



Second Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
Standing Committee
on
Law Amendments

Chairperson
Mr. David Newman
Constituency of Riel



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

Name	Constituency	Party
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert, Hon.	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
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PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupert'sland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA
THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AMENDMENTS

Thursday, October 10, 1996

TIME – 7 p.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. David Newman (Riel)

VICE-CHAIRPERSON – Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain)

ATTENDANCE - 11 – QUORUM - 6

Members of the Committee present:

Hon. Mr. Downey, Hon. Mrs. Mitchelson, Hon. Mr. Reimer

Messrs. Dyck, Lathlin, Martindale, Ms. McGifford, Mr. Newman, Mrs. Render, Messrs. Sale, Tweed

WITNESSES:

Ms. Theresa Ducharme, People in Equal Participation Inc.

Ms. Joan Johannson, Canadian Association of the Non-Employed

Ms. Donna Ansell, Private Citizen

Mr. Sid Frankel, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and U of M Faculty of Social Work

Ms. Ellen Kruger, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and U of M Faculty of Social Work

Ms. Annie Marie Partanen, Private Citizen

Ms. Michelle Forrest, Private Citizen

Mr. Glen Murray, Councillor, Fort Rouge Ward, City of Winnipeg

Mr. Jim Finlay, Community Action on Poverty

Ms. Pauline Riley, Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women

Mr. Allen Bleich, Canadian Union of Public Employees of Manitoba

Mr. Brent Rosnoski, Manager of Intergovernmental Affairs, City of Winnipeg

Ms. Leslie King, Director of Social Services, City of Winnipeg

Mr. Paul Moist, Local 500, Canadian Union of Public Employees

Mr. Doug Lambier, Private Citizen

Mr. Raymond Blue, Private Citizen

Mr. William Seymour, Choices

Ms. Valerie Price, Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties

Ms. Alison Norberg, Church in Society Committee, Winnipeg Presbytery, United Church of Canada

Mr. Garry Loewen, Church in Society Committee, Winnipeg Presbytery, United Church of Canada

Ms. Mary Ross, Inner City Ministries, Volunteer Project

Ms. Tammy Sutherland, Inner City Ministries, Volunteer Project

Ms. Denise Flett, West Broadway Community Ministry

Mr. Raymond Despatis, West Broadway Community Ministry

Ms. Sharon Olson, Private Citizen

Ms. Kristine Barr, Manitoba Young New Democrats

Ms. Catharin Johannson, Manitoba Young New Democrats

Ms. Susan Bruce, Private Citizen

MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:

Bill 36—The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Chairperson: Good evening. Will the Standing Committee on Law Amendments please come to order.

This evening the committee will be considering Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. Before the committee can proceed with its business it must elect a Vice-Chairperson. Are there any nominations?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Chairman, I would nominate Mr. Tweed.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Tweed has been nominated. Are there any other nominations? Seeing none, Mr. Tweed is elected as the Vice-Chairperson for the committee.

To date, we have had a number of presenters registered to speak to the bill referred to for this evening. I will now read aloud the names of the persons who have preregistered to make a presentation. The persons registered to speak are Joan Johannson, Donna Ansell, a spokesman to be named for the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg, Fiona Muldrew, Lorna Wilson, Frances Evers, Annie Marie Partanen, Michelle Forrest, Councillor Glen Murray, Jim Finlay, Cheryl Bryton, Pauline Riley, a spokesperson to be named for the Canadian Union of Public Employees of Manitoba, Leslie King and Brent Rosnoski, Paul Moist, Doug Lambier, Kay Slaunwhite, Raymond Blue, Theresa Ducharme, William Seymour, Valerie Price, Alison Norberg, Tammy Sutherland, Margot LaVoie, Deborah Graham, Morgan Brock, Rhonda Chorney, Eric Cote, Marlene Vieno, Denise Flett, Paul Mallea, who is an out-of-town presenter, spokesperson to be named for the Village Clinic, Julia Segal, Karen Tjaden, also an out-of-town presenter, Monique Foucart, Louise Simbandumwe, Dr. Mary Pankiw, Sharon Olson, Yvonne Naismith and Irene Sale, Kristine Barr and Catharin Johannson, Linda Churchill, Susan Bruce, Bonnie Caldwell, Kathy Sinclair, and a person who has not preregistered but who has walked in this evening and has now registered, Sylvia Bector.

If there are any other persons in attendance today who would like to speak to the bill and whose name does not appear on the list of presenters, would you please register with the Chamber branch personnel at the table at the rear of the room and your name will be added to the list. In addition, I would like to remind those presenters wishing to hand out written copies of their briefs to the committee that 15 copies are required. If assistance in making the required number of copies is needed, please contact either the Chamber branch personnel or the Clerk Assistant and the copies will be made for you.

