an appropriate new policy to be brought into the Province of Manitoba. That is currently under investigation.

Mr. Speaker, regardless of the reporting structure my honourable friend, I simply give him the assurance that no further medical efforts could have been undertaken in those circumstances last spring to prevent those unfortunate deaths. We followed every known medical precaution and procedure. I trust that my honourable friend will accept that medical advice.

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

Parainfluenza Deaths

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Kildonan, with his final supplementary question.

Mr. Gulzar Cheema (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, on June 12, the First Minister (Mr. Filmon) took as notice a question from the Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) as to how many of the 34 deaths were as a direct result of strain from influenza. Is the Minister of Health now prepared to give us that information?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that parainfluenza was

the cause of death, not influenza, which is different because certain influenzas are able to use the inoculation. I consider this to be a very serious situation. In cases of influenza, inoculation of the resident population in our personal care homes is done. Parainfluenza, there is no immunization available because it is caused by the common cold.

My honourable friend asked the question narrowly about influenza. It is my understanding no patients died from influenza. They succumbed to parainfluenza, a complication of the common cold, which was a complication on top of numerous other medical problems those residents had.

Again, I want to assure my honourable friend, the medical doctor, Liberal Health Critic, that every piece of medical advice was followed appropriately in this case.

Public Utilities Board ICG Rate Application

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): My question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld), and follows the theme I guess of many other questions with respect to seniors as we all celebrate Seniors Day in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, seniors are also consumers and as consumers deserve the best protection with respect to their interests that we as legislators can offer.

My question to the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) is a simple one. Some months ago, ICG signed a contract for natural gas supply which will cost Manitoba consumers some additional \$15 million to \$20 million, more than it should have cost, and this Minister chose not to intervene in that contract application.

My question is, did the Minister of Energy and Mines take the time to provide input to the Public Utilities Board with respect to the latest application of a 6.3 percent increase, which will cost Manitoba consumers, Manitoba seniors, people on fixed income, an additional \$38 per year on their heating bill? Did the Minister of Energy and Mines take the time to send someone from the department to represent seniors and consumers?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, the reason we have a Public Utilities Board is to review the applications put forward by the various utilities. The Public Utilities Board will review all the information placed before them and will come up with their decision, and it is not up to the Government, we do not believe, to intervene in that decision.

Mr. Storie: Mr. Speaker, the Minister referenced the Public Utilities Board, and we have all noted with interest there have been changes to the Public Utilities Board, I presume, so it is easier for ICG to get their rate applications through. My question to the Minister—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

POINT OF ORDER

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

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I think the Honourable Member's imputation of motives here is a good indication of the kinds of problems we have in this House from time to time with this Honourable Member, as evidenced also by the question of privilege raised earlier today by the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard).

Is the Honourable Member prepared to withdraw those comments and apologize not only to the Honourable Minister of Mines (Mr. Neufeld), but also to all Manitobans because again he is leaving an incorrect and certainly improper impression in the minds of the people and making the suggestion that members of the Public Utilities Board are somehow biased in their approach to their work? Shame on you.

Mr. Speaker: Order; order. The Honourable Member for Thompson, on the same point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Second Opposition House Leader): On the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I think it is well accepted that we do have a fair amount of give and take in Question Period, a fair amount of recognition of the rights of freedom of speech. I believe the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) was certainly not imputing motive on the part of the Minister and was not contravening our rules. He was merely expressing his opinion, which is his right as a Member of the Legislature. His opinion that perhaps the Public Utilities Board has become less receptive to—that is his opinion, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): On the same point of order. Very clearly, what the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) did was question the integrity, in fact, slander the members of the Public Utilities Board by what he said.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Chair would like to thank all Honourable Members for their advice. We will peruse Hansard on this one and will return to the House.

Public Utilities Board ICG Rate Application (Cont'd)

Mr. Speaker: Would the Honourable Member for Flin Flon kindly put his question now because time is scarce.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Energy and Mines is, given that ICG in its application also requested a 14.5 percent rate of return on its investment, and it was supported by the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld), can the Minister explain how, in the interests of consumers, the Minister of Energy and Mines can support that kind of rate of return when seniors might expect 4 percent or 5 percent or 6 percent on their investments?

Hon. Harold Neufeld (Minister of Energy and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I have reportedly said that I did not think it was too excessive. That is very different from supporting a 14.5 percent. I have never said that I supported any rate of return. That is up to the individual investor to decide for himself. I do believe that the Public Utilities Board—

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Second Opposition): Who is standing up for consumers?

Mr. Neufeld: The Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) asks who is standing up for the consumers. The Public Utilities Board is in place to review all the information placed before it on matters of rate increases and the Public Utilities Board, in our view, is quite capable of making a decision without any interference from the Government.

ICG Utilities Supply Shut-off Regulations

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Flin Flon, with his final supplementary.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I think all the Members in the Chamber are becoming increasingly amused at the absence of a Liberal presence when it comes to questioning the motives of others.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Storie: My question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Connery). The representatives from ICG met with the Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs in the province yesterday to request the elimination of a provision that prevents them from cutting off gas to consumers who have neglected or cannot pay their bills. Is it the intention of the Minister of Consumer Affairs to undermine the rights of seniors and others in a province that requires a long heating season? Is it the Minister's intention to introduce legislation to support ICG in its intention to cut off gas to consumers?

* (1050)

Hon. Edward Connery (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Member knows well that the PUB will listen to arguments from all concerned people. They will listen to arguments from the gas company. They will listen to arguments from Arne Peltz for the Consumers' Association, to determine if their policy should be in place. If their policy should be in place, they will make recommendations to me as to what that policy should entail. If the Member would read the newspaper, he would see that the Consumers' Association of Manitoba strongly support a properly worked method of cutting off people who are abusing the system because when somebody abuses the system, all other consumers in Manitoba, including the seniors, have to pay the cost of those who are abusing the system. A proper process, if it is in place, will be there.

Seniors Support Services Funding Reduction

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition believes in the importance of developing supportive programs for seniors so they can remain in their own homes and in the community. Programs such as congregate meals, recreational opportunities and non-profit cleaning services have been proven to be cost-efficient. The support services to the Seniors Program, through the Department of Health, is responsible for the development of such programs.

Can the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) tell us why this Government and why this particular program in the department has not been given any substantial resources in this year's Budget? In fact, in real terms, the funding has declined.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): I do not want to debate Liberal policies in terms of services to seniors as have been enunciated from time to time.

The one thing I do want to indicate to my honourable friend, the Member for Ellice (Ms. Gray), is that we, when the previous administration introduced support services for seniors as a concept to enhance the range of services available to seniors in the community as developed by community organizations with the use of funding from Government to basically hire volunteer co-ordinators on a permanent basis, we recognized that to be a valuable service because it could very well enhance the amount of services available to seniors, which Government naturally could not be involved in delivery of for very obvious reasons. We have continued to support the support services for the Seniors Program.

What we are doing, Mr. Speaker, in this year's Budget, is continuing with the funding of projects that were started. My honourable friend might be aware that projects commence and cash flows indefinitely during the year. We are assuring . . .

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

Ms. Gray: We hear a commitment in words from this Minister, but yet we have seen no action.

