



Fourth Session - Thirty-Fifth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(HANSARD)**

42 Elizabeth II

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Denis C. Rocan
Speaker*



VOL. XLII No. 106 - 1:30 p.m., WEDNESDAY, JULY 21, 1993

**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Fifth Legislature**

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, July 21, 1993

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Valerie Smart, S. Rex, M. De Baets and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the '93-94 budget.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Sherry Peirson, Doris Verhaeghe, Darlene Funke and others requesting the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) consider restoring the Children's Dental Program to the level it was prior to the 1993-94 budget.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member (Ms. Friesen). It complies with the privileges and the practices of the House and complies with the rules. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [agreed]

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

WHEREAS Manitoba has the highest rate of child poverty in the country; and

WHEREAS over 1,000 young adults are currently attempting to get off welfare and upgrade their education through the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS Winnipeg already has the highest number of people on welfare in decades; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has already changed social assistance rules resulting in increased welfare costs for the City of Winnipeg; and

WHEREAS the provincial government is now proposing to eliminate the Student Social Allowances Program; and

WHEREAS eliminating the Student Social Allowances Program will result in more than a thousand young people being forced onto city welfare with no means of getting further full-time education, resulting in more long-term costs for city taxpayers.

WHEREFORE your petitioners humbly pray that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba may be pleased to request the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Gilleshammer) to consider restoring funding of the Student Social Allowances Program.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Home Care Program Housekeeping Services Reinstatement

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Lels (St. Johns): You will recall, Mr. Speaker, back in October 1988 the Minister of Health announced the formation of the Health Advisory Network. He said at that time, I want to restore confidence and lessen controversy in the health care system.

Well, today on the steps of the Legislature in the rally that was there, we did not see a lot of confidence, and there certainly was a heck of a lot of controversy.

Study after study of that Health Advisory Network has recommended preservation of the home care system. Lo and behold, today we learn of another report of the Health Advisory Network. This one is the Primary Health Care Task Force Report and, Mr. Speaker, it states that increased availability and utilization of home care be considered as an appropriate alternative to institutional care, both through prevention of admission and appropriate and well-planned early discharge.

I want to ask the Minister of Health today if he can tell us and all those Manitobans who joined us on the front steps of the Legislature if he will now give his assurances to reinstate the full aspect, all the components of home care to ensure that every single member of our senior community, every member of the disabled community is able to have access to homemaking services so that they can

live in their homes and in their communities with dignity.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): First of all, Mr. Speaker, if I were to accept my honourable friend's advice, I would have to turn back the policy that she sat at cabinet and approved of in 1984. Howard Pawley and the NDP brought in, in Support Services to Seniors, the policy under which seniors in Manitoba would purchase housecleaning and laundry services, the domestic services.

Since 1985, seniors in Manitoba have been purchasing laundry services, housecleaning services and meals under that program that my honourable friend approved at the cabinet table when she had responsibility in government.

My honourable friend refers to the Health Advisory Network report which recommended that the Home Care Program be increased, and since a \$38-million budget, the last time the NDP funded Home Care, we have taken that advice. That is why today the budget approaches \$69 million. We have made that investment as recommended by the Health Advisory Network.

Secondly, the second report that my honourable friend refers to says, an expansion of the Home Care Program. That is why in this year's budget we expect to provide 11 percent more hours of personal care in attendant care, helping seniors with dressing, with bathing.

We intend to provide 9.5 percent more hours of registered nursing services. We intend to provide 3.6 percent more hours of VON nursing services consistent with that recommendation, Sir.

* (1335)

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, the minister can distort and misrepresent the facts all he wants, but it is the seniors and the people with disabilities who will tell him that they are no longer—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for St. Johns, with your question.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a copy of this latest report, the Primary Health Care Task Force Report, which along with the reports on services for the elderly, on ambulatory care services, all of them state, including this latest one, that home care services are an essential service in shifting services into a community-based setting.

Why will the minister not listen? If he will not listen to the seniors and the disabled in our community will he at least listen to members of his own appointed Health Advisory Network and—

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

Mr. Orchard: Possibly that advice that my honourable friend so graciously gives to listen might also apply to her in terms of listening to the answers.

How can my honourable friend avoid the direct answer, which I have given probably 100 times in this House, that this year compared to last year we are going to purchase 11 percent more hours of care for helping seniors to dress, to bathe and personal services, 11 percent more hours this year than last, 9.5 percent more hours of nursing services from registered nurses than last year, exactly consistent with that report?

The only time, Sir, that misinformation comes out is when it is under the authorship of one Tim Sale, defeated NDP candidate, on behalf of press releases that he puts out on behalf of Manitoba Medicare Alert Coalition, which causes the kinds of fears that seniors and others have about government programs, because when you put out wrong information and you know it is wrong when you write it, how do you expect Manitobans to understand what the program is able to do for them, that in fact it is spending more money and buying more hours of care service?

Sir, I will fully acknowledge less hours of laundry and housekeeping domestic services, as has been consistent with the policy my honourable friend approved in 1984 and implemented in 1985.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: That is utter balderdash and the minister knows it—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The member for St. Johns, with your final supplementary question, please.

Ms. Wasylycia-Lels: Let me ask, then, the acting Premier for the province, since actually back in 1990 the Premier (Mr. Filmon) himself made a promise to Manitobans to provide funds for additional in-home aid and personal care for seniors.

The seniors are tired of broken Tory promises. I want to ask the acting Premier if he will try to make good on that promise made by the Premier. Will he

direct the Minister of Health to abandon his plans to eliminate housekeeping, laundry and meal service for elderly Manitobans, people with disabilities and everyone who requires care, to live in their communities with dignity?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, when the Premier made that commitment in 1990 we delivered on it, because in 1991 the Home Care Program increased in funding by 12.1 percent. The Premier lived up to that commitment in the next year, 1992, where the program increased by 11.8 percent.

We lived up to that commitment again this year, despite reductions in government spending across the board. The increase in home care spending is \$1 million, which represents a 1.7 percent increase this year over last.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I make no apology for saying clearly and unequivocally that the information provided to Manitobans and unfortunately reprinted in the MSOS Journal, authored by Tim Sale, defeated NDP candidate, is wrong and is false, and has misled and caused fears among seniors.

I make no apology to my honourable friend the New Democrat who defends that kind of action by Tim Sale, defeated candidate for the NDP. I do not believe anybody has the right to frighten seniors and others who rely on this program when we are putting more resources into the program, not less, Sir, and with the changes we make which will maintain the service, not destroy it.

* (1340)

APM Management Consultants Contract Cancellation

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, only one person in this Chamber is frightening to the seniors and disabled in Manitoba, and that is the Minister of Health.

Mr. Speaker, the minister fails to mention that thousands of people are being cut off the home maintenance program, 1,200 are being forced to pay for ostomy supplies, 5,000 to 6,000 are now being forced to pay user fees for their home care medical equipment.

He fails to mention that. He talks about '85 and other provinces and other people, but he fails to deal with that.

My question to the minister is: Will the government finally start listening to the public? Will

they cancel the multimillion dollar contract to their U.S. consultant and take those millions of dollars and put them back into the Home Care Program, which should be done?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I forgot one valuable piece of information in answer to a former questioner. In 1990 when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) promised to increase home care spending—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable minister to deal with the matter raised.

Mr. Orchard: —we brought in self-managed care for disabled Manitobans at a substantial expenditure of new funds in the Home Care Program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, yes, I have never hidden from the fact that we are asking for a contribution by users in the ostomy program. That contribution is lower than is asked by an NDP government in Saskatchewan of the ostomy program. It is less than is being asked of Albertans on the ostomy program.

Our asking seniors to purchase equipment less than \$50 in cost is consistent and more generous than other provinces that have similar requests where equipment is being paid for by the consumer. We have done that while maintaining the supply of wheelchairs and other expensive equipment necessary for independent living, plus purchasing more hours of care and personal service care and nursing care in the Home Care Program this year over last.

Victorian Order of Nurses Layoffs

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the minister.

Mr. Speaker, VON nurses provide home care services. Can the minister advise why 10 VONs were laid off, VONs who provide home care services, this very morning, if this government is expanding services?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend will get an answer to that question when I ask VON as to why they chose to do that.

Mr. Speaker, our expectation—and I want my honourable friend to understand this so that he does not distort the facts. We expect this year to

have a 3.6 percent increase in services purchased from VON this year over last. That is more service, not less service.

I cannot answer for the internal staffing arrangements of VON, but I can indicate that we will be purchasing more service hours from VON this year over last year. If they do that with fewer personnel and have more hours for an individual nurse, that is their management decision. Our concern is that we have those services available—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (1345)

Home Care Program Budget—Winnipeg Region

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, unless the minister has a complex, only one person in history could do more with less.

My final supplementary to the minister is: Will he also confirm, since they are laying off 10 VONs today, whether or not the Winnipeg region Home Care budget is, as we stated last week, down by \$2 million this year for home care services in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we expected to spend some \$28 million in the Winnipeg region last year in the Home Care Program. This year we expect to spend some \$29.6 million. That ought to answer my honourable friend's question.

Now, I realize my honourable friend is trying to use the language that is used consistently by opposition members, "cutbacks" to instill fear. My honourable friend in opposition will not acknowledge that we are increasing the amount of personal care service, nursing service in the Home Care Program to do what, Sir?—to maintain more Manitobans in independent living situations in their homes, to meet greater medical needs for independent living in their homes, not less, as my honourable friend alleges.

Home Care Program Consultations

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, the practices in home care are in confusion. Services to seniors and the physically disabled are affected and have affected staff. Home care clients alike do not know what tomorrow will bring. They have not been told how the minister's cuts or changes will be

implemented, and so they cannot help their clients plan what to do.

Will the Minister of Health put a moratorium on the changes in the Home Care Program until he has consulted with the people affected by these changes and until he has analyzed the impact of these proposed changes?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): My honourable friend makes a very interesting case, and, Sir, I will tell you what we were doing to accept that advice even before he gave it.

Every individual who currently receives free housecleaning and laundry service will be subject to an assessment and a review by the professional staff in the Home Care Program. As is consistent with the NDP policy of 1984, implemented in 1985, where those individuals have the ability to pay for that service themselves, as currently over 50 percent of the consumers of home care in Manitoba do, they pay for their own laundry and their own housekeeping, we will make that referral of the remaining seniors on home care to paid-for services.

It is through that vehicle of assessment by the same professionals under the same guidelines that have operated in the rest of the province, rural Manitoba, Brandon, north end Winnipeg since 1985, and we will achieve the same consistency of program in Winnipeg as we have now in rural and other parts of Manitoba.

Equipment/Supplies

Mr. Nell Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, the home care equipment depot is also in a state of confusion. There is a backlog, and clients cannot get supplies they urgently need, like urine bags.

Will the minister direct his staff to ensure that the backlog in medical supplies is eliminated so people can get their supplies?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gaudry: There is a grave confusion, Mr. Speaker, over where home care clients can get the supplies they urgently need.

Will the minister advise Manitobans where they can get the medical supplies they need every day? They cannot wait months for him to figure it out.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the process that, as I explained in my first answer to my

honourable friend, will be undertaken in terms of the professional assessment by our staff of each individual client's current needs. We expect, for instance, with the housecleaning and laundry services, where it is appropriate, as has been the case—and I reiterate, even though my honourable friends in the New Democrats want to avoid this, we will do this consistent with the policy brought in by the NDP in 1984 and consistently applied in rural Manitoba and north end Winnipeg since 1985 when it was first implemented.

Those decisions will provide seniors with an increased opportunity for personal care needs and nursing services to be met so they can continue to live independently in dignity as the program was designed to do, Sir.

Pharmacare Backlog

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Mr. Speaker, one moral test of government is how that government treats citizens who are in the shadow of life, like the disabled, the sick and the handicapped, as well as the citizens who are in the twilight of life, the seniors or the elderly.

This government imposed a deadline strictly such that it confiscated 100 percent of Pharmacare refunds of seniors who are late in filing, regardless of reasons. The form in Pharmacare stated that it takes six weeks to process the claim. We have had phone calls, Mr. Speaker, where people who are filing claims have been waiting now for more than six weeks.

Can the honourable Minister of Health explain this unreasonable delay?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, this question has been posed by my honourable friend before and I am pleased he posed it again today, because subsequent to the last time he posed this question, I regret to inform my honourable friend that the delay in refund is approximately 10 weeks now compared to the normal six or seven that has been there.

The reason for the delay is that we have had a 21 percent increase in numbers of claims this year over last year. That is an unusual increase. We have seldom experienced such a significant increase year over year in claims, and we are simply behind in the refund process and are working diligently to try to bring that claim return time down.

* (1350)

Mr. Santos: Mr. Speaker, given, again, this government's policy of workweek reduction whereby some government employee who wants to work on Friday cannot work on Friday, what step is this honourable Minister of Health taking in order to prevent this unreasonable delay in the refunds of Pharmacare claims?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I know my honourable friend wants to call it unreasonable that 20 percent more Manitobans are requesting a refund under the Pharmacare program and I regret that, because we did not expect that increase in claims to be filed. Quite frankly, it has overwhelmed the normal increase in staffing that we have done since I came into government.

I want to remind my honourable friend that in 1988, in the month of May when I was appointed Minister of Health, the delays were 12 and 14 weeks at that time because the then government of Howard Pawley refused to put additional staff on.

We changed that immediately, Sir, on May 9, 1988, when I came in as Minister of Health and speeded the refund process. We have done that every year since. This year the 21 percent increases, quite frankly, caused a greater delay than expected.

Pharmacard Implementation

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Last supplementary, Mr. Speaker: Can the honourable Minister of Health state a target date in his schedule of reform as to when he will implement the proposal for a Pharmacare card system so as to prevent all these problems about refunds in claims?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, that is one of the few issues that we have unanimously agreed on in this House, and I have to compliment in his absence the member for The Maples, who was a very progressive thinker in terms of health care. It was his resolution that you might recall some three months ago we unanimously approved to have the plastic card technology available for the Pharmacare program and other health care programs.

We anticipate that we will have the plastic card system in place January 1 of next year, unless we run into some unforeseen in the planning or any

resistance from the system that we do not anticipate at this time.

Justice System Victim Services

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, currently we are debating in the Legislative Assembly a package of Justice bills which includes a reduction in the fine-option program, clawbacks in victim services and deindexation of compensation for victims of criminal acts.

I would like to ask the Minister of Justice if he can explain the rationale behind these policy changes in light of his government's oft-repeated verbal statements that they are concerned about victims of crime and the increase in criminal activity in this society. How does that square with these policy—

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

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): We remain committed, Mr. Speaker, to enhance services for victims of crime.

I think in the past few years there has been quite a change in emphasis right across the country. Unfortunately, however, the federal government helped us get into some of these programs and, because of their budgetary problems, we find them pulling back from some of these programs.

I have been very frank with the honourable member about the dilemma that we in Manitoba find ourselves in, which is very much like the dilemma in other provinces across this country with respect to criminal injuries compensation. But I can say that in areas where it is extremely important for us as a province, we have enhanced services to victims through the Women's Advocacy Program. We have beefed up that program as well as the prosecution's function in our Family Violence Court.

We have Victim/Witness Assistance programs in operation. In seven of our detachment areas, we have victims assistance units operating now that were not before we came along, and so on and so on.

* (1355)

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, the government refuses to take responsibility and offloads responsibility onto another level of government as they are wont to do.

Will the Minister of Justice admit to the House today that his government's real goal in these legislative policy changes is to divert funds that were being used to provide services to victims of justice, to deal with criminal compensation claims, et cetera, to general revenue because his government has absolutely no economic strategy, no rational, logical, thought-out economic plan, so make the—

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

Mr. McCrae: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not acknowledge that we are diverting funds away from programs that are already existing which would call for the cessation of those programs.

The Justice for Victims of Crime Act set up a fund which we have used for the past four or five years to assist agencies in providing special projects to their clientele, those being victims of crime.

We have a provincial fund as well as a federal fund, and when the federal fund was set up it was always planned that those funds would be used to run government-operated victims programs. We have found that the victims programs we have that are operated by government are efficient and serve many, many hundreds of people in our province, and we are pleased with those programs.

We do not like to have to face the fiscal realities we have to face, but if we do not face them we will have nothing for victims in the future.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, it would have been nice if he had faced these fiscal realities five years ago—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is not a time for debate.

The honourable member for Wellington, with your question, please.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask what the Minister of Justice is going to tell these community groups that are going to have their fine-option programs cut, what the Minister of Justice is going to tell the victims of criminal acts who are going to be deindexed and the services that are going to go back into general Justice revenue rather than special projects under the Victims Assistance Fund.

What is the Minister of Justice going to tell these groups and victims who need these services that

have been provided and who deserve them, and are now faced with having them taken away?

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member asks what I am going to tell community groups who provide these services. The honourable member forgets who the fine-option program is supposed to serve; that is, people who are sentenced to high levels of fines and cannot afford to pay them. That is whom the program is for. It is not designed for community groups; it is designed for poor people who cannot afford to pay their fines. Those people who can afford to drive Mercedes Benzes around Winnipeg and find themselves in trouble with the law do not need the services of the fine-option program.

The fine-option program is cancelled for offences like highway traffic offences and parking offences, Mr. Speaker, and I acknowledge that.

Western Economic Co-operation Health Care System

Ms. Avlis Gray (Crescentwood): Mr. Speaker, this week in the House when we asked the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) a question on integrated health care system, he did not respond to our question but rather reduced the debate to that of a partisan one. I believe that all Manitobans are tired of that.

Mr. Speaker, there is an opportunity for some creative ways to look at savings in health if we look at what the Maritime Premiers are doing. I think it is important, and all Manitobans want to be assured that we will have an intact health care system, a home care system, and that at the same time, we can look at being more efficient in how we spend our dollars.