Did the committee wish to establish a time limit on presentations heard this evening?

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Chairperson, before we do that I would like to recommend that we establish a reasonable time to adjourn tonight, and I

would like to suggest midnight. We have 45 presenters, but the government House leader has taken steps to accommodate people by scheduling another hearing tomorrow morning starting at nine o'clock if necessary. I think rather than stay here—it does not matter to us; we get paid to be here—but rather than keep these people here till three or four or five o'clock in the morning, I would recommend that we adjourn at a reasonable hour, like midnight, and resume the committee hearing tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Chairman, I would, I think, just in the interest of fairness of the people who have shown up tonight that perhaps we proceed with some time limits based on presentation and question and see how the evening presents itself before we put closure on the end time.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I think I would like to speak against that. I know that the briefs are various lengths. I know that, for example, one person has a one-page brief. I also see from the list that there are presenters here like the Social Planning Council that I expect will have more lengthy briefs, and I think it will all even out. I would be opposed to limiting the right of anyone here to speak. I know I was in the committee a few days ago and one of the government members tried to limit presentations to 10 minutes. I think that would be most unfair given the importance of this bill. These are probably the most major changes to social assistance legislation in Manitoba in decades, and to limit presentations to 10 minutes would be very unfair to people here who want to tell their stories, to people who have more lengthy presentations—I presume the City of Winnipeg and the city councillor will have longer presentations—and I think we should hear everyone according to the length that they have prepared to speak.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Well, just to add to what Mr. Martindale was saying, I know that members opposite have chosen not to debate the bills, but that does not mean that other citizens in Manitoba have made the same choice. I think, as well, regarding the closing hour, I am sure that there are single parents who are making presentations tonight who would much better be able to make accommodations for their children if they knew, for example, that we would wrap up tonight by 12. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: I am hoping that the committee can come to an agreement on this on relatively short order because we are taking up time, of course, of the presenters.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, I would like to make a motion that we limit presentation and debate and question on this to 15 minutes per presenter in order to create fairness to the people who are sitting here. They will know, based on the schedule that they have been presented with, at what time approximately they will be asked to make their presentations, as we have, I would suggest, in several of the other committees that we have sat on and also basically in accordance with the rules of the House where each member is accorded a time limit to make their presentations.

Mrs. Shirley Render (St. Vital): Well, I was going to just put out as a suggestion that perhaps if there are moms with children here tonight, maybe there might be some allowance made to move them up farther. I do not know whether that would help matters at all.

Mr. Chairperson: I will point out that at the moment I have already had an indication that Ms. Theresa Ducharme, who has had her hand up at the back the last few moments, probably to tell us that she has a time constraint due to having to rely on suitable transportation, and she has expressed the hope that maybe there will be agreement that she could be moved up the list of presenters with the collective approval of the group here.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Mr. Chairperson, I oppose the motion. Simple arithmetic suggests that by midnight only 20 people could be heard if we had started 10 minutes ago, and there are 46 on the list. Many of the people who are here use public transit to get home. Many of the people who are here have families and have to work. They are not people who have a great deal of leisure time. Survival is a difficult matter for them. So, to suggest that they should sit here until three or four in the morning to accommodate a timetable that they had no say in making, I think is discourteous. It is insensitive to the real world in which they live, which is a difficult world. So I think it would be very bad for any kind of sense that this Legislature is concerned about public dignity, it is concerned about the dignity of its citizens and any sense of civility, to require people to sit past

midnight. The time limit is something I oppose as well, Mr. Chairperson, but the notion of not being willing to set a humane adjournment time, considering the nature of this bill and its impact on people's lives, I think is simply unconscionable.

* (1910)

Mr. Tweed: I believe I have put forward a motion, and I would ask that the question be called.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Tweed has moved that there be a 15-minute time limit for presentations and questions and answers of presenters, so it would be 15 minutes inclusive.

Voice Vote

Mr. Chairperson: All in favour of the motion, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Chairperson: All opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Chairperson: The Yeas have it.

Mr. Martindale: I request a counted vote.

Formal Vote

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 6, Nays 4.

Mr. Chairperson: The motion carries 6 to 4.

We can now proceed. There will be then a 15-minute time limit for submissions. Did the committee wish to hear from out-of-town presenters first? [agreed]

Did the committee wish to indicate at this point how late it is willing to sit this evening?

Mr. Tweed: I believe that, again, as I stated earlier, I think that as we approach that time frame it should be at the discretion of the Chairman to make a suggestion as we proceed through the evening, not set the time limit at this point.