Seniors Support Services Yard Maintenance Program

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): Mr. Speaker, a supplementary for the Minister responsible for Seniors. One such important support program which seniors would like is a non-profit yard maintenance and exterior house maintenance service. Can the Minister responsible for Seniors indicate to us what specific initiative his department has taken to ensure the development of such a program for seniors?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, our Government's record is very good, particularly when it comes to support for seniors and the expansion of many programs. I would suggest that those kinds of program developments or

enhancements of them will be considered in discussion with my colleague, the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), who is very capable in his area of responsibility in discussions with seniors. Developments of meaningful programs will be carried out and enhanced.

Seniors Directorate Hotline Service Review

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Ellice, with her final supplementary question.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): With a final supplementary for the Minister responsible for Seniors (Mr. Downey). The hotline in the Seniors Directorate has somewhat cooled down. Individuals requesting answers from this hotline actually receive no answers and get referred to the Department of Health.

My question to the Minister for Seniors is, will this Minister review this flawed service and actually take some action and establish a direct line which does provide some relevant concrete information to seniors in a timely manner?

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for bringing that to my attention. I can assure her that this Government is concerned about the needs of seniors 365 days of the year, just not in Question Period, the day that we happen to have many seniors in this Assembly. Yes, I will look into the hotline and if it is not working as effectively as it should be, then we will move to take the kind of necessary steps to correct it.

Gold Mine—Shoal Lake Arsenic Testing

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (St. Johns): Another issue of great concern to seniors in this province, indeed to all Manitobans, is the question of safe drinking water. My question is to the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), considering that yesterday Ontario environment officials said there was really no problem with arsenic in the water of the City of Winnipeg, but considering that the company officials actually have said recently there is a detectable measure of arsenic in the material being discharged into Shoal Lake, given that yesterday the MP for Rainy River, Howard Hampton, was here in Winnipeg and said that he has not been able to get any answers out of the scandal-ridden Liberal Government in Ontario, will the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please; order please. The question is?

Ms. Wasylycia-Leis: It is obvious we need some leadership for Manitoba. Would the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) tell us what tests have been done for arsenic, what the results of those tests have been, what is the exact measure of arsenic in the city drinking water?

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Mr. Speaker, the Member has a good turn of phrase regarding the problems that the Government of Ontario seems to be having these days. I would respond to the question in terms of a commitment that I have made consistently to the Legislature that by the middle of next week we will have a pair of people on site to do testing and to do some detailed analysis of the water surrounding the site of the proposed gold mine. One thing I think we all need to bear in mind is that this is also the site of an old gold mine that operated for many years, and therefore we do need to do some testing in and around the site to see precisely what may be there.

Mr. Speaker: Time for oral questions has expired.

NON-POLITICAL STATEMENTS

Hon. James Downey (Minister responsible for Seniors): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I may have leave of the House to make a non-political statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Minister have leave? (Agreed)

Mr. Downey: First of all, I would like to indicate to the House and thank all Honourable Members for opening their offices and helping to make this a very special day for seniors in Manitoba, a day which we are all extremely proud of them and pleased that they were able to join us in the Manitoba Legislature to celebrate this day.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have no control over the weather. It is my understanding at this point, the program will be going ahead as you saw on your release of yesterday. If it appears as if we are unable to accommodate the speeches and the activities outside, then they will be moved.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

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

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): On a point of order, I am quite interested in what the Minister for Seniors (Mr. Downey) is saying, and I am having difficulty hearing it because of the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) who continues to argue with the NDP right here.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the Honourable Member for Osborne. I would like to ask Honourable Members, those wishing to carry on a private conversation can do so outside the Chamber. The Honourable Minister responsible for Seniors has the floor.

* (1100)

Mr. Downey: Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my comments by saying at this point it is planned to proceed with the program as it was scheduled, that we move out to do the speeches and ask the Members of the Opposition

to participate, as well as the leadership from the seniors organization to participate in the activities out on the grounds of the Legislature. If it appears it is unable to be done, then we will move all the exercises and activities inside. We would ask for the judgment of the Members of the House as to whether or not they may be afraid of melting in the rain. We could probably accommodate them because of the sweetness of some of them, but we will in fact try to make that go ahead as it was.

Mr. Speaker, I have one additional comment to make. I say that in congratulating all those participants in the 55 Plus Games these last few days, my colleague who has contributed through his department and the Government who have contributed through their departments are very, very proud of them. I have one further comment which may encourage my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst) to stand as well. I was pleased last night to be able to present the gold medals or the silver medals to some of the constituents of yours, Mr. Speaker, of mine from Arthur and from other areas of southwest, in the Slow Pitch awards. I compliment them and congratulate all the participants, but I say that particularly, as I was extremely proud of many of those individuals.

An Honourable Member: Where did the gold medalist come from?

Mr. Downey: That is why I said it may encourage my colleague from Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) to rise. The gold medalist came from Charleswood, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. James Carr (Fort Rouge): Mr. Speaker, do I have leave to make a non-political statement? (Agreed)

Mr. Carr: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House, have already congratulated the Minister and also his staff, which I know have spent much time in preparing the events that will occur throughout the day. This is a day both to celebrate and to contemplate. It is a day to celebrate the contribution made to Manitoba's society these many years by those who are now senior. We are still young enough, as a province, to have within our community those who through their pioneer efforts built this province. We have living memory among many of those who were in the gallery today, and those in our community who remember the early days in Manitoba. They came from all over the world. They came from eastern Europe, from central Europe, from western Europe, from other provinces in Canada and the United States, from Asia. It was their efforts that built the strength and the diversity of our society in Manitoba today. So it is truly a day to celebrate.

It is also a day to contemplate, a day to contemplate the challenges which face us as legislators in an era when our population is aging. Seniors are growing at a rate of population faster than anybody else in society. The list of challenges and problems which face us as legislators is a long one. We have the challenge of an aging population, to ensure that we recognize above all the dignity and the independence of people. That, more than anything else, is the lesson I have learned since I have had the privilege of being the critic for Seniors for the Liberal Opposition.

Individuals want to remain independent. They are not looking for handouts. They are looking for a sense of respect and of dignity. It is our challenge to encourage them to have all of those things. The problems of elder abuse, and we congratulate the Minister for taking an important first step, the issue of drug prices, the issue of home care and recreational opportunities are all those that face us as a society.

So I rise on behalf of the Liberal Opposition to say that we celebrate the accomplishments of seniors in Manitoba today. We contemplate how in the years ahead we, as legislators, can make the society such that they remain independent and live their lives with dignity. We are very happy to participate in the events around the building today. Thank you.

Mr. Jay Cowan (Churchill): Mr. Speaker, may I have leave to make a non-political statement?

Mr. Speaker: Does the Honourable Member have leave? (Agreed)

Mr. Cowan: Mr. Speaker, as Seniors Critic for the New Democratic Party Opposition, it is indeed a privilege to be able to join in with all my colleagues in this House, to extend greetings to those seniors who have come to this building today to help celebrate this day, and through them to their families and their friends, those who may not have been able to come, to also indicate to them that we are thankful and appreciative of that which they have done for our society over their many years.

In celebrating this day, Mr. Speaker, we are acknowledging their accomplishments which in large part make us what we are, give us the benefits that we have here today and give us guidance and leadership on how to live our own lives. Our Party, as I know all Parties in this House do, will want to use this opportunity to pledge our commitment to continue to work with seniors to build upon that which we have all accomplished together and to meet new challenges which yet confront us.