My question to the Deputy Premier is: Will the Deputy Premier direct the Minister of Health to pursue the idea of an integrated health care system as they are looking at in the Maritimes?

*(1400)

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I really am intrigued with my honourable friend's suggestion. I wish my honourable friend had taken the time during the Estimates process to put a little more flesh on the skeleton of what opportunities for integration she might see with our neighbouring provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Let me tell my honourable friend what we are doing to date in terms of a national integration of

program and approach, and then what we are attempting to do on the prairie scene.

Mr. Speaker, firstly, nationally, all provincial Ministers of Health—New Democrats, Liberals, Conservatives—agreed to the reduction of graduate school sizes in medicine to come to grips with the physician supply. As a further reinforcement of that, that we have undertaken in Manitoba, we have discussions underway now with Faculties of Medicine in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to attempt to find areas of program co-operation, specialty co-operation, so that we do not each, province by province, replicate a complete menu of specialty training programs but rather build programs of excellence province by province, medical school by medical school.

Those discussions have been underway, Sir.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, well, that is interesting, that the Minister of Health has asked that we put a bit more flesh on the ideas. This is the minister who has the budget. This is the minister who has all the staff who can make sure they know exactly what is going on in the other provinces.

I would ask the Minister of Health: Is he prepared to make the idea of integrated health care a priority, and will he himself convene a conference of western Premiers and Health ministers to specifically look at this very important issue? Will he do that?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, the reason I wanted to have my honourable friend give me a little more enlightenment as to what the Liberal Party would believe would be appropriate areas—for instance, I would like to know whether the Liberal Party agrees with the decision in Saskatchewan to close 52 hospitals in rural Saskatchewan. I do not know whether my honourable friend is in agreement, for instance, with some of the program changes that we made that the Liberals have criticized which are consistent with changes that were made in Saskatchewan.

We are doing a lot more co-operation in terms of provision of health care services than ever before. Some of the decisions my honourable friend's colleague just criticized in the Home Care Program are consistent with decisions made in Saskatchewan, for instance, this year.

That is why I want to know, what does my honourable friend believe we ought to co-operate

on?—because where we have co-operated my honourable friend the Liberal has disagreed.

Ms. Gray: Mr. Speaker, with a final supplementary to the Minister of Health.

Can the Minister of Health tell us: His Quality Health for Manitobans: The Action Plan, is this to be a made-in-Manitoba action plan, or is it to be a made-in-Saskatchewan action plan?

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where my honourable friend is coming from, because my honourable friend well knows that the Health Action Plan that was tabled May 14, 1992, and supported by the member for The Maples—would he still be here, we would have a consistent approach from the Liberals in health care, but unfortunately he is not.

I indicated at the time that consultation with Manitobans by the Health Advisory Network, and that advice was incorporated into the Health Action Plan, consultation, for instance, with the Urban Hospital Council, with the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, with experts in Manitoba and some of the leading health-care planners in Canada and indeed, Sir, occasionally, United States, had input and added—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Personal Care Homes Fee Schedule

Mr. Bob Rose (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I was disappointed earlier in Question Period when it appeared that the official opposition were condoning a news release put out by Tim Sale.

We all of us from time to time as MLAs have phone calls from our constituents, and in the last couple of weeks a number of calls have come in to my office concerning the personal care home increases. Upon investigation, I found that many of the concerns were based on a news release put out by the Manitoba Medicare Alert Coalition—of a number of organizations listed, I note that Choices is one—sent out by Tim Sale.

I am not going to read the whole news release to identify all the inaccuracies, but I would like to give the Minister of Health a question so that we may finally discern the facts.

Is it true, as is said in this news release, that, therefore, income taxes are payable on the total fee?

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I really thank my honourable friend the member for Turtle Mountain for posing this question, because Tim Sale, the defeated NDP candidate, did put out this press release July 7. There is one accurate piece of information attached, Sir, and that is the schedule of residential charges which I gave to the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak).

I assume the member for Kildonan passed this on to his confrere, Tim Sale. But what he failed to do was to pass on my explanation in Estimates that day which explained the personal care home charges, because Mr. Sale inaccurately portrayed the \$15,600 independent living allowance as being taxable income, with the threat in here that it was going to cause people—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable opposition House leader, on a point of order, I am sure.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yes, Mr. Speaker. We let the question go by initially, although it violated several provisions of Beauchesne 409. I can understand if the Minister of Health and the government members are sensitive about criticism, particularly by Tim Sale, who is respected in the community, but we hardly need to get into this kind of debate.

If the minister wants to debate health care with Tim Sale, I am sure that can be arranged.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable opposition House leader does not have a point of order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health is having great difficulty in hearing the instructions from the Chair, and I wonder why.

Order, please. Right, Harry?

I have told the honourable Minister of Health the honourable member did not have a point of order, and then I have recognized the honourable Minister of Health to finish with his response.

* * *

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, the reason for my concern about this press release by Tim Sale, the defeated NDP candidate, is that it was basically

reprinted word for word in the latest edition of the journal of the Manitoba Society of Seniors. When it contains incorrect, false information which raises fears among seniors, I am concerned. That is why the member for Turtle Mountain is concerned because those seniors—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Turtle Mountain, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Rose: My supplementary is to the same minister, and I would hope that all members of the House would have as much concern for the seniors as I have for those people who have called me, and I am asking for facts in response to information that is out in the general public. It is causing considerable trouble to the point where some of my constituents have gone to a lawyer to ask if this is fact.

My question to the minister: Is this quote from the press release put out by Tim Sale fact? Quote, MMAC understands that fees will be assessed by nursing home administrators who may be forced to seize family assets to pay these new fees if the family refuses or is unable to pay without selling their assets.

Mr. Minister, this is the kind of information that is forcing my constituents to go to lawyers—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, my honourable friend my colleague from Turtle Mountain makes the exact point, because Tim Sale, defeated NDP candidate, on behalf of the NDP, is saying in here—and this has been reprinted in rural newspapers, in the Manitoba Society of Seniors Journal—that the family may have their assets seized, they may have to sell their assets. Sir, that is patently false—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that information that people in Turtle Mountain will not be forced to sell their homes—

Mr. Speaker: And your question is?

Mr. Rose: My final question, again, from that press release that says, this is clearly in violation of the spirit and intent of the Canada—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Turtle Mountain, kindly put your question now, sir.

* (1410)

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 410.(5) says very clearly: "The primary purpose of the Question Period is the seeking of information and calling the Government to account."

Maybe the member for Turtle Mountain should be asking questions about the cuts to home care and not wasting the time—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. For sure, you have overstepped your bounds. You do not have a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Turtle Mountain wants to ask his question now, I think.

The honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), the two members, if you want to carry on a conversation you can easily do so outside the Chamber. Right now the honourable member for Turtle Mountain wants to put his final question.

Mr. Rose: Mr. Speaker, I will make it very brief. I am merely trying to seek information—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member that the honourable member should ascertain the accuracy of his own facts prior to bringing it to the House.

Now, the honourable member for Turtle Mountain, put your question, sir.

Mr. Rose: I would ask the Minister of Health if this quotation from the press release, that is clearly in violation of the spirit and intent of the Canada Health Act, is correct.

Mr. Orchard: Mr. Speaker, again, that is the reason why I am so concerned when defeated NDP candidates put out this kind of information, because again it is false.

When the Schreyer government insured personal care home services, they charged a per diem. They have, in the Schreyer government, the Pawley government, the Lyon government—it does not contravene the Canada Health Act. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, I really regret that Tim Sale is putting out such misinformation suggesting—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health will take his seat, now.

Labour Force Development Agreement Consultations

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Speaker, in response to my question on Labour Force Development agreements yesterday, the Minister of Education indicated that she had completed five months of consultation with her joint federal-provincial management committee, and now there will be a subsequent six months of consultation with Manitobans, thus extending the whole process to 11 months.

Will the minister tell us today why on March 26 she promised that, and I quote, consultations to produce a made-in-Manitoba solution would be completed in about six months, when in fact she has dragged out this process so that the local boards, when they are established, will be simply established at about the same time that the agreement expires in March of '94?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, of course, as I said when I responded on that day, the consultation process will be a six-month consultation process. In preparation for that process, agreement had to be reached between the federal government from whom the funds will flow and the provincial government for a made-in-Manitoba solution to come to agreement as to how that consultation will take place. That is exactly the work that has been done.

A Memorandum of Understanding is now prepared, and we look forward very soon to starting the consultation process.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I think we have another of those rolling Tory deadlines here.

Mr. Speaker: Question, please.

Ms. Friesen: Will the minister give us a date when these consultations will begin? Will she confirm that those consultations will include the Manitoba Federation of Labour and education and equality groups?

Mrs. Vodrey: The date will be set when the federal government has signed the Memorandum of Understanding. That is the position that we are at now. Then, when that is completed, I will be announcing for the people of Manitoba exactly how that consultation process will work.

Northern Manitoba Highway Maintenance/Repair

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Speaker, yesterday our Highways critic raised concerns about northern roads. We have been advised that the Moose Lake RCMP actually had to issue an advisory warning for travellers not to go on Highway 384.

There are other problems that have also been identified with 391 in northern Manitoba, a total of 92 statistics, a fatality rate three times the provincial average. I know the minister has responded in terms of some of the concerns that have been raised, particularly the concern I raised with the minister about the condition of Highway 6 next to the Pisew Falls.

I would like to ask the minister, in the same spirit in which he has indicated he will look at a stretch of the highway that has led to two fatalities in the past year, will he also now look at the very serious situation with Highways 384 and 391, and look at a significant upgrade to those northern roads?

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Yes, Mr. Speaker, on Highway 384, I have had the privilege to meet with some of the people directly in my office about the condition of the road.

We had a limited amount of crushed gravel that was available that was used for a portion of the road. A contract was let to take and do more crushing, and, unfortunately, the operator could not get down there until about, I think, a week ago. The crushing should be taking place now. As soon as that gravel is available, we will be spreading it on the road.

I have talked with my maintenance people to make sure that we try and keep that road in as reasonable shape as possible. Unfortunately, the weather conditions have been such that 384 is not the only road that is having difficulty. Most of the gravel roads are having difficulty with the amount of rain that we have had. We are trying desperately to try and keep them in reasonable and safe shape.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Committee Changes

Mr. Neil Gaudry (St. Boniface): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Crescentwood (Ms. Gray), that the composition of the Standing

Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: Crescentwood (Ms. Gray) for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) for this morning's meeting, 9 a.m., July 21.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer); the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae) for the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render).

I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the member for Riel (Mr. Ducharme) for the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer); the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson) for the member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer); the member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) for the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson).

Motions agreed to.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources, meeting July 20, at 7 p.m., be amended as follows: the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would ask if you could please call for continuation of debate on second reading, to begin with Bill 52, The Manitoba Foundation Act.

We will have other announcements, House business, as the day progresses.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 52—The Manitoba Foundation Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), Bill 52, The Manitoba Foundation Act; Loi sur la Fondation du Manitoba, standing in the name of the honourable member for Inkster.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I had adjourned debate knowing that the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) was wanting to comment on this particular bill today.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on The Manitoba Foundation Act, because I think it is a positive initiative on behalf of the universities and the hospitals of the province.

It is my understanding from a briefing from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) that this act in fact came about as a result of the desire of the universities and the hospitals in the province of Manitoba to get a larger than normal tax credit for very large donations to either the hospitals or the universities. Since the hospitals and the universities of this province provide very valuable and considerate service to the people of this province, I think it is reasonable that they should be given the opportunity to raise large sums of money and to be given an appropriate tax receipt or credit for those monies raised.

I want to comment more specifically, Mr. Speaker, on the role of the universities in this. There has been in the past a great reluctance on the part of universities to accept corporate donations because of the whole issue of academic freedom. I am pleased to see that they are moving somewhat away from that. I do not think there has to be any conflict between academic freedom and donations from corporations or indeed individuals to those university institutions.

I think the corporate community and individuals are unwilling to put too restrictive a control on the grants which they give to universities. Should they do such, then the universities are well within their right to refuse that donation, and they should indeed do that. But there has to be an ability, I think, for our universities and, unfortunately, because of some of the policies of this government, even our hospitals, to look more and more to the private sector for the raising of funds to conduct not only primary research, but ongoing programs. If this Foundation Act makes it possible for those universities and those hospitals to attract those donations which can continue a high level of service, a high level of service which used to be provided by government, but is no longer provided by government, then there must be a vehicle whereby those universities and hospitals can obtain that funding.

* (1420)

Mr. Speaker, we are delighted to support this bill. I will be the only speaker from my party addressing this bill, and we are prepared to allow it to go to committee.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 52, The Manitoba Foundation Act; Loi sur la Fondation du Manitoba. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? [agreed]

* * *

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would ask if you could please call in this order Bill 49, The Summary Convictions Amendment Act; Bill 53, The Justice for Victims of Crime Amendment Act; followed by Bill 42, The Liquor Control Amendment Act; followed by Bill 48, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, and then there will be some further announcements on House business.

Bill 49—The Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), Bill 49, The Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi, standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, I wish I could say I was pleased to get up to speak on Bill 49 this afternoon, but I am not. I think the Minister of Justice knows that my sentiments and, through me, the sentiments of the members of my caucus and my party after the questions that were asked by me today in Question Period, many of which deal particularly with the dreadful, I would say, implications of this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, my understanding of the principles of Bill 49, according to the Minister of Justice's (Mr. McCrae) opening statements on second reading, is to, No. 1, remove parking tickets and traffic fines from the fine-option program, and the second major thrust of this piece of legislation is to remove incarceration as a penalty for nonpayment of these parking tickets and traffic fines. I will base my

comments on the assumption that those are the two principles in this particular piece of legislation. I am sure that the Minister of Justice will correct me if I am wrong in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, on the second principle, that of deinstitutionalization, if you will, or deincarceration for failure to pay parking fines and small highway traffic act fines, we have no quarrel with that element of the piece of legislation. We would have preferred that The Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act would have included only that particular element of the legislation, and we would be willing to support this bill should the minister, in committee, choose to amend and delete all other elements of this legislation.

However, Mr. Speaker, and I am not trying to prejudge what the Minister of Justice will do in committee, but past experience in dealing with this government in public hearings is that they are not prone to make major changes in legislation. [interjection] I said they were not prone; I did not say that they never did make major changes.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, when you look at a government, a government brings in legislation and they have reasons and principles and goals behind legislation. If it is well drafted and well thought out they should have. So I do not expect legitimately the Minister of Justice to make huge changes in pieces of legislation, nor do I expect other members of the government to make major changes in legislation unless it can be proven or shown very clearly by the opposition comments and most particularly by concerns raised by the people of the province that the elements in the piece of legislation are flawed.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the House today, and most particularly to the Minister of Justice, that much of Bill 49 is fatally flawed. Let me restate my reasonings for saying that the first part of the legislation is flawed, that is, removing many people in the province from accessing the fine-option program. That is flawed if the government is interested in carrying on the goals of the fine-option program which were and are, according to my understanding of the legislation, to enable people to have an option to paying fines.

Mr. Speaker, this particular element of the current legislation has been used greatly by people who financially feel that they cannot afford to pay

the fine, although there is no means test for being able to access the fine-option program. It is open to anyone as an option.

Mr. Speaker, if the government is committed to retaining the principles of the fine-option program, then the first part of this legislation is fatally flawed, as an implementation of that goal.

However, Mr. Speaker, if, as I believe is the true case and as I stated in my question this afternoon to the minister, this government's true interest in making a change to Bill 49—as it has been the government's true interest in making other changes to other pieces of legislation in this House—is really not fairness and equitableness and good service provision, but it is, where can we get some more money?

The minister, in his statement on second reading—and as I have said before, the minister is very open about it—said, these changes to the fine-option program are going to save us a quarter of a million dollars.

The minister said, and I quote from Hansard of June 25: "By removing them"—that is the highway traffic and parking ticket elements of the fine-option registration—"we could save the province in the order of \$250,000 annually, beginning with just under \$125,000 this fiscal year." And my understanding of that is that the legislation will not be implemented until approximately half.

According to my reading of what the minister stated, is he saying that one of the benefits of this change will be saving the government \$125,000 or \$250,000?

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that another outcome of this legislation is going to be a reduction in the numbers of people that will be able to use the fine-option program. It will be a reduction in the number of people that community groups will be able to access to help them with their service provision.

This is an element of this piece of legislation that was not discussed in detail by the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) and part of the legislation that I think is something that should be looked at very carefully.

As the minister states, there is a network of more than 140 community resource centres and over 500 work centres that currently use the fine-option program.

Now, by extrapolation, if you take 55 percent of the registrations from the fine-option program out of the fine-option program you are left with approximately 45 percent of the numbers next year that you have this year. I want to ask the minister some questions on this, but out of that 45 percent that remains in the fine-option program a portion or the majority of those people will be people who are responding or are doing the fine-option program as a result of a criminal conviction.

Now, some of the community groups that have made use of the fine-option program in the past are child care centres, personal care homes, as well as community organizations such as the John Howard Society, Winnipeg Harvest, the CNIB, the Manitoba Wheelchair Sports. I have not had an opportunity to get the entire list, but many, many community groups.

Now, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), I and others have questions about the efficacy of this piece of legislation, because the impact is going to be so devastating to these community groups and organizations which have made good and effective use of the fine-option program in the past.

The minister, I believe, and I am paraphrasing him because I have not got Hansard from Question Period today, stated in a response to one of my questions that the purpose of the fine-option program was to enable people who could not afford it to pay off fines. That is one of the purposes of the fine-option program.