Mr. Chairperson: Can that be agreed, Mr. Sale? I appreciate you have your hand up, but just to save everybody time, if we approach that time and there are some people that want to stay beyond that time and get it done rather than come back tomorrow, perhaps because they cannot be heard tomorrow, would that be a satisfactory resolution?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, no, it would not for the following reason: that people have lives to lead, they have work to go to, they have children to care for, and to suggest to them that they should sit here past a particular time when they have no idea whether they are going to speak before nine o'clock tomorrow morning or not is simply unreasonable.

We are not dealing with people who are always in complete control of their own lives. They cannot make some of those decisions. They are not theirs to make because they have children, they have jobs. So I think that Mr. Tweed has suggested that you suggest an adjournment time. The people in the room can do arithmetic. They know full well that if they are thirtieth or whatever on the list and we are taking 15 minutes or so for each presentation, they are not going to be heard before midnight, and they can come back tomorrow morning.

I see the minister is agreeing. I hope that the committee would also agree and do the humane thing. I wish you would suggest an adjournment time that is fixed so that people who are here can govern themselves accordingly.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, it is up to the committee to come to some resolve on this. That is the process we are going through at the moment.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I agree with my colleague that we should adjourn at twelve o'clock. It will be approximately halfway through at twelve o'clock. That is a very reasonable time to adjourn, and then people would know whether they are going to be presenting tonight or tomorrow, and then people can decide whether they are going to stay and listen to all the presentations until midnight or go home earlier and be back here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Otherwise, we are going to be making this decision at twelve o'clock, and we will be opposed to it again at twelve o'clock. I

think we should come to an agreement now and adjourn at a reasonable time.

Hon. Bonnie Mitchelson (Minister of Family Services): There have been some good points made around these issues. I do also feel, though, that there may be some people that would prefer to stay tonight and do their presentation, and we are trying to determine for them. I know some of our honourable friends are trying to say that no, they should have to come back tomorrow morning if they cannot get on before 12. I would suggest that, if there are those people that are making presentations that would prefer to stay because they do have other commitments tomorrow, we should accommodate them as well.

So I think that as we move along through the process, if there are those people that would prefer to come back tomorrow morning, maybe they could make that known to the committee clerk, and we can try to accommodate. We want to hear from everyone, but I do think, too, for us to say to people that if they cannot be heard tonight they have to come back tomorrow morning is not fair. If people do want to stay and do want to make their presentations, then I think they should have that opportunity.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, is the committee and is the minister committed to a nine o'clock meeting tomorrow morning regardless? In other words, if people get utter fatigue and leave at one o'clock and there are no more presenters, is the committee going to rise and say, well, we will not have a meeting at nine o'clock, or is the nine o'clock meeting an agreed commitment?

Mrs. Mitchelson: If there are presenters to be heard tomorrow, there will be a nine o'clock meeting.

Mr. Martindale: I will agree to this suggestion by the minister on the understanding that people will be able to present tonight if they cannot come back tomorrow morning but that people who are unlikely to get on tonight, that we will have a committee hearing tomorrow morning at nine o'clock.

Mr. Chairperson: It appears that we then have agreement on that, and thanks all of you for your co-operation and your patience, presenters as well.

We had one indication already then that we had a person that due to time constraints wanted to move up the list. Would it be appropriate, given there is only—it looks like two out-of-town presenters who we have agreed go first if Ms. Ducharme would go third? [agreed]

How did the committee wish to deal with the names of persons who are not in attendance this evening if a person, having registered, does not appear? Would it be agreeable that the names be dropped to the bottom of the list if the person is not in attendance when his or her name is called? [agreed]

If the name is called a second time and there is no response and the person therefore not being present, what is the will of the committee in that situation?

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairnan, I would suggest that not only do people have the ability or the right to make a presentation here tonight, they also have the right to make a written presentation and that we should accept that as such.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I will agree to that suggestion only if it is not like what happened here a few years ago when people's names were read a second time at four o'clock in the morning. If those names will be read at nine o'clock tomorrow then, yes, we will agree with you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: I think everyone at this table is more reasonable than that, and thanks for that comment.

The Clerk is going to go to the back of the room at the moment and will receive indications as to whether anyone wants to be dropped down the list. Otherwise, I will call people in order as follows: Paula Mallea will be the first presenter, Karen Tjaden would be the second presenter, and Theresa Ducharme would be the third, and then we start with the list unless it is agreed otherwise by you in association with the Clerk. [agreed]

I would like to call then on Paula Mallea. Paula Mallea, would you please come forward. Is Paula Mallea not here? Has there been a call for Paula Mallea? Paul Mallea not here, she will then be dropped to the end of the list.

The next call is for Karen Tjaden, Manitoba North-western Ontario Conference of the United Church of Canada.