In closing, because I note we should be out in the ceremonies already, and I want to keep my comments short so we can proceed there, I do want to indicate that we are thankful for those accomplishments. We have all accomplished much by working together, but there is much more that remains yet to be done. I know that we will all approach that challenge with a determination to make a better world for those seniors today and seniors in the future, and to ensure we protect that which we have gained and build a new society which will bide even better benefits in the future.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call the Bills in the following order: Bill 11, Bill 27 and Bill 30?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), that Mr. Speaker do now leave the Chair and

the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider and report of Bill No. 11, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les circonscriptions électorales, for third reading.

MOTION presented and carried and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider and report of Bill No. 11, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les circonscriptions électorales, for third reading.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE BILL NO. 11—THE ELECTORAL DIVISIONS AMENDMENT ACT

Mr. Chairman (William Chornopyski): Committee, come to order to consider Bill No. 11, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act.

We shall proceed to consider Bill No. 11 clause by clause. Clause 1—pass; Clause 2—pass; Preamble—pass; Title—pass. Bill be reported.

Committee rise. Call in the Speaker.

* (1110)

IN SESSION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. William Chornopyski (Chairman of Committees): Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered Bill No. 11, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act, and has directed me to report the same without amendment.

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux), that the report of the Committee of the Whole be received.

MOTION presented and carried.

DEBATE ON SECOND READING BILL NO. 27—THE FISCAL STABILIZATION FUND ACT

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), Bill No. 27, The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act; Loi sur le Fonds de stabilisation des recettes, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock).

The Honourable Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) wishes to speak on Bill No. 27, and it will remain standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Osborne (Mr. Alcock), by leave.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): There have been many on both sides of the Opposition benches who have questioned the legitimacy I guess of the Stabilization Fund. I, Mr. Speaker, have not been quite so critical perhaps as other Members who have spoken to this legislation to this point.

One of the prime concerns that I have with the idea, the concept of a Stabilization Fund, is that the possibility

exists that through Order-in-Council the Executive Council may in fact be able to manipulate the fund in such a way that it becomes not a Fiscal Stabilization Fund, but in fact a rainy-day fund, a political fund, a slush fund, any of the other euphemisms you could tie to that amount of money available to the Executive Council basically on a whim.

I know that is substantially overstating the case. I know that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) - (Interjection)- well, Mr. Speaker, the lip from Portage la Prairie suggests that was our Government. Our Government did have a fund, a \$200 million fund, which is roughly the amount that the Stabilization Fund encompasses. The only difference was that our Government was forthright enough to say, here are the programs we are going to fund through this support program, and we called it the Jobs Fund. It supported the employment of students and the Venture Capital Program for business, and the Technology Commercialization Program to help us bring research from the universities into the business community, and a whole plethora of other programs that were identified and defended by Ministers.

The problem with this fund of course is that we have none of it. The fact of the matter is that if you want a buried fund, this is a perfect example because only the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), and through the Executive Council, can anyone have access to the fund. The review of that access will only be as a result of a report to the Legislature from the Provincial Auditor after the fact.

Mr. Speaker, it does not take a genius to know when the Provincial Auditor reports on the use of funds some six, eight, 12 months after the fact, that the reporting of that fact is going to have very little impact on the ability of the Opposition or the press or concerned citizens to change the Government's mind. The fact of the matter is the horse will be out of the barn and long gone before anyone has a legitimate chance to review the spending that the Government is undertaking.

Now, I see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) shaking his head, but certainly if the Minister of Finance is disputing what I am saying is possible, then I would like to know what other interpretation one should put on the piece of legislation that we have?

Now the Minister of Finance is here, and I appreciate the fact that the stated intention by the Minister of Finance is one that I do not disagree with. I think the idea of having the fund that is available to cushion the impact of significant increases, decreases and revenue or spending, perhaps because of forest fires or other disasters in the province, that is not necessarily a bad idea, and I have said that consistently when asked about the intent of the stabilization fund.

What I am concerned about when I read the legislation is the possibility that the Government by regulation, by Order-in-Council, can spend additional monies piecemeal without real reference to the overall fiscal situation, the fiscal circumstances of the provincial Government. If, for example, this Bill allows the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) three months before an election to infuse \$50 million into the health care fund,

then I oppose this legislation. If the Minister of Finance can take \$10 million and put it into an employment training program two months before an election, then I oppose this legislation.

If, on the other hand, all that is being contemplated and all that actually can take place, if that is all that by regulation the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is perhaps misunderstanding his own authority as Minister of Finance, directly responsible for the fund, to manipulate the circumstances, I respect the Minister of Finance enough to know that the Minister of Finance's intentions now are as pure as the driven snow with respect to this fund.

However, the Minister of Finance may not always be the Minister of Finance, and there are some other Members of the Executive Council whose motives quite frankly are suspect from time to time. I will not name names, Mr. Speaker, because that would be a breach of the rules, but the Minister of Finance, I think, his intentions are quite legitimate, and that is to balance out the fiscal situation from year to year.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. If the actual impact of this legislation cannot be tampered with by the Executive Council or by the Minister responsible for the fund in any way by regulation or by Order-in-Council subsequent to the passage of that legislation by this Legislature, then I support it. I will be asking those questions in committee.

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

I want to know with a great degree of certainty that no Minister of Finance—certainly not this one, but no subsequent Minister of Finance—can manipulate that fund to allow it to become the kind of political slush fund that we all I think in this Chamber do not want to see become a permanent fixture at the disposal of the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) has chosen to reference the Manitoba Jobs Fund. I was speaking of the Jobs Fund some moments ago when I indicated that the provincial Government of the Day, when the Jobs Fund was introduced in 1983, I think made it very clear that there was a Minister responsible for the programs placed under the Jobs Fund that those programs were well publicized. The need for those programs was well-known. If the Minister would have come forward with that kind of a recommendation at this point in the province's history, he perhaps would have had even more support because we in the Opposition, we in the New Democratic Party, have been calling for additional funds for employment creation, calling for additional funds to create jobs for young people, not the cutbacks we are seeing through the Minister of Education and Training (Mr. Derkach), the \$3 million reduction in the Job Training for Tomorrow Program which is reprehensible at a time when unemployment is rising.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to get back to the nature of the fiscal situation in Manitoba. I see the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) gloating at his press conferences because the fiscal situation of the province

is -(Interjection)- the Minister of Finance says he never gloats. He may not be gloating but, gosh, it looks like he is. It sure looks like he is gloating, but I want to remind the Minister of Finance that his good fortune is only as a result of other people's misfortune, and the other people's misfortune are the thousands and hundreds of thousands of Manitobans who are paying increased taxes to the federal Government, to Michael Wilson, to his usurious tax regime for average Manitobans. That is why this Minister can gloat and that is the only reason this Minister can gloat.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other reason he can gloat is because, fortunately, a fortuitous event in Ontario which sees their economy booming has allowed the federal Government to transfer many millions, hundreds of millions of additional dollars in revenue to provinces like Manitoba. The irony is of course that had not things changed as they sometimes do, in 1988 the provincial Government would have been an NDP Government with a balanced budget plus money for the important services that Manitobans need and jobs that need to be created.