* (1430)

Mr. Speaker, one of the positive outcomes of the fine-option program as it is currently implemented is that not only do people have the opportunity to pay off fines through community work, but the community organizations also benefit greatly from the work that is done by these individuals. That is going to be taken, in large part, away from those community organizations, and that is an impact of this piece of legislation that either the minister has not thought through clearly enough or he has thought it through and is willing for those community organizations to pay the price so that the government can save a quarter of a million dollars.

I feel that is not fair. It is not just. It is not equitable, and it does not make sense either from a social service point of view or from an economic

point of view. Those community groups, many of whom have received major cutbacks from this provincial government over the last few years and many of whom also have at the same time seen an enormous increase in their workload and in the people that they service, are now being told that they will not have access to the fine-option program to enable them to provide services more effectively and efficiently.

Mr. Speaker, there will still be people in the fine-option program, and I will ask the minister and discuss this in committee, because it is not clear. The percentage of those people left in the fine-option program will be people who are paying off fines as a result of criminal activity, as a result of criminal convictions. There are many of these community groups such as child care centres, daycares and possibly personal care homes, who will not feel that they can make use of the fine-option program under this category. They were able to make use of the fine-option program as it was expanded before Bill 49 because there were many people who were convicted of noncriminal activities, who were convicted of traffic fines or speeding tickets or parking fines. So I think this is a major shortcoming in this piece of legislation.

Also, Mr. Speaker, another impact that this legislation will have on the individuals who were, in the first place, able to work off these noncriminal fines is that many of these individuals through their fine-option community work began to understand the importance of working in a community, began to understand or had reinforced for them the importance of "citizenship," finding that they enjoyed working in the community.

I have people from Winnipeg Harvest telling me that one of the most positive things about the fine-option program for them has been that not only do they get assistance with their program delivery, but also that many of the people who worked off their fines came back after their fines were paid and continued to volunteer at Winnipeg Harvest. I am sure that there are other community organizations for which this is also true.

Mr. Speaker, I would also suggest that if the minister is serious about breaking the cycle of violence, about dealing with citizenship and prevention, the impact of the fine-option program before Bill 49 was positive. Now maybe there are not thousands and thousands of people who would

fit into this category, but there are a number. I think the minister has not thoroughly thought through the negative impacts of this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like, through you to the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), to bring up a couple of issues that I hope he will be able to address in committee or on third reading. The minister is fairly vague in his opening remarks, and that is legitimate because it is an introduction of the bill. The minister states that currently one of the weaknesses is that the fine-option program can be used for small fines, which may be less than the \$40 fee paid by the province to community organizations as the registration for the fine-option program.

I would like to ask the minister what the actual numbers are. What is the actual number of people that will be affected by this? What is the number of fines that are actually less than \$40? Frankly, Mr. Speaker, is this a legitimate concern other than in the area of the minister's trying to save money?

The minister also talks in his opening remarks about the variety of collection measures that will now be put into place instead of incarceration. As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of the elimination of incarceration as an option for people who have small fines, et cetera, that they are being forced to pay, so we applaud the government for this change.

The minister talks about a variety of collection measures that can be employed ranging from warning letters and refusing to renew drivers' licences to seizure of vehicles and other options. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister what some of these other measures are that are being looked at and see how efficacious they will be in actually implementing the goals of Bill 49. I would also like to ask the minister what those costs are going to be, because implementing these new collection measures will not be without cost.

When the minister stated that they would be able to save \$250,000 per annum by implementing Bill 49, we wonder if that is after the costs have been taken into account of the new collection measures, in which case this \$250,000 would be a net figure, or is that a gross figure and the costs of the new measures will have to be taken off that?

I tend to think it is the second. The \$250,000 is a gross figure, not a net figure, and the actual benefit in a financial way to the government will be much

less than is stated by the minister, which only reinforces our concerns about this program. It is not cost beneficial, certainly not to the government and most definitely not to the community organizations that have used the fine-option program. Frankly, it is probably not going to be cost effective or fair economically to the people who will be now forced to not have the option of working off their fine, and I will deal with that in more detail when we get to committee hearings.

I would also like, finally, to ask the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) to clarify for me one final issue. I understand, according to the Minister of Justice, that they are taking away incarceration from the bill, so that if a person does not pay their fine, they will not be incarcerated. Mr. Speaker, I am concerned, and not being a lawyer, I need clarification on this. It is my understanding that ultimately there may be, in fact, incarceration as a result of Bill 49.

(Mrs. Louise Dacquay, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

I would like to give a specific case, a suggestion. A person has been convicted of a highway traffic violation. The person is given a fine of \$100. Now there is no longer a fine-option program available for this person, so this person is required to pay that \$100 fine. The person does not pay the fine. The collection measures, whatever they are, are unsuccessful in getting the person to pay the fine. I would suggest that there could be, in that particular case, the end result of incarceration, a general warrant being issued for that person's arrest.

I hope that the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) will be able to clarify that position for us prior to or during committee hearings. But, if that is the case, this really is not that much of a change. In effect, it puts further down the road incarceration as an option, but it does not eliminate it completely.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have outlined our concerns on this piece of legislation. It has only one positive element to it, and that is the deinstitutionalization for minor infractions, which we heartily support. But that positive feature is far outweighed by the negative impacts on the people who will come under this piece of legislation, and the negative impacts of the community groups that currently take advantage of the fine-option programs, and the lack of real meaningful financial savings to the government.

* (1440)

It is an ill-conceived, ill-thought-out piece of legislation, and I would hope that the minister will seriously consider major amendments in committee, or perhaps even withdrawing the piece of legislation entirely.

With those remarks, I conclude my comments on Bill 49.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Madam Deputy Speaker, I can indicate that I anticipate I will probably in all likelihood—most likely—given that there are no changes and perhaps no altered circumstances, be the last speaker from our side on this particular bill.

I think that the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) has very accurately stated some of our concerns, concerning our particular difficulties with this bill.

The fine-option program, I think all members of this House will agree, is a very progressive and a very useful program, particularly in instances where incarceration should not occur. It provides an alternative to many individuals in our society who, through some kind of contact with the criminal justice system or otherwise, are sentenced and have an opportunity, rather than being incarcerated, to work through the program.

In addition, the community benefits. Is that not indeed one of the primary functions of our criminal justice rehabilitation system, which is to provide some benefits to the community in return, through the working of the individual or individuals—in the case of an individual, who provides a return to society.

The concerns, as raised by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), are something that we would like to have answered in terms of committee, as it relates to situations where an individual is perhaps facing a fine, a nonpayment, and the fact that they might be incarcerated with respect to an open warrant issued for their arrest as a result of an unpaid fine.

I note that in this part of debate we are generally not to deal with specifics.

I do note that Section 17(11) of this particular act in general states that imprisonment cannot be imposed and a warrant for persons' arrest and detention cannot be issued if the offence relates to parking or offences related to The Highway Traffic

Act, which may very well, given that particular response in the bill, indicate that in fact an individual will not indirectly be incarcerated as a result of this change in policy and this change narrowing of the definitions of those who were able to take advantage of the fine-option program, et cetera.

We would like assurances from the minister that in fact that is the case, Madam Deputy Speaker, because the exception would refer to, quote, parking offences as referred to in Section 16(2) of the act, as well as offences under The Highway Traffic Act or regulations under that particular act. I do not know if it appeals to other summary convictions or convictions of other summary matters relating to perhaps regulatory offences and the like.

I think that a review in committee is necessary as to when and where individuals could be incarcerated as a result of an open warrant issuing for failure to pay fine, to ensure that an individual is not indirectly incarcerated, as indicated by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), under the changes proposed by the minister concerning this act. So we will look very closely for clarifications, Madam Deputy Speaker. We will be looking for clarification from the minister in committee with respect to that particular issue.

In general, we are concerned that the fine-option program, however, has been whittled down and cut down by this government. It is something that does raise concerns on members of this side of the House, because we have seen a whittling down of many of the very positive programs that have been in place in our justice system for several years, primarily as cost-cutting measures. We only need to look to the Department of Health to see a department where a government proposes to reform and make things better and at the same time what they really do is downsize and cut programs after programs after programs to the detriment of the community and to the detriment of those who are receiving those programs.

One only looks to the rally today of hundreds of individuals at the Legislature to decry the minister's coldhearted and ruthless cuts to the health care system. That is why we on this side of the House are on guard and ever vigilant from this government when they are engaging in their cutbacks and their downsizing because the minister wields huge axes that pare away at the very roots and the very

foundations of many programs that have been put in place in Manitoba and that, in the long run, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this is the irony, cost us far more. One only needs again to look at the Department of Health to see examples of this. It costs us far more in the long run.

For a bunch over there who think they are economic managers, they are very penny-wise and pound-foolish. They cut away programs that are preventative, that help keep people, in this instance, out of reinvolvement with the law. They might, in the long run, be creating more of an expense and more human misery in this province as a result of these kinds of cutbacks.

Again, one only needs to look at the Department of Health as an example of a minister who has gone amuck, slashing and cutting, Madam Deputy Speaker, to the detriment of the health and welfare of the citizens of Manitoba. We have seen the example today with the seniors and disabled who had to rally to try to get the minister to listen, to try to get the minister to listen to the public and to try to have the minister respond. [interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) asks, what are we debating? I am only giving, by way of example, that we are ever vigilant of this government in any area or any department when it cuts and slashes, because what they say they are going to do and what they ultimately do are generally two different things.

Madam Deputy Speaker, having provided those comments, I believe, as I indicated earlier, I am the last speaker from our side. I believe we are prepared to pass this particular bill on to committee stage for consideration and, in particular, for consideration of the issues raised by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) and myself in this regard. Thank you.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

* (1450)

Madam Deputy Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 49, The Summary Convictions Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les poursuites sommaires et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No? All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On division.

Madam Deputy Speaker: On division.

Committee Changes

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Wellington (Ms. Barrett) for Transcona (Mr. Reid); Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) for St. Johns (Ms. Wasylycia-Leis).

Motion agreed to.

Bill 53—The Justice for Victims of Crime Amendment Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 53, The Justice for Victims of Crime Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits des victimes d'actes criminels), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett).

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, again, as I said in my opening remarks on Bill 49, I am not pleased to get up and speak on Bill 53 because I think again this is an ill-thought-out, ill-conceived piece of legislation which will have negative impact on the people of Manitoba, and it is only—[interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I must apologize to the House. I almost let myself be distracted by the member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard). I suggest it is a shame that we in the Province of Manitoba are obliged to spend so much time dealing with the member for Pembina, and it would be very nice if we did not have to. I think I will try and ignore him as much as I possibly can. It would be nice if the

people of Manitoba did not have to pay any attention to him.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to get back to—
[interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would appreciate the co-operation of the honourable members. I am certain the honourable member for Wellington is being extremely distracted both by her colleagues and members on the opposite side of the House.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Bill 53, which is an amendment to The Justice for Victims of Crime Act, is again one in a long list of pieces of legislation that the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) has brought forward this session which is regressive in tone and punitive in implementation and outcome.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a theme and a tone running through these pieces of legislation and through these bills that bodes ill for the people of Manitoba.

As I have stated earlier in discussion on these other bills, and think that Bill 53 follows in this guise, this government has absolutely no political plan. They have absolutely no idea of how to get this province out of the deepest recession that it has ever been in. The statistics are frightening enough and have been put on the record on numerous occasions by members of my caucus. It is not just the statistics nor even majorly the statistics we should be concerned about when we deal with pieces of legislation like Bill 53. It is the people behind those statistics who are our concern and should be the concern of the government.

The government certainly talks a good line. The government talks about a domestic violence-free zone. The government talks about its concern over the rising juvenile crime rate. It talks about its concern for maintaining the basic services that the people of Manitoba have legitimately come to expect as their right, but it is only talk.

When you take a look at the legislation that this government has brought in this session and you couple it with the legislation that it has brought in over its five years in office, very clear themes emerge, and those themes are, as I have stated earlier, that this government has no economic strategy. It has no good, positive, concrete ideas as to how to get us out of the recession; no good, positive, concrete ideas as to how to get people

working again. It has no good, concrete ideas for protecting the basic services that Manitobans deserve and have a right to expect from its government.

This, Madam Deputy Speaker, is not, on my part, partisan rhetoric. I know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in particular and his Premier (Mr. Filmon), the member for Tuxedo, both state in responses to questions in this House with a great deal of regularity that we are politicizing the issues. I would like to suggest to the government that we are not politicizing issues. We are raising issues that are of concern to us. We are raising issues that have been brought forward to us by our constituents throughout the province of Manitoba, issues that are of concern to constituents in every single one of the 57 constituencies.

I know that every single member of this House, including every single member of the government benches, has received phone calls, conversations and letters of concern around every single one of the issues that we have raised in this House. This is not, in its most basic form, a political discussion, a partisan political discussion. We on this side of the House are doing our job as opposition members to call the government to account for its actions.

In the context of Bill 53, I am going to attempt to call the government to task for its actions in this piece of legislation. Madam Deputy Speaker, The Justice for Victims of Crime Act was first implemented in 1986, and it was designed to provide a fund from which nongovernmental programs could take resources. The fund was to be established and is currently established through surcharges on fines that are levied on individuals who have been convicted of criminal offences.

It is a very nice concept, Madam Deputy Speaker, that there is a direct correlation between the punishment levied on a person convicted of a criminal action and the positive consequence that can come out of that punishment; that is, this fund which is established out of part of the punishment for a crime then enables groups and organizations to fund projects and programs to assist the victims of those same criminal actions.

It is a very simple concept in theory, and it has worked quite well in practice. We are very concerned that Bill 53 will gut the bases of the victims of crime assistance fund.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would just very briefly like to read into the record some of the grants that the Victims Assistance Fund has funded over the years. These grants come from the 1989-1990 annual report, but they are grants that are similar throughout the history of this fund. There was a grant to implement a needs assessment for victim services. There was a grant to enable a publication of domestic abuse information. There was a grant to assist the Age and Opportunity Centre in attending the Canadian organization of Victims Assistance conference which enabled people who work with victims—in this case, elderly victims—to get together to talk about issues of concern, to bring forth ideas, to do "networking."

There was a grant to provide for the continuation of service delivery to survivors of homicide, again, victims of crime, Madam Deputy Speaker. There was a research project on childhood victimization, antecedence to prostitution. Again, if we are going to be able to assist people to get out of the cycle of poverty, to get out of the cycle of violence, to get out of the cycle of prostitution, to get out of the cycle of drug abuse, we have to understand what the causes of these situations are. We have to be able to identify the kinds of programs that can help, and research is essential in this regard. The Victims Assistance Fund has over its years funded a number of research projects that have, as their specific target, victims' assistance programs and support services.

* (1500)

We have a police project. The Brandon city police department was given a fairly substantial grant to evaluate its victim services. It was a development evaluation of a police-based victim services unit in Brandon, a three-year funding project. This is, again, the kind of thing that needs to happen. If we are going to understand how the police systems in our province can better work with victims and can better deal with the issue surrounding victims' assistance, then we need to have research into those kinds of issues and questions. These are just some of the projects that have been funded by the Victims Assistance Fund.

Now, every single one of these programs and research projects were delivered to non-governmental agencies. In some cases, they were delivered to agencies which are funded partially by the government, such as Age and Opportunity, the police system, that kind of thing. But they are

arm's-length, independent organizations and projects, and that was another part and rationale and basic principle of the Victims Assistance Fund.

It was not designed to provide general operating revenue for the Department of Justice, nor was it designed to provide general operating revenue for any other government department. It was specifically designed to provide nongovernmental groups with funding.

I was not a member of government in 1986 when this particular piece of legislation was originally passed, but I would assume, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the careful separation shown in the Victims Assistance Fund act was deliberate.

It was deliberate because it was an understanding and a recognition on the part of the government of the day that these projects are not the kind of projects—they are not the kind of pilot project or research project that can legitimately be undertaken by a government under its department with any degree of success. That is largely due to the fact that government responsibilities are, in large part, with direct service provision.

The role of government is very different than the role of pure research or even applied research in most cases. So the government of the day recognized this and said, well, we need to have pilot projects; we need to have research in the area of victims' assistance.

Let us set up a fund paid for by fines levied on people who have been convicted of criminal acts and use that fund to assist nongovernmental organizations and agencies in doing pilot projects and research projects that may then eventually have the outcome of becoming governmental programs, such as we hope the elder abuse project will become ultimately part of the core funding of the government. That may be an end result of some of these projects.

But the research grants would not be ongoing. These projects and these grants were all time limited, and they were all designed to provide the government with assistance in services and information, but not directly under a government line in the budget.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, my reading of the minister's comments on second reading in this regard is to really undermine that basic principle of separation of the fund from government programming because this amendment—and I

quote from the minister's comments, Hansard, June 25—" . . . will allow for the cost recovery of government-driven programs from the Victims Assistance Fund. This will enable these programs to expand and provide better service to victims of crime in Manitoba."

There is no one in this House on either our side of the House or the government side of the House who would disagree with the need for increased and expanded programs to service victims of crime.

That is not the point here. The point is that the government is raiding again. It is saying we have a fund here of money and, oh boy, we need to access that money. We need to get our hands on that money. We have gotten our hands on some money through deindexing criminal compensation; we have gotten our hands on some more money by eliminating over half of the fine-option program. Here is another way, here is another pot that we can access.

We do not have an economic development strategy. We do not have any job creation programs. We do not have any concept of revenue generation, except to take from the victims and take from the external agency that provides service to victims of crime in the province of Manitoba. I would suggest that this is not only suborning the principles of The Justice for Victims of Crime Act, but it is a nasty, mean, regressive, unfair, totally unnecessary act on the part of the government.

They are doing it because they do not have any other sources of revenue. They are doing it because they have no ideas. They have no concept of what government should be about, and they are saying, we really want to not have to make tough decisions on making fair revenue decisions. We want to be able to have our Bob Kozminskis and our Arni Thorsteinsons and our major profit-making corporations continue to reap the benefits of tax loopholes and regressive tax policies. We are going to instead claw back services, claw back benefits, take away from the victims of crime in this province.