Floor Comment: Mr. Chairnan, Karen Tjaden is unable to be present this evening. Now, I was to present on her behalf but I am not rural, so I would be happy, now that we know that there is a meeting at nine o'clock, if she could reschedule at that time or in the morning or else just simply left in her current order, which is about 35.

* (1920)

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, what we will do then, if she appears, she will be shown as put at the end of the list for tonight, but if she does not appear tonight and does not have a chance to speak, she will be on tomorrow's list for nine o'clock. Is that agreeable to the committee? [agreed]

The next individual then is Theresa Ducharme. Theresa.

Ms. Theresa Ducharme (People in Equal Participation Inc.): I am a little short for the microphone but my voice is quite strong this evening, being the first speaker.

Thank you for this opportunity of speaking on Bill 36, which is long overdue, and I am glad that I am still alive to have it amended.

I, Theresa Ducharme, on behalf of People in Equal Participation Incorporated, agree with most of the changes proposed to the social assistance act. In fact, I am proud to be here this evening and honoured. I affirm that there needs to be only one system of income assistance as the three current systems overlap and invite abuse from the federal, provincial and the municipal levels of welfare or social assistance.

I am proud to see that we have changed the name to income assistance so that we can all have income and feel proud that we do have a right as citizens to be part and parcel of Canadian citizenship and the financial benefits that we all reap whether we are senior citizens, family allowance or whatever the assistance is. We are part and parcel of equality as we should be.

The province is the logical government to administer this act. We are proud to see that Manitoba will be taking on that responsibility. I believe that is how it will be delivered, is it not?

It is important, your honour, that those receiving income assistance have their cases reviewed annually. I was on the welfare system for about 25 years, but I was not sure if I was interviewed or reviewed or assessed once every 16 years or 15 years or when it came about because I was one of the administrative mess that everybody else was there, and now that I am a married woman for 18 years, I am my husband's responsibility on his income, so I am proud to say that the welfare system should have an annual assessment, not just an annual report as is indicated in the act itself. It says an annual report will be granted, but I am not sure if that is on an annual assistance of reviewing each client or how it will be done so I would like more detail in that fashion because I do not know how it is going to be administered in that fashion. Okay?

It is important that those receiving income assistance have their cases reviewed annually. If this is not done, as is the case with Handi-Transit—I am bringing that in—and the disabled parking permit program, where you are only registered once in a lifetime, there will be misadministration allowing certain individuals to remain on the program who need to be removed.

Just like my mother when she became deceased, if we did not inform the old age pension, they would not have known if she was dead or alive or where she was or how she was still receiving her income if the family did not provide that service or that information. So it has to be done on an annual basis so that people are either registered or they are back at work or they are moving in the direction of future change and future development and stability.

I would strongly advise, under Section 5(1)(a) that the director, who is given power to decide who may or may not receive assistance must be required to consult with medical personnel in charge of those physically or mentally incapacitated, because in the statement itself it says that the director will decide who is a person.

I would like to know if an embryo is going to receive allowance, social assistance or not, because the wording is not adequate to my knowledge or to my physical or mental abilities. So I would like that incorporated, so that the director is not going to be the sole God and parcel of the whole package here. Do you understand what I am trying to say?

Because right now the social assistance act, which will be incorporated into the income act, we cannot leave it in the power of one director. So that is how my interpretation is that he will oversee and precede the Premier and everybody else in power. So please do not let the director have that much power, because every time when I was assessed on welfare or social assistance in my years of encouragement, that when I mentioned that, the person would say, Mrs. Ducharme, we are here to assess you. We will have to find a job.

So I said, if I can get out of this wheelchair and breathe on my own I definitely would find that job because I would like your job. I think I could do it better, and that is how I always left the people who came to assess me when it was once every six years or whatever it was. And they would say, well, we will have to have a doctor's confirmation that you cannot go to work. Oh, lovely.

From the observation of this person coming to interview me, to see that I should stay in the program or not, I did not know what I had to do, or what I did not have to demonstrate on my own behalf as to how I belonged on this program, or could I please stay on this program and not send me out to work, because I would love to take your job.

Your Honour, and all those at this table, I am sure I will give you a challenge in the next election. See, I am planning to run for politics in the upcoming provincial elections, so be prepared for many changes for yourself there. So that is why I am here, amending the social assistance act because I am looking for a job, and I plan on taking your job. How do you like that? So I am starting right at the top.

Floor Comment: Do you want any suggestions as to whose seat you should start with?

Ms. Ducharme: The one at the head of the table.

Mr. Chairperson: I look forward to the challenge. It will be formidable.