So when we start talking about good fiscal management, let it be recognized that but for other than completely serendipitous circumstances, the Government would have been an NDP Government. The Budget would have been balanced and we would have been spending money for jobs for young people, for services to Manitobans. This circumstance that the Minister finds himself in has nothing whatsoever to do with the much-vaunted Tory good management. There is no such thing. It is a misnomer; it is non sequiter; it simply does not happen. It is ludicrous. The fact is that social democrats across this country have bandaged the economy through good times and bad times, in a far superior and a more responsible management than any Tory Government in Canada.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the deficit did rise under the NDP Government. The deficit did rise, but what the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) forgets to tell the people of Manitoba is that while we inherited a \$300 million deficit in 1982, the Saskatchewan Tory Government was inheriting a \$200 million surplus. In comparison, we were a model of economic constraint, a model of economic good management in Manitoba.

* (1120)

The Tory Government in Saskatchewan was bungling a \$200 million surplus into a \$3 billion deficit in a matter of four years. Not only that, we had the good manager, Mr. Wilson, elected in 1984 becoming Minister of Finance, doubling the federal debt. While Mr. Wilson was talking about reducing the deficit, the people in Manitoba elected a Government in 1986 that committed itself to doing it, and in two years brought the deficit down from \$600 million to \$300 million. The good fortune that Mr. Manness inherited would have seen a drop to \$150 million in two years.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I respect the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) judgment on the question of The Fiscal Stabilization Act, but I have to admit that I am a little galled, I guess, by the Minister talking

eloquently about, you know, we have managed fiscally, we have managed things so well, because frankly they have not. They have fallen into some extremely good fortune and they seem to be managing to bungle that, so what opportunity existed is disappearing very quickly. I have not heard the phrase uttered by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), but certainly it has been uttered by others, less partisan observers, who have said Mr. Manness should thank Eugene Kostyra and Michael Wilson for his good fortune, not anybody in the front bunch, not the leadership or the First Minister (Mr. Filmon), not the leadership of the Minister of Finance, because frankly they have shown very little leadership.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, managing the fiscal affairs of the Province of Manitoba is no easy task. It never has been, it never will be. The bottom line however, it again represents not necessarily planned events but it is circumstance in Manitoba. We happen to be blessed with an abundance of natural resources, we happen to have a relatively diverse economy, and we happen to have a relatively stable financial situation.

Governments are wont and Ministers of Finance are wont to take political credit for events, circumstances which have no bearing whatsoever on their particular actions whether they be as a Minister or as a part of a Government. This Minister, perhaps more than any recent Minister of Finance, has availed himself of circumstance to attempt to create a climate of political credit. I want him to know that in discussions with Manitobans, and I do not mean just from my constituency but from the Manitoba Hotel Association to the Tourism Association, to small business people in Brandon and across the province, they recognize as much as anyone in this Chamber that the fiscal circumstances of the province have more to do with what others have done than the Minister of Finance.

The Minister may, although he does not gloat, he has informed us in the Chamber that he does not gloat, Mr. Deputy Speaker—the smile, the small grin that creeps across his face whenever he meets at a press conference to talk about the fiscal situation of the province, may soon be wiped from his face, because we all know that those circumstances that created this windfall for Manitoba can equally disappear, dissipate in a matter of months. I think the Minister of Finance is beginning to appreciate the fact that this short-lived prominence, this short window of opportunity when the Government can promote its good management, is quickly going to disappear.

That is what concerns me about this legislation, because while I recognize that the fiscal situation of the province is deteriorating, many Manitobans may not have felt the impact of that deterioration. Most Manitobans who own a house in Winnipeg or in other parts perhaps even more acutely, other parts of the province, know that the value of their house is not what it used to be. They know that if they go to the market today, they certainly will not get what they would have a year and a half or two years ago when there was an NDP Government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, most Manitobans are just beginning to appreciate the impact on them personally of a slowing down economy, of increasing

unemployment, of a decline in retail sales. All of the statistics that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Minister responsible for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Ernst) do not want to talk about are happening, but it is a slow process. I do not want the Minister of Finance or this Government to have access to a \$200 million slush fund because the temptation—and believe me I know the temptation is great for saying, yes, that is the original intention but we could do this.

I certainly would not suggest that we—(Interjection)—The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) still continues to talk as if he had something personally to do with the good circumstances of the fiscal situation of the province. I can tell the Member for Lakeside that he did not at all. The fact is that they are reaping the benefit of good economic policy of the New Democratic Party and they are reaping the results of good economic policy on the part of the previous Government and good, good management. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), in one of his more thoughtful and candid remarks, once said that after reviewing the management of the previous Government and looking at the way spending in departments had been managed, that he had to say that we had managed the departments—this fat had been pretty well squeezed out of them. I think that was an acknowledgement that all Governments in periods of fiscal restraint do those things.

We are seeing right now, and Members on this side in the New Democratic Party are going to be showing over the period of the next few months and into the fall, that the reduction in spending in Government departments like the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), for an example, are going to hurt individual Manitobans across this province, time and time again, and that just the other day, and I raised it already with the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Albert Driedger), the Flin Flon Motor Vehicle Branch has been closed. I got a letter confirming it. Now that is taking away services in an area of the province that has very few services to begin with. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), the Member for Lakeside, may say that is good management, but I will tell you the people in Flin Flon do not think that is good management because they have to travel 115 miles or 100 miles to get access to equivalent services.

An Honourable Member: Where do they have to go?

Mr. Storie: To The Pas.

The people in Snow Lake who have had a reduction in services, according to the city council at least, from the Highways and Transportation Division do not consider this good management. The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) may want to tell us about good management but the circumstances, the fiscal circumstances of this Government, had nothing whatsoever to do with good management. Any impartial, non-partisan observer of the circumstances of the province will confirm that.

* (1130)

I want to get back to, I guess, the major concern in principle that I would have and perhaps some others

would have with the Stabilization Fund. I want the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) on notice, that when this piece of legislation comes before committee, it will be scrutinized very carefully, that we in fact may be asking for, if not demanding, amendments if we are not satisfied, that under no circumstances can the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) or Executive Council remove funds in the middle of the year for any esoteric purpose.

If this fund is going to balance at the end after a fiscal year, if this is going to ameliorate any tremendous loss of revenue or tremendous expense, then there may be justification for it. I am not certain that it serves any long-term purpose for the people of Manitoba. Obviously, there may be small, there may be modest, I will say, improvements in the debt cost that the province might incur, but on the whole I do not think that the Stabilization Fund itself, even if it operates in complete accordance with the Minister of Finance's (Mr. Manness) wishes, is going to achieve very much significantly for the people of Manitoba or the fiscal situation.

It will, however, look pretty on a graph because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), after five years, will be able to table a line that looks pretty good. My guesstimation is that this Minister of Finance's line will not be five years, but it may be a year and a half, maybe two years, but he will have the line going in the right direction. That may serve his purposes and in fact it may actually save the province some money, some additional debt cost, but it will not be as significant as the Minister of Finance will attempt to pretend, or Members of the Government will attempt to suggest when they speak on this legislation.