I say that with all sincerity. I really believe that this a disgusting, despicable piece of legislation, and it has no business seeing the light of day. I would like to conclude my remarks by commenting on what the minister stated in his remarks of June 25, when he said: " . . . the purpose of this

legislation is to clarify the intention of The Justice for Victims of Crime Act.”

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, we have spoken in this House about the fact that this government reinvents definitions. They reinvent definitions of contribution in health care. Here again is another example of a reinvention or a new definition for a word.

The purpose of this bill is not to clarify the intentions of The Justice for Victims of Crime Act. The purpose of this piece of legislation is pure and simple: to emasculate the intentions of The Justice for Victims of Crime Act. It is to open the cookie jar so that the government can take the money that this fund has established, and can use it for its ongoing operations.

There is nothing in this legislation that says that the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) cannot use this fund to help pay for the deputy minister's salary. There is no prohibition on the uses that this money can be put to under Bill 53. Before Bill 53, it was very clearly identified that that fund was to be used for nongovernmental services, projects, and research grants.

Now, the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae), and I suppose by definition, any member of the government or of the front benches can say, h'm, here is a million and a half, here is \$2 million. Well, we are a little short on Connie Curran's next monthly payment, so let us take some of the money that was supposed to be used for services for victims, and we will say, because we are going to pay half a million dollars to Connie Curran out of this fund, we can free up a half a million dollars, so we will not have to cut half a million dollars out of some other program.

That kind of sleight of hand is going to happen under Bill 53. I say that because this has happened in other legislation in this government. This government cannot be trusted. It cannot be trusted.

* (1510)

When the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) says, trust me, we will not do this; when the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) says, this will not happen; when the Minister of Justice (Mr. McCrae) says, this is going to be the only outcome of this piece of legislation, trust us, the people of Manitoba know that this is not true. The government cannot

be trusted because it has gone back on its word innumerable times.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, I would just like to state that if it had not been made abundantly clear before, I will state it very clearly now, the New Democratic Party in caucus assembled is totally unalterably and forever in opposition to Bill 53 in principle and in every single one of its clauses. Thank you.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill 42—The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 42 (The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief.

We have some major concerns with this piece of legislation, and I am counting, as I know I can with utmost certainty, on the words of wisdom from my caucus colleagues to clarify our concerns on this piece of legislation, so I will not spend any more time dealing with Bill 42 at this time. Thank you.

Mr. Jerry Storie (Flin Flon): Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to spend some time going over Bill 42 and expressing some of the concerns that the member for Wellington mentioned in her brief address on this bill. [interjection]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I expect that I will not be as brief as the member for Wellington, in answer to a question asked from his seat by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay).

Over the past 12 years there have been many, many amendments to The Liquor Control Act. On many occasions in the past 12 years we have amended the act which has led, really in my opinion, to bringing our governance of the control of alcohol in the province of Manitoba into the 20th Century.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are many of us who look at the current regime of control of alcohol as really a throwback in response to prohibition, response to genuine concern amongst people of the day about the effects of alcohol. I do not think anybody, certainly not in this Chamber, can deny that alcohol has, is having and will have a profound effect on our society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not want anything that we suggest, that we talk about in this Chamber, and nothing that I say about relaxing some of the rules and regulations that govern alcohol consumption in the province, to suggest that alcohol is not a serious problem. Alcohol is, without doubt, the most used drug in the world. It is used in virtually every society around the world in one form or another. The consequences of its use are to be found everywhere, especially when we had prohibition, the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) says. The impacts of the consumption of alcohol are as profound in my constituency as any of the province.

People will know that in the past two decades health care officials have identified a new syndrome related to alcohol consumption, particularly alcohol consumption during the early stages of pregnancy. Fetal alcohol syndrome, which is the condition caused by the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy, is a serious health problem, but it is, more importantly, a serious social problem. This syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, has side effects, has repercussions for our community, for our education system, for our family services, our social assistance system which are profound and lasting.

Madam Deputy Speaker, those who are affected by alcohol, who show the symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome, can, in effect, be nonfunctioning members of society. In some communities, particularly some remote communities, certainly in most northern communities, there are individuals who show symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome. We are just now beginning to understand the additional cost that we are going to incur because of consumption of alcohol.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am not one who believes that we are going to, in any way, be able to eliminate the consumption of alcohol, but I think there are many things that we can do to ensure that we educate the public, that we educate, in particular, pregnant women about the dangers of

consuming alcohol during pregnancy. I do not know how many members of the Chamber know that in the Yukon, for example, every single bottle of alcohol that is sold through the Yukon Liquor Commission, the equivalent of the Manitoba Liquor Commission, has a large yellow sticker on the bottle, whether it is a bottle of liquor or a bottle of beer or a bottle of wine that says: Drinking alcohol may harm your child. I believe that as we proceed and as we have proceeded in the past few years to attempt to, in some sense, liberalize our drinking laws, that we have an equal responsibility to make sure that the public is aware.

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the things that I think the government should consider, and I wish and I hope that the minister will read my remarks, because I believe the time has come for us to put warning labels on alcohol bottles. I remember when the first warning labels were applied to cigarettes. I remember the reaction of the industry, reaction of the advertising industry, but since we began to seriously educate the public about the dangers of smoking, the dangers of smoking while you are pregnant, the long-term dangers of smoking, the statistics clearly show that Canadians have heeded that warning. We have seen a decline in smoking that would have been so unpredictable and was unpredictable.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I recently attended a meeting where there were some 45 people. Not one of those people in that public meeting was smoking. When someone asked whether the group minded if he smoked in this case, everyone said yes.

It would have been unthinkable 20 years ago for anyone to even consider that an individual smoking might interfere with the rights of others. To suggest that a person could be ejected from a room for simply smoking would have been completely inconceivable, 20 years ago. Today, it is commonplace. Today, the shoe is on the other foot and the people who smoke ask, in most cases pleadingly, if you mind if they smoke.

We can do the same thing with alcohol. If we are going to liberalize, and I am not going to say encourage, but liberalize the laws governing alcohol consumption, then we should take the next step and make sure that people are aware of the dangers. We all know that alcohol is addicting. We all know that alcohol has serious side effects. The government, and I have given them credit for

this on many occasions, took the initiative with Bill 3 to make sure that impaired driving and drinking and driving was not condoned in any sense by members of the Legislature or by most Manitobans.

We need to take the next step and ensure that the next most serious repercussion for alcohol consumption, and that is consumption of alcohol during pregnancy with the corresponding fetal alcohol syndrome children that we are seeing—we need to put a large warning on our bottles of alcohol, and we should do it now. Other jurisdictions are doing it. It is time that we did it.

* (1520)

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to make sure that this is not construed as an attack on the alcohol industry, the alcohol producers, the breweries in our province or an attack on those who supply alcohol, because drinking, like smoking, is a matter of individual choice. If we accept that premise, we should believe here that it is informed choice. Informed choice means knowing all of the risks associated with an activity and clearly, because from my perspective the costs of not addressing the question and the concern over fetal alcohol syndrome children is of such proportion that we just cannot ignore it.

I think that we should have an amendment that provides for a warning label on all of the alcohol containers distributed in the province which identifies that particular concern. I was told, as a matter of fact, in an emergency meeting that was held in Thompson to deal with the community of Shamattawa's crisis, that one in three in that community are or may be affected by the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this problem is not confined to rural communities or northern communities. This problem exists in every part of the province in every social strata amongst every ethnic group. The fact is that until the last decade, the serious nature, the serious consequences of drinking while pregnant were not well understood. We now know the consequences, and we should do something about it.

I am going to leave that issue and I hope that the minister responsible will take this seriously, will look at the potential for taking that next step. I do not believe that in jurisdictions like the Yukon where they have applied the warning, that there has been any serious reduction in the sale of alcohol, but I

am willing to bet, Madam Deputy Speaker, there will be a change in the consumption pattern. Perhaps, over time, we will be able to convince each other that drinking during pregnancy is a serious health risk for the child and ultimately a serious financial risk and a social risk for the society in general.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to add, although those specific suggestions do not come from the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, I do have a copy of a letter that was sent by Grand Chief Phil Fontaine to the minister responsible, expressing concern for the liberalization of the laws governing alcohol consumption in the province. I will leave it to the minister to address the concerns directly that are raised by Grand Chief Fontaine. I think clearly there is a recognition that alcohol is not simply a revenue generator for the Province of Manitoba. Alcohol is a drug. It has side effects. There are consequences for its consumption. I want the minister and I want the government to consider very seriously those concerns.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to spend a minute or two on some of the specifics of the bill and some of the areas where we have some concerns.

I believe, first of all, that one of the fatal flaws and one of the reasons why it is going to be very difficult for members on this side of the House, members of the New Democratic Party to support this legislation is the decision on the part of the government to begin privatizing alcohol sale. Madam Deputy Speaker, the issue of the establishment of privately owned wine boutiques is a serious issue that needs, I think, public discussion.

I have already said, in other forums, that perhaps what we need is a period where this specific issue is dealt with, because once we establish the principle that the Manitoba Liquor Commission is no longer the sole supplier of alcohol and the profits that we derive as a society from the sale of alcohol are now going to be shared with private entrepreneurs, I think we are on a slippery slope. I am not sure that any government would be able to withstand the pressure to continue that process into beer and other spirits, heading us again to the Americanization of the distribution of alcohol in Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what I want to talk about when it comes to the specialty wine shops or the wine boutiques is the, I think, rather—I was going to say devious, but it is not really devious. I think it is clumsy more than devious, the approach they have taken to this problem.

I asked the minister some days ago, when the Manitoba Liquor Commission was in committee to review its annual report, what motivated the government to proceed with the establishment of specialty wine boutiques. I want to remind this Chamber what the minister said motivated her, what her first response to that question was. What the minister said was, one of the first meetings she had was with three individuals who wanted to sell alcohol, three individuals who I believe she said were members of a wine club or were wine enthusiasts who wanted to start selling specialty wines.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the minister acknowledged there was no hue and cry from the public of Manitoba to introduce the establishment of specialty wine boutiques. I want to just sort of contrast with the minister's explanation of why we are starting down this road with the fact that the Manitoba Liquor Commission for the last six or seven years has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars establishing wine boutiques in Manitoba Liquor Commission outlets in Winnipeg and in other parts of the province.

Mr. Smith, the president and chief executive officer of the Manitoba Liquor Commission, indicated that, yes, indeed, not only had they spent hundreds of thousands of dollars establishing specialty wine boutiques, one of the largest of which is in the Grant Park Shopping Centre, but he also indicated and was quite enthusiastic about the fact that the Liquor Commission had also spent thousands and thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money training staff so that they would have the necessary expertise to work in these wine boutiques.

So the Liquor Commission spent hundreds of thousands creating the wine boutiques, building the actual facilities, and then they spent more money training staff to make sure that they could provide a level of service that was commensurate with the boutique status, I guess, Madam Deputy Speaker. So you have to ask yourself—and this government was in office most of the time during which these wine boutiques were being established—what is

the strategy? If they are going to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars creating wine boutiques for the public and training staff, why are they turning around and allowing, encouraging the establishment of specialty wine boutiques which are going to compete with the very boutiques they established on their own?

Madam Deputy Speaker, it gets worse than that, and I think this is where you have to seriously question the integrity of the government itself for the way they have conducted this particular implement. As I was saying a minute ago, there was no hue and cry from the public for the establishment of wine boutiques. The chief executive officer of the Liquor Commission indicated there was certainly no complaints from the public to his knowledge, so why then, even before this legislation passed, did the government—and I believe they instructed the Manitoba Liquor Commission to place ads in our local stores and local papers advertising for an entrepreneurial opportunity for people interested in wine boutiques.

* (1530)

There are two other sinister facts which we have to look at before we talk about this particular advertising. No. 1, Madam Deputy Speaker, was the establishment, the registration of a business name, which was clearly designed solely to take advantage of the opportunity to become a wine boutique. What is also transparently obvious to members of the Manitoba community was the fact that there are two or three groups lobbying the government for the establishment of these boutiques, and the names of the people whom we expect—and we have our names written down of who are going to end up with these specialty wine boutiques. I want to say that it is not just the New Democratic Party that has this list of names of people. It is also members of the hotel association who say, yeah, we know who is after these.

But what makes it more obvious, what makes it more transparent that the government actually has a hidden agenda, that the government is going to use this legislation as an opportunity to help out some of their friends, are the criteria they use to screen the specialty wine boutique proposals that the Liquor Commission is going to get.

I should say that it is not the Manitoba Liquor Commission that is ultimately going to decide who gets to establish these opportunities in Manitoba.

The Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, the cabinet, the minister responsible are going to ultimately decide who get these government perks.

But I want to spend a minute talking about the criteria. These criteria were quite obviously written for people that the minister responsible had in mind, and I want to read into the record the criteria that were published in the paper.

It says: Pending the approval of legislation—acknowledging that we do not even have any—successful applicants for this program will be selected from interested persons who meet the following minimum requirements: knowledge, background and interest in wine—well, that would pretty well cover most people who enjoy wine—successful business experience in the province, and sufficient financial resources, minimum \$250,000 in liquid assets.

Now I asked the minister whether there was some pun intended in using the words "liquid assets," and she assured me there was not, but the \$250,000 minimum is ludicrous. It is absolutely and totally ludicrous. It is meaningless.

If someone could not organize a wine boutique with less than \$250,000 worth of liquid assets, they probably should not be in business. I personally have spoken to someone who is very knowledgeable in the industry who indicates that \$50,000 or \$60,000 would certainly be adequate. All that this is doing is eliminating and limiting who shall apply. That is all that they are doing.

The fact of the matter is that if the government was serious about this proposal, if it was not going to turn into some opportunity on behalf of the government to lay out some political plums, they would offer these licences the same way they offer beverage licences and cocktail licences and all other categories of licence in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Deputy Speaker, what they would do is simply establish the criteria that need to be met for you to be eligible to have a licence to sell specialty wines. That is all they would have to do.

Just as anyone who builds an establishment now has to meet certain criteria to get a beverage licence, they would have to meet the criteria, and there would be no interference. That is what it is going to be: political interference on the part of the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council and part of the cabinet to ensure that "friends" get these licences.

So this in and of itself is sufficient reason to vote against this legislation. The fact of the matter is—[interjection] The member for St. Norbert usually drinks a once-famous wine that was made in Manitoba called Beausejour, and it was mostly made out of stems and pieces.

The provisions in this section of this bill—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to pay particular attention to the honourable member for Flin Flon on his remarks, and I am being distracted by some peripheral noise around my chair.

An Honourable Member: Oh, we are sorry, Mr. Minister.

An Honourable Member: That is not a point of order.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Well, that is questionable. The honourable minister I do believe did have a point of order. I was trying to listen to every word the honourable member for Flin Flon was saying too, and I was experiencing some difficulty.

Mr. Storle: Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the interjection of the member for Lakeside.

On this point I think there are two sets of objections, and I want to emphasize that we are not alone in expressing concern about the privatization of liquor sale in Manitoba. Clearly, the MGEU has expressed its concern. The president of the Manitoba Liquor Commission, Mr. Smith, indicated that there would be jobs affected. Certainly, if these wine boutiques take any significant portion of the sales away from the commission, they are going to lose jobs, and we all have to be concerned about that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, they point out another fact which the government has missed, and I mentioned it. Right now, the way the legislation reads, any wine that is listed with the Manitoba Liquor Commission that is being sold at the specialty wine boutique has to be sold at the same price. What is going to happen and what happens in Alberta is that the Manitoba Liquor Commission sells the wine to the individual specialty wine

boutique owner at a discount, usually a 30 percent discount.

What has happened in other provinces, and I will use Ontario because our model is going to follow more likely what Ontario has, as opposed to perhaps Quebec or Alberta, the experience is that on every litre of wine sold, the province has lost the equivalent of fifty cents a litre. In the province of Manitoba that would amount to tens of millions of dollars in lost revenue to the government. [interjection] Well, no, that is because of the discount, the discount in the wine that is sold by the commission.

The discount—for the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), who probably knows this—is more significant for the specialty wine boutiques than it is, of course, for other cocktail lounges and beverage rooms and licence holders who purchase it, where I understand the discount is more like 7 percent or 8 percent or 9 percent or 10 percent.

So it is not only a question of principle. This government that maintains at every opportunity that it needs more government revenue is actually giving away government revenue. Tens of millions of dollars is going to be lost through this exercise, certainly if these boutiques are successful, never mind the lost investment in establishing the boutiques to begin with. Madam Deputy Speaker, the experience in other jurisdictions shows us that.

* (1540)

I emphasize again and for the member for St. Norbert or the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), the bottom line is there has been no public clamour for this. I have never met anyone who said, gosh, I cannot get the kinds of wines I need; I am so disappointed, or that the people who are serving us currently in the liquor stores are not able to give us the proper advice. This is a facade. The Conservative government, this government is introducing the privatization of wine because they have a few friends who want it to happen, who want to take advantage, who want to have the opportunity to make money in an area that has been very lucrative for the Province of Manitoba.

I want to finish on that point with respect to the specialty wine shops. I think the government is being underhanded. I think they are being devious. I think that they lack integrity on this issue, and I am not satisfied that we are doing the right thing in any event.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are a couple of other concerns that I think also need to be addressed. One of them, and I know the minister and I have had a chance to talk about this, is the issue of the sale of alcohol on credit. I know, and every member of this Chamber knows, that for any one of us, if we are over the age of 18 and have access to a credit card, we can buy alcohol on credit. You can currently go to a cocktail lounge or a restaurant, virtually anywhere in the province, and, in effect, buy alcohol on credit.