Ms. Ducharme: Okay. Well, you have one right here and I have my seat and table ready to go, so I can do a better job because I am halfway there. See? So, continuing good luck with this—and hard work because, please, the negative people and the other ones are hurting

because change is very difficult for all of us and having an amendment or change even when they say, okay, now you are an adult, you must find a job, mom and dad cannot look after you, you have to do things on your own. Thank God, we are not a little bird where the mother pushes you out of the nest, and you have to go flying whether you have wings or not.

So that is exactly what this Social Allowances Act becoming the income act is positive action for future change. It can only be the purpose and the positive that is going to come out with people like myself and others who cannot walk, cannot breathe, cannot move a muscle, and yet I am giving a job to a young lady, to others to care for me so I can do a darn good job, better than any one of you. So there you go. That is my sales pitch for the future, so there you go.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks very, very much for your presentation.

Ms. Ducharme: Do you have any questions?

Mr. Chairperson: Are there any questions by members of the committee?

Ms. Ducharme: Anybody awake to ask me a question?

Mr. Chairperson: They are all awake, and you have done so well with your presentation. You have made it very clear.

Ms. Ducharme: Mr. Newman, Chairman, I am also going to leave you 10 ballpoint pens. We are selling ballpoint pens for our PEP organization, and you did not say that there are no solicitations, so they are \$3 each and each member of this board must purchase one. So how do you like that?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation and your very concise presentation.

Ms. Ducharme: So that is my gift to The Social Allowances Act becoming the income act and that is our income for PEP. Do I have your support of leaving those ballpoint pens?

Mr. Chairperson: No. I am afraid I do not have any authority to do that, but the people in the back of the

room would probably be grateful to receive them and maybe some of them would be prepared to make a contribution to you. Thank you very much, Theresa.

Ms. Ducharme: Thank you, love, and no IOU.

Mr. Chairperson: The next presenter is Joan Johansson. Would Joan Johansson please come forward.

Ms. Johansson, you can now proceed with your presentation. Thank you for coming.

* (1930)

Ms. Joan Johansson (Canadian Association of the Non-Employed): Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. This brief was prepared by the Canadian Association of the Non-Employed. All the people that had input into this brief were recipients of social assistance, so the people that actually are on social assistance, we asked them, what do you need to see happen, what do you want to see happen? And that is how this brief was prepared.

We then took the brief to some organizations in the community, and Bonnie Hoffer-Steinnman is here representing the Manitoba Association of Social Workers and the Manitoba Institute of Registered Social Workers, which have endorsed the principles in this brief. She is not speaking, but they have endorsed this brief. Thank you very much.

I will just carry on and read this then. The Canadian Association of the Non-Employed presents the following rights and principles upon which we believe a fair, just and effective income support system can be built. We request that the following rights be written into the social assistance legislation being prepared.

Every individual has the right (1) to an adequate income; (2) to appeal decisions made about their income support; (3) to not be required to work or train for assistance and to freely choose work.

Also, we request the following principles be followed in preparing the legislation: (1) establishment of an advisory council on poverty that includes people living in poverty; (2) a government program that allows people to live in dignity, not destitution; (3) separation of education, training and job search from income support;

and (4) our long-term goal is that income support be in the form of a basic income supplement delivered by the income tax system for every adult aged 18 to 64 years.

I will now elaborate these rights and principles. First, an overview. We recognize the need for reform of the social assistance system. Our recommendations reflect three years of research and discussion with people living in poverty. Canadian workers have suffered greatly from technological change, globalization and public and private downsizing. Thus, a fair and just income support system needs to be devised so that the victims of massive social change are not punished but rather are supported by the community in which they live.

The first right, every individual has the right to an adequate income. Every individual living in our society needs their basic needs met. An adequate income would make it possible for people to have money to cover housing and utilities, food and household supplies, clothing, personal needs, transportation and communication.

In the society that we live in, no one can be a healthy member of their community unless they are able to participate in it. This requires access to transportation and communication. The situation as it is today forces people to rely on food banks to supplement inadequate social assistance.

People should not be forced to rely on a charity to meet their basic needs. As the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 22, everyone, as a member of society, has a right to social security.

Number 2, every individual has the right to appeal decisions made about their income support.

An appeal process is essential in any bureaucratic institution that makes crucial decisions about people's lives. This right to appeal can occur at the place in the system where the issue first arises, or later at an appeal board. Each individual must have the right to have an advocate with him or her at every step of the process, beginning at the initial place of difficulty. If the problem is still not resolved, the person has the right to be heard by an appeal board. In the justice system people can choose to be judged by their peers. The welfare appeal board is made up of people who have likely never

experienced living in poverty and/or living on social assistance. We expect an appeal board to be comprised of people who are the peers of those they are judging. If necessary, financial resources should be available for a person wishing to appeal.

