



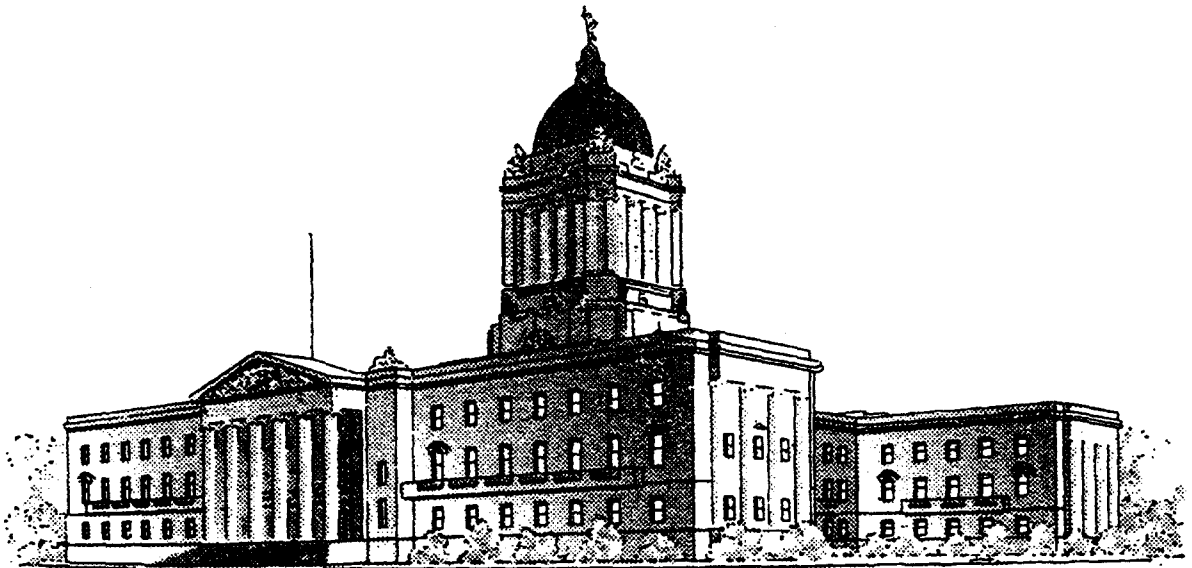
First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. XLV No. 39 - 10 a.m., Friday, September 29, 1995

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

<u>Name</u>	<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Party</u>
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BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
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VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

Friday, September 29, 1995

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

**Standing Committee on Economic Development
First Report**

Mr. Mike Radcliffe (Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Economic Development): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the First Report of the Committee on Economic Development.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Your Standing Committee on Economic Development presents the following as its First Report.

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Your committee met on Thursday, September 28, 1995, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building to consider the Annual Reports of the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation for the years ending March 31, 1992, and March 31, 1993, and the Annual Reports of the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation for the years ending March 31, 1994, and March 31, 1995.

At that meeting, your committee elected Mr. Radcliffe as the chairperson and Mr. McAlpine was elected as the vice-chairperson.

Also at that meeting, your committee passed the following motion:

THAT the Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation, Annual Report 1991-1992 be passed, following general discussion at the sitting of this committee, September 28, 1995.

Your committee has considered the Annual Report of the Manitoba Lotteries Foundation for the year ending March 31, 1992, and has adopted the same as presented.

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jim Ernst (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Reports for '94-95 for Consumer and Corporate Affairs; Fitness and Sport.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report for 1994-95 for the Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would like to table the Annual Report '94-95 for Urban Affairs.

* (1005)

Hon. Brian Pallister (Minister of Government Services): Madam Speaker, I beg to table three reports today: the Fleet Vehicles Agency for '94-95, as well as Materials Distribution SOA for 1994-95, and the Government Services Emergency Expenditures for 1994-95.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report for 1994-95 of the Manitoba Health Research Council, and I table today the Annual Report of the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba for the year 1994-95.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I am pleased to table Volumes 1 and 2 of the Public Accounts for 1994-95 and also the Annual Report of the Department of Finance for 1994-95.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): I have the privilege of tabling the Annual Report for the Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation for the annual year.

Hon. Glen Cummings (Minister of Environment): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1994-95 Annual Report of Manitoba Environment and also the Annual Report for 1994-95 of the Sustainable Development Innovations Fund.

Hon. Harold Gilleshammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to table the Annual Report for Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, also for the Manitoba Centennial Centre Corporation and for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission for the year 1994-95.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to present the Annual Report for the Department of Education and Training, 1994-95.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I am pleased to table the 1994-95 Annual Report for the Conservation Districts of Manitoba.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Cancer Therapy Pharmaceutical Coverage

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): My question is to the First Minister (Mr. Filmon).

Unfortunately this week it has been a tale of two priorities with the government—unlimited amount of money for the hockey team, the Jets hockey team, in terms of infrastructure and losses that the taxpayers are covering, yet we hear that vital drugs are being cut off to children requiring them in cancer therapy.

I would like to ask the Premier—since yesterday we learned that another drug is being reduced and cut off for children that require cancer therapy, a drug called ondansetron, and that drug is an anti-nausea drug that is necessary for children that are receiving chemotherapy treatment—why has that drug been cut off, and can we find a way to fund these important priorities for children and families that are going through one of the most traumatic experiences, that facing their families with cancer?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, my information is that no child or no family of a child in these circumstances has been, as the honourable members says, cut off, and it is our undertaking that none will.

Mr. Doer: I thank the minister for the answer today. I wish we would have had that a week ago when the minister received correspondence. I think the families have gone through a traumatic experience with this uncertainty.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the minister, in light of all the cuts that are taking place and all the correspondence that is going on about the impact of these cuts, does the minister have in place a process to ensure that decisions are not made to cut off drugs as we have mentioned, as we mentioned yesterday and as we mention today, that decisions are made not to cut those drugs off for children requiring them for cancer therapy and other programs, that families will not go through this kind of trauma, that the Minister of Health has got a more hands-on approach to these issues and does not require the opposition to raise these issues in the Legislature?

* (1010)

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I certainly agree with the initial comments made by the Leader of the Opposition.

As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the budgeting process allows for certain dollars to be budgeted for certain programs that are demand driven. In this particular case the demand equalled the budgeted amount early enough in the fiscal year to create a problem for the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation.

The honourable member's suggestion is also a good one in that we have a system in place to ensure that we do not unnecessarily raise concerns that do not need to be raised. So indeed I think we have the department, the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, and the Health Sciences Centre working closely together to ensure that those sorts of things are addressed early enough so that they do not create concern.

Mr. Doer: I assume by the minister's answer, because the decision was made effective September 4 for the G-CSF drug, that there would be a different status before September 4 versus after September 4—and the drug that I mentioned in my first question, ondansetron, a drug that is required for children to be able to eat after they have chemotherapy programs, which the nurses have also been told has been cut because of government funding.

Will the minister table today in the House a process by which he will be able to determine whether the safety of patients and the health of patients in Manitoba will be protected in light of all the cuts that are taking place in health including the \$19-million cut that is already trickling through the various programs and patients of the Health Sciences Centre and other related programs?

We do not want to continue to bring issues to the House. We want the minister to be in charge of the Health department, and we want to make sure that his promise in this House of protecting patients is truly a promise that he can keep, rather than having to come after these programs after they are cut off to get the government to reverse its decisions for safety of patients here in the province.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I will just repeat for the honourable member that budgets for all kinds of programs are set based on the previous experience and the previous demand, and so these matters do arise.

In terms of the honourable Leader of the Opposition's comments about people facing very, very serious, sometimes even catastrophic circumstances, I can only point to my record of the past couple of years in dealing with issues that have come along like that. We have I think tried to deal as sensitively and compassionately as we can with families in this province.

Health Care System Funding

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, from his seat the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said it was not the government initiative that caused this cutback in program, but will the Premier or the minister not admit that it is government cutbacks to funding institutions

that they have cut back the last two years that have strangled the budgets and not allowed them to do things like drug therapy, like hip and knee replacements, like surgery, and that is why we have the longest waiting list in the country, and that is why we have problems that we have to bring to the floor of this Legislature day after day after day.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I reject everything the honourable member has said.

Pharmacare Funding

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Maybe then the minister can explain why, in the Annual Report of the Department of Health released yesterday, it shows that payments to the Pharmacare program by the government have decreased by 20 percent the last two years. Can the minister explain that?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, if you look at our drug assistance programs I think you will find that they are either the best or among the best in this country.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, as usual the minister did not answer the question.

I would like to ask the minister to explain why in the Annual Report of the Department of Health in 1992-93 it showed that expenditures for the Pharmacare program were \$60.8 million, and why in the '94-95 Annual Report released yesterday it shows that expenditures in Pharmacare are down to \$48 million, a 20 percent increase over two years. Can the minister try perhaps to answer a question and explain this?

* (1015)

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the honourable member should not be quite so selective. He should look at the performance of the program over several years and he will see significant increases in commitment by the government at a time when we have been dealing in extremely difficult economic times and circumstances, at a time when our colleagues, our friends, whatever they are in Ottawa have made life pretty difficult for all of the provinces

because of the handling of the finances of the Government of Canada.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, we are not working in any easier times today, as the budget by Mr. Martin on February 27 would indicate, and we face significant challenges. At a time when you do face significant challenges like that, it is nice to be a Manitoban because we are working with budgetary circumstances which have been worked on carefully for seven and a half years. We are able to withstand the kinds of pressures that we are going to have to withstand, and we are in a much better position than most other provinces in this country.

Health Sciences Centre Outpatient Chemotherapy Program

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, there is mounting evidence from the \$8-million underspending in the first quarter statement in the Health department that the government's health cuts are hurting deeply, especially for those most at risk, cancer patients and their families.

Can the minister confirm that the \$19-million cuts now underway at Health Sciences Centre are putting at risk the outpatient chemotherapy program at Health Sciences Centre? Will he confirm that?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, in anticipation of preparing budgets throughout Manitoba, all of the hospitals, all of the facilities and all the caregivers are in the process of reviewing how best they are going to provide the highest quality service they can to Manitobans, at a time when budgetary pressures are pretty significant. So we have discussed this before.

Health Sciences Centre is one of many hospitals looking at options that might be available to them. I am not here to confirm anything the Health Sciences Centre might be looking at by way of options for dealing with next year's budget.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, could the minister then explain why in the parents' newsletter, Parents of Children with Cancer, why they say the following: The programs are under review and may be transferred to

other departments, which are under the gun to cut their budgets. It is coming out of the pharmacy pocket now. Plans are to shift it to the Children's Clinic pocket. They, of course, do not feel they can sustain such a program with their limited financial resources. Therefore, it will come under review.