The provisions in this bill in my reading of it go one step further. Buying alcohol on a credit card is a totally different matter than allowing any kind of credit arrangement, which is what I believe this legislation contemplates. I say that because when a person uses a credit card, there is an independent third party that arbitrates how much you spend. Most people have credit cards that have reasonable limits. In other words, credit cards that have a \$3,000 or \$5,000 limit, but if you leave the issue of credit to individual suppliers, whether they are vendors or licensed beverage suppliers or any other supplier, and you put no controls on it, there is inevitably going to be circumstances where individuals who have an addiction to alcohol consume more than they can afford, and there are no limits. It is conceivable that someone with a generous heart and a big appetite could end up at \$5,000 or \$10,000 or \$20,000 in debt to some supplier because of these provisions.

We will have people running tabs, which is currently not allowed in hotels and bars across the country. For most people, that is not going to be a problem, but, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to put to you a scenario which, I think, is conceivable: an individual of modest means with an addiction to alcohol, a person who is an alcoholic, continues to drink and run up a tab at an establishment in Manitoba. At some point, the supplier, the owner says, you owe me a thousand dollars. The individual says, I do not have a thousand dollars. Well, the credit arrangement that has been arrived at can be resolved through negotiations, but if the individual who is a chronic drinker, who is an alcoholic, runs a tab and has no means of paying it, the person who supplied the alcohol is in a significant position of power. All of a sudden he says to the individual: Well, you have a half-ton truck out there; you give me that, and I will wipe off your bill. It leaves much to the imagination if we are

going to allow unlimited credit with virtually no means of controlling that credit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, if this bill is only talking about the use of credit cards, then that is one issue. If we are talking about allowing individual suppliers to indeed make up their own credit arrangements, I think we have a different problem and a problem of a different magnitude. I raise that concern, and I would like the minister to address that in her closing remarks on second reading as well.

The other issue which has been raised by a number of people outside of this Chamber is the question of the deregulation of the provisions which govern licensing of beverage rooms and cocktail lounges and cabarets. The minister, when she introduced Bill 42, tabled a long list of deregulation items. Some of them, I think, are of little consequence, but others, I think, are of some consequence.

I know that issues like the size of glass that is used are probably of no consequence. There are many other small amendments that I do not think are going to receive significant opposition. For example, the licensees will no longer require written approval to adopt shorter hours; licensed premises will no longer be required to sell at least one light beer—all kinds of regulatory changes which, I think, have little bearing on either the health of individuals or the health of the industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is some question about the decision to remove the provisions governing, I guess, room standards and the quality of hotel rooms that are attached to beverage rooms. I know the argument is that the buyer beware, but although it was not normal, liquor inspectors did have the power, if they were not satisfied with the quality of rooms attached to a beverage room, to suggest, if not require, that the rooms be upgraded, that the windows at least be able to be open. They had some control over the quality of accommodation. I think in the long run, we may want to watch very carefully how this relaxing of standards affects not only the establishments themselves but affects the view of the travelling public and tourists in Manitoba, how it impacts on their perception of the quality of accommodations in the province.

There are a couple of other issues that have been raised, for example, by the Manitoba Hotel Association. The Hotel Association is concerned

with subsection 96(1), which deals with gaming in licensed establishments. Particularly, they are concerned about one of the clauses which talks about the obligation on the part of an owner to ensure that no game or sport that is played poses a risk of injury to the participant. Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, there are very few games or sports that do not hold some risk. Even if you are going to allow darts in a bar, there is the risk of injury. So I think we need to ensure that we place reasonable limits on that requirement. How much time do I have left?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Three minutes.

Mr. Storie: Madam Deputy Speaker, the hotel association also raised the concern with respect to the obligation of owners to monitor and be responsible for individuals who leave their premises. Clearly, we want to control violence outside of these drinking establishments generally, but the hotel association, at least, is of the opinion that this is an undue onus on them and leaves little responsibility with others and with the individual drinkers themselves. It also, for example, they believe, would not allow them to eject someone from a drinking establishment, from the bar, and remain on the premises. In other words, they could not be expelled from the bar and go into their hotel room. There is some belief that it may be interpreted that way.

* (1550)

Madam Deputy Speaker, the other one, and the other serious one, deals with the decision of the government to eliminate the requirement that a certain amount of food be served with alcohol or a certain food with alcohol, the percentage that currently exists and has existed sort of by mutual agreement for a long time. This is a serious issue for the hotel association and for a lot of its members, people who have invested a lot of money in making sure that they had adequate food available between the required hours. It will make it easier for competition to undermine their investment, and I think that is a legitimate concern. Certainly, from our point of view, because these establishments tend to employ large numbers of people, there is a concern that we are going to lose employment as the end result of all of this.

So those are some of the concerns that we have with this legislation. As I say, I know that there are a number of other individuals and groups out there

who have concerns, including the coalition for responsible liquor laws, who believe that we need to have a longer and more extensive public debate about the issue of alcohol sales in the province, particularly about the privatization of alcohol sales and a review of the programs and the supports that are available for people who ultimately are the victims of the alcohol policies of the government.

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to again urge the Conservative caucus to consider the issue of placing a warning label on all alcohol containers, which simply says, drinking alcohol may injure your child, because the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome is a serious one for all of us, and this is one way I think we could address it.

Mrs. Sharon Carstairs (River Heights): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on Bill 42 today because, like the member, I have some questions with respect to this particular piece of legislation, questions I hope that the minister can clarify to some degree in the committee stage or even hopefully accept some friendly amendments which would enhance this particular piece of legislation.

Let me begin by thanking the member for Flin Flon for addressing the issue of fetal alcohol syndrome, which I myself have spoken to on a number of occasions in this House. I think the recommendation that he has made and which I concur with, which is that labelling on bottles would go a long way to identifying this very serious health hazard in our society, would be extremely useful and cost-effective and could be done with limited objections.

I want to spend my time today specifically addressing Bill 42. There are, I think, some positive things about this bill. There are some changes with regard to lifting some of what were pretty odious restrictions on many restaurateurs and owners of licensed establishments in the province of Manitoba. When these particular requirements have been lifted, I think that it is a positive thing.

I really do not think, quite frankly, that it is the business of the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission to determine what kind of knives and forks are used in restaurants. I think that is irrelevant and unnecessary. That is the kind of regulation which quite frankly gives government a bad name because people think that they are

constantly dealing with bureaucratise instead of dealing with true issues.

However, there has been a positive aspect of the ability of the Liquor Control Commission to examine decor before they actually issue the licence, and this is an issue that I would like the minister to seriously consider. I think that when a restaurateur decides on a decor that is reasonable, then they should have little or no difficulty having approval given to that decor by the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

However, we are all aware that there are establishments in our community which, in my opinion, do not place women in a very high—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I wonder if I might ask those members carrying on private conversation that they do so either in the loge or outside the Chamber so that I can hear the comments of the honourable member for River Heights.

Mrs. Carstairs: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As I was saying, there are certainly, within our province, certain drinking establishments which I think debase women, and I am concerned that if there is no limit whatsoever on the decor of these establishments, there may be further debasement of women within those establishments.

Therefore, although I do not want an ironfisted, heavily inspected control commission at work, I think that there may still be within the department a desire to maintain a final say on the decor approval of a liquor licence in the province of Manitoba.

This would be just that quick examination which would ensure, I think, that we have within our community not censorship, but a recognition that the debasement of women, and the prevention of that debasement, is not a form of negative censorship.

Some of the other issues, however, which come up in this particular bill also cause me some concern. I think that at first glance there is some interest in having wine boutiques, places where individuals can go to purchase wines that are perhaps not available in liquor outlets.

But what has happened over the last couple of years is that there is more and more availability of those wine selections within liquor stores themselves. Perhaps the wine boutique was more

required five years ago than that wine boutique is required today. Five years ago, it was, quite frankly, difficult to obtain within communities many wines that one wanted.

So I wonder why we have chosen this particular time to move to a wine boutique when we have already made considerable progress within Manitoba Liquor Control Commissions themselves, in providing a variety of wines. I also wonder why we have not questioned or examined these changes with the public.

In the past, whenever a government wanted to make significant changes to The Liquor Control Act, they have had widespread public hearings prior to the introduction of a piece of legislation. This has not been the case with respect to this piece of legislation. So we do not know, quite frankly, whether there is a desire on the part of Manitobans for a broadening of the sale and availability of alcohol, and whether or not there is a desire to have a privatization, at least, of the selling of wines. I think that is something that would be worthy to know, and to have had some analysis before this legislation was presented to us.

An additional concern that I have is with respect to the hours of operation of the wine boutiques. I wonder if this is not going to cause some conflicts, not just with the Manitoba Liquor Commission outlets themselves, but for Manitoba Liquor Control Commission outlets that are located in private establishments.

I think, for example, of the one at the lake. Are you now going to permit a wine boutique in the little shopping centre at Traverse Bay, which is going to be opened on Sunday, but you are going to require that the grocery store, which is the official outlet for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission—is that going to be required to shut down, as it is now on Sunday?

Is that going to put that small grocery store owner in conflict with the wine boutique in that the hours of one are not identical to hours of the other? Those are concerns that have not been addressed in this particular piece of legislation, and I hope that the minister will address some of those in her opening remarks to the committee when this bill goes to committee.

I think also that there are some legitimate questions that should be asked about liberalization of liquor control laws at all. You know, it is

interesting that most of us in this House would deny being drug abusers. Most of us would say, no, we do not abuse drugs under any circumstances, and yet I would suspect that the vast majority of us in the House have, at least on one occasion, abused alcohol.

* (1600)

Alcohol is a drug. Alcohol is the most dangerous drug in Canada, and it is the most dangerous drug because there are more people addicted to it. There are more people injured as a result of it, and there are more people who are in permanent handicapped positions because of their abuse of that particular drug.

The member for Niakwa (Mr. Reimer) talks about nicotine, and, yes, it is true, it is also a drug. But, in fact, statistics would have us now understand that there are far fewer people who are smoking than there are people who are drinking. So, if you are abusing a drug, the drug of choice in Canada is alcohol. It is no longer nicotine, it is not marijuana, it is not heroin—it is alcohol.

When we look at liberalization of laws with respect to the use and therefore the abuse of this particular drug, then I think there has to be broader consultation with the body politic as to whether this is in everyone's best interest.

There are some changes, however, which I find difficult to find any objection to, for example, beer vendors in hotels would no longer be restricted to selling only domestic beer. I see no reason why they should not be allowed to sell other beers if that is the wish of the consumers who are purchasing the product from the vendor.

I also see, quite frankly, no objections to the use of VISA or Chargex or other forms of plastic. I think that the first step that we took in that direction was allowing people to cash cheques. Once we have, in essence, allowed them to cash cheques, I see no difference, quite frankly, between the cashing of a cheque and the use of a piece of plastic, be it a VISA or a Chargex card or an American Express or any other form of card that is acceptable to that particular outlet.

That is a change which some people might take great offence at but which I think is just a reflection of the society in which we live, that people are carrying less and less cash in their pocket and that most of us are carrying probably far too much plastic.

My other concerns with respect to this bill is with regard to the hours that seem to becoming even more open. I find it somewhat ironic that, on the one hand, we have a government that appears to be seriously looking at age restrictions on drivers licences, part of which is caused by the fact that young people are consuming alcohol and then are driving automobiles. That, I think, is a reasonable examination, but at the same time we are suggesting that we should make the ability to purchase that liquor even more and more available to them.

I think that it is an interesting balance that we seem to be examining here, and I wonder if in fact it is what we truly want to do, because I think it is perfectly clear that at the present time, rules in the province of Manitoba do not deny anyone a drink if they truly want a drink at almost any hour of the day that they want it. One questions why we would think it necessary to make liquor even more available than it is at the present time.

The Manitoba Government Employees' Union has commissioned a survey, and I am sure the government will read such a survey because it came from that particular organization somewhat skeptically, but if it is indeed a valid survey of 400 people—

An Honourable Member: If.

Mrs. Carstairs: If, and I do say, if it is a valid survey. I have only seen part of the survey, but the information that I have been given is that it is a random sample of 400 Manitobans and is accurate within 4.9 percent 19 times out of 20, which makes it a relatively valid poll. Some polls go as low as a 3 percent validity rate and they go to a 5 percent, so it is well within that range.

The survey was apparently completed the first week of July and it asks the following question: All of the profits from wine and liquor sales in Manitoba should be used to fund needed services like health care and education. Of those people who were asked that question, 84.8 percent agreed. I think we would say that is valid. All of us would say that. The reality is that if you are going to have private wine boutiques, some of the profit that is made from those sales are going to go to the private owners of those wine boutiques and is not going to go for the health and social benefits of the province of Manitoba.

The second question they asked, and which I think is a somewhat loaded question, says: The last time the provincial government looked at major changes to the province's liquor laws, they consulted with the public before any changes were implemented. This time the government—and this is what I think is somewhat loaded—is rushing to have the legislation approved without any public discussion, and that is just not acceptable. Of course, 76 percent agreed with that statement, and 18.8 percent disagreed. I would have liked to have seen the question without the "rushing to legislation," and then we might have had a little bit more valid statement on that.

The question was then asked: I would like to have a wine store in my neighbourhood which is open long hours, seven days a week. Madam Deputy Speaker, 69.6 percent of the respondents said no, they did not want a wine store in their local neighbourhood. However, it might have been more interesting if the question had been asked, would you like to access a wine store, because what we have found with regard to many of these things is that everybody wants it in somebody else's neighbourhood but they all want to use it. We have all had those kinds of experiences. However, it gave you at least an idea of whether or not people wanted the wine store in their neighbourhood. I must say, I think if you had asked all of the people in my neighbourhood if they would like to have one on Academy Road, most of them would have probably said yes.

With the proposed changes to the liquor control laws, the Manitoba Liquor Commission will no longer have the right to inspect hotel premises to ensure food and accommodation standards are acceptable. I would be worried hotel standards will go down if these onsite inspections are eliminated. Madam Deputy Speaker, 75.6 percent of the respondents said they agreed with that statement. I have some concern about that. I think the inspections did act as a bit of a deterrent, perhaps not a great deterrent but somewhat of a deterrent if they knew that the premises were going to be inspected. Now there will still be some health inspections. There will still be some inspections with regard to the food quality, but certainly not with respect to decor.

It would have been interesting, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we had heard not just from 400 individuals that had been chosen by a random

sample but by a task force which did ask the question in a very public way as to whether individuals wanted to participate.

The question perhaps that concerns me—because I know that some of them will say that, well, we have a legislative hearing process and people can show up to that particular venue and explain to us whether they did or they did not want these changes—was the statistic that 68.8 percent of Manitobans had no idea that the government had such a bill before the House at this particular point in time. That does not surprise me. I know all of us in this House think that the work we do is terribly important. I have to suggest to you that I have come to the conclusion, after some many years in this Chamber, that 95 percent of what we do is totally unnoticed by the public at large and it is of concern and of intense interest only to the 57 of us gathered in this particular room.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I look forward to this bill going to committee. I hope there will be presentations on the bill. I hope the minister will address some of the concerns that I have raised in her opening remarks, and I hope she will be open and flexible to positive amendments and changes to this legislation, which I think will be to the enhancement of the legislation and to the enhancement of the people of the province of Manitoba.

Thank you.

* (1610)

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be the final speaker from our side on this particular bill.

Mr. Enns: Pass the bill, Steve.

Mr. Ashton: Indeed, the bill will be voted on, for the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), fairly soon.

As has been the case with a number of bills, we have significant difficulties with this bill. I know I personally feel that this is the absolute opposite of what we should be doing with liquor laws. To my mind, the real issue here is not liberalization—if that is the word that we want to use—of liquor laws, because this is not a bill that necessarily liberalizes liquor laws.

It deals with a whole grab bag of issues, a grab bag of issues that have been put forward by some lobby groups. Probably a number of them have

been put forward by the Liquor Commission itself, and it really is a bill that has no real focus, no real thrust. It does not really reflect the wishes of the public of Manitoba. Everything is wrong here, Madam Deputy Speaker.

We have a bill that is the result of this lobbying both internally from the Liquor Commission and by particular lobby groups. Now, we are going to have this matter dealt with today on second reading. We are going to have committee hearings on Monday on this particular bill. What is going to happen on Monday is that there will be some input. There will be some input. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, what is wrong is the fact that once again in this House on a matter that really crosses any political boundaries, that instead of going to the public first, we are going to have a bill brought in, in this session, public hearings and that legislation put in place because of the majority of this government.

I have said this on the Sunday shopping issue and at that time I said in terms of liquor legislation that we should do the same thing. We should have a legislative committee deal with this with nothing on the table, no bill, no proposals necessarily, that would go to the members of the public throughout this province and ask them, what do you think about liquor legislation in this province?

I will tell you what most people tell me in terms of liquor laws. I think most people say that a lot of our current legislation is antiquated, that it needs looking at. It needs restructuring. We need reform. But it is not strictly a question of liberalizing or increasing accessibility or changing any specific regulations. Different people have a different approach on liquor laws. There are differing opinions. But I think there is a feeling, in fact, in recent years we have not had a comprehensive review of our liquor laws in this province. In many ways, we have aspects that are outdated, but we also have other aspects that are contradictory, Madam Deputy Speaker, and this bill does not deal with any of that. The bottom line here, to my mind, is why do we not go to the members of the public and ask them?

I will tell you what I find is an interesting paradox, for example, in terms of dealing with liquor laws is I think the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) pointed out some of the social problems from alcohol abuse. Indeed, alcohol abuse is one of the leading substance abuses. It is really the leading area of substance abuse in this province. I have

seen countries where there are virtually no restrictions on liquor laws, yet there is far less abuse of alcohol than there is currently.

Mr. Enns: You are missing the point, Steven.