The fact of the matter is—and the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Neufeld) is sitting there with a perplexed look on his face because he knows that what I am saying is accurate—as an accountant, I know that he will be very straightforward when he discusses this piece of legislation and perhaps tell the Chamber what, in his professional opinion, the net impact of this legislation will be on the fiscal situation of the province in the succeeding year to which the fiscal fund is tapped into. In other words, if we tap into at the end of fiscal year 1989-90, what is going to be the net impact in the 1990-91 year? Some simple arithmetic, even if the whole fund is used, tells me that it is a very miniscule amount in respect to the total expenditures of the Province of Manitoba—a very, very small amount.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the legislation perhaps has some appeal from a political perspective for the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Government. It may have some appeal, a modest, perhaps small in terms of the fiscal circumstances of the preceding year; but on balance, it is neither particularly innovative nor ingenious, nor is it going to be particularly successful when all is said and done. I am reminded that when all is said and done there is a lot more said than done. This may be reflected in this piece of legislation, as well as in respect to any piece of legislation that we have seen before this Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You have approximately 20 minutes.

Mr. Storie: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.—(Interjection)—The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) says, do not use it all. Believe me, I have only touched the surface of the implications of this piece of legislation.

The fact is that the legislation also, I guess, leaves Members Opposite, and perhaps myself as much as anybody else, asking some questions about the decision of the Government to, at the same time as it is cutting back services and I go back to the Fliin Flon Motor Vehicle Branch at the time they are doing this deeming it necessary, put aside this \$200 million of which they used \$50 million immediately. But the question is, what is the alternative? Is there a logical alternative to the approach that the Government is taking?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are going to hear, and I say quite unequivocally, individual Members of this Chamber get up on almost a daily basis and raise concerns about cutbacks to services, capital projects not proceeded with, hospitals not built, senior citizens homes not built, services denied, services cut, services lost to communities and individuals across the province.

I respect the need of the provincial Government to control spending. I respect the need of the provincial Government to work in the long term to reduce the debt of the province and the debt charges that do become a burden on the financial circumstances of the province, but there is a cost to doing that. The question this Government is going to have to ask—and I hope that they are viewing this from some sort of economic philosophy, and that is not a simple knee-jerk Conservative reaction saying, well, let us save the money, let us cut the services, let us cut the spending, because we believe in the New Democratic Party. I think we have demonstrated in the Province of Manitoba and the Province of Saskatchewan, perhaps most particularly, that there is a balance between economic objectives and social objectives, and that you can focus on economic objectives and say the sole goal of this Government, the sole mandate is to reduce spending and balance the Budget. The other side of that is while you are doing it is that you are losing services, cutting services, costing people in one way or another their health, their education, services that they deserve to provide. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the question.

The Liberal Opposition, whose lust for power is exceeded only by the lust for power of their individual Leader, asked the question, why did the NDP support the Budget? That question has been answered quite eloquently by our Leader who said that we are supporting the tax breaks for average Manitobans, for seniors and working people, voted against by the Liberals who then have the gall to come in and say, let us debate the federal, let us debate the imposition of a federal sales tax at least a month after that has been debated and was introduced by the NDP. The answer is simple. This Government has I think adopted in its Budget many of the things that were proposed by the NDP, so we will be watching the Government. I put them on notice, the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) put the Government on notice, that under no

circumstances will we watch this Government implement a right-wing agenda. The right-wing agenda is no different from the Liberal agenda—(Interjection)—Well, they adopted our agenda, that is right.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Storie: The Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) finally has it right. The Member for Seven Oaks said they adopted our agenda, meaning the NDP agenda, and he asks us why we supported it. Well, that was interesting. What I said, for the Member for Seven Oaks' edification, is that if this Government, this minority Government, adopts a right-wing agenda, if they adopt the right-wing agenda, if they choose to give tax rates to ICG, their good friends ICG at the expense of average Manitobans, they will not be in Government very long, because that is who we are here to protect, the average person, if they do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reason I say that the economic agenda of the Liberals is no different from the Conservatives is because frankly if you go through the list of Members and listen to their comments—the comments of the Member for Transcona (Mr. Kozak) are a good example—they are Conservative in their economic philosophy, in some cases to the extreme.

I want to remind people, assuming there are any listening, that the Leader of the Opposition, the Member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs), during the election and prior to the election was telling Manitobans that the biggest crisis was the economic one, that we had to get our financial house in order, that this Government was wasting money. Economic cuts would have been the order of the day in a Liberal Government. Heaven forbid that Manitobans have to ever experience that again, but that would have been the order of the day.—(Interjection)—

* (1140)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) raises a delicate question in my mind. It is hard to ponder the imponderable because the Minister of Finance says, what is the Liberal position? From day to day it is almost impossible to define, because one day they believe this and one day they believe that. This is an Opposition Party. The Leader of the Opposition (Mrs. Carstairs) is a prime example of an Opposition who genuinely believes that they can have it both ways. We can spend and save, spend and save, spend and save. It is ludicrous to say the least.

Then when you look at the Liberal position, not only on fiscal matters, but look at the Liberal position—I understand today, today of all days we are going to see Liberal representatives at the opening of the Union Centre, the sod turning for the Union Centre. If this is not funny, I do not know what is. This is the group that have not said one word on labour issues since the Member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) was elected. This is the group who had the Labour Critic stand up and say, yes, final offer selection works, but we are opposed to it. This is the group that have opposed

every significant piece of progressive labour legislation they ever saw or heard from.— (Interjection)— Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says that so have unions.

The Member for Inkster is going to get a small surprise. I predict the Member for Inkster is going to get a small surprise, because if the Member for Inkster is hanging his hat on the belief that unions oppose final offer selection, he is wrong, because not only does the Manitoba Federation of Labour, but the Canadian Federation of Labour support final offer selection. They have changed their mind. In fact, some of the unions that opposed final offer selection have used it, and they know it is going to work.

I have told the Minister of Labour (Mrs. Hammond), I have told this Government that if they want a vote of non-confidence, you introduce final offer selection because that is going to be a fight, the political death of this Government.

I hope with all my heart that the Members from the Liberal Caucus continue to support the elimination of final offer selection because I think that tells us more about the Liberal Caucus than most people really want to know. I know that it tells us more about the Liberal Caucus than what working people in this province want to know.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the delicate question about what Liberals really believe is imponderable, and I do not want to cause myself any undue consternation by considering that any further because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) may have time to think about what Liberals think. Heaven forbid, I do not have that much time because you have to explore every side of both issues all the time and a continuing flux. It is really not a very productive use of any intellectual energy whatsoever.

I think we are finding, as well, in talking to Manitobans that the initial fascination with the lady in red perhaps has dissipated markedly, and I think that is due, in no small measure, to the performance in this Chamber.

The fact of the matter is that they have no focus. It is quite obvious to observers in the gallery, observers in this Chamber, that the Liberal Caucus has absolutely no focus. They cannot decide on a day-to-day basis what their real principled objections to anything the Government does, and so they continue to change.

I do not want that to be interpreted as, in any way, suggesting that I do not respect individual Members of the Liberal Caucus. I think they are fine, fuzzy individuals. Their individual philosophies, in some cases, I think reflect more on New Democratic Party philosophy, and I think perhaps the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Cheema) is perhaps an example. On the other hand, perhaps the Member for Fort Garry (Mr. Laurie Evans) reflects more the ideological position of the Conservatives. That is probably why, when it comes to policy, they are the most schizophrenic group on the political scene in Manitoba. They do not know what they stand for.