Can the minister explain why the parents feel that this program is very much at risk under the \$19-million cuts?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, if I was in the position of the parents referred to by the honourable member, I think I would share the same kinds of concerns, but I say to those parents and I say to the honourable member that I am not aware of any child that has been impacted in the way that was raised yesterday by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer). As I have said, we are going to ensure that does not happen.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, can the minister tell Manitobans with cancer and children with cancer how it is possible to cut every budget simultaneously without deeply hurting our ability to offer hope to those with life-threatening illnesses?

* (1020)

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, the assurances I am giving today, the assurances given by Dr. Brent Schacter of the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, the assurances indeed given by the manufacturers of these drugs I think go some distance toward providing the kind of assurance that the honourable member is talking about.

I am not here to pretend that Ottawa is not taking \$7 billion out of the health and social transfer across this country which will have a very, very significant impact here in Manitoba and elsewhere, but I say by virtue of our performance in the last seven and a half years, we have laid a much stronger foundation than Health ministers and social services ministers in other provinces are having to face.

AIDS Prevention Government Strategy

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, my questions are also for the Minister of Health.

Over a year ago, the Krever inquiry into Canada's blood supply met in Winnipeg and exposed this government's dismal record regarding services to persons living with HIV-AIDS. Sunday, October 1 is the date of the annual AIDS walk and nearly one year ago this government's Department of Health, after seven years of silence, initiated the development of an AIDS strategy. The weeks go by, people die, nothing is announced and Manitoba remains one of two provinces in Canada without an AIDS strategy.

My first question to the minister is this: Given that the Manitoba data indicates that if the annual increase in infected individuals continues at the current pace the number of Manitobans infected with AIDS will double in five years, how can the minister justify cuts to services in Manitoba?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, working with the advisory committee on AIDS, the development of a new AIDS strategy is underway.

The honourable member's question is very general in nature, and I think some of the answers I have given previously respecting our ability in Manitoba to deal with the pressures that are being thrust upon us by our federal counterparts—nobody is saying that it is easy for any government in this country, but I am proud of the fact that during the course of all of this we have consulted something in excess of 15,000 Manitobans in the development of our responses to the challenges that we face.

Ms. McGifford: Can the minister tell us how many staff years in Manitoba Health are devoted to the care, treatment, education and prevention of HIV-AIDS?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I will ask the department to prepare an inventory of the kinds of services available and the numbers of people involved in them. The kind of question the honourable member is asking is more appropriately asked during the Estimates process of the Department of Health. We spent something, I think, in excess of 50 hours on this particular matter—the Health Estimates. We will consider this an Estimates question and get a written response for the honourable member.

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, I understand the staff year is .5.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Osborne, to pose her question now.

Ms. McGifford: Can the minister tell the House if the government still intends to release an AIDS strategy, and when?

* (1025)

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, an AIDS strategy will be announced when all of our consultations are complete. I do not accept the honourable member's assertion that half a staff year is devoted to the issues related to HIV-AIDS.

Rural Crisis Line Government Commitment

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

In Winnipeg, we have fortunately a line which we call the Klinik crisis line and which is open 24 hours. If individuals have some stress, they can feel free to call that line at no cost. In rural Manitoba, of course, we have the rural stress line. There is a great deal of concern in terms of the funding of this particular line and the resources that they require.

I would ask the Minister of Health, is the government equally committed to the rural stress line as it is to the urban stress line known as the Klinik crisis line in the city of Winnipeg?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I wish the honourable member had kept himself up to date on all of the developments in the reform of mental health services in Manitoba over the past two or three years. Many, many services have been instituted in rural and northern Manitoba that never existed prior to the election of this government in 1988. Through mental health reform, people in communities are now able to access the services of community mental health workers, crisis stabilization centres, drop-in centres, self-help organization drop-in centres, assisted housing, assisted employment

programs. I invite the honourable member to write to me and ask for the catalogue of services that have become available in mental health.

The honourable member asks a specific question about the crisis line which is still a matter that is under review. There have been significant concerns raised about the rural crisis line by other caregivers. Madam Speaker, we are duty bound to listen to those concerns too.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I am asking the Minister of Health if he is going to acknowledge the need of the rural stress line and ensure that the government's commitment is going to be there to ensure that this particular program is going to be there into the future. It has only been in place for a year. It does need proper resources in order to make sure that it is feasible. In Winnipeg, we have the Klinik which is virtually fully funded by this government.

Is this government prepared to make the same sort of a commitment to the rural stress line?

Mr. McCrae: I just want the honourable member to know that I have been dealing quite frequently with the Canadian Mental Health Association and the farm groups who are proponents of the crisis line. We have raised with them the concerns raised with us by the women's shelter organization respecting the operation of the crisis line. We have also raised with them the idea that there ought to be some sort of inventory of all the different lines that are available to Manitobans and an appropriate co-ordination of all of that.

So the work continues, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, it is a question of fairness. I ask the Minister of Health, will he treat the rural crisis line in the same fashion that we are treating the city of Winnipeg Klinik crisis line?

Mr. McCrae: Well, it is a little bit surprising to have a Liberal lecture me about fairness when it comes to rural Manitoba, Madam Speaker. I did not hear the honourable member—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): On a point of order, I understand the rules for answering a question is it should not incite debate. The first comment of the minister was nothing more than an attempt to incite debate and did not, in any way, try to answer the question, and I think it should be ruled out of order.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, the honourable member for Maples indeed does have a point of order. I would remind the honourable Minister of Health that his responses to questions should deal with the subject matter raised.

* * *

Mr. McCrae: I apologize, Madam Speaker. I did not mean to get the honourable member going like that.

With respect to fairness for rural and northern Manitoba, I simply remind honourable members of some of the kind of support that this government has provided to the agricultural community. I think of programs like Decentralization and wonder why we could not have had more support from some of my colleagues in this House.

If that is an inappropriate thing to say, Madam Speaker, well, I am sorry for that too. But it is a fact, and we do need support for all manner of issues related to fairness amongst Manitobans. We had a debate yesterday about that very matter.

Many of my colleagues are here to remind me about fairness for rural and northern Manitoba. Madam Speaker, that will be on our minds as we address the issues related to the rural crisis line.

Education System Physical Education

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I wanted, before I ask my question, to clarify for the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) that the question I asked yesterday about the decline in incoming—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would ask the honourable member for Wolseley to pose her question

with the appropriate preamble. My understanding is that the member is questioning something and that would only arise if a point of order had been raised.

The honourable member for Wolseley, to pose her question now.

Point of Order

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. My purpose was to correct a number that I used yesterday.

Madam Speaker: I will accept the point of order. The honourable member for Wolseley, on a point of order.

Ms. Friesen: So it is a point of order to correct a number.

Madam Speaker: That is accurate.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wanted to correct for the Minister of Education that the question I asked yesterday about the decline in incoming international students at the University of Manitoba since the introduction of differential fees should have used a number of 58 to 60 percent decline, a number which I am sure she is as concerned about as we are.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable member for Wolseley on that point of order for clarification.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Wolseley, now to pose her question.

Ms. Friesen: My question is for the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae), and I want to table three copies of a report in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute indicating recent research linking regular exercise in the reduction of breast cancer risk in young women. Madam Speaker, this is an important study because it has been difficult to delineate the relationship between exercise and particular types of cancer.

* (1030)

The study concludes by saying, and I quote: Our results strongly support the need for education policies that require participation in physical education classes and that encourage lifelong participation in exercise programs.

I want to ask the Minister of Health why his government refuses to require the teaching of physical education throughout the high school years in Manitoba.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): The requirements for physical education, as the member knows, extend through to the end of the second year of high school as they did when the NDP were in government.

Ms. Friesen: Could I ask the Minister of Health to respond to new research, and will the minister give us a timetable for the implementation of his own report, the healthy child report, which says that every school in Manitoba should mandate physical activity, quality daily physical education, from K to Grade 12 as an essential component of a child's school day?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The Department of Education and Training joins with the Department of Health, the Department of Family Services and the Department of Justice in the work of the Child and Youth Secretariat, headed by Mr. Reg Toews. The kind of report and recommendations to which the honourable member refers this morning is the kind of report that would be placed in the hands of those four departments at that secretariat and taken from that point.

Nonetheless, we are pleased with some of the things that we have been able to do in the area of breast cancer detection and prevention through the diagnostic programs set up in Manitoba and other initiatives as well. The report the honourable member talks about will no doubt be reviewed by the secretariat.

Gambling Social Costs-Youth

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Yesterday, we learned that \$118,000 was spent on two studies into

lotteries which were attempted to deflect concerns raised by Dr. Cyrenne, a report in the Free Press.

Today, we are learning once again just how serious some of the potential problems from the dramatic increase in gambling that has taken place in Manitoba can be. There is a Nova Scotian expert who stated that electronic gambling is a colossal catastrophic calamity for the next generation, further went on to suggest that there is compelling evidence that in fact youngsters are gambling in unprecedented numbers.

I would like to ask the Minister responsible for Lotteries why there is virtually no reference, in fact there is only one brief reference to problems with gambling amongst young people in the \$118,000 worth of reports that were commissioned by the Lotteries commission.

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): I will remind the member for Thompson that we are the only province in Canada to do not one but two studies on the whole issue of problem gaming and problems arising as a result of gaming activities. We did one in 1993 by Dr. Rachel Volberg and we did a follow-up study in 1995, which I have provided him a copy of and I encourage him to read that document.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, will the Minister of Lotteries perhaps read the recommendation from the Health of Manitoba's Children report issued this year, March 1995, which pointed to some of the impacts of gambling, the increase in gambling that has been expressed particularly in rural Manitoba which started the process of VLTs and specifically recommends that research be conducted into the impact of gambling on children in rural and northern areas?

Mr. Stefanson: I have outlined to the member for Thompson that we have probably led the nation in terms of the quality and the kind of research that is being done. We have done not one but two studies on problem gaming, unlike any other jurisdiction in Canada. We have also done a significant economic analysis that I provided the member with yesterday, Madam Speaker.

So again, in terms of the kind of research, the quality of research, I do not think Manitoba takes a back seat to any province or any jurisdiction, and we continue to pursue quality information to allow Manitoba Lotteries Corporation and our government to make future policy decisions.

Mr. Ashton: Madam Speaker, a final supplementary: Will the minister admit that the one thing, the only thing that Manitoba has led the way in is a tripling of gambling revenue particularly from VLTs with almost no consideration of the social effects? Will he now constitute the real studies that we need, not the \$118,000 to attack the Free Press and Dr. Cyrenne, but reports on the major impact gambling is having on adolescents and young people?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I will not admit any such thing, and, again, the member for Thompson refuses to listen to answers.

I have informed him about the reports prepared by Dr. Rachel Volberg, the only jurisdiction to have two reports. In that report, when she talks about the problem of pathological gambling she shows in 1993 the level was 4.2 percent, and even with the introduction and expansion of VLTs in entertainment centres the level is 4.3 percent two years later, basically flat during that period of time. So again Manitoba is leading the nation in terms of the quality of information.

The problem with the member for Thompson is he does not read all the information and he only comes back with answers that he wants.