Mr. Ashton: Well, the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns) says I am missing the point. The point for the minister is that there is not a direct correlation between restrictions and legislation related to liquor and low levels of alcohol abuse. The facts are quite the opposite. I would suggest that we really fundamentally have to be doing is changing societal attitudes towards alcohol and particularly amongst young people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I graduated from high school in Thompson. I remember my high school years in Thompson. Let us put it this way, I did graduate at a time in which the drinking age was 18. Needless to say, most people I went to school with did not wait until they were 18 to start consuming alcohol—

An Honourable Member: It was 21 when you were in high school.

Mr. Ashton: No, it was 18, for the member. When I graduated from high school, and I graduated from high school in 1972, the drinking age was 18. For the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister), being 37 years old, if you want to get into the timing, I believe the change in the liquor laws were made public or came through in 1970. [interjection] I was 16 in 1972.

Madam Deputy Speaker, now we are going down memory lane here. [interjection] When did I become a socialist, says the minister. I joined the NDP when I was 17 years old and worked on my first election in 1973.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as much as we could trade this back and forth, and I look forward to the member for Portage's comments, the fact is, when I was in high school the drinking age by that time was 18.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let us put it this way, I do not think more than a small minority of kids that I went to school with did not consume alcohol well in advance of the drinking age, which originally was 21 when I was in the earlier grades, or else 18. In fact, many people were regularly going to bars at the age 15 or 16 when I was in high school. That has not changed. I think that is something that has been recognized in terms of it. What I am saying is though, let us deal with the—

An Honourable Member: Raise the drinking age.

Mr. Ashton: The member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) says raise the drinking age. I do not agree with that. In fact, I think one of the problems that I found when I was in high school, and it is the same today in terms of high school students, we have somehow associated drinking with the coming of age. What happens, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that you will get kids who feel they are proving their emerging adulthood at the age of 14, 15 or so, and they are doing it by drinking.

I know the member for Portage with his background in terms of education will probably be better able to update members of the House than I am. I am talking from my contact as an MLA in talking to people. I know, if you talk to anyone in our school system currently—I mean it is not just a question of high school, it is junior high. There are kids in junior high that are consuming alcohol. What I am saying is, even with a drinking age there is significant consumption of alcohol by those who are under the official drinking age, so the argument that somehow by having the restriction one can prevent access to alcohol is, I think, fallacious.

What I am suggesting to the member for Portage is that the significant thing we have to do is change societal attitudes about drinking and particularly amongst young people. Societal attitudes is the key factor. I have been in countries where there are no restrictions on drinking, where those who are in the teenage years feel no compulsion to drink to prove anything. Because it is available they do not deal with it. I am not suggesting that would work in this country, because we are dealing with different cultural attitudes that have been adopted over centuries, different cultural attitudes that have to be taken into force.

I think we have to look at some societal changes, Madam Deputy Speaker, in terms of that. Most definitely, changing the drinking age would, I believe, be absolutely counterproductive, because that is not the problem. The problem is the attitudes.

There are a whole series of other issues, and that is dealing with the question of the drinking age. In terms of accessibility of alcohol and in terms of liquor laws, we are accessible at certain times, we are not accessible at other times. We have lounges open on Sundays, but not bars. We stay open until two, Madam Deputy Speaker; we are

now talking about opening cabarets at four. I mean we have a whole series of ad hoc changes that have taken place over the years in response to concerns expressed most directly by people in the industry. I say, why do we not ask people? Why do we not ask the members of the public what they think about our liquor laws?

I want to go further in terms of some of the other issues touched upon by this legislation—the opening of the wine boutiques. Why should we now, on the guise of saying that we do not have proper selection and we are serving the public, open up the eventual privatization part of our liquor system distribution in this province?

* (1620)

Madam Deputy Speaker, as the member for River Heights (Mrs. Carstairs) pointed out, there has been a significant investment of time and effort by the Liquor Commission in providing a selection of wines in our liquor stores. As someone who certainly appreciates some of the selection that is available, I can point to the fact that it has improved dramatically. There is not a need to privatize that function of the Liquor Commission.

I ask the question rhetorically to the minister, at what point do we draw the line? We have specialty wine stores. Are we then going to have specialty beer stores? Are we going to have liquor available? Are we then going to restrict it only to boutiques, stock the upper end? Are we then going to have corner stores providing wine sales and beer sales as do some provinces such as Quebec and, I know, in Alberta?

Madam Deputy Speaker, where do we draw the line? Are we going to have another bill next year expanding it, and another bill the period after that? I think this is very fundamentally something we have to put to the public. Why do we not ask the public what they think? We do not have to run polls. We can have a committee of this Legislature set up on a nonpartisan basis, because I do not believe this is a partisan issue, and we can go to various different areas of the province, to northern Manitoba, to rural Manitoba, to Winnipeg, and ask them. That is an area that is of significant concern to me in this bill and our caucus.

There are other areas too. The liquor bill, as it is currently constructed, has a whole series of regulations in terms of quality of the establishments, requirements of hotels, et cetera.

We have had many hotels in this province that have been following those regulations faithfully for years. What are we going to do now? Deregulate it to the point where other people come in and not live up to the same requirements that existing hotels have lived up to for that period of time. Do we really want to take out some of the standards in terms of rooms and in terms of the licensed premises? Is that really in the best interest of the public?

One thing I will say about our system of liquor laws in the province is that we do have standards, and if one compares to other jurisdictions, I think that is something I would be very concerned about, if we lost those particular assurances to members of the public. We do not have the same sort of premises that exist in other areas. We do not have a reputation for that, Madam Deputy Speaker. That is another issue that should be dealt with by the public.

I want to deal with the whole area of consultation in a more general sense, not just in terms of the commission. We have outlined earlier—I know the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Storie) talked about the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, their concerns expressed by Grand Chief Phil Fontaine in terms of the lack of consultation. First Nations have a very ongoing debate on this particular issue. One looks at the experience in terms of dry reserves in particular, issues of bootlegging in terms of those communities. I know in my own area there are many different approaches to alcohol. We could learn a lot from the experience of aboriginal people on this issue. I know they are very concerned about their words. In fact, I know the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Driedger) can talk from his area of the province to the differing philosophies in terms of availability of liquor, particularly in a number of communities that have historically been dry communities, Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Honourable Member: Does Steinbach have a bar?

Mr. Ashton: Steinbach—well, there is some discussion on Steinbach, whether it has a bar. I do not believe there is one in Steinbach to this day because of the different view of people in that community. We have to respect that, Madam Deputy Speaker, the diversity of this province. But the way to come to a more rational system is not for the minister to sit down with various lobby groups and come up with a list of changes, and sit down

with the Liquor Commission and ask what they want. I have got no doubt the Liquor Commission would love not to be dealing with a number of these areas, but that is what the minister has done.

Let us look at the credit card issue, Madam Deputy Speaker. To my mind, there is only one reason for having the credit cards available. It is, yes, convenience, but it is also to expand sales. Any operator in this province that has credit cards has to pay commission, including the Liquor Commission, to Visa, MasterCard or whatever particular company we are dealing with, and I ask the question: Is anyone going to say they want to take the existing revenues minus whatever the commission they are going to pay for the use of the cards, or are they going to, on the assumption that that credit is going to expand sales, say it is worth the trade-off? I believe that is the rationale for credit cards. There will be an increase in the volumes that will outweigh the added expenditure to the Liquor Commission or any licenced operation that is able to use credit cards. That is the bottom-line analysis.

Now whether it is right or wrong is another question, Madam Deputy Speaker. I think there are many who would consider that to be the wrong kind of move. Others might argue that in a society where one is increasingly able to go to a corner store and have cash advances from bank machines, it really is just moving that process into the Liquor Commission and their licensed premises. But no one is going to convince me or anyone that is looking at the economics of it that the real reason is not because by having credit available you will expand sales. Any private business operator that has credit cards available does not just have them there out of the goodness of their heart.

I do not know many private business operators who like credit cards when it comes to paying the commissions on a monthly basis, and I know there are a number of people who operate small businesses in this Legislature. I am sure they do not like paying those commissions. They do it because they make the decision that by having availability of credit cards, they are providing a service to their customers that is going to increase sales. It is as simple as that. No one out of the goodness of their hearts asks Visa, MasterCard to come in and start charging them commissions.

That, I think, is one of the problems with this entire bill. I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is not a bill that can be described as a bad bill on each and every one of its sections. There are some sections I could probably agree with, and I know many of our caucus members could agree with, but there are some sections I have got to ask: Why are they here? Why? You know, why the change in cabaret hours to four o'clock? Would that be perhaps because the cabarets lobbied for it? Would that be it? Are people on the street saying, yes, we want cabarets open for a longer period of time. It certainly is not something, I know, the hotel association has been lobbying for, because they have to provide services that are not provided by cabarets and have to live up to licence restrictions that cabarets do not have to live up to, such as food ratios and the number of hotel rooms.

But, you know, I think what happened here is the minister decided, let us reform, and I use that in quotation marks, our liquor laws. Reform is not sitting down with five groups who give you a list and saying, well, I am going to give you one out two things that you have suggested. Real reform, Madam Deputy Speaker, will come from talking to members of the public, including the stakeholders in the industry. They have got to be included, but everybody has got to be included.

It has got to look at the public interest, and you know, this bill does not liberalize our laws, per se, in my mind. It does not update the laws. It does not reform the laws. It just changes them and, I would say, changes them arbitrarily, and it changes them in a way that I think will lead to a lost opportunity, because I think there is a real opportunity in this province to have a nonpartisan review of our liquor laws. I mentioned about having a legislative committee; I will go one step further. What if we were to appoint a committee that would include not just members of the Legislature but perhaps outside members of society, social groups who are concerned, health professionals, people who are involved in the industry, citizens? It is not a new idea. We could appoint this commission. I do not think it should have an extensive budget and cost taxpayers a lot of money.

What if we had an independent body to deal with it? We do it with our salaries now, why not with liquor laws? It is not a partisan issue. There is no NDP position on liquor, Conservative position on liquor or a Liberal position on liquor. I bet you

within each caucus there are wide differences of opinion that result in consensus positions. [interjection]

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) talks about members of our caucus and their position on liquor, but you know, I think this is where I want to go a step further than saying that the process is wrong here. I would say not only that, the time is right to change the way we deal with these kind of bills. There has been a lot of talk about parliamentary reform, reform of our political process, and I think what we are doing, as I said, in terms of MLAs' pay, et cetera, we are dealing with that, in that context is a reform, a major reform.

There was a group that just came out recently of labour leaders and business leaders who suggested that we change the way that we deal with bills, that we do send out committees before we make the final decision. I realize it is difficult on some bills to do this. I realize that there are major political differences and our process works well, the parliamentary system.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture, I am sure we would agree on one thing in this particular case, that if one has issues such as, say, labour law or other issues where there are some clear differences between the parties, ideological differences, that the electoral process works better or worse at times in the sense that when people make a decision, when they are voting for the Minister of Agriculture or they are voting for myself, they have some idea of what I stand for, what the party I am running for stands for when governments are elected. Conservative governments roll back labour legislation, they expect that, or when the NDP governments are in and they move changes to the labour legislation, they expect it.

That is where there are clear differences. I am not saying that you can necessarily go and have public consultation in a nonpartisan way on those issues. I think that is unrealistic.

* (1630)

But the Minister of Agriculture, when he ran in the election, last one, I am sure he did not have to deal with questions in terms of liquor laws—I did not. Never was it questioned because most people assume it is not something that is a partisan-political issue, but that does not mean his constituents do not have opinions on liquor laws.

I know my constituents do. A pretty wide diversity between—I have people in dry communities, for example, dry reserves who are very opposed to access to liquor, others who think we should liberalize, we should open on Sundays, we should have corner grocery store access. I mean it crosses the entire diversity. That is why I am saying, here is a good opportunity for a bill that, if we just put it aside for a while, could be used as an opportunity here to have that kind of input.

But what I am saying is that by having this bill we will lose it. Already the minister responsible for this bill is saying, that is the public hearings. Why not have public hearings without a bill and spend the time—we are going to be out of session eventually in this Legislature and whenever we are called back, we are going to have a period where we are out of session. Why not use that time for public hearings and consultation?

I think that is something that we can learn from in this particular bill. Look at the report from Ottawa from that collection of people in the labour movement, the community at large, business, they said we have to start doing things like that.

You know, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the reasons the respect for our political system is declining, I think, is because the partisan political system and party discipline works well for many items. Ideological differences, setting budget policy, most of the issues we deal with, I would argue the parliamentary system work well, but it does not work as well in the nonpolitical, nonpartisan issues, because what happens is we create a whole series of issues and we make them into partisan issues that they really should not be.

We are going to have a vote on this bill very shortly and whether it is a recorded vote or a voice vote, we are going to have a vote. It is not going to be a free vote and it is going to be defined by the political structures. Obviously, the government members are going to feel obliged to support their colleague, and I do not fault them for that. I mean, this is a government bill, but you know, should it be that way? Should it have to be that way? Would it be that way if we had an independent group, either of this Legislature or an independent commission that made a report and that we had legislated changes that resulted from that? Would it have to then be subjected to a party vote? Could we not have a free vote?

I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, you would probably find that if we had a process like that, we would probably have a fair amount of consensus, but we would also have differences between the parties. I bet you that if we had a free vote on a series of liquor law changes that were part of that process, you would get members in each party that would vote one way or the other. In fact, I will go one step further, and I have got evidence of that because there used to be a time that whenever there was a liquor law introduced in this Legislature, no matter whether it was supported by all the caucuses, you would have members, particularly from Steinbach. Whoever represented Steinbach in those days, on an obligatory basis, had to get up and speak against whatever changes there were in terms of liquor laws. I realize there have been changes of attitudes even within some of the communities that have been opposed to greater access.

So I just want to complete my remarks on that basis. I will be voting against this bill and our caucus will be voting against this bill, but I feel sad in a way that we even have to get to this stage. If we had done it right, we could have public hearings without the pressure of the bill, without the pressure of time. We could have had a nonpartisan approach. I think, Madam Deputy Speaker, we probably would end up with a far better series, not only of liquor laws, but an understanding of the reality of the whole series of issues dealing with liquor, because without that I think we will never get the societal changes.

I go back to the debate that the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) and I had earlier today. How can we get societal changes in terms of dealing with alcohol unless we start bringing people together in a nonpartisan, nonpolitical way and start saying, look, here are the issues, let us talk about it, let us come up with solutions. That is how we are going to get the changes in societal attitudes, to my mind. It will give us what we really need in terms of liquor and access to liquor in this province, a balance between those who wish to consume and the social problems that can come from overconsumption. That should be the goal.

That is not a political goal. We can all share that. That is why I am voting against Bill 42 in the hope that by killing this bill right now, out of its ashes can come a better approach to liquor laws and parliamentary process in this House dealing with

the many issues that should not be political. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is second reading of Bill 42, The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No? All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Deputy Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

An Honourable Member: On division.

Madam Deputy Speaker: On division. Agreed.

Bill 48—The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1993

Madam Deputy Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 48, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness), Bill 48, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 1993 (Loi de 1993 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité), standing in the name of the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on an extremely important bill that is before this Legislature at this time, one that is affecting thousands upon thousands of Manitobans, virtually involving all Manitobans, Madam Deputy Speaker, because we have before us a bill that, as usual, is a mixed bag as these statute law amendments pertaining to taxation tend to be.

There are some elements of the bill that we can agree with. There are some elements that affect economic development, encourage economic development; we can agree with those. There are some that affect the environment that we can agree with, but there are many, many that affect the poor, the seniors, children, that impose a serious tax

burden on those who have least resources and we definitely object to that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, just to speak briefly on some elements of the bill, I think that, as I said, reducing the taxes on railway diesel and aviation fuel is probably a good move. It does encourage economic growth, economic development.

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

We can agree with the elimination of aviation fuel tax for cargo flights from or to overseas destinations. That certainly does encourage international aviation in and out of Manitoba, particularly the Winnipeg airport.

Also I note that it extends the 10 percent manufacturing investment tax credit for another year, and that is fine, although I am not sure that it is helping very much, Mr. Acting Speaker. I do not know whether it is really helping, because if we look at what is happening to manufacturing in Manitoba we see it unfortunately, as they say, going down the tube. This tax credit has been around for a few years now, and I do not see where it has had much beneficial impact. At least the figures we have on manufacturing, what is happening to employment in manufacturing, what is happening to manufacturing sales, and indeed the very existence of manufacturing industries in this province is being threatened, we wonder whether that investment tax credit is really of any value whatsoever.

I think back of some specific examples when I talk about erosion of manufacturing, erosion of our industrial base. There are many specific examples that we could look at, one in my own constituency, Marr's Leisure Products, that used to manufacture fibreglass boats that disappeared after free trade was introduced. This tax credit would have no bearing whatsoever on that type of an industry. It just was attracted out of the province because of the free trade deal, but there are others closer in to Winnipeg. There is, in Steinbach, the Toro Engines which packed up, went back to Minneapolis, the head office location. I do not think this manufacturing tax credit had any bearing on what that particular company did or would have done. I have yet to see any benefit from this.

But having said that, we are not opposed to that 10 percent investment tax credit. At least it is a fairly minor item, and I note that it does not do much

by way of taxes. What it involves for a year, it is roughly, I understand, something in the order of \$1.7 million to extend that. So that is not a very significant item.

* (1640)

There are other parts of the bill that we can agree with too, that which is affecting the environment, a new environmental tax preference of five cents per litre for recycling used oil into diesel fuel. We think that is a good move. I am not an expert on environmental matters, but it seems to me, at least at first glance, that this is a step in the right direction.