I think, in the long run, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and perhaps the Budget vote was a good example of this—

Manitobans are going to see the confusion that exists in the Liberal Party. They are going to see the inconsistency that exists and they are going to see, frankly, much of their election rhetoric about management with heart or competence with heart was a facade. It was perhaps a genuinely legitimate and excellent marketing ploy, but a marketing ploy, as we often find, underlies a very weak product. The product, in this case while it was marketed well, is very weak, very weak indeed. It is weak on policy, it is weak on substance and, frankly, it has been a weak performer in the eyes of many in the Legislature.

I digress severely, that has nothing to do with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I would like to return to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund just for a minute.

I just want to say that the Liberal Member for Seven Oaks (Mr. Minenko) asked a legitimate question. He said, why are you supporting this? The reason is very simple. I support this solely, and I guess it will be recorded, because I have some faith that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), when he introduced this legislation was telling us the truth. I have some faith that his intentions with respect to this fund are honourable. I genuinely know that the Minister of Finance is concerned with the fiscal situation in Manitoba. I know that he wants to have it managed in the best possible way. We may disagree on the methods that he chooses to manage it, in fact, we do quite often but I know that his intentions are genuine and sincere.

Having said that, the bad news is that I will also be very carefully scrutinizing the legislation, the powers that are given to Executive Council and through regulations to the Minister and his Cabinet, because I want to know that the intention will be followed through and that not only this Government, but no subsequent Government will be able to manipulate this fund because if they are, there are no controls on this fund.

There is no accountability in the sense the Jobs Fund was accountable because it was introduced as an Act. It was an Act—individual Ministers were given responsibility, it was much more public.— (Interjection)— The Minister of Finance may want to debate this point but I believe the Jobs Fund ended up—it may have been refined over the years—but it ended up being quite a responsible fund, responsible to the taxpayers and responsible to individual Manitobans who received benefits from the Jobs Fund. Manitobans liked the Jobs Fund. They recognized that it was there for a purpose and it was serving a purpose.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to conclude by saying that I look forward to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) having officials at the committee to answer the detailed questions about the potential abuse of this fund. If I am assured by the comments, and if my New Democratic Party Caucus is assured by the Minister of Finance and his officials and those who drafted the legislation, that there are no possibilities of this fund being manipulated for strictly political purposes at some point, then I believe that it may be supportable.

That is an important proviso and I put it there so that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) will be on notice and the Government will be on notice that while

we supported some of the Budget initiatives of the Government, this initiative still has many questions that need to be answered, and we intend to answer them. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Richard Kozak (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the limited time remaining before summer recess, for consideration of Government Bills, I feel under an obligation today and have been so advised to keep my remarks brief and strictly to the point. However, I would like to take this opportunity to detail some important aspects of my Party's position on Bill No. 27, The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act.

* (1150)

I cannot say it is a pleasure to address this Bill because we feel it distorts and holds open to disrepute economic policy concepts with which our Party has been identified for over half a century. At the outset, I am sure that the title of this Bill, The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act, awakened among all Honourable Members a certain nostalgia for our old Economics 100 classes. Automatic stabilizers and discretionary fiscal policy are the principal tools of countercyclical economic theory as we all learned back then, and the title of this Bill is an obvious attempt to associate this Government's intentions with sound economic theory.

The Government's problem is that we have moved well beyond Economics 100, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is not enough to use some of the right buzzwords. The detailed action plan underlying the verbiage has to be both theoretically sound and socially responsible. The Bill under consideration today fails on both counts. At this point, I believe it is perfectly clear that I have absolutely no intention of speaking against countercyclical economic theory. In its simplest terms, the theory is that Government should prevent the economy from overheating when times are good and should stimulate economic activity when times are tough, a reasonable clearly understandable proposition.

I hope no Member of this House is unaware that I have spent much of the last 14 months arguing that the Government of Manitoba should recognize that the economic recovery of the last seven years has lost its vigour and should recognize the need to shift from a restrictive stance to a stimulative one, by presenting a package of tax cuts for businesses and consumers alike.

I myself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, claim no particular credit for making extensive use of countercyclical economic theory. In all modesty, this approach has been a key element of the Liberal Party's tradition since Mackenzie King used it to combat the Great Depression. I have referred to the automatic stabilizers which are tools of this theory. With some genuine pride, I remind all Honourable Members that most of Canada's system of automatic stabilizers is a Liberal creation. Programs such as Old Age Security, Unemployment Insurance and Medicare are sometimes referred to as our social safety net. They maintain the spending power of Canadians when we face tough times as individuals or as a society.

Today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are considering a Bill which evokes the language of countercyclical economic

theory. This Bill is not the product of a Liberal Government but rather the product of a Conservative Government. Is the Conservative Party undergoing a conversion? I think not.

I remind all my colleagues that The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act comes before us at a time when the federal Conservatives are launching a full-scale frontal assault on our Unemployment Insurance system. Is the Government of Manitoba a Conservative Government at philosophical loggerheads with the Government of Canada, also a Conservative Government? I think not, because the Bill before us has absolutely nothing to do with any credible notion of countercyclical economic theory. The Tory leopard has not changed its spots.

Let me explain in some detail why the Liberal Party finds the proposed Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act entirely and unequivocally unacceptable and indeed an insult to the theoretical foundation on which it supposedly rests. In brief, we believe that this Bill runs roughshod over good accounting practices, seriously threatens the principle of responsible Government and exposes this Government's sadly deficient social conscience.

On the matter of good accounting practices, let us look at two examples of fiscal stabilization funds that are universally accepted as conforming with generally recognized accounting principles and see what they have in common. I specifically refuse to treat individuals' personal savings accounts as an appropriate example, because they are subject only to individual ideas of prudent planning, and there is no need to meet accounting standards or to protect the interests of shareholders or taxpayers. The examples I have selected are both drawn from corporate accounting practices. Although we are not running a corporation here, we are similarly subject to accounting standards, and we owe the taxpayers the same protection extended to shareholders.

The examples selected are loan loss reserves and sinking funds. Loan loss reserves are reserve funds maintained by banks and other financial institutions to ensure their ability to survive a wave of loan defaults. Sinking funds are reserve funds maintained by corporations to ensure their ability to pay bond and debenture holders as outstanding issues mature. The common principle, I should point out, is that both loan loss reserves and sinking funds are set up for narrow restricted purposes, specified in detail in advance. Shareholders' interests are amply protected because corporate executives have no discretion to use reserve funds for unauthorized purposes. We demand that the taxpayers of Manitoba have similar protection, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Instead, our Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) proposes a reserve fund modelled on the British Columbia Stabilization Fund, a fund with absolutely no guiding parameters, a fund that will give this Government a blank cheque to spend up to \$247 million on absolutely anything in any year of its choice without adding one penny to the province's annual deficit. B.C.'s Minister of Finance put it best when, on March 29, 1988, he was quoted as saying, "The fund could be used to support social programs or lower taxes or whatever the Government decides to do with it, build

highways, get themselves re-elected, whatever they want."

I stand in awe of the brutal frankness of right-wing politicians when they find themselves with a majority Government, but I resent being asked for a blank cheque by this Government, any Government or anyone else for that matter, and the Official Opposition refuses to let the people be fooled. I hope the Second Opposition Party can agree with these sentiments. I have to say I was deeply disappointed with the vague, poorly analytical remarks presented to this House earlier this morning by the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie). Times have changed and those with principles are now disappointing us.