Point of Order

Mr. Ashton: On a point of order, Madam Speaker, Beauschêne is quite clear in terms of Beauschêne's Citation 417 referring that answers should refer to the question raised.

You know, the minister continues to get into these personal comments in terms of listening or not listening. I am not going to comment on his answers in the personal sense. I would appreciate it if he did not do the same. He is out of order, Madam Speaker, and

I would ask if you ask him to give answers to the very serious questions about youth and gambling, not engage in the kind of irrelevant debate he is doing currently.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order, I would remind all members to pick and choose their words carefully. All members in this House are referred to as honourable members.

Winter Roads Norwin Contract

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert's Land): My questions are for the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Over the past two years the department has cut the budget for winter roads in northern communities while spending thousands of dollars on consultant's reports.

This question that I have for the minister is whether or not he has accepted the proposal of Norwin for a long-term contract which will hire local residents and create employment in these remote communities.

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, Norwin had a five-year contract with the department. It expired last year. The department is currently in the process of negotiating a potential agreement with Norwin at a price that is deemed to be appropriate.

* (1040)

Mr. Robinson: A letter was forwarded to Norwin by the minister and it says roughly that in the event that there is no agreement by the end of this month, it would be open to public tender.

I would like to ask the minister, if indeed the Norwin contract is not accepted by this province, does this mean that First Nations people will be shut out and the possibility for local employment not there for the people of these communities?

Mr. Findlay: No, Madam Speaker. If the process leads to opening it for bids, Norwin or any other First Nations company or group that wants to bid can bid.

Highway Construction Projects Capital Spending

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

This past March the minister released a budget showing an expenditure of \$103 million on capital spending. What are the current estimates of how much of that committed spending will in fact be done in the current fiscal year?

Hon. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, over the course of the last two years we have certainly got more of our tendering out earlier because that is what was needed to give the industry advance warning as to what the projects were. This summer has been an excellent summer for construction because it has been dry, and I would expect because of that, because of those two events, the whole budget will be expended.

Certainly, it is very difficult to be absolutely sure at this time because projects are in the cleanup phases, but we fully expect the budget to be expended.

Mr. Jennissen: Will the minister today guarantee that the projects identified in the Estimates as part of the capital spending for 1995-96 will in fact proceed, weather and equipment permitting?

Mr. Findlay: Madam Speaker, the member should be aware that at any given time we might have about two times the budget out in front of the industry in various stages, but the amount that could be expended in any one year is only the total of the printed budget.

Department of Highways and Transportation Layoffs

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Will the minister tell the House whether any of the over 125 Highways department staff being laid off are being cut to save money which is being diverted to pay for the forest fires or flooding?

Mr. Glen Findlay (Minister of Highways and Transportation): Madam Speaker, notice has been

given that there will be some layoffs and it is again due to the same reason as I mentioned before. The projects proceeded rapidly and early in the year. Now the department management finds that there is not enough work to keep them fully employed through the period of January, February, March. It is very difficult to keep people employed if the work has all been completed and that is the circumstance that exists.

The number that will be affected is still unknown and the length of time that the layoffs may be in place is still unknown, but I understand that no matter who is laid off, the recall will be April 1.

Immigrant Referral Centre Government Evaluation

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Madam Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship.

Last week the minister indicated to the House that he had allocated resources to evaluate the new immigrant assessment centre. He also stated that he felt it was a more efficient way and immigrants would be better served if the province took the lead in providing these services.

Will his department's evaluation be directed towards delivering this service, as an example of the province taking responsibility in this area, and call a meeting of those partners and the service providers?

Hon. Harold Gillehammer (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship): I appreciate the former trustee from Winnipeg No. 1 School Division is still advocating for her former division.

That centre that the member speaks about is under consideration. We have dedicated some staff time and resources to working with a number of the groups within the settlement community, and I would hope that some of the issues around that will be resolved in the near future.

Ms. Mihychuk: Will the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship, who is a former principal, indicate to the House, will the evaluation also include co-

ordinating with the Department of Education who has cut—indicated to immigrants that she is not willing to fund the ESL portion of this project?

Mr. Gillehammer: Madam Speaker, as I indicated to the honourable member a week or so ago our funding for ESL programming in Manitoba has remained stable. The problem with some of the funding lies with the federal government. They are on a course to withdraw that funding.

I have indicated to her before that the province does not have the ability to backfill for these federal cuts.

Ms. Mihychuk: I have a final supplementary to the minister.

Will the minister ensure that the bungling displayed by the Department of Education, in terms of the student loans process, will not occur in the provision of services for new immigrant families in a project that has been proven to be effective and exists in York and in B.C.?

Mr. Gillehammer Madam Speaker, the honourable member, who sits with so many bunglers in that particular caucus, I am sure is having difficulty sorting some of these issues out.

I would point out to the honourable member that our resources that have been dedicated towards ESL in settlement issues have remained stable.

VLT Revenues Dauphin Statistics

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Yesterday, the Minister of Finance confirmed that cabinet knew the community-by-community breakdown of VLT revenues in November of 1994 and refused to release Dauphin's figures.

Since Dauphin does have more than four sites, why did the minister withhold from the people of Dauphin these VLT figures until after the provincial election?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries

Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, I answered a very similar question yesterday in committee put forward by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton).

To put the record straight, the information was available at the end of November on a site-by-site basis, but based on discussions with the Ombudsman it was determined that there was a need for third-party confidentiality and that therefore only communities that had four or more sites should have the information provided on a community-by-community basis. That was done on a province-wide basis.

At the same time it was determined that in terms of providing all of the information it should also show funds going back into communities. Ultimately that report was produced, submitted and released immediately in June of this year.

Deficit Reduction

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Why is it that communities such as Dauphin, Flin Flon and Thompson make such a high per capita contribution toward the provincial debt while areas such as Pembina and Springfield who have cabinet ministers pay so little?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, what a totally ridiculous question. The member knows if he looks at the analysis that communities have an opportunity to apply for programs whether it is the REDI program or Community Places and so on. Based on that, there is an amount available to be distributed on a proportionate basis.

The good news, Madam Speaker, is I think the people of Dauphin and Flin Flon take the deficit seriously. They want to see the deficit eliminated here in Manitoba, unlike members of the NDP, and that is why they are on that side of the House.

Gambling Addiction Treatment Programs

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, will the minister admit that the \$118,000 he spent

commissioning reports to criticize the independent report of Phillipe Cyrenne would have been much better spent counselling the thousands of people addicted to this government's slot machines?

*(1050)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Madam Speaker, I will admit no such thing and I wish the member would get his information correct, that that was a report commissioned—and it was indicated to the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) yesterday—by the Manitoba Lotteries Corporation.

In terms of meeting the needs of people with problems or educating the public, we provided the Manitoba Addictions Foundation originally with \$2.5 million over five years. They came back and asked for another \$416,000 and that funding support was provided, Madam Speaker, because we take that issue very seriously and will attach the resources that are required to educate, to counsel and to deal with any potential problems with gaming.

Poverty Rate Calculation

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Earlier this week the Minister of Family Services made comments to suggest that people living below the poverty line really are not poor in Manitoba.

I would like to ask the minister to confirm, given that the low-income poverty line is calculated by figuring the total amount of money that people are spending for basic necessities including food, shelter and clothing, more than 56 percent of their income, if that is not the level that this minister is using to determine low-income Manitobans, what level is she proposing?

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Family Services, with a very short response.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): I thank my honourable friend for the question, because it does provide me with the opportunity to clarify exactly what I did say the other day.

Madam Speaker, there are people who live below the poverty line who would be terribly offended if they knew that their children were included in the statistic that says there are so many children living in poverty.

Madam Speaker, there are people who live below the poverty line whose children are well nourished and loved and nurtured. Those children are not living in poverty, although their family income may be low. The children that we need to focus our energies and our efforts on are those children that are living below the poverty line that are neglected and abused and malnourished.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Annual Walk for AIDS

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): I request leave to make a nonpolitical statement.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Osborne have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Ms. McGifford: Madam Speaker, on Sunday, October 1, the annual Walk for AIDS will take place in Winnipeg and in other Canadian cities. The purpose of the walk is to translate hope into action, remember those who have died and raise funds for HIV-AIDS prevention, education, care and treatment.

Last year 300 people and several corporate sponsors raised \$30,000. The goal of the committee this year is to raise \$50,000.

Let those of us who are in the House today remember, as John Donne has told us, no man is an island, entire unto himself. When someone dies from AIDS, the bell tolls for all of us.

Committee Changes

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for La Verendrye (Mr. Sveinson), that the composition of the Standing

Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) for the member for Springfield (Mr. Findlay); the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) for the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render); the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) for the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Jim Ernst (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, with leave of the House, I move, seconded by the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pallister), that for Thursday, October 12, 1995, only, the House will sit from 10 a.m. until 12:30 p.m., and when the House adjourns at 12:30 p.m. on that date, it shall stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m., Monday, October 16.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Ernst: On a matter of House business, I would like to inform the House that the Venture Manitoba Tours Ltd. 1994-95 Financial Statement and Auditor's Report tabled in the House yesterday will be considered by the Standing Committee on Economic Development on October 17, 1995, along with the reports previously referred for that date.

Madam Speaker, would you please call Bill 5, Bill 2, Bill 6 and then the balance of the bills in the order that they are listed on the Order Paper.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 5—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), second reading, Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire), standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

An Honourable Member: Stand.

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

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Madam Speaker, I would just like to add my comments to this debate. Much has already been said on this bill that I concur with, and I am anxious to see this bill passed on to committee to hear public submissions on this bill. So I will just add some few brief comments.

My understanding of this bill is that it has three components. In the current legislation teachers' duties are defined. The amendment adds the duties of principals to allow ministers to make a clear distinction between the roles of the two professions, of the teacher and of the school administrator.

The legislation allows secondly for the creation of advisory councils for school leadership. Councils will have parent, community and business representation to provide advice to school principals on the day-to-day operation of schools.

Thirdly, the most important and controversial component of this bill allows teachers to suspend students from the classroom to re-establish the teacher's control over the classroom.

This bill puts New Directions 3 and 4 from the reformed blueprint into action. This bill reflects the reactive approach that has become the hallmark of this government. It is a knee-jerk response to the problem of unruly and violent behaviour in the classroom.

This response removes the offending student from the classroom and prevents the individual from being a problem for the teacher and other students. It does nothing to address the problem of why such behaviour exists in the first place.

The second part of concern is, where do these students go? There is no requirement for alternative program to be created that these young people could be suspended to. Do we put them out on the street where they become a problem to the community and a problem for law enforcement officers?

The Liberal Party believes that there should be a province-wide code of behaviour. It should be developed with the input of students, teachers, administrators, school trustees and community representatives and not merely by the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) in a regulation as Bill 5 proposes to do.

It should clearly outline the expectation, the consequences, and be flexible enough to incorporate local needs. Many school divisions have developed their own codes, and we should take advantage of their experiences.