Number 3. Every individual has the right not to be required to work or train for assistance and to freely choose work.

Canada ratified the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Cultural and Social Rights, which states in Article 6, the states parties to the present covenant recognize the right to work, which includes the right of everyone to gain his or her living by work which he or she freely chooses or accepts and will take appropriate steps to safeguard this right.

The practice of requiring people to work or train in order to receive social assistance is commonly called workfare. Workfare and trainfare programs clearly violate this right. We believe that people want to work and to have the opportunity to prepare themselves for work. It is not necessary to force people into training, retraining or workfare programs.

Workfare programs in Canada today have paid people less than minimum wage. Workfare participants are also not covered by employment and health and safety standards. Thus people on workfare programs are not entitled to the same basic rights as other workers.

Workfare has been tried in many states and in three provinces in Canada. In the United States, it has usually been abandoned because workfare programs have proved to be more expensive than simply writing out welfare cheques because of the administrative costs of the program. In practice, in both Canada and the United States, unionized workers have been replaced by unemployed welfare recipients. No new jobs have been created. We have, in effect, created a revolving door. Workfare programs mean that some workers on welfare replace others who are working and the original workers end up on welfare.

Now the principles around delivery of service.

Number 1. Establishment of an advisory council on poverty that includes people living in poverty.

When the Minister of Finance, Eric Stefanson, held a prebudget consultation in Winnipeg on January 23, 1996, one of the recommendations was that an advisory council on poverty be created. Mr. Stefanson, in his letter to CANE, April 30, 1996, states, with respect to the proposal for an advisory council on poverty, I have been informed there are no specific plans for such a council at the present time.

We feel that such a council is a necessary part of any government process to monitor and/or change policy and/or legislation concerning issues related to poverty. This council could reflect the various interest groups within the community. An important component of the council would be people who are actually living in poverty.

Number 2. A government program that allows people to live in dignity, not destitution.

At the present time, the City of Winnipeg Social Assistance Program is a, quote, program of destitution—from the City of Winnipeg. Social assistance programs were supposed to provide sufficient income to live a modest lifestyle and to live with dignity. We expect the government to provide a government program that allows people to live in dignity, not destitution, as the case is today. When benefit levels are determined, the market basket approach as presently used by the City of Winnipeg should be the guideline. This approach means the actual cost of goods and services be taken into account. Currently, reductions have been made in assistance levels that do not have any relationship to the actual cost of goods and services.

Also, certain key issues need to be addressed.

(1) Assets a person can have before qualifying for social assistance. The psychological devastation that is caused by requiring people to use up all financial assets—bank account, cash, RRSPs, insurance policies, et cetera—before receiving social assistance outweighs any short-term savings by the government. As you probably know, now to be on Winnipeg social assistance you have to be left with \$10, and I know that workers will ask people, how much money do you have in your pocket when you go into apply.

* (1940)

We recommend that a person when first applying for social assistance be allowed to have and keep a thousand dollars cash, RRSPs, insurance policies that will not be available to them until they are of retirement age, and a car of modest value. Many jobs require ownership of a car.

(b) Money that people are allowed to keep while on social assistance (1) from a job. If people are working, the cost of working should not be deducted from their welfare. When people are working, they should keep a basic amount for working expenses calculated per day's work, for example, \$7 a day. Going to work should not make people worse off than before. Above the working expenses, the amount deducted from the social assistance benefits should be calculated to permit an increasing individual income up to minimum wage. Thus, when people work they are better off and rewarded for working.

(2) Money from other government programs such as CRISP, SAFFR, 55 Plus are put into place in order to assist low-income families. By denying people on social assistance access to these programs, they are penalized because of their source of income. These people need the amount just as much as other low-income people. The recent changes in the tax credits also penalize people on social assistance. The purpose of the cost of living tax credit and the property tax credit was to redistribute income to the poorest members of society. The poorest members of our society are mostly those receiving social assistance. It makes no sense to penalize these people because they are not part of the labour force.

(3) From child support payments. Here again, low-income people are being put into different categories depending on their source of income. A child has need of this money regardless of the custodial parent's source of income.

(c) Availability of health care—prescriptions, dentist, eye exam, glasses, et cetera. These services should continue to be available.

(d) Special needs. It has long been recognized that special needs occur above the regular monthly expenses. Furniture and household goods need to be repaired or replaced. Children attending school need supplies. Every household has these needs. Therefore, every household should automatically be given a special needs

budget. There should be no need for people to have to make an appointment with their social worker, travel to this appointment, explain the situation and justify the need. A special needs allowance on a regular basis, for example, twice a year, should automatically be given to recipients of social assistance.