* (1200)

This brings us to our deep concern for the future of a responsible Government in Manitoba. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) introduced The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act on June 16, with only one argument to serve up to us. He said, "The volatility in year-to-year revenues can mask underlying trends, risking pressures for short-term decisions, which may be inappropriate for fiscal conditions and long-term fiscal objectives." Let me take the liberty of rephrasing the Minister's argument. I believe he said that the people are better off if their attention is diverted away from the real data and instead is focused on data adjusted to suit the Government of the Day.

I ask this Government to reflect on this shocking, infuriating and downright undemocratic argument, to withdraw this ill-considered bill at the earliest opportunity, to undertake some serious soul searching on what they stand for and to earn our gratitude for listening to reason. I remind this Government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that no corporation in Canada could get away with massaging its financial statements to create the impression desired by management in its annual report to shareholders. In fact, it is typical for corporations to carry assets on their books at cost, even though the present market value or replacement value may be much higher. The people of Manitoba deserve the same assurance that no one is getting away with anything when it comes to the books of the Province of Manitoba.

Finally, I would like to discuss what the proposed Fiscal Stabilization Fund tells us about this Government's social conscience. Recently we were alarmed to realize that \$107 million was made available for the fund through unannounced cuts in provincial Government programs last year.

Now my Party is firmly in favour of improving the efficiency of Government service delivery. While we could not support the precise streamlining measures proposed by Phase 2 of this Government's management audit, we sat in complete disbelief as this year's Throne Speech declared victory on inefficiency in Government, while Phase 2 of the audit gathered dust on the shelf and while Phase 3 has yet to see the light of day.

I remind the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) that on December 5 of last year he left me with the understanding that we could expect to see Phase 3 in February. Where is it?

We are left with no alternative but to believe that the saving accomplished by this Government was done at the expense of vital Government programs. Growing waiting lists for crucial health items like cardiac surgery strongly indicate the Government rates a Fiscal Stabilization Fund above the needs of the health care system. I could comment at great length on this distorted sense of priorities but I will not. I will not, strictly in the interests of avoiding points of order related to unparliamentary language on my part.

In conclusion, I would like to turn to the New Democratic Party, all of whom sit there in their array near the main exit from this Chamber and challenge them to disagree with one word I have said this afternoon. As they sit there, not one of them has the courage to challenge one word I have said. I remind them that they have called the proposed Fiscal Stabilization Fund "immoral, fraudulent, and an example of creative accounting." I suggest to them that their credibility would be enhanced if they stopped talking one way and voting the other way, as we have seen too often on their part in this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, without rancour I make an urgent plea to this Government to rethink this Bill. The comments I have made today have not been with the intent of wasting my breath or causing annoyance to this Government. I am in fact today making a genuine sincere attempt to persuade. I repeat my urgent plea to the Conservatives to withdraw a Bill that is unworthy of an upstanding Government.

I feel obliged to raise one more point at this time. The Government would have us believe that tax reductions probably would not have been possible at this time without the introduction of The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act. This suggestion is nothing short of absurd. Shuffling revenues from one year to another has absolutely no effect on this province's real financial position. It has absolutely no effect on the province's net indebtedness, the health of our economy or our future prospects. It has absolutely no effect on our ability to deliver a tax cut to Manitoba businesses and consumers.

I fail to understand how a responsible Government could use this specious argument and tell the people of Manitoba otherwise. If this Bill is not withdrawn, the Liberal Members of this House at least will be honoured to stand up in pride and vote against it. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Clayton Manness (Minister of Finance): Is the Bill open to close debate or is it standing in the name of the MLA for Osborne (Mr. Alcock)?

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Stand.

* (1210)

SECOND READING

BILL NO. 30—THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT

Hon. Charlotte Oleson (Minister of Family Services) presented Bill No. 30, The Child and Family Services

Amendment Act, for second reading and be referred to a committee of this House.

MOTION presented.

Mrs. Oleson: Bill No. 30, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, was distributed to Members on June 21, and it clarifies and strengthens provisions dealing with the protection of children, particularly with respect to the reporting of child abuse which occurs outside a family situation.

In the early fall of 1988, several cases involving alleged sexual abuse and harassment of children at school pointed to the need to strengthen and clarify child protection provisions in The Child and Family Services Act.

Existing provisions were not quite adequate to cover situations involving acts by a person other than a parent which caused a child to be in need of protection.

There was an interdepartmental review of the Act in the fall of 1988. This led to the drafting of Bill 46, which was tabled in the House in the last Session. Given the complexity of the issues, a need for wider consultation was recognized, and the Government withdrew Bill 46.

Prior to the drafting of the current Bill, Bill No. 30, senior staff from the Departments of Family Services and Education and Training held consultations with representatives of key organizations in the education, social services and law enforcement fields.

Bill No. 30 incorporates a number of suggestions received through this consultation process. I would like to read into the record a list of the organizations that officials of both departments entered into consultation with in order to get a good cross section of people to give their opinion on this, so that we would have something workable and usable in the protection of children.

I also might add, along with this list of course, that we did consult with Opposition Members on this and received input from them as well, or at least they had the opportunity to provide us input on the Bill. The list of people, groups and organizations rather, included Children's Hospital Child Protection Centre, Manitoba Association of Child and Family Service Agencies, Winnipeg Police Department, the Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Manitoba Association of Social Workers, the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, the Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools, Manitoba Association of School Superintendents, Parent Teacher Federation of Manitoba, Provincial Advisory Committee on Child Abuse, Agency Council and Indian Agency Executive Co-ordinators.

Having received this input, it is our belief that Bill No. 30 represents the wishes and concerns of Manitobans and will thoroughly address the key issues concerning the protection of children.

The substantive amendments contained in Bill 30 consist of clarification of the definition of abuse to

include care providers, other than a parent or guardian, further defining and clarifying what is meant by a child in need of protection and recognizing, in law, the right of a parent or guardian to be notified that their child is in need of protection. Also, it empowers the director of Child and Family Services to report persons to a professional organization for causing a child to be in need of protection, and it expands the provision requiring agencies to report conclusions of an investigation, and requires the police to advise employers where a person, who works with children is charged with a criminal offence against a child.

In addition to these more significant changes, there are a number of minor amendments intended to improve the structure or wording of the Act, and to eliminate redundant and unnecessary provisions. For example, all offence provisions in Part III of the Act are brought together under one section near the beginning. This will help the general public and professionals to understand their responsibilities under the Act.

I believe that Bill 30 reflects the considered view of many who have a strong commitment to the protection of children. I am also of the opinion that, because of the breadth of opinion and advice received through our consultation process, this Bill represents significant progress in child protection legislation in Canada, an excellent statute for the protection of children in Manitoba.

Therefore, for the reasons that I have enunciated before, I recommend this Bill to the House, and I encourage its early passage bearing in mind, of course, that the goal of everyone in this House is the protection and well-being of our children—our children, our most valuable asset, and the very future of our province. Thank you very much.

Ms. Avis Gray (Ellice): I stand today to also speak on Bill 30, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act. I thank the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) for her well-chosen words. We, on this side of the House, as Official Opposition, certainly support the Government and the Minister of Family Services, in its efforts to strengthen the Child and Family Services legislation in this province.