This bill does give teachers the authority to suspend students. Formerly only superintendents and principals could suspend students. The Liberal Party is concerned that without a province-wide code of behaviour a policy for suspending students may be different from classroom to classroom. Standards of behaviour should be consistent.

The Liberal Party believes that we will not make our schools safer by suspending students without offering them a place to go. As I said, there must be alternative programs in place.

Regarding the school advisory councils, 86 percent of schools have advisory councils in place now. We are pleased the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) has decided to recognize them. Advisory councils have had a positive impact on Manitoba's educational system. I myself have been involved in school advisory councils both in the elementary and the middle schools, experience at my daughter's schools.

When parents are involved in the education of their children, learning improves, and we have better schools. The make-up and powers of these advisory councils must be clearly outlined to ensure they will reflect the needs of the community and understand their role in the administration and school policy.

As was mentioned earlier, we are concerned about special-interest groups and the way the bill spells out the creation of these advisory councils that a small special-interest group could take over these councils for one year.

So again, I just wanted to add these comments to the bill. I look forward to it passing on to committee where we could hear public submissions. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

* (1100)

Madam Speaker: As agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

**Bill 2—The Balanced Budget,
Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection
and Consequential Amendments Act**

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on second reading, on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), Bill 2, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et apportant des modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett). Stand?

An Honourable Member: Yes, please.

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

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill 2, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act.

We believe, as New Democrats, that we must review the balanced budget legislation in the context of how we run our family finances. This is something that we used to hear a lot about from the government side of this House, and I think that after we have finished this debate, we probably will not hear about that particular argument anymore. I will go into running family finances in more detail later.

In a family, we pay our way for our day-to-day expenses and invest for long-term assets. We believe that if we applied the restrictions that are set out in this

bill to our families, then only the very richest of Manitoba families would be able to function. Families work to balance their budget. We believe that government should too, but we do not believe this legislation is in keeping with running our government like we do in our families.

Under this legislation, only the richest families would be able to buy houses without borrowing for the mortgage. Few families would be able to help their children by paying for their college education. If families ran like this bill proposes, we would see families selling their houses and cars to buy food whenever their income did not meet their expenditures.

In fact, I know of students who were at Red River College and were having difficulty meeting their budget requirements. Because they had mortgage payments, they reduced their expenditures in every other area so that they did not have to sell their house, because they knew that their home was an asset, that it was a long-term investment, and it was the thing that they wanted to protect the most. In fact, one of the stories that I heard was about students going to a food bank in order to help stretch their food budget further so they would not lose their house.

Those are the kind of tough decisions that families are having to make and the sacrifices that families are having to make in Manitoba at this time in order to get a post-secondary education.

I am sure that government members are getting the kind of phone calls that we are getting from students who are saying they cannot get a student loan or, if they have already graduated from university and they have huge student loans on which the interest is piling up and if they do not have a job, their prospects of paying it off are almost zero. So, of course, they are greatly concerned, and they should be, because some of the recent changes have made it very, very difficult to get student loans.

Once again, a student loan is really an investment in the future, because we know that the more education a person has, the more likely they are to get a job and the more likely they are to get a good-paying job, which means that in most cases it is a good investment and

that students are able to pay off the cost of that investment.

The proposals in this bill, though, would not allow most families to balance their finances responsibly. One of the things that New Democrats have always felt strongly about is Crown corporations. However, in a family we do not sell our long-term assets, such as a house, to pay for everyday expenses, but this bill, Bill 2, promises more of the same kind of sleight of hand that we have seen in this year's budget.

In 1994 this government sold McKenzie Seeds, a money-making Crown corporation. I came across a press release from the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) dated March 22, 1991, saying McKenzie Seeds records \$711,000 profit, which was up from 1989 when their profits were \$416,000. So what does this government do but sell Crown corporations, including ones that are making money, in order to pay down the debt. But, of course, once that has been done, they lose the income from future profits.

So, as I was saying, in 1994 this government sold McKenzie Seeds, a money-making Crown corporation, and manipulated that sale so that the proceeds were put against the 1995-96 expenditures of the government. They were not even credited to the year of the sale. Also, a special lottery slush fund was previously credited as an asset of the province, but it was drained and included in the current year's revenue. So this government has really gone to some extraordinary measures to create what is apparently a surplus in this year's budget year, but, according to some of their critics and bond rating companies, it is really a deficit for this year.

So the sleight of hand that they tried to perpetrate on Manitobans—[interjection] Well, the minister from Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) says that bond rating agencies are very supportive. We know that the bond rating agencies are something this government puts great stock in, and they like hearing positive things from bond rating agencies. They just do not like it when a bond rating agency says, not only do you not have a surplus, but you have a deficit. Later on in my speech I actually have the amount of money.

Here it is. The Dominion Bond Rating Service says it is really a deficit of \$96 million, and I am sure that is the kind of news that this Conservative government does not like hearing from bond rating agencies, because they unmask a lie in the budget for this financial year. [interjection] That is why we need a balanced budget to eliminate sleights of hand in the budget. What kind of logic is that?

With this legislation in place, we expect to see more of the same, a desperate sell-off of the provincial resources—our telephone company, our hydro company and our public insurance company—just so the government can show a balanced budget. In fact, many of my constituents and people on my executive have been saying, what is going to happen because of this balanced budget legislation? Are we not going to have terrible cuts in the provincial budget next year, in next April's budget? I have said, well, not necessarily so. We think that there probably are more cuts coming like the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) and his \$19 million cut to the Health Sciences Centre so that children who need drugs, children who have cancer and leukemia, do not have the money to pay for those drugs.

I talked to some of those parents, including the parents who were interviewed by the media yesterday and some of the ones who would not go public because they did not have the courage, including one who is a nurse who did not want to lose her job. One of the parents said that not only were parents having to pay \$3,000 to \$7,000 a year—or the cost of these drugs would be \$3,000 to \$7,000 a year—but one parent said that they paid \$3,400 for drugs for two months and it took them a year and a half to pay off that bill. We think that this is totally undermining the basic concepts of medicare whereby we share these costs as a whole society. We do not burden the individual whose child has cancer or leukemia with the cost of these drugs. We share these costs as a society. That is the purpose of medicare.

I am using this by way of illustration to say that when you have balanced budget legislation, like Bill 2, then the government either has to cut expenses as they are doing in Health—and I use the example of the \$19 million cut to the Health budget this year—and I am

proposing that because of Bill 2, because of balanced budget legislation, that next year the government has two fundamental choices. They can either make more cuts to the health care system, as they are doing with children with cancer and leukemia, and other budget cuts that they are contemplating, like reducing the food allowance for children on city welfare when they standardize the rates.

You know the Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) will not come clean on this, but she is setting the stage just like Mike Harris, the Conservative Premier of Ontario, did. Ontario, where people are now very angry over what is happening with his proposed budget—[interjection] Yes, well, the minister from Minnedosa would probably be rioting in the streets too if he had to live like that and lost that much income because of a Tory cutback

This Minister of Family Services in Manitoba is setting the stage by talking about how high social assistance is in Manitoba compared to other provinces and saying that what children really need is love and the real problem is abuse. She will not admit that she is going to cut the food allowance for children on city welfare, and that is another budget decision that this government is making partly because of cutbacks from the Liberal federal government in Ottawa and partly because of their own balanced budget legislation, but it is going to come.

* (1110)

To get back to what I was saying before, this government has two fundamental choices. They can make cuts such as the examples I have given in Health and the examples I have given in Family Services or they can raise more revenue. I am going to talk about user fees and reducing property tax credits later, but the other alternative is to sell Crown corporations, to sell assets. This could bring in millions or even billions of dollars of revenue.

This government could actually get away with very few cuts in next year's budget by selling Crown corporations, by selling assets. If you look at Manitoba Hydro, if you look at Manitoba Telephone, if you look at MPIC, these Crown corporations have considerable

assets, and if they were to privatize or sell off even parts of them, it could raise millions or billions of dollars in the short term for this government. But the long-term implications are that the people of Manitoba would not have those assets, nor would we have the income from profit-making Crown Corporations. So we cannot support any legislation that will promote the sale of our Crown corporations for a short-term political gain of the Conservative Party.

I would like to discuss also accounting practices. The same practice of selling long-term assets is unacceptable to our rating agencies, as the Conservative government found out during the election when the Dominion Bond Rating Service said that Manitoba's boast of a balanced budget was really a deficit of \$96 million. So once again, we see that the numbers have been fudged in order to win an election, and it is a good thing that we have a Provincial Auditor who can point out the shortcomings of this government—[interjection] And that we have bond rating agencies that the minister from Steinbach likes so much. He talks about the bond rating agencies and how they like this government.

Of course, they like bond rating agencies when they give this government a good review, when they say good things about their budget, but they do not want to hear and they do not want to talk about this; they would rather heckle us when we talk about the Dominion Bond Rating agency who says they have a deficit of \$96 million.

If the member for Steinbach does not agree with my figures or he does not agree with the Dominion Bond Rating agency, he has the opportunity to stand on his feet on a point of order and contradict me and give me some other set of figures. If I can be proven wrong, I will apologize to this House, but since he is not going to rise to his feet to contradict the Dominion Bond Rating agency, then I guess we will need to accept—[interjection]

Just last month, the Canada West Foundation pointed out that a disturbing and confusing part of the Manitoba budget is that the province is reporting a surplus this year, but the tax-supported debt of the province will actually grow this year by \$141 million, over \$166 for

every Manitoban. While this Conservative government says that they are reducing the debt, according to Canada West Foundation, the actual debt of the province will grow this year by \$141 million.

I do not understand how that happens, but it seems to be in contradiction of Bill 2 and the balanced budget legislation. The prediction of a surplus this year was nothing more than creative accounting to slide the Conservatives past the election, and this legislation promises more of this same kind of deceit. I wish I had with me the quote, I think it was from Samuel Clemens who said that there are lies and—how does that go? Lies, lies and damn lies—statistics lies and damn lies.

This is the kind of deceit that is coming from this government when it comes to budget numbers. This is the government that has been out on their numbers by millions of dollars. In fact, it took one of their own members to point out the highest deficit in the history of Manitoba. I can remember when Harold Neufeld, whom we used to call honest Harold, spoke in this Chamber on budget debate, and you could have heard a pin drop while he spoke because he had the honesty to point out that the deficit was at least, I believe he said, a hundred million dollars higher than what the budget numbers showed.

Time has proven him right. The Provincial Auditor has shown that the government and even their projections of their deficit were out considerably. This government has a terrible record when it comes to deficit projections. There are understandable reasons. If the federal transfer payments are down, the budget projections of the deficit could be out. If the economy goes down, the government has less revenue from provincial sales tax, from fuel taxes, possibly from income taxes, or certainly from income taxes if the economy goes down, then the government revenue goes down. This is one of the reasons why their deficit numbers are out, and one of the reasons why deficit numbers are difficult to predict.