(3) Separation of education, training and job search from income support. We recognize the good work done by the City of Winnipeg to assist people on social assistance to re-enter the workforce. However, these programs do not need to be linked to social assistance cheques. In a more efficient social services system, the income support section should be separate from help with education, training and job search. People on assistance should be able to choose and access the resources they need. As well, people not on social assistance should have access to the same resources. There is no reason why such resources should be linked to one's source of income. The federal government recognizes this principle. It is now in the process of putting in place resource centres for people who are job searching. These resource centres are available to everyone in the community.

The assumption has been that a person who requires social assistance also requires the assessment by a social worker. Just because a person has been laid off from their job it does not mean they need to discuss their situation with a social worker. Some people may require resources from the larger community to deal with concerns such as illiteracy, addictions, family issues, et cetera. There are social service agencies set up to deal with these situations.

The best way to help people find the resources they need is to set up community resource centres. These resource centres would be appropriate places to access community resources. All resources, whether employment, education, job search or special needs, could be publicized and available to the whole community through such community resource centres.

Finally, our long-term goal is that income support be in the form of a basic income supplement delivered by the income tax system for every adult aged 18 to 64 years. Overall we believe that many of the inefficiencies of the present system could be eliminated through delivery of income support through the income tax system. Such a

system also makes clear that people have a right to an adequate income and people who are not in the labour force are no longer discriminated against.

We believe that Canadians are a compassionate people. An overwhelming majority of people have continued to maintain that underprivileged Canadians have a right to an adequate income. The Bibby report states that in 1995, 84 percent of Canadians believed that people who are poor have the right to an income adequate to live on.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Johannson. You exceeded your time limit briefly, and I did not interrupt because I knew that you were approaching the end of your presentation.

Mr. Martindale: I have some questions for the presenter.

Mr. Chairperson: I would appreciate it if we could try and keep this brief to honour the commitment to all the presenters at the back and the people at this table.

Mr. Martindale: Under Rights, No. 1: Every individual has a right to an adequate income. Is it your belief that the rates now are inadequate?

Ms. Johannson: Yes, definitely. People are hungry. People are eating only two meals a day.

Mr. Martindale: Do you see your recommendation to use the market-basket approach that is currently used by the city but not by the province as a solution to setting rates that are adequate?

Ms. Johannson: Yes, then the rates would have some relationship to the actual cost of food and clothing and housing.

Mr. Martindale: But do you realize that because the province is taking over city social services that positive feature of the city system is going to disappear in all likelihood?

Ms. Johannson: It does not have to disappear. It is up to the people around this table to make it disappear or to keep it. I cannot believe that—I mean, I do not know how the people that make these laws can believe that anybody can live on \$411 a month.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Martindale, I hope this is your last question.

Mr. Martindale: Yes. Well, you will be pleased to know that I have been promoting the market-basket approach of the City of Winnipeg and recommending it for the provincial government, but that suggestion has been ignored.

I presume that when you say that assistance should be delivered through the income tax system that you mean a kind of guaranteed adequate income? Is that right?

Ms. Johannson: Yes, and it depends how you implement that. You would have to have a whole discussion. We have a paper on that specifically if people are interested in that specifically, the details of how you would do that.

We know that in Manitoba it was tried for three years under the Schreyer government, a program called Mincome, where we had a guaranteed annual income in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Johannson. What I will do, just for the benefit of presenters to follow, is I will indicate when there are three minutes left in your presentation. I also want everyone to know that if you submit a written presentation, it is not necessary to read every word for the sake of having it put on the record because what you say is transcribed, so sometimes you may wish to summarize your presentation. Even though you know it is going to be 15 minutes or more in length, summarize it and leave more time for questions if you wish. So I just leave that open to all of you. Thank you very much, Ms. Johannson, for your very complete presentation.

The next presenter as agreed on the list is Donna Ansell. Donna Ansell, please come forward. You may begin to proceed with your presentation while your brief is being circulated.

Ms. Donna Ansell (Private Citizen): You will notice on the first page I have given you a brief synopsis of my curriculum vitae.

All I am saying is this new program which is being set up for social assistance is not going to work. I have been

on social assistance for four years. I have tried desperately to find a job. There are no jobs out there. All you are going to do is make it even harder for people to find jobs. Jobfare does not work.