It also allows newspapers to apply levies under The Waste Reduction and Prevention Act against the retail sales tax liabilities, and this, technical as it may sound, Mr. Acting Speaker, is a measure that should promote some additional recycling. This is true also of the application of the \$3 per tire tax for another year, and this again provides funding for recycling. So those are acceptable measures by and large.

We have some problem, however, when we look at some of the other taxes that are being introduced by the minister, by this government. We mentioned earlier on in this Legislature, in fact when the minister first introduced this bill, I questioned the whole matter of fairness on taxing of raw leaf tobacco. The minister assured me that this was still a lower rate than that applied to dry cut tobacco.

We have had some conversations with the retailers of raw leaf tobacco. They maintain that this differential is still not good enough and it will virtually drive them out of business. That is a sad state of affairs, Mr. Acting Speaker. Although I do not smoke and never have smoked in my life and I believe it is hazardous to health, nevertheless, people are smoking, and it seems to me that what we are doing here is penalizing those on lower incomes who are inclined to use the raw leaf tobacco because it is considered to be cheaper.

Well, there are some other details as well. In fact, there are many, many details in this rather voluminous, rather lengthy bill, as a matter of fact, Mr. Acting Speaker. There are over 60 pages, and there are dozens upon dozens—well, hundreds virtually, hundreds of detailed tax changes; so detailed, of course, that the minister normally provides reading notes for members of the

Legislature so we can understand what these various sundry miscellaneous adjustments are all about.

There is something that really hits you between the eyes, and that is two major tax grabs, if you will, or two major initiatives that increase the tax burden on Manitobans.

The one major initiative is the extension of the retail sales tax base. What this bill does is broaden the retail sales tax base to include all kinds of items that were previously exempted from the provincial sales tax. What we are doing is hitting people in lower income categories; we are hitting the seniors; we are hitting children; we are hitting people who like to read.

The reason I say that is that what we are doing now is levying the provincial sales tax to restaurant meals under \$6. Now there was a reason for cutting it off. Part of it was administrative, but it also was considering people that did not have much money would go out the odd time to Robin's Donuts or the Salisbury House to get a nip or a hamburger or whatever and they would not have to pay the tax. If you were into a more elaborate dining room setting, of course, and you paid more than \$6, well so be it, then you paid the tax. Now that is eliminated.

Everyone now—any kid who goes to McDonald's now and wants a hamburger or shake or a Big Mac or whatever is subject to paying a tax. So we are putting taxes on food items in restaurants and takeout stores that kids would not normally have had to pay a tax on.

We are also putting in a tax, Mr. Acting Speaker, on nonprescription drugs. I think that is a step backwards too, because many of the nonprescription drugs are required for the health of people, particularly for handicapped people, particularly for senior citizens who tend to use more drugs than people who are younger or people who are not handicapped in any way. So here we are, imposing a levy on an area of consumption that is, I believe, slanted towards hitting people who are aged and people who are handicapped, people generally who tend to use more drugs, more medicines.

Also, I really regret that this tax, the sales tax, is now applicable to newspapers and magazines. I really believe that that is a backward step because what it does, of course, is discourage reading of the

newspapers, reading of magazines, reading of this printed word, so to speak. Therefore, I think in terms of having an informed public, we are moving backwards. I am sure I have the support of the newspapers and the magazine industry when I say that this is a very, very bad tax in that respect.

There is another area that is now being taxed, and that is personal hygiene supplies. That, again, is related to a medical or quasi-medical situation, and it is regrettable that this government is now seeing its way to taxing personal hygiene supplies.

There is a tax now, Mr. Acting Speaker, on safety equipment. I think that is horrendous. Why should we discourage people from buying safety equipment? Yet that is what a sales tax of this nature, will do.

We are now taxing school children. We are taxing school supplies. Mr. Acting Speaker, how backward can we get in this respect? Why on earth should we be taxing school supplies?

We are taxing babies. This bill is taxing babies now. Baby supplies are no longer exempt under provincial sales tax. It has been for all these years, for decades virtually. Now, all of a sudden, because this government thinks it needs the money, we are going to tax baby supplies. Certainly we should not do anything to discourage population expansion in this province because our population growth certainly is not there. Certainly the last thing you want to do is tax baby supplies.

We are even taxing sewing patterns. We are taxing children's clothing items that cost more than \$100. In this day and age of high cost of clothing, Mr. Acting Speaker, it is not unusual for a person to pay more than \$100 for a children's clothing item, perhaps a snow parka or whatever.

So I believe that this broadening of the retail tax base is a regressive move. It is unfortunate. It is hitting, as I said earlier, aged people, senior people. It is hurting children, on the other hand, and it is hurting people who are inclined to use additional drugs to maintain themselves or to buy personal hygiene supplies. So that, to me, Mr. Acting Speaker, is very regrettable that we have gone backwards. Usually we try through exemptions in retail sales taxes to alleviate the burden on certain groups in society, but we are going backwards. We are taking away these exemptions.

In effect, in total, what this Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) is taking from the people of

Manitoba is, by his own estimates, \$48 million. These tax measures are an increase in sales taxes of \$48 million for a full year. So I say there is no question that this particular bill is a bill to increase taxes on Manitobans.

There is another area of the bill that increases taxes or the tax burden virtually, but it increases it by reducing the property tax credits and some of the other tax credits that have been scaled down. For instance, the minimum property tax credit is reduced from \$325 to \$250, so virtually everyone loses \$75 in tax credit, which translates to an increase in property taxes for the typical ratepayer in the majority of Manitoba municipalities. So what we are doing is shifting the tax burden onto the ratepayers and, I guess, ultimately affecting municipal government.

All property tax claimants will be required to make a minimum contribution of \$250 towards their local property taxes directly as homeowners or through their rent as tenants before they are eligible for provincial tax credits. This again, Mr. Acting Speaker, is regrettable. The argument is, well, everybody should pay some property tax, and I have heard that argument many a time, but if you accept that logic, then you should accept the logic that no one, but no one, should be able to get away without paying some income tax, but there are many people who pay no income tax, not only wealthy people who can manage to, through various tax loopholes, get away from paying taxes, but also a lot of poor people who just do not have the income and their exemptions put them in a position of not paying any taxes.

* (1650)

So the fact is there are income taxes that are not paid by some sectors of society, and there is nothing wrong with people not paying any property taxes if they happen to own, as would be the case in most of these instances, very poor property that did not get very much tax, particularly in rural Manitoba. But nevertheless, these people are now having to pay some property tax.

Another area of concern is the Pensioners School Tax Assistance Program, \$175. This is to be income tested now for all recipients, so pensioned homeowners with incomes under \$23,800 will have to wait. They will have to apply for benefits under their income tax return next spring, and I guess this has got some people

concerned, but regardless, there is a great deal of money being taken away from pensioners because of the changes to the Pensioners School Tax Assistance Program and because of the reduction of property taxes. To use the Minister of Finance's own estimates, which are included in the budget documents, what this amounts to is \$53.4 million. So we are imposing, in effect, by reducing these credits, an additional burden of \$53.4 million on the people of Manitoba.

If you add that to the \$48 million in sales tax increases, what we have done is increase the tax burden on Manitobans by \$101.4 million. That is significant, so let us not say that this is a government that does not increase taxes. They have increased the tax burden on Manitobans by \$101.4 million. This is the estimate provided by the Minister of Finance right—and if you want to read it yourself, it is under Budget Paper C Taxation Adjustments. It is on page 1, and there it is: Summary of 1993 Tax and Tax Credit Changes. There it is, \$48 million more sales tax, and \$53-million burden because of the reduction of provincial tax credits.

So, Mr. Acting Speaker, there is no question that this budget is a big tax grab on the people of Manitoba, and it is imposed in such a way that it is hitting the children. It is hitting the kids that like to go to McDonalds to get a Big Mac. It is hitting women who are trying to raise a family, because you are hitting baby supplies. It is hitting people who like to read newspapers and magazines because, for the first time now, you are taxing them. You are hitting seniors and people who are disabled people who have to get nonprescription drugs and, all in all, Mr. Acting Speaker, it is a backward, regressive type of tax increase. Therefore, for these reasons, there is no way that members in the opposition can support Bill 48.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

I mentioned earlier there are some features we could support. There are a couple of items affecting the environment, a couple of items that encourage economic growth. Fine. We do not oppose those, we are agreeable, but this is one bill and in this bill you have—oh, I am sorry.

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, we are approaching the

hour of 5 p.m., and I wonder if you would canvass the House and see if there is a willingness to waive private members' hour.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to waive private members' hour? Yes, it is agreed.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Sorry for the interruption, to the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans).

Mr. Leonard Evans: Mr. Speaker, so as I was saying, what we have got here, it looks rather innocent. The bill is sort of neutral, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, but this is the bill that hits the people of Manitoba to the tune of \$101.4 million. So it is regrettable that this government is not only increasing a burden on Manitobans, but is increasing the burden on some of the most vulnerable in our society.

As I said, there are features of the bill that have an impact on the economy, and I must take this opportunity to note that the economy needs every bit of support and encouragement that it can possibly get because this economy in Manitoba, unfortunately, has ground to a halt. In fact, the fact that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) continues to have big deficits is essentially a reflection not on outlandish expenditure increases, because that is not occurring, they are holding the line on expenditures.

The problem the Minister of Finance has, and this government has, is that the revenues are not coming in. The revenues are not coming in because the economy is not growing. There is no expansion in the economy. So the retail sales are languishing and, therefore, retail sales tax revenues are not expanding. In fact, there are instances where they are diminishing. Similarly with income tax, you do not get income tax out of the unemployed.

So there is an impact of the economy on the tax revenue of this government, and because of the poor growth in the economy, the inadequate growth, in fact no growth in revenues, you have got these continuing large deficits continuing to the point that Manitoba's per capita debt today is bigger than it has ever been in our history.

If you look at some of the figures, when I say slow economic growth, I am not talking idly. I am not imagining this because we get figures monthly from Statistics Canada indicating what is

happening to the Canadian economy, including the province of Manitoba, and we can look at various economic indicators. In fact, I have a report here showing 12 economic indicators of the provincial economic activity. Out of the 12, we are performing below the national average in eight out of the 12. We are performing below the national average in capital investment, in inflation, in manufacturing shipments, in economic growth, in average weekly wages, in the creation of jobs, population growth, construction work and housing starts. We are below the national average in the first half of the year.

This is the performance of the Manitoba economy in the first half of 1993 compared to the same period last year. So there is no question, Mr. Speaker, that our economy is in rather poor shape.

I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and others on that side like to brag, well, Manitoba after all still has the second or the third lowest unemployment rate in Canada. You know, if you go back to the very first year, the very first month that we collected labour force statistics in Canada, you will see that Manitoba was always among the lowest three. In fact, sometimes we are not among the lowest three. Sometimes we are fourth lowest. So to say that, to tell us that is to tell us nothing, because there is no indication that is a sign of great economic health in this province.

When we look at that, we have to keep in mind that that calculation of unemployment relates to the size of the labour force. Our labour force is either not growing or it is growing very slowly and therefore it is easier to keep the unemployment rates down on that account, say, compared to the Atlantic region where you do not have the same mobility of people.

What happens in Manitoba typically are people who are trained, usually with skills, with some training, professional or occupational training; who leave Manitoba because they cannot get work. They simply leave, which is very sad because of this exodus of trained people, educated people usually. It is not people who are untrained that move. The mobile people are the people who mostly are best trained among us. They are the younger people, too, Mr. Speaker. So we are losing some of the best and brightest unfortunately, but because they are going we can maintain a

relatively low—relatively, I say—low rate of unemployment among the provinces.

* (1700)

Having said that, there was bad news in this last report for the month of June. We are the worst in western Canada, and we seem to be stuck there around the 10 percent mark, give or take a fraction of a percentage point. This is just not acceptable that that level of unemployment is continuing, which translates into 50,000 or more people in Manitoba who are willing to work, wanting to work, but cannot find jobs and therefore are deemed to be part of the unemployed. I think that speaks volumes of the state of the health of this province of ours.

I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) from time to time likes to boast about, well, we have increased a few jobs this month. This past month there has been an increase in jobs. Very good, we like to see that, but the reality is that the level of employment in this province today is lower than it was when this government took office in 1988. If you look at the figures, in 1988, we had on average for that year 494,000 working. Our employed labour force amounted to 494,000 people.

If you take the first six months of 1993, and we have the first six months now from Statistics Canada, the average is 486,500 people. So, Mr. Speaker, we have fewer people, thousands of people less than we had in 1988 when the government took office. So I cannot in any way, shape or form say yes, we have grown. Our economy has expanded. Our economy has not expanded. It has shrunk and that is sad.

There are different reasons for it. Some are beyond the administration of this government. I admit that. I only wish members opposite would have agreed to that when they were on this side because—

An Honourable Member: I think you should speak about the positive initiatives like Ayerst . . .

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, Ayerst was here a long time ago.

An Honourable Member: But is that not a great proposition?

Mr. Leonard Evans: Yes, yes.

So, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we just do not have enough jobs for our people. If you look particularly at manufacturing it is really sad that we

have fewer people working in manufacturing industries today than we had five or six years ago.

In 1988, we had an average of 63,000 people working in manufacturing. Today we are around—I do not have the number right in front of me but I think it is around 50,000. It is certainly less than it was when this government took office. So we have had an erosion of manufacturing in this province.

I know the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) keeps on telling us, well, he is keeping spending down, we are trying to keep taxes down and, therefore, we are attracting business, we are attracting industries. Well, it sure has not been reflected in the manufacturing industry. We do not have the growth there that we need to have to provide jobs for our people.

If you look at the level of shipments and the figures I have for last year, for the full year of 1992, we had \$6.2 billion in manufacturing shipments compared to \$6.7 billion in 1988. When you consider there is some inflation there, we are putting out less manufacturing output than we did when this government took office. So there is certainly no growth. In fact, as I said, the reverse, we have reduction in our manufacturing industries.

We can look at other factors in the economy. One that is very concerning, too, is what is happening to the average weekly earnings in the province. If you look at the industrial aggregate we tend to be very much on the low end of the scale. The growth of wages in this province is the second worst in the country. We are nine out of 10. We have been that this year, and we were in that situation last year as well. I think what that means is that the average worker in this province is not able to maintain a growth in wages comparable to the growth in wages and earnings that is occurring in the other provinces. We are slipping behind as time goes along.

There are all kinds of other statistics we could look at. I am not going to take the time to go into all the details except to mention one other area here and that is in housing, and that to me is just very, very startling. The figures are such that it is almost unbelievable.

When this government took office, the average—this is housing starts in urban areas—amounted to 4,448 units. Now this is calculated by CMHC. This is where the figures come from, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 1988, 4,448

units. If it was an apartment with 10 suites, that would be 10 units, a single-family house is one unit.

At any rate, almost every year it has come down. In 1989, we slipped down to 3,147; 1990, we slipped down to 2,274; 1991, it went down to 1,438; 1992, it went up slightly to 1,821.

An Honourable Member: It went up? What year was that?

Mr. Leonard Evans: It went up in 1992. It went up by a little less than 400 units to 1,821, but compare that to 4,448 units in 1988. This is urban starts, but that constitutes about 90 percent. [interjection] That includes the suburbs. That is the entire metro Winnipeg area, the city of Brandon, Portage, Virden, Emerson, Steinbach, you name it, all the urban areas. The only thing excluded are the rural municipalities in remote areas, and they are a smaller percentage. The pattern is the same, anyway.

I can get all the areas and I would show you the same pattern—very serious.

Why is that? It is because we do not have the population growth, we do not have the net family formation, and that reflects the lack of economic opportunity here. People are leaving, and even people who are here are worried about losing their jobs. They are not necessarily going out buying new houses or building new houses.

This is very dramatic, Mr. Speaker. You can see that reflected in the value of building permits, the same pattern. I will not read all these figures—same pattern, a steady decline. It is only a fraction. The value of building permits in '92 was only a fraction of what they were in 1988, likewise with construction work performed.

Generally, these figures reflect an economy, regrettably—I say regrettably very sincerely—that is stagnating, that does not provide the job opportunities for our people, that see our youngest and our best, our young people, our maybe not so young people, but among our best trained, best educated leaving to go to Ontario, to Alberta and to British Columbia, because that is generally where people go.

All in all, since this government has taken office, we have had a net loss of well over 40,000 people. That is a net loss equivalent to the entire size of the city of Brandon. The city of Brandon is around 40,000, just a shade under. We have lost just over 40,000 people. That is a net loss, not a gross. I

know there are people coming in, but then when you deduct those that are going out you get a net figure of minus 40,000. This is a sad state of affairs.

This government has been in office now for five years. We have had six budgets, I guess, and we are always told: these policies are going to stimulate economic growth; we are going to—next year, do not worry, it may not be so good now, but next year it is going to be better. Well, I guess you would call this next-year country, because the performance has not been there. The economic policies reflected in the budgets of this government have not translated into economic growth, have not translated into a rise of the standard of living of the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, having said all that, we can look at the finances of the province and see that, in spite of the restrictions on spending by this Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) and by this government, we still have continuing deficits. Manitoba's spending per capita is among the lowest of any of the provinces. I think we are either the lowest or probably the second lowest over the last few years.

* (1710)

When you get figures from the different lending agencies, the investment agencies and so on, Wood Gundy or whatever, you can make the comparisons. The Royal Bank has figures tallied as well. They compare the provincial budgets. I think Manitoba has probably the lowest or probably the second lowest spending experience per capita in the country among the 10 provinces. It is not because this government is a big-time spender that it has continuing chronic deficits. It is because of its failure to provide an atmosphere to bring about adequate economic growth which would translate into revenue growth.

When I say the lack of revenue growth, I am again basing it on the data, of course, provided by the Minister of Finance in the budget document. The fact is that '92-93 revenue declined by 5.3 percent—or Manitoba collections declined by 1 percent in total, in particular what is referred to as Manitoba collections. Regardless, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that revenue, even when it does grow, does not grow very well.