When discussing the Filmon government's record on deficit, Manitobans must remember two things. First, the 1988-89 budget that they inherited from the NDP resulted in a budget surplus of \$58 million, something this government refuses to admit. Both the Provincial

Auditor and the Dominion Bond Rating Service confirmed this surplus, a level that has not been matched since. I think in the last 25 years the only two budget surpluses were by the Schreyer government and by the Pawley government, something this government does not want to talk about.

In 1992-93, the province reported the highest deficit in its history, \$742 million according to the Provincial Auditor. Now it is up to \$819 million, the highest deficit in the history of Manitoba. I better write that down for future reference, \$819 million according to the Provincial Auditor, the highest deficit in the history of Manitoba. In their seven years in government, this Conservative government has not yet bettered the achievement based on the budgets set forth by the NDP.

Let us look at the long-term view. This government only takes a short-term view of the future of this province. Gone is the long-term vision of premiers, including Conservative premiers like Roblin, and NDP Premier Schreyer who could see that a timely investment in the present could save more dollars in the future. In the shortsighted view of government finances outlined in this bill, if the shortsighted views were in place when Duff Roblin was Premier—and I am sure that the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) admires Duff Roblin—the floodway would never have been built and each spring thousands of Manitobans would have suffered flood damage to their homes. After all, it was Roblin himself who said, who can say what the monetary cost is of not building a road, a school or a hospital?

I think that that is an obvious thing when it is applied to something like the floodway, that you spend millions of dollars now but you save millions of dollars in the future, and certainly the member responsible for disaster relief should understand that.

So, too, the Schreyer government was prepared to invest in schools and personal care homes so that today we have these assets for the benefits of our parents and our children.

In the last seven years we have borrowed to create The Forks development creating jobs, creating a major

tourist destination and reclaiming our heritage for generations to come. Could we do this if this legislation was in place? Probably not.

In the future we may wish to invest to secure the future of the Churchill spaceport. Could we do that if this legislation was in place or would we doom Churchill's future because of inflexibility?

Under this approach to balanced budgets, most small businesses would be unable to operate. They would be unable to borrow funds for capital improvements and expansions or even to get underway.

According to the government's task force on capital markets, it said the majority of small businesses usually require some debt financing. The report goes on to note that small business used debt financing to purchase capital assets such as buildings and equipment and for current assets and ongoing operating costs. Financing of operating costs is usually by way of loans, mortgages or leases backed by the required level of collateral security.

The example that this government likes to use frequently is that of farmers who are small business people. They are continually pointing out to us that they have several more farmers in their caucus than we have in our caucus. So it is rather appropriate to think that we use farmers and farms as an example of small business. Not only do farmers borrow money from banks to buy land by way of a mortgage—

An Honourable Member: They do that.

Mr. Martindale: —and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) agrees with me. Farmers borrow money from banks and financial institutions to buy equipment. A new tractor might cost over \$100,000. Most farmers cannot afford to save up and buy a \$100,000 tractor.

Many farmers use an operating line of credit in order to put the seed in the ground in the spring. When the harvest comes off the fields and they sell the crop they pay off the operating line of credit, but this government does not seem to take into account that this is a normal practice. They like to talk about balancing the family books but I do not think they would want to use this example. [interjection]

* (1120)

Well, the member for Portage (Mr. Pallister) says that you can have debt and balance your budget. But we are talking about amortizing things over 10 or 20 years which is normally what the province does when they build schools, when they build hospitals, when they build hydro dams.

Even businesses do not operate under the rules that this government proposes. So this government is proposing an economic straightjacket for government that does not apply to household budgets. It does not apply to farmers taking out loans and has not applied in the past to the government investing in capital assets.

I would like to talk a little bit more about family budgeting. Unless a family has large pools of inherited wealth, it must balance its income against its expenses. Manitobans balance their interest, food, clothing and other bills with their income. At the same time, they also budget for a mortgage to buy a house or a loan to help a student get through college. If Manitoba families had to operate like the government proposes to operate, they could not afford to buy a house or to attend university.

I would be interested to know how many Conservative MLAs have credit cards in their pockets or their purses. How many Conservative MLAs have a mortgage on their house, or how many Conservative MLAs used to have a mortgage on their house or on their equipment or on their land? My guess is that the vast majority use credit cards, use credit, have mortgages or have had mortgages in the past. Why? It is because very few people can afford to pay cash for everything, because of convenience. Credit cards are really used for convenience because buying a house is a good investment. It is a good investment to build equity in a house. It is also the best tax shelter in Canada, because there is no tax on capital gains on a house.

So I predict that we probably will not hear Conservative members debating Bill 2 in this Legislature talk about household finances and family finances, which they used to like to talk about when debating the budget. But I think that we have successfully rebutted that argument.

I would like to talk also about inflexibility. The inflexibility of this legislation means that our services will not be able to withstand any minor fluctuations in the economy. If a combination of a drop in metal prices and a reduction in equalization drops provincial revenues by \$200 million, programs will be cut to meet the balanced budget target.

The Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) pointed out in his last budget, a cut of just half that amount in education would be the equivalent of a doubling of college and university fees. So there will be consequences to government program funding. The result of those cuts is a vicious cycle. Fewer costs and increased services mean less people can afford training opportunities. Fewer people being trained means more prolonged unemployment. Prolonged unemployment means higher welfare costs and lower tax revenues, and the cycle continues to spiral downward.

Now there are long-term statistics on this from studies of provincial and federal budgets so that we know that when the economy is expanding and government revenues go up things become very positive, but that when the economy contracts, when the economy gets smaller, it has a huge effect on government. Income tax revenue goes down, revenue from all other sources like fees and fuel taxes goes down, but expenses go up because unemployment insurance costs go up and welfare costs go up. We would also contend that it has an impact on crime and other areas which become an expense to government as well.

That reminds me that I really should discuss in my speech here—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Burrows was recognized to debate Bill 2.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for admonishing people.

But it does remind me that one of the most odious parts of this bill is that it hamstring future governments, that it ties future governments to the

decisions of today. I think this is most undemocratic, that governments only have a mandate for four years and you do not have a mandate to dictate budgets for the next 30 years. That is really out of your purview. We think that it goes against the principles of responsible government. It goes against the principle of the accountability of this government for its term of office. It is undemocratic to tie the hand of a government 30 years from now by the legislation that you are debating today, particularly budgets, because they are done on an annual basis.

This legislation is really quite unusual because it is very rare for a government to repeal a whole bill. It happens quite often that governments amend legislation, but they very rarely repeal a whole bill. You know that this is very unusual legislation, tying the hands of future governments.

Going back to debt costs, we must always look at the full balance sheets, our debts and our assets, when assessing our overall financial situation. Today our costs of debt service are amongst the lowest in the country at 12.7 percent of total expenditures. In exchange, we have roads, schools, hospitals, power plants and much more. Relative to most of Canada, our finances are in good shape, but you would never know this from looking at the Conservative election pamphlets. They like to put out pie charts, and they have been doing this for the last five years in their literature and in their pamphlets, since I have been here, and, of course, it always comes out at election time.

Instead of being up front with Manitobans and telling Manitobans that the debt servicing charge is about 12 cents on the dollar, they have a pie graph that alleges to show that the debt is about 45 cents on the dollar, but, if you examine it closely, it says that this is a percentage of income tax revenue, which does not tell the whole story, does not show the whole picture, because it leaves out all those other sources of government revenue, including the ones that are going up quite steeply, for example, Lotteries Commission revenue. It leaves out all the other kinds of revenue, which amounts to hundreds of millions of dollars.

So they have misled the public through their electioneering by implying that our debt is 45 cents on

the dollar, but, you know, in the small print, if you read it, it says a percentage of income tax revenue. The real figure, the only figure that counts, is to look at the overall debt, which is 12.7 percent of total expenditure. As I have said, it is one of the best in Canada, one of the lowest in the country.

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

I would like to talk briefly about tax increases and the Filmon record. The hypocrisy of the Filmon government's taxpayer protection policies is made clear by their record. In 1992-93, when the government raised taxes by \$400 per family, not one of those taxes would today be subject to the so-called referendum. So there are lots of ways that this government can raise revenue through the backdoor, which, of course, is not mentioned in this legislation. The Premier's own briefing notes from that day indicated that the tax increases were the equivalent of a 5.6 increase in income taxes or 1.4 points of sales tax. Tax credits were reduced, the sales tax was broadened and fuel taxes increased.

It is clear that the intention of the Filmon government is to do more of the same—increase user fees, decrease tax credits and offload costs to municipalities. We have five years of history of the Filmon government doing this since they got their majority in 1990.

What about cuts to services? What this balanced budget bill promises is that no matter what the effect on health care or education, these are the services that will continue to be cut by the Filmon government. In the past, this government has talked about protecting three vital areas and protecting vulnerable Manitobans and protecting people the most in need, but I think they have abandoned that, particularly with this legislation, and now we are seeing huge cuts in health care, \$19 million at the Health Sciences, forcing parents of children with leukemia to pay for the cost of drugs for thousands of dollars a year.

*(1130)

In education, we have seen cuts to school divisions and caps imposed on school boards' ability to raise their own revenue. In Family Services there have been

numerous cuts, particularly in 1993, but continuing since then, and now this government, this Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), is poised, she is preparing the ground, she is sowing the seeds to cut the food allowance for children, which for infants from zero to one is \$130 a month higher than the provincial rate. It is a disgrace to think that this minister would even consider doing that, the provincial Minister of Family Services. [interjection] Well, she has acquired a new nickname this week. I will admit that much.

Despite its election promises that this government may have no choice but to cut more and more of health care services that we depend on—I am sorry, I got that wrong. I should just do it verbatim here. We know what their election promises were. Their election promise, including their TV ad, was to protect health care, that every Manitoban who needed health care was going to get it. Now we are five months from the election and we are seeing the cuts. We are seeing the \$19-million cut to the hospitals. We are seeing parents having to pay for the cost of drugs. It did not take long to break that promise.

It is clear that unless there is a revenue loss of \$250 million or more there will be no exceptions to the balanced budget requirement. The result, according to economic models, is that we lose jobs and we lose services. Of course, when we lose jobs, we lose tax revenue and there is an increased cost to government for social assistance. That is actually one of the reasons why their budget projections were out so much in the past, because the welfare budget projection was out by tens of millions of dollars. This is not the way Manitoba families run their families and it is not the way we should run our government.

With those remarks on the record, I will conclude. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Bill 6—The Public Schools Amendment Act

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Bill 6 (The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles

publiques), on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), standing in the name of the honourable member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk).

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave that this matter remain standing? [agreed]

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad to be able to rise today to put a few words on the record about Bill 6, an amendment to The Public Schools Act.

This is the second of two bills that the Department of Education, the Minister of Education is proposing to the Legislature today. Although both bills have something to recommend them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think they are in themselves an indication of a very thin agenda, at least in a public sense, on the part of this government.