The Minister of Family Services has mentioned there was a Bill that was introduced earlier on in this year, and because there seemed to be some concerns and were concerns about that legislation that it was withdrawn and further and more extensive consultations were received by a wide variety of groups and agencies. We applaud the Government and the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Oleson) for taking a step where it was the importance of the legislation and the importance of ensuring that appropriate legislation be drafted. That was their No. 1 concern, and they chose to continue to consult with groups and agencies. We do feel that it is important that the Government has done this, and we applaud them for withdrawing that first legislation introducing what appears to be certainly very good legislation and strengthened legislation in the area of child abuse.

The Minister has indicated the extensive groups who were consulted in regard to this particular amendment,

and we are pleased to see as well as the main concern about third-party reporting, some other amendments and changes as well, which will strengthen the legislation. Certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, child abuse is an ever-growing concern and issue in our society today. It is incumbent upon Government, who are seen to be the leaders in the area of legislation, that we do have legislation and support services in the community that wherever possible can assist in the detection of child abuse and in the treatment as well for families and for children in the whole area of child abuse.

* (1220)

Certainly we saw in the fall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a situation where an acute loophole in the legislation was recognized. I think it is important for the people of Manitoba that we have seen an example of co-operation of Parties in this House to really deal with this issue in a co-operative pro-active way and look at amending legislation for the good of all Manitobans and certainly for the good of the children in our community.

We are very much pleased that the Minister consulted with ourselves, and we had the opportunity to provide input on this Bill. We are certainly pleased with the extensive list of consultations in the community. We hope that this particular strengthening and this legislation will be used as an example in the whole area of Child and Family Services of how we do need to continue on and co-operate with one another, and to continue to consult and get input and feedback from the front line workers, from the people in the community who are dealing with this particularly difficult issue, the whole area of child abuse.

I will keep my remarks brief, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I feel as the Minister of Family Services. It is important that we allow this Bill to move on to committee stage. I would just like to say that certainly we do support the efforts of the Government in this Bill and the amendment. We do recommend that the Bill do be moved to committee.

Mr. Reg Alcock (Osborne): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I realize that the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) also wishes to speak on this Bill, and I will keep my remarks brief and give him an opportunity to speak when next it is before the House.

I do want to make a few brief comments and I would like to add my thanks to the Minister of Community Services (Mrs. Oleson) for the work that was done on this Bill. Child abuse is a very difficult issue that this community wrestles with every day. It is one that we have learned a great deal about over the years and all Parties in this House and all Governments over the past few years have struggled to find ways to allow the community to deal with those who in the community abuse each other, abuse women and abuse children.

I can say from my personal experience that we struggled very long and hard on the question of third-party abuse when I was in the directorate. It is a very difficult, complex issue which I think this Minister has addressed adroitly and has found a solution to it that eluded us when we wrestled with the entire Child and

Family Services Act. I think the process that was used in this case was a model that allowed us to step aside from the adversarial roles that we take in this House and to wrestle with what is a very important and very contentious issue in this community.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair.)

Mr. Speaker, abuse is growing. The number of children who are abused in this province has once again more than doubled. The stress that people who are working in this field feel is proportionately greater. The agencies who work in this area are going to require support and assistance from everybody. They are going to require support from the Government in a financial sense and the Government has moved to provide some additional resources to see that there is an ability for those agencies to address this important problem, but they are also going to need the support of the community because they are dealing with very difficult, very complex personal issues, and issues that often raise other issues about how we care for children.

There are a lot of maxims that we function on here, things such as, spare the rod and spoil the child, the rule of thumb, which essentially grows out of a belief that it is okay to beat and abuse people, that somehow you make better children, more obedient families. I think there is a role for all of us to play to educate the community and to help them understand that in fact the damage that we inflict upon children, upon adults in this community—we today have a paper tabled that addresses a similar issue when it comes to our elderly—that there is an ethic in this community, and throughout North America and indeed throughout the world, that somehow it is acceptable to physically dominate or physically use one's ability to dominate to get your way. I think that we need to get a counter message out to the community that says that is not acceptable. I think we are doing that in this province. I think we will continue to do it.

This Bill, however, does something different because we have recognized in the past that there was a need to right that balance when it came to families, that we needed to, as a community, act against the ability of a family to abuse its children, and that we had to extend that abhorrence to the general community, that we had to find a mechanism other than the traditional assault mechanisms granted under the Criminal Code to express our revulsion when people abused children.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the history of children's services in this province, that we as a province undertook formally to prevent the abuse of animals before we attempted to address the abuse of children, that it was only after we had developed structures that allowed us to prevent people from leaving their pigs out to freeze or beating their horses, that we began to wrestle with the other question of people who would sexually abuse children, physically abuse children.

Children were killed in great numbers throughout this country without any kind of direct action being taken. I think we have come a very, very long way over the years. I think we began to recognize the need to protect children from physical abuse. We began, before the

turn of the century, to recognize the need to ensure that children are provided with adequate housing and clothing so they did not freeze to death in the wintertime, that they were fed, that they were loved and that they had a place of respect in the community. We later began to realize the need for education, and to see that there were other responsibilities that the community had to children that we should be taking on.

The question of sexual abuse is one that arose much more recently. In fact, if you go through the statistics on sexual abuse, you will find that if you go back 15 years, 20 years, there were almost no cases of sexual abuse raised or reported, and that it is only as we as a community have gotten past our sensitivity in this area and accepted the fact that children, and often very, very young children, are repeatedly and viciously sexually abused in this community, that we began to deal with it. It is as our awareness of that has grown, so has the reporting to the point where now sexual abuse far outnumbers the reports we have of physical abuse, and the community's response to it and sensitivity to it has grown apace.

I think the Donny Lalonde Fund that has been created in the northeast area of the city is an example of how this community is prepared to come together and work together in order to support programs that again express our very deep revulsion at the physical or sexual abuse of children. It is interesting to note Donny Lalonde's comments when he says that it is his personal experiences as an abused child that led to the anger that drove him into boxing, and more laterally led him to reflect on the need for him to become active in this area and for him to say to the community that he, from his personal experience, believed that this was inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour in our community.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that always eluded us was, what do we do when a child is abused in the community and the parents are not aware of this, and the abuse does not involve the parents? What do we do when there is some other individual who has created an act of abuse or has perpetrated an act of abuse?

* (1230)

What this Bill does now is it very clearly lays out the supremacy of parents as those who are responsible for the upbringing of the children, but gives the community, gives the Government, gives the agencies a role to play in ensuring first that the abuse is stopped; secondly, that the parents are aware of enacting on it, and if the parents are not prepared to act on it, then the community is prepared to act on it. I think it is an important improvement in the body of law that exists currently to protect children in this province.

Mr. Speaker: I am interrupting the proceedings. When this matter is again before the House the Honourable Member will have 32 minutes remaining.

HOUSE BUSINESS

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): I have corresponded with the Opposition House Leader (Mr. Alcock) and spoken to the Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Doer), and I will be announcing today that the Standing Committee on Industrial Relations will meet in Room 255 to continue consideration of Bill No. 3 on Tuesday, June 27 at 10 a.m.

The announcement is being made, Mr. Speaker, at this time because of the need on the part of the staff of the House to know and to make the plans, and made within the knowledge of special circumstances the Honourable Member for St. James (Mr. Edwards) is going through these days. We will attempt to extend every courtesy in terms of accommodation of the Honourable Member for St. James.

Mr. Speaker: We would like to thank the Honourable Government House Leader.

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