The fact is that we have continuing deficits. So we have a government that keeps on preaching fiscal restraint and yet when we get to the bottom

line, we find that it continues to have deficits. Every year it has had a deficit, so as a result, we have increased the public debt in Manitoba now to the point that the public debt of Manitoba is higher than it has ever been in its history.

This government has the honour of having a total net debt per capita of \$11,923. That is well above anything experienced before this government took office. As a matter of fact, the year before this government took office, the debt per capita was considerably lower. It was \$2,000 less. In 1987-88, the year before this government took office, the net debt per capita was \$9,559. Today it is \$11,923. In other words, it is about \$2,500, roughly speaking, higher per person than it was before the Filmon government took office.

Let us not pretend that this government is containing the public debt. The public debt has grown, and it could have reduced the public debt in the first year it took office, though. It could have done that, because what happened, it was left with some surplus funds from the previous government and also it was blessed with some federal transfers.

All in all, when we look at these numbers, we see that in 1988-89, the first fiscal year of this government, they could have had a surplus of \$58.7 million, but instead, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) chose to create a new fund called the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. In British Columbia, they call it the Budget Stabilization Fund, otherwise known as the BS Fund. Well, our BS Fund, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, \$200 million was established in '88-89, the very first budget. Instead of showing a surplus and with that surplus reduce the debt, no, he puts \$200 million into this fund to show a deficit.

Mr. Speaker, that was the one year we could have had a surplus. At any rate, we have not had surpluses at all. We have had deficits year after year and, of course, now and taking last year, we would have had, using these figures, a deficit of \$730.5 million if it were not for the fact that the Minister of Finance took \$200 million from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. That is the same figure he put in five years ago and included it as revenue. Here is a copy of the O/C which authorizes a transfer of \$200 million from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund to general revenue to help pay the bills. Without this, as I said, the deficit in Manitoba would have been \$762 million, so even on their own score, their own objective of trying to eliminate

deficits, trying to keep the debt down, this government has failed. Its failures would have shown up even more so if we did not have this bit of a shell game going on. I do not know what is going to happen next year, because the minister has pretty well blown all the money. He has a few dollars there. I am not sure where he is getting it from, but it looks as though most of that fund is blown. Of course, included in there are some preferred shares of Repap, but as the Auditor herself has said, these things are almost worthless at this point in time at least.

So, Mr. Speaker, I say therefore that this government has failed on all accounts. It has failed in terms of imposing a tax burden in a very inequitable way on the people of Manitoba. They increased the tax burden on the low-income groups, on the children, on the seniors, on people who are disabled. So it has increased the burden of taxes in that way and, of course, it has increased—have I got one minute?

My time is up, Mr. Speaker, so I conclude by saying that we will vote against this bill because it is inequitable, because we do not believe in taxing a hundred million dollars—putting another hundred million dollars tax burden on the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Dave Chomlak (Kildonan): Mr. Speaker, I welcome—[interjection]

House Business

Hon. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): On House business if I may, Mr. Speaker, before the member for Kildonan has the floor.

I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will sit tomorrow, Thursday, at 9 a.m. and again at 7 p.m. to continue considering presentations on Bill 41, if necessary.

I would also like to announce that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will sit tomorrow at 9 a.m. and again at 7 p.m., if necessary, to consider Bills 35, 47, 49, 52 and, should some additional time be required, for Bill 24.

Mr. Speaker: I would like to thank the honourable deputy government House leader for that information.

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak in opposition to this statute law amendment.

Hon. Donald Orchard (Minister of Health): You mean you are against something more?

Mr. Chomlak: Mr. Speaker, there are two myths; there are two prevailing myths. The member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) will have his opportunity to speak. There are two myths in our province. The first myth we hear is that the Tories believe in tax reform. The second myth is the Tories of course believe in health reform. Actually, there are three myths. The third myth is that this Conservative government does not tax. This has been one of the most tax-ridden—I hesitate to use the word "deceitful"—I will say subtle, I will say subtle tax regimes in the history of the province of Manitoba. The member for Pembina has much to say from his seat on this particular issue. He has much to say from his seat, and he will have the opportunity to take part in this debate.

Mr. Speaker, part of the taxing regime of this government is directly as a result of actions of the member for Pembina who this year is taxing seniors for their home care equipment, who this year is taxing the sick, the 1,200 Manitobans who require, for medical reasons, ostomy supplies. This minister has imposed a tax on the sick, on these people of \$300 a person.

You know, Mr. Speaker, often we do not get the impression in this House about the effects of these taxes on individual citizens. At the rally this afternoon I indicated for the member for Pembina—and I have written a member—that I went to the home of a constituent last week who started crying on the doorstep because she is a colostomy patient, because she has been taxed to the hilt on the property tax by this government, had her property tax credit decreased this year by the government, had her senior citizens tax credit decreased in this bill by this government and had the minister impose a \$300 per year tax on her colostomy equipment.

* (1720)

Mr. Speaker, the minister accuses us of fearmongering. He never leaves this Chamber to go out and talk to people like that. As he taxes the sick, and this government in general, with their taxes on senior citizens, should be ashamed of

what they have done in this budget. Anyone that would support this budget should be shamed to support this particular tax measure.

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

Mr. Acting Speaker, as I began my comments, I said the biggest myth in this province of Manitoba is that this government has not raised taxes. We know what kind of tax grab this government has initiated on property taxes. We put out a chart last year. It is incredible—a \$70-million property tax grab on the education portion alone, and this government says: We do not tax; we are going to hold the line on taxes. They have grabbed, at the end of last fiscal year, \$70 million on property tax, the education portion alone.

It is unbelievable what they get away with. Now they are asking for more, but they are doing it in subtle ways. They are reducing the property tax credit and saying: We do not tax, we are just taking 75 bucks out of each homeowner's pocket; we do not tax, we are just taking \$125, in addition, out of each senior citizen's pocket.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the way this government, in underhanded fashion, has imposed taxes on the citizens of Manitoba is nothing short of disgusting, unfair, unequal, and they should be taken to task for this. In addition, there is a fashion and a manner in which this government imposes these taxes.

This government has a penchant for retroactivity. They retroactively have introduced taxes. Before the bill is even passed, they are collecting taxes at the border. They are not enforcing the Sunday shopping law before it has even been passed.

This government has contempt for this process. They have contempt for the Legislature. They are imposing taxes. They are requiring and demanding of people that they pay these taxes, and the bill is not even through this Chamber. After five years and six budgets, this tired government, this government is completely out of touch with the population of Manitoba.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I have said on many occasions that I will give this government credit during the minority period, because my constituents said: You know, the minority Filmon government was not bad; it kind of reminded us of the old Schreyer government, and my heart goes up.

But this government that was elected in 1990 is a horse of a completely different colour, and its bills and its statute law amendments of this kind—they are not forthright. They do not go to the public and say: Look, we are increasing your taxes for X, Y and Z reasons. No, they slide it in. They slide it in in a budget. Then the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) stands up and cannot give us statistics as to how many people, how many seniors are affected by it. Oh, they have the statistics, Mr. Acting Speaker, but they are not revealing them, any more than the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) is prepared to tell us how many thousands of Manitobans he is cutting off of the Home Care maintenance program or how many thousands of Manitobans he is taxing on his sick taxes that he is putting on, taxes on the sick for the Home Care equipment program. They have the statistics. They better have the statistics if they are imposing these taxes, but they do not tell us.

The Minister of Finance, Question Period after Question Period, could not give us the information as to the effect that some of these tax measures will have on Manitobans. I do not believe that the Minister of Finance did not have that information. I believe that they did not want to tell the public the draconian and dramatic effects that their tax regime and their tax legislation would have on the average Manitoban.

Now I know where this is all leading. It is all leading to an election probably next year where the government will say, we do not tax. We do not tax. They are going to put on their pamphlets how they have not taxed, except the \$70 million tax grab on property tax owners, whoops, and then the expanded PST, whoops, and then the tax on the sick that the Minister of Health has imposed in the form of \$300 per person on colostomies, whoops, and on ostomy supplies, whoops, and then the tax on the sick in the form of a user fee on home care equipment.

They were not even forthright in the admission of that, because we found out in Estimates that it is not just a one-shot \$50 fee. It is \$50 on every single piece of equipment. So my constituent who I visited last week, Mr. Acting Speaker, will have to pay for the gloves for the procedure. He will have to pay for the incontinent pads. He will have to pay for the catheter equipment he needs, all of which because it falls under \$50.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I know that members opposite are trying very desperately to deflect attention away from their taxing regimes. They are trying so desperately hard to stop the public of Manitoba questioning their callous hardhearted decisions in health care. They are trying every tactic in the political book to move attention away. They are doing every political device necessary. [interjection]

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) says spend. Let me give members opposite a lesson in spending. Which government has recklessly signed the largest consulting contract in provincial history, Mr. Acting Speaker? We would have millions of dollars in our health care budget. We would not have had to increase taxes as draconianly and as dramatically as the Minister of Finance had if the Minister of Health had not entered into the Connie Curran gravy train, the Connie Curran gravy train that sees millions and millions of Manitoba tax dollars going down to his U.S. consultant. To do what? To tell us how to somehow reform our health care system when the hospitals themselves are doing the cutting and Connie Curran will get credit for on her account—disgusting.

Right there—the Minister of Agriculture should not laugh, because I think his constituents will say the same thing to him that my constituents are saying to me: get rid of that American consultant. We can do our own health care reform. We would have \$6 million in addition, at least, if they had not entered into that contract. We would not have need for a lot of these measures.

Mr. Acting Speaker, another occasion last week when I was door knocking, a constituent coming to the door and saying how disgusted she was that she was forced to pay PST at the border when the bill was not passed. She said, is that bill passed? I said, no it is not passed, in fact, we are debating this bill right now. She was disgusted that she had to pay a tax that had not even been passed by duly elected legislators.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Findlay) calls us "airheads," the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) says that we are against taxation. We are against gravy trains, we are against giving free rides to your friend, we are against the American consultant and the cozy Connie Curran gravy train that that Minister has entered into. So let not that minister lecture us,

because he has much accounting to do in terms of the public.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when I look at this tax bill, I think that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Manness) ought to go back to the drawing board. He ought to go back and look at what his priorities were, and he ought to go back and look at some of the decisions that had been made.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the member for Brandon—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Order, please.

When the House is ready, the honourable member will commence. Thank you.

Mr. Chomlak: The member for Pembina (Mr. Orchard) has one consistent quality: an inability to listen to anybody, be it the Speaker, the Acting Speaker, or members of the house, and, more importantly, an inability to listen to the public of Manitoba who have come to him in droves, who came in the hundreds this afternoon to complain about Home Care.

* (1730)

Mr. Acting Speaker, what could he do? He blamed everybody under the sun. He blamed NDP candidates; he blamed Howard Pawley; he blamed the 1985 NDP government. The one thing that this government and this minister is incapable of is taking responsibility for their actions.

That is evident in this bill, because it slip-slides in. You know their tax increases are slip-slid in—slithering into the Legislature in the form of a bill. They slipped these tax increases in, they slipped it through the budget.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, maybe—I do not know the strategy—but maybe one of the reasons for the Minister of Health's (Mr. Orchard) hard-hearted cuts to the Home Care Equipment program, to the colostomy program, and to the Home Care maintenance program were because they were trying to cover up their tax increases. Perhaps that is the strategy. If you beat on everyone in the province and get them worried about their home care and their health care, maybe they will not notice the tax increases that they are bringing in.

You know, Mr. Acting Speaker, how ironic that a government that increases property taxes as much as they did would bring in legislation to freeze the ability of local school divisions to deal with these

taxes, after they have brought in probably the biggest property tax grab in the province's history. Then they have the audacity to bring in the bill and to blame it on the school divisions. Only this government, that does not have the political integrity to come forward and debate a bill and then pass tax legislation, that does not have the integrity to admit what they are doing, could do that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, when we talk about the effects of these tax increases, we should talk about average hard-working Manitobans who have seen their taxes increased because of the removal of \$75 in the property tax credit, or the seniors who have an additional \$125 removed. That is having an effect on the average Manitoban. That is a real tax increase, a direct tax increase, an unfair tax increase.

Our Leader, on many occasions, pointed out what the effect of that is in north Winnipeg versus the effect of it in Tuxedo and other areas. There may be some individuals that \$75 does not mean a lot, but for most Manitobans, \$75 is a lot.

If you talk about my constituent whom the minister, by taxing on the sick, is charging an additional \$300 for her colostomy and who is taxing her home care supplies, that is a serious effect on Manitobans. Not the worst, but one of the saddest things about this is it is done subtly. It is done slyly. It is done in a slithery way the way this was brought in.

An Honourable Member: Slimy.

Mr. Chomlak: I will almost go that far.

I feel strongly about this, Mr. Acting Speaker, because I think part of the problem, the perception of government, is that government is not forthright. We see that daily from the Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard) in his pronouncement on health care. The government does not come forward, make its pronouncements and debate them. They bring in a bill that is retroactive. They try to hide it and slide it and cover up. This is a massive tax increase, \$1.4-billion tax increase—[interjection] One hundred, I stand corrected. I will admit, it is only \$101 million. I apologize to members of the House. The tax increase is only \$100 million; a hundred million dollars is all that this—

An Honourable Member: What is a hundred million?

Mr. Chomlak: What is a hundred million dollars here and there, Mr. Acting Speaker, particularly

when a lot of their friends are getting off pretty well. That is what I resent. I resent a government standing up and saying, we do not increase taxes. Whoops, just a hundred million dollars here and maybe another hundred million dollars there. That is after the \$70-million tax grab that was made on property taxes the last several years. That is after offloading onto property taxpayers, and that is education property tax alone, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Acting Speaker, members on that side of the House somehow have the audacity to suggest that they are good managers and that they somehow are decreasing the deficit after having increased the deficit to \$862 million, the highest in provincial history.

I cannot reiterate and I cannot emphasize enough that these are all in addition to the taxes on the sick that have been imposed in this budget by this Minister of Health (Mr. Orchard), all of these increases. [interjection] The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) says, not true. The member for Lakeside will agree that they are now charging \$300 on colostomy supplies which are necessary medical supplies that a person has no choice but to get, a medical supply that formerly was provided by the government.

The member for Lakeside will also agree, I suggest, that they are now charging a \$50 user fee on home care equipment. That means walkers. The last walker was given out by St. Boniface Hospital for free last week. Mr. Acting Speaker, raised toilet seats, gauze equipment, catheter equipment, all necessary medical supplies, rubber gloves, all charged directly to the sick, the elderly and the disabled. If that is not a tax, then I do not know what is.

All of those taxes are in addition to the hundred-million-plus increases that we are seeing in the statute bill. At least members opposite would have the intellectual honesty, if not the political honesty, to admit that. You would think they would have at least the intellectual honesty to admit that, but they do not. The Minister of Health says, this is a contribution. Is the hundred million dollars—is this a contribution?

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): What is this, the United Way?

Mr. Chomiak: The member for Thompson says, is this the United Way? Is this now, this tax bill, a

hundred-million-dollar contribution from the citizens of Manitoba to this present government?

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Not all the citizens.

Mr. Chomiak: Not all the citizens, the member for Wellington reminds me, and that is very correct. That is the other very disappointing part of this. These taxes are not fair. They are taxing kids on the one hand and seniors on the other, Mr. Acting Speaker.

I note that having basically covered most of my points and knowing there is other urgent House business to be dealt with, knowing that I think I have probably made my point, at this point I will adjourn debate, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): I am wondering if there might be leave to have this matter remain standing in the member's name. I believe the acting government House leader may wish to move to other business including Report Stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau): Is there leave for this matter to remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak)? [agreed]

House Business

Mr. Darren Praznik (Deputy Government House Leader): Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to ask for the leave of the House to have Bills 35 and 47—I believe we require unanimous consent to have them shifted from the committee to which they were sent into the Law Amendments committee for tomorrow. I believe if you canvass the House you will probably find unanimous consent for that change.

(Mr. Speaker in the Chair)

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable deputy government House leader have leave to change—I believe there are two bills, 35 and 47. Is there leave to change those from one committee to the next? Yes. [agreed]

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I would ask if you could please call at Report Stage the bills as listed on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker: When Bill 48 is again before the House, the honourable member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) will have 20 minutes remaining.

Committee Changes

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources for the 9 a.m. Thursday session be amended as follows: the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) for the member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson).

I move, seconded by the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments for the 9 a.m. Thursday session be amended as follows: the member for Morris (Mr. Manness) for the member for Roblin-Russell (Mr. Derkach); the member for Assiniboia (Mrs. McIntosh) for the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine).

Motions agreed to.

REPORT STAGE

Bill 27—The Environment Amendment Act (2)

Hon. Jim Ernst (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that The Environment Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur l'environnement), as amended and reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

* (1740)

Bill 36—The Highway Traffic Amendment Act

Hon. Jim Ernst (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Stefanson), that Bill 36, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route), as reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No? The question before the House is that Bill 36, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act; Loi modifiant le Code de la route,

reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in. All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas have it.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

Bill 40—The Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Amendment and Crown Attorneys Amendment Act

Hon. Jim Ernst (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. McIntosh), that Bill 40, The Legal Aid Services Society of Manitoba Amendment and Crown Attorneys Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société d'aide juridique du Manitoba et la Loi sur les procureurs de la Couronne), reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 44—The Alcoholism Foundation Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Jim Ernst (Acting Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Enns), that Bill 44, The Alcoholism Foundation Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Fondation manitobaine de lutte contre l'alcoolisme et apportant des modifications corrélatives à une autre loi), reported from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, be concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed]

The hour being 6 p.m., this House now adjourns and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, July 21, 1993

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