Bill 6 proposes to change some elements of The Public Schools Act to prevent the selling of goods without approval, to apparently prevent certain kinds of trespass and disturbance, and to require or to enable the principal or an authorized officer of the school to have the assistance of the police.

Many of the elements of this act are already covered in parts of other acts, in particular The Petty Trespasses Act, which enables the prosecution of those who unlawfully enter the property of another. Now, the fines in that case are much smaller. What this bill does, I assume, is propose to increase the fines that are already contained within another act.

There are also quite extensive fines that are proposed in this act, and that is something I think that we will want to be discussing with the minister when it comes to committee. Also at the committee, we shall be looking at issues of appeal. One of the most interesting questions, I think, that was raised by the Panel on Education Legislation Reform, that one of the several earlier ministers of Education brought into being, was that there should be proposals and means for investigation of complaints. Recommendation 79 of

that panel on legislative reform argues that school boards should be required to appoint a volunteer or ombudsman for a fixed term to investigate and report on complaints.

It is that kind of public possibility of appeal that I think has been of concern to people in Manitoba. I do have some concerns about this bill and the absence of an appeal process within the bill, and I know that others that I have spoken to also share some of that. Now, it is possible that the minister has had receipt of questions and discussions upon this issue and that she too may be prepared, when we get to committee, to look at this issue again. I just draw to her attention that her own panel on legislative reform did underline that aspect of public accessibility and those sorts of issues.

It is interesting when you look at that panel on legislative reform, which has many, I think, quite valuable suggestions. It was a panel which, I have noted in earlier speeches in the Legislature, spent many months travelling around Manitoba, asking Manitobans for their views on education and for what they thought in 1993 were the most significant issues.

When I looked at Bill 5 and now in looking at Bill 6, I looked in vain for some indication that the issues raised in those bills were at the head of the list of the people of Manitoba when they looked at or were asked about legislation reform in the early 1990s. I find that this part of Bill 6, that is, the increasing the penalties for trespass, really was not at the top of their agenda, so presumably it has become important since.

I know that there have been cases in Winnipeg where there have been a number of principals who have been very concerned about their ability to restrain and to remove disruptive people who are not connected with the school. So I look forward to listening to the minister perhaps discuss some of the evidence that she has for the requirements for this and how this particular bill meets the issues of those who have faced the kinds of problems such as there have been in one or two schools in the city of Winnipeg.

One of the things that I suppose continues to surprise me about this government is their reluctance, perhaps inability, to put any evidence of any kind about any

bill, about any issues, on the record. It is a government which rules by fiat, which rules from the centre, which really is not interested in public discussion. I think just the very way in which they have treated the report of the Panel on Education Legislation Reform, essentially to basically ignore it, is an indication of the store that they have put by public input.

When Mr. White, Roy White presented this report, he spoke, I think, very carefully of the great enthusiasm that people had, the sincerity, the enthusiasm, the quality of their briefs. The people of Manitoba seized the opportunity to make their views known and expressed the government's appreciation for their willingness to listen to them. I think those people, all those hundreds of briefs that were presented and the commissioners themselves, must be extremely disappointed with this government and the way in which they have proceeded with educational changes.

Bill 6 and Bill 5 are the two elements that have come out of this report, and yet this was a group of people who, I think, came with a number of very significant and very useful suggestions for the minister. In fact, one of the things that they did suggest, I think recommendation No. 1, was that The Education Administration Act and The Public Schools Act be integrated into one act, and that this new act be written in simple, clear language and in a format which will enable easy reference. A very valuable suggestion, something which has been done in other jurisdictions—not all jurisdictions, but certainly other ones—and, I think, has been done to the great benefit of the population.

* (1140)

I would urge the minister to consider that first and important recommendation of her own report to the Panel on Education Legislation Reform. Instead, what the government has chosen to do, it went to the election with a couple of bills which were couched in a relatively authoritarian manner that decreed by regulation what kind of school councils could be established, what the laws of suspension would be, and who would be responsible for setting those disciplined standards throughout Manitoba. All of this they were to do by regulation, not by the discussion, not by the

openness that I think was suggested and anticipated by the Panel on Education Legislation Reform.

This bill, however, raises a number of concerns for us, and I look forward to discussing these with people who will be presenting on the bill when it comes to committee, and also, I hope, with the minister herself. One of the items that gives me concern is, and I know that in discussing a bill we do not refer to specific sections, and so to put it in general terms—what I am concerned about is the definition of "trespass." This particular bill allows principals or school boards or their designates, I should say, and I assume in most cases that is going to be principals, to determine trespass on school property.

I do think we need to have a very clear discussion about that because one of the things in the inner city, and that is part of the area that I represent, one of the aspects of inner city life in Winnipeg is that there are relatively few green spaces and that school grounds, school playgrounds, school playground equipment, school playing fields are most important to children in the neighbourhood. Most children have no alternative. Who is to determine "trespass"? Are children who play in the schoolyard, who play basketball up to ten o'clock at night, are they going to be considered trespassers? Who is to determine that, and where is the appeal? Now it is possible in other areas of the province that that is not such an issue, but I do think it will be of great concern to people in my constituency.

Gordon Bell School, for example, had a very intensive and very successful fundraising project that the parents and many people in the community worked on a number of years ago where they put together a good track, a running track. I mean, this is a school which is very centrally located in quite a dense urban area, and they put together the money for a good outdoor track and for outdoor basketball courts, and I believe they also use them for tennis. That was a community effort and it was intended, I believe, for the community, as well.

Many of these school playgrounds, in fact, also have money from Community Places, a government program which I am pleased to see that this government has finally resuscitated as it got close to an election and

decided that it had to have some kind of community action on its election material. They did, of course. It was originally an NDP program and has helped communities right across Manitoba and for a number of years this Conservative government was prepared to let that lapse. But I do congratulate them. I certainly support the reintroduction of Community Places.

Now what I am arguing here is that Community Places and community money has gone into the creation of playing fields, of soccer pitches, of children's climbing frames, that are important not just to the school but to the community because that is the only place that many people in my constituency have to play. If we are to define that as trespass, if a particular principal or a particular school board is to be able to define that as trespass, I think there will be some confusion in the minds of the community. I do think we need to get that straight. I cannot believe that that is the intention of the minister but in writing legislation one must, of course, be aware of all of the possible interpretations that could come from that bill.

I am also concerned, I think, that there is no appeal in this bill, and I think in many areas of school issues we do need an appeal and a public process of appeal. I was pleased to see that in fact the minister's committee on legislation reform also argued for a similar kind of public discussion. The Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties, I know, has drawn this to the attention of the minister and has asked that the right of appeal of accused trespassers to school board should be affirmed. I assume we will be discussing that with the minister when it comes to committee.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe also that this bill has a section which prohibits the selling of goods without prior approval of the school board or of a designated person. I think we do need to have some discussion around that. I would very much look forward to any government member speaking on actually any bill, because we have got what we have got and what they have got into the habit of in this government is, frankly, one minister speaking for perhaps 10 minutes or less and then you hear nothing from the other 20 odd members of their caucus. So that sense of representation and diversity of Manitoba, I think, is lost and I think it is quite regrettable.

I remember the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) giving us a little lecture the other day, quite an interesting one, about the role of private members' bills, but I think he should also turn his attention to the role of debate generally in the House. I believe that there are members on the opposite side who have very valuable experience to bring to bear but who, for some reason or other, are prevented from speaking on various bills.

The ministers, when they present the bills, also do it in a very cursory way, and the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) is no exception. I would have appreciated a greater discussion on the part of the minister of the reasons for this bill. Whom is it to affect? Whose role is it to change? What will be the impact of this on Manitoba schools? This is the minister who is responsible for both The Public Schools Act and for The Education Administration Act and, I think, ought to be able to provide us in introducing bills with some indication of the impact and the changes that it is going to require on the population.

Some of that does get discussed at committee, but committee is perhaps a less accessible forum for the general public. This is the place for general debate. I think it is incumbent upon ministers to explain why they are introducing bills, what is being changed and what the impact will be on the people of Manitoba. The ministers, presumably, are proud of their bills. They believe that they are significant. I think that their speeches and their attitude towards the debate ought to in fact reflect that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that one of the problems that we have with this government is that what we see in the House, what we see in debate, is only a very small part of what in fact is going on in the Department of Education. If you talk to any teacher, principal, superintendent or trustee these days, right across Manitoba, you will know that they are feeling a very great burden of the changes that the Department of Education is requiring so rapidly.

I was struck by a recent comment by the Minister of Education in Ontario, where he said that really what he was out to do was to destabilize the education system,

to create a crisis where one did not exist in order that he would be enabled to put in place more quickly, in a crisis situation, the kind of program that he envisaged. The kind of program that he envisages is not that different from the one that the Tory government in Manitoba has been proceeding to perhaps on a slower basis, given the fact they have so many ministers of Education over there. That has slowed things down a little bit, but it is exactly the same kind of thing, I think, that Premier Harris will be proceeding with.

It is difficult perhaps to avoid the thought that this government, too, has tried to do the same thing. The school boundaries issue and the Action Plan for Reform and the loss of 270 teachers across Manitoba, all of them are having, I think, an enormously destabilizing effect upon education reform. They have the potential to create a crisis where none existed before.

Education is always open to improvement. Every teacher, every class, every lecture, every book, every course, every program, every curriculum can always be improved, but the way to improve it is with co-operation, and that is what I see lacking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in this government. It is reflected, I think, in the bills, where we see a very slender legislative proposal and a great deal of action going on by regulation, by fiat, by the authoritarian direction of the minister.

We see that, for example, in the regulations that are to be proposed for advisory councils on school leadership, the very people who should be looking at trespass and at access to school grounds and to school buildings, yet those are the people who seem to have been excluded from disciplinary policies which will all be set by the minister, who also retains the right to dissolve a duly elected school council anywhere in Manitoba.

So it is that authoritarianism that concerns me, that distance from the people, in spite of the recommendations of their own committee.

* (1150)

I was speaking a minute ago about a section of the act which dealt with selling goods, Section 2 of the act,

which deals with the prohibition of the selling of goods. I think that one does need some clarification, and I am looking for some clarification from the minister.

Many schools have hot dog days. They have sales. They have those local fundraising activities. Some of them are done on a regular basis; some of them are done on an ad hoc basis; and many of them are very successful. Unfortunately, under the conditions created by this government, they are most necessary and are being used for essentials, not for what we might used to think of luxuries.

I am wondering if those kinds of activities, where in fact students are selling to each other or parents are selling to children or parents and teachers are selling to members of the community, will be affected by this act. Is it going to make things more bureaucratic? Is there going to be more red tape that is going to be required for school boards, or can this easily be delegated? What difference will it make? What impact will this have upon the daily and normal functionings of the school? I expect that the minister has considered this, and that she will be explaining this in her speech.

I think it also has an impact upon the kind of commercialization that we have been seeing recently in schools. There are, particularly in education in the larger provinces, whether it is Ontario or Alberta, quite clearly concentrated efforts, concerted attempts by large corporations to ensure that their material enters the school curriculum. We have not seen this to such a great extent in Manitoba, but certainly that presence is there.

I will not name the large corporations because in fact there are quite a number of them who have prepared curriculum, or who are sponsoring particular events at school or are sponsoring competitions within schools. Basically, if we look at some of the arguments that are presented in recent literature on this, what they are after is a captive market. Whether it is through television, whether it is through young people's television in the classroom, whether it is through specific curriculum, whether it is through environmental activities, whether it is simply support for a particular type of billboard for a sports event, they realize that their market lies in young people.

I think this particular section of the act may indeed affect that as well, and I wonder if the minister has given consideration to that and will perhaps clarify that in her thoughts. If indeed it does apply to the preparation of curriculum, if a good, service or merchandise does indeed include curriculum, then I think this section of the bill may have a greater importance than the minister perhaps anticipated.

So it is a bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which I think has some potential to improve elements of school life for Manitobans. It is a bill which, of course, represents in itself only one small part of the changes that are required in education.

As I said before, every element of education can always be improved, but what is important is how we do it. This government talks constantly of partnerships, yet it ignores the recommendations of its own partners, the people of Manitoba, speaking through the panel on legislative reform.

It speaks of parental partnership and yet really envisages no role for parents much beyond a regulatory role, a setting of budgets, a discipline committee perhaps within a school. While those are important, there are so many more ways for parents to be involved.

I notice that the department has produced one book on that, and I commend them for doing that. It is called *Parents in Schools, Partners in Education*, produced in 1994. Some of the ideas in here are reasonable, but, when I compare this to what has been produced by the Saskatchewan trustees or even, for example, by the Canadian Stay in School initiative of the Government of Canada, I find that *Parents in Schools, Partners in Education* is a relatively inaccessible document. It is written in the language of bureaucrats. It is written in the language of, really, administration.

If I could find an example here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps I could. Perhaps this paragraph will do. It is talking about parental involvement in governance. I am quoting: In this form of involvement, parents take on decision-making roles related to planning and policy development in school-related matters such as budgets, curriculum and personnel. Governance practises very

widely in the degree of power that parents have from an advisory role to full responsibility for decision making.

That actually sums up what a great deal of the book is about. I want to compare that to *Parents Welcome* produced by the group in Ottawa that looked at the Stay in School, speaking directly to parents and saying to parents, and I am quoting:

Young children need to know that you believe school is important, that young children need eight to 10 hours of sleep every night, that young children need a nourishing breakfast in the morning, that they need clothing suitable for the weather and that they need playtime with friends and other family members.

This is a very practical book aimed at parents with reading levels that will vary greatly. It has specific activities that you can do with your child that will help in school, such as reading stories out loud, ensuring that you go together to the library for books, watching a television show you both enjoy and then talking about it.

There are so many ways in which parents can be involved in our schools, but what we are seeing from this government, and it is represented in the very thin legislative agenda that they have offered us, is essentially a regulatory role. Parents can be involved in a council, but where is the encouragement for parents to become involved completely or fully in their child's education and to know the kinds of questions that they can ask and to find ways of helping parents to help their children? It is those practical partnerships that parents need to know.

There are so many ways, as other governments, whether it is Saskatchewan or, in this case, the one I was quoting for—was actually, I believe, paid for and initiated by the federal government under Brian Mulroney. I say that word with some trepidation, but, yes, indeed, it was. Far more practical, and I hope that the government will take the next step from *Parents and Schools, Partners in Education* to in fact ensure that they broaden their scope, that they envisage a much broader role for parents in schools and in the education of their children.

Again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems to me that what is really happening in education in Manitoba is not going on in these bills. What is really happening, of course, is that you have an education system which is being put under great stress and crisis by this government, perhaps not quite as callously or as deliberately as the Mike Harris government, and certainly somewhat slower, as we can see at the moment. But the Boundaries Commission, the changes in curriculum, the teacher job loss, all of those I think are destabilizing the situation for parents and children and families and schools across Manitoba, the curriculum in particular.

This government has set a great deal of store by changing the curriculum, and they are doing it very, very rapidly. It is based upon an assumption that you can actually have a finite, perfect curriculum that will be there, and then you just send out updated sheets. That is what they think curriculum is all about, and yet curriculum has to be taught by real teachers in real classrooms.

It has to be a curriculum into which teachers are part of that preparation, where it has been tested and piloted and whereby the Manitoba variations, and we have a very varied province, we have a province with an enormous spread of income, enormous spreads, a great challenge of distance, and we have a province with great multicultural presence as well, so that the testing of curriculum here and the development of curriculum has to be done with the many, many variations in mind. It has to be done co-operatively.

But what we have seen from this government is in fact curriculums—perhaps I can use the English Language Arts curriculum. The English Language Arts curriculum sent out by this government to schools within the last month, a curriculum which is to cover everything from K to 12 for English Language Arts, which in many parts of the schools represents 40 percent of the school day, and this curriculum, the school divisions were given 10 days to look at it and to send back their comments.

This is 10 days in September when schools are dealing with enrollment, when they are dealing with issues of new teachers and new children, a time of,

well, what should I say, continuous involvement. This is a very heavy and difficult time of the year for students and for parents and for teachers. They were given 10 days to look at the curriculum that will be set for the next, what would one assume, five to 10 years in this province.

* (1200)

Well, that simply is not a good use of people's resources; it is not a good use or a good evaluation of all the work that went into that. I acknowledge the work of the staff and others, not only here but in other provinces, that has gone into the preparation of that curriculum. How disappointing it must be for them that across Manitoba English teachers and Language Arts specialists and elementary school teachers were given only 10 days to consider, to meet, to talk, to think about essentially the next five to 10 years of their professional life. That is simply inadequate, and I think it reflects a very, I would say, very backward view of what curriculum is.

However, that is the way in which they are proceeding, and it is the speed which I want to concentrate on here, because it is the speed of curriculum change, the absence of what we used to think of as broadly based consultation, which is putting increasing pressure upon schools. All of this is happening outside of legislation, so that what we debate here in the Legislature is only a very small and a very thin part of what the government is actually doing. When you talk to teachers in the classroom or you talk to parents who are being affected by these changes, these are not the issues that you hear, and, indeed, that is reflected in the minister's panel on legislative reform. What they are concerned about is parental involvement. They are concerned about open discussion of that. They are also concerned about changes to curriculum and being involved in that.

Where is the opportunity, for example, for parents to reflect upon the English language curriculum? I would have thought that a government, which spoke so highly of parental involvement and which went to such troubles to handpick a committee of parents, a forum of parents, even to film that committee of parents just before the election, might have sought some

opportunities for parents relatively broadly to have some input into English language curriculum, but that has not been so. It reflects a particular, I think, push in the department, coming perhaps from the last minister, towards a very rapid change and, I think, a relatively authoritarian change in education reform. It need not be so, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I want to offer the government some alternatives. One of the alternatives that I found most instructive was the report of the royal commission on learning in Ontario. It was done under the previous government, the NDP government, but it was based upon a broader consensus than simply a government edict.

It was not just based upon, as this legislation is, consultations with a handpicked parental group. It was based upon a royal commission composed of Monique Begin and Gerald Cathlin [phonetic], the co-chairs. It included a student; it included somebody from the Catholic school commissions; and it included people who represented the newer multicultural community of Toronto and Ontario.

I think it was a commission which took its job very seriously, and I think it had some very interesting and useful aspects of education to present to Canada generally, not just to Ontario. I contrasted it in my own mind with *Renewing Education: New Directions—A Blueprint for Action*, one of the many pieces of blue Tory literature that we got just before the last election.

The royal commission spoke in general of its concern about the future, anxiety for the future, about the dramatic changes, about the very brutal society of Toryism and the free market combined with a right-wing populism of the Newt Gingrich and Ronald Reagan variety, a very brutal world that has been created by these new governments. Provinces like Ontario and like Manitoba and other provinces have less control over the future than we had in the past, and that has been a deliberately constructed situation.

But the royal commission believed, as do the ministers of Education in Manitoba, that education is something that we can have some control over, an education they saw as something which affected everyone, as did indeed some of the Manitoba

publications as well. But what the Ontario commission reflected was a concern about the increasing disparities within society and the way in which education must address that.

I looked in vain through every multiple page of every government publication on education, and I could find nothing, nothing which indicated that this government had understood the level of child poverty in this province or that it had understood in any way the disparities in background, in education, in income and their impact upon our schools.

It makes you wonder if the ministers really listen to the teachers who must be telling them this on a daily basis because all of those changes in society, the increase in poverty particularly, are being placed at the feet of teachers, and they must deal with it on the front line every day.

I was pleased to see that the royal commission in Ontario recognized that, and it saw that the real crisis in education, as it called it, is caused by societal changes on a large scale, and they recognized that given the kind of society which the new brutal conservatism has created, we have less control over that than we used to.

The Ontario royal commission is, I think, well written and it is written in plain English. I really enjoyed it from that perspective. It is a very accessible document, and I commend the authors of it. In fact, I commend anyone who is able to write in plain English. It is not an easy skill, and it is certainly one that I think we all should pay attention to and develop.

I wish that *Renewing Education: New Directions—*the blueprint and the guide for parents had been written in such a way that it is accessible to more than civil servants because there are some ideas in the Manitoba education reform, there are some ideas in their booklet for parents that are useful and should not be buried in a language and a format which are not particularly open or accessible.

One of the things that struck me about the Ontario royal commission was that it came from 20 months of public discussion and it emphasized, I thought, and

used adjectives such as creative, thoughtful, imaginative, skilled and knowledgeable. That was the kind of education legislative reform that they proposed.

I went by contrast and compared it to the Manitoba documents, and what did I find? I found literate, numerate. Fine, but I also found something called pure literacy and an education which was to be aimed at fitting the employer's mold, that talked about jobs. Important no doubt, but where was the other part of education, the other percentage, the creative, the thoughtful, the imaginative, the skilled and the knowledgeable? That was not something which formed the focus of the Manitoba discussions.

In Ontario equity was an issue, social justice was an issue, and it came from the hearings as well as from the commissioners themselves. Is there anywhere in the Manitoba blueprints for educational reform where equity and social justice form a part of the concerns of this government? Well, I did not have to perhaps do a detailed search, but certainly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this was not the focus of those many documents.

The Ontario government spoke of diversity needs being addressed, and when I referred to Bill 6, I argued the importance of the inner city and the role that the school playgrounds play in the life of the children of the inner city. So those I was pleased and impressed to see, the recognition of the needs of diversity in the Ontario royal commission.

While it is possible, and I think quite likely, that staff in the Department of Education and indeed ministers themselves may recognize the importance of diversity, it is not something which their education plan reflects, and it is something which every Manitoba Minister of Education must take account of.

The Ontario royal commission recognizes the role of wealth and of family in success. That is not something which enters into the deliberations of a Manitoba Minister of Education. They do not seem to recognize that there are disparities, that some children start with a huge advantage and that others start with an enormous disadvantage from which many of them, without extra assistance, which is not forthcoming from this government, will never recover.

The amount of money, the amount of time, the amount of effort that parents and children and schools can put in in the first four or five years of a child's school life will pay dividends over and over again. Nursery school, kindergarten for children who are severely disadvantaged have been shown over and over again to have an enormous impact on the future prospects of that child.

* (1210)

But that is not something that we find reflected in Manitoba documents nor indeed in the legislation which the government is offering us.

The Ontario royal commission actually went to schools. It visited schools right across the province, from nursery schools to kindergartens to French Immersion schools to Catholic schools to public schools in small towns and in communities across Ontario. They saw evidence of poor standards. They recognized that and they reported on it, but they also saw evidence of great teaching. They saw evidence of classrooms where the students were active and participating and were enthusiastic and where learning was taking place every day.

They give examples over and over again of the best practices of the good schools and of the master teachers. What I find so reprehensible about this government in its education reforms is that all that we have heard is an undermining and an attack upon teachers and upon schools and upon school boards. Where is the argument, where is the evidence for the master teachers that we have?

We have to look outside in fact to find that recognition of our master teachers, the recognition of the Peguis School, for example, the recognition of River East school. All of those are coming to us in national and indeed international awards, but that recognition is not coming from this government.

A minister who will stand up and say that we have some of the best schools, some of the best teachers in the country and that we have some of the best practices that can be learned from by every Canadian I think is the Minister of Education that I want to see.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I am very pleased to rise and speak on Bill 6 today, this morning. In a former life I was a school principal and an educator, before I became the MLA for Dauphin. I believe that I am absolutely interconnected with education in Manitoba, having been either a consumer or a participant of some sort in it for the better part of my life. So I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak on a bill, Bill 6, that has to deal with this government's attitude toward education.

The first thing that I want to say is that Bill 6 is a reactive bill. There is nothing proactive about Bill 6. Bill 6 simply reacts to a terrible performance by the Conservative government over the last seven years in the field of education. Bill 6 reacts to the pressures that have been put on the field of education over the last seven years in a very meanspirited kind of a way.

As an educator, I took part in many professional development opportunities; as a teacher and as a school principal, I also did attend many courses at university in which we talked about the way in which individuals think.

Individuals' thinking can be divided up into several levels. The lowest of the levels would include the boot-camp kind of an attitude that I see prevalent in Bill 6. My encouragement to the government and to the minister is to think higher than the lowest level of thinking and think of ways in which you can prevent these kinds of cases from happening before you have to enact the specific measures contained within Bill 6.

The two measures that concern me the most are, No. 1, the increased penalties for trespass, and No. 2, the prohibition of sales and goods at school. I have some concerns, generally speaking, on both of those areas that I will get to a little bit later on before my time runs out.

My first concern is the lack of public input that has gone in in putting together Bill 6. My belief is that, if a truly comprehensive and true effort into collecting public input had been undertaken by this minister or any of the several ministers who have served this government over the last seven years, then they would have learned from parents and from people throughout

the province, including students and teachers and administrators and trustees, that what is needed is not the big-stick approach that is contained in Bill 6, but that a discussion needs to take place of the good, positive ideas, proactive ideas that would prevent the kinds of situations from arising within our public schools that we see happening across the province today. These sorts of events are producing the kind of knee-jerk reactions contained within Bill 6.

My understanding is that one meeting was held with a selected group of parents in order to come up with some ideas that this Conservative government could use to come up with not just Bill 6 but the ideas that were contained in Bill 5, which was previously talked about in this House. I do not think that serves nearly adequately enough to provide the public input that I think is so necessary in creating a topnotch education system in Manitoba.

The gap exists and the gap is widening between what this Conservative government sees in education and what the people of the province actually want their students to attend to in schools. The gap exists in terms of what courses they want their children to be offered, i.e., the curriculum, and also the type of teaching strategies that are actually out there in the classrooms today.

I touched on curriculum there, and I want to be a little more specific in my comments on curriculum. When I was involved in education, I actually gave the Conservative government a great deal of credit for coming up with a course called Skills for Independent Living. I actually sustained a little bit of heat in the community in which I live because I gave a Tory government some credit.

For years and years, there were many of us within education who were actually working out there with kids who pushed the provincial government towards adopting a course that would provide students with the skills that they need to not only just survive and exist within society once they graduate but to actually succeed and flourish—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I would like to advise the honourable member that we are dealing with

Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act. This is not a general discussion on education, but I have not been able to find the curriculum anywhere within this bill. [interjection] The honourable member reminds me back—where it is found. Speak to Bill 6.

Mr. Struthers: I thank the Deputy Speaker for that advice. I will continue to talk about Bill 6 and the need within Bill 6 to address curriculum problems as a form of prevention rather than a form of reacting all the time to situations that exist within our schools.

The advantage of the course Skills for Independent Living is that it was providing guidance, providing advice, providing all kinds of tools that students could use instead of resorting to the kind of disruptive behaviour that Bill 6 tries to deal with.

* (1220)

The advantage of a course with those objectives in mind is that those students then would be able to live themselves within a school setting without having to worry about whether they were going to be charged for trespassing, whether they had to worry about being expelled from school or suspended from classrooms and those sorts of things.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

I wonder where the course Skills for Independent Living is right now, and I also wonder why Bill 6 did not address the problem of a lack of prevention on the part of our school system.

Along this line as well, I was disappointed that Bill 6 did not deal with the kind of cuts that have been happening in education. As a former educator, I know full well that when there are cuts that hit the education system, they are passed down to the school level, and then decisions have to be made at the school on what is going to be cut. Without a doubt, without fail, the first area that gets the axe ends up being guidance—guidance and counselling.

Now it seems to me that instead of using the big-stick approach involved in Bill 6, we should be looking

at opportunities to provide our students with the kind of guidance and counselling necessary to allow them to make up their own minds, to make their own decisions, to choose to act in a nondisruptive way, but what we are doing with Bill 6 is, we are ignoring that whole opportunity.

Not only are we ignoring that opportunity, we are actually encouraging school divisions to act in a reactive type of manner, nothing proactive.

If we are talking about penalties for trespassing and the increases in the amounts of money that we talk on trespassing, then what we are eventually talking about is, again, an increasing role for the school principal. I have made the case over a long period of time that already we are putting too much responsibility on the shoulders of our school administrators, principals and vice-principals, because I know exactly how it works.

We make a law called Bill 6 in this House. The minister takes that law and she passes it on to school boards. School boards take a look at the law, and they say, let us give it to the superintendent. He will administer it in the division. The superintendent turns, takes the law that we have and gives it to the school principal. Now, unfortunately, for the school principal, there is no other way to pass it on. It ends up on the school principal's desk in his office, and he has to deal with it—

An Honourable Member: Or her.

Mr. Struthers: —or her. Now she, as the school principal, already is in charge of running the school, is already in charge of the discipline procedures that the school has, and is already to a point where she is overloaded—

An Honourable Member: Or he.

Mr. Struthers: —or he, sorry. You have to keep everybody happy, right—[interjection] Exactly. It will come back.

About Bill 6, Madam Speaker, the net result of this whole chain of command dumping down to the next chain of command is that it ends up on the school

principal's desk. At the same time, this same provincial government cuts back on the very resources that the school principal needs in which to do his or her job.

The net result, of course, is that the job becomes cumbersome and that the ability of the principal to provide any kind of preventative measures, which, I think, should be included in Bill 6, is not there. The school principal, at every local level in every school in the province, ends up again reacting to situations. That is not something that I think this government should be encouraging.

I think quite often we end up talking in this House about a whole bunch of different issues. I think we end up talking about something like Bill 6 without ever understanding what the impact is going to be on people. Now the first and foremost of these people that we should be concerned with is the student. How is Bill 6 going to impact on each and every individual student in the province of Manitoba? Well, my suggestion here today is that this is going to have a negative impact on the students and their ability to gain a quality education in Manitoba.

We have always been encouraged as educators to throw our schools open to the community, involve community, involve parents, involve all the groups in the community that we should be building bridges with. My worry is that, if we enact Bill 6 as it is standing right now, that kind of community-school relationship will be broken, that we will actually be discouraging people from coming into our schools and taking advantage of the facilities and the courses that are available to us, not just—I think the assumption is being made that this trespass will occur only when schools are not in progress. I would suggest that it has some implications for schools during school hours as well.

I have been to many professional development opportunities, many courses, many school-sponsored events in which we were encouraged to encourage people into our schools. Now, if we are going to start getting schools concerned about the trespassing, my worry is that those people will be turned off from coming to school, and we will start to make our schools very closed, very inward looking and not accessible to the community and to the parents and to students, who

do gain a lot of benefits from extra school and co-curricular activities that our schools currently sponsor.

My colleague, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), talked about the commercialization of schools and the commercialization of education, and I stand here today to agree with what the member for Wolseley has said and to try to put more of a real-life experiential twist to what is going on in our schools. Anyone who could walk into a school gym today is probably going to see a scoreboard with either Coca Cola or Pepsi or some large corporation's logo printed right on the scoreboard.

Now, that may seem innocent enough just on the surface, but I want to tell you that along with that kind of advertising comes a price. You do not let one company put the scoreboard up in your gym and another company run the drinks out of your cafeteria. There is always a price to that, and I do not think those are the kinds of attitudes we should be looking toward in school.

I think the commercialization of our schools has gone too far, and I worry that Bill 6 is not addressing those kinds of problems. I worry that the cuts that we are experiencing in schools these days throughout public education by this government are going to encourage more and more commercialization of schools as they move in to fill in where the provincial government is backing out. That is a trend that has been happening in schools over the course of the seven years of this government. I think it is something that this government should be taking a lot more seriously than what it is, and I would have hoped to have seen something in Bill 6 to combat against that.

I am also concerned with the ability of local communities to make decisions in light of the provisions of Bill 6. I do not think Bill 6 takes into consideration the unique differences that we experience from one region to the next in this province, even more specifically from one school division to the next.

We have all got different abilities from one division to the next to fund the programs that we would like to fund in our schools. We have got different and varying abilities to raise taxes locally to do those sorts of things.

Bill 6 does not take into consideration the unique differences from one division and one region to the next in our Manitoba education.

Again, my most pressing concern in the whole area of education and Bill 6 is the lack of public input. This is something that I think local schools have taken upon themselves to try to provide. I think that local school divisions have done some very innovative, some very tireless efforts in collecting the opinions of their parents, and not just parents, but all people in the community.

They have done some very good outreach programs on a school-and-division basis to bring people into the communities. My worry is that the provincial government is not doing the same thing. My worry—

* (1230)

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 21 minutes remaining.

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, September 29, 1995

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