When I first went on welfare I was with Community Home Services. That, pardon my English, is a crock of monkeys. All it does is give people no money, take away all their benefits and make them feel like slaves. You think that you are doing us a favour; you are not. You have taken away our pride, our dignity and our self-esteem. I would like to see all of you for six months live on what one person makes. I would love to have somebody give me a \$14,000 increase when I got elected. Most Manitobans and most Canadians have seen a deduction in their salaries. Why does the Conservative government not do the same thing? You are doing a rollback on everybody for 2 percent. Why do you guys not take a 10 percent cut and realize there is real world out there? I would love to be able to live on what you guys get per day, because I can tell you most social assistance recipients would love it. I would love to be able to go out to Le Beaujolais and have a meal. I cannot do it.

* (1950)

Mr. Chairperson: Can I just interject just for a moment. I would appreciate it if the presenters to come and the public at the back would try and restrain themselves from participating in this way. It is not fair to the presenter, and it certainly means that there could be equal time going both ways, and then we could get quite a session going. So this is a time I think to show respect for the presenter and the process, and I would really appreciate your co-operation. Please continue. Thank you.

Ms. Ansell: There is also a new system set up where every two months people on social assistance have to go down to 294 Main Street. This is specifically for people on the city. I was there two months ago, and I was there again yesterday. I was there for five minutes and that cost me \$2.80. That was my money. Nobody gave me a bus ticket. Nobody did anything for me. Two dollars and eighty cents out of a daily issue is a lot of money.

I have basically just covered what I have said in the brief. There is nothing else to say, except you guys are

doing it wrong. Give us dignity. Give us whatever but do not take away anything. I know it is hard. You want to have a balanced budget, but do not balance it on the backs of poor people. It does not work, because if you get poor people, all you have is worse and worse.

Stop and think about it. You could be next in line. Nobody's job is guaranteed. No banks are guaranteed that they are not going to fold. Most of you could not survive on what we get per day. I know you could not. You do not know what it means to be poor, and if you can do it, more power to you, but it takes a lot of getting used to.

Four years ago, I was making \$26,000 a year. I am now making less than \$6,000. That is a \$20,000 drop in salary. I do not know if you guys could do it, but I did it. So that is it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you. Will you now be prepared to entertain questions?

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Ansell, for a very emotional presentation. I think there is a good reason for that, and that is, you have to live on assistance every day and it has an effect on you.

Perhaps you could tell the committee how much you get per day for various items. I understand that it is broken down on your receipt. Maybe you could tell us how much you get for food and how much you get for personal needs and other items per day.

Ms. Ansell: Personal needs is a \$1.96 per day; food is \$3.87 per day; clothing is 96 cents per day; and there is one other item that I cannot think of off the top of my head. You cannot buy anything, clothing for 96 cents. I do not care where you go, whether it be a Salvation Army, wherever, you cannot buy anything for 96 cents.

Mr. Martindale: You issued a challenge for all of us to try and live on these kinds of rates, and I think it is probably the kind of challenge that all of us should take up.

You referred to the people around this table as "you guys." We will ignore the guys part, but you did lump us all together. I want you to know that the people on this side of the table are all in the NDP caucus and we will be

voting against this bill. This is a government bill, and we are not supporting it.

Ms. Ansell: Thank you.

Mr. Martindale: Oh, one more thing. I do not know if you are aware of it, but we tried to vote against the salary increase that MLAs got when civil servants got a decrease. It did not come to a vote, but I believe we wrote to the Clerk of the Legislature saying that we thought that MLAs should take the same kind of rollback that civil servants got, but the government using its majority gave all of us here a raise. But your point is well taken.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, you made some references to the difficulties of job search and the costs. Could you just talk briefly about the kind of efforts and costs involved in trying to put a day in looking for work?

Ms. Ansell: Well, there is your bus fare. Bus passes are either \$52 a month or you go buy bus tickets which are 10 for \$13.50. You have to pay to have your resume xeroxed, and most places are 5 cents a sheet, unless you have a place where you can get them done for nothing—it all adds up—plus stamps, plus envelopes. Around the city of Winnipeg you are expected to make cold calls. Well, that is very expensive. There is nothing worse than pounding the pavement and going nowhere.

Personally, I do not make them anymore because I have been told by numbers of employers that they are not interested in cold calls; all they will do with my resume is throw it in the garbage. So I have to go through either Canada Employment or the paper, and that means 90 cents per envelope. It all adds up, and this all comes out of my issue. Nobody does this for me; I do it all with my own money.

Mr. Sale: I believe that the proposal is that you would have to make 15 contacts every two weeks. Am I correct in understanding the new proposal?

Ms. Ansell: Actually, it is 15 to 30, depending on you as a person.

Mr. Sale: How long would it take you to make that number of contacts even if they were cold contacts, assuming that you were working flat out? How long, how many trips on a bus would that take?

Ms. Ansell: Depending on what area you go into. If you decide to hit downtown and do one side of Broadway or Portage Avenue, you could do probably 15 in three-quarters of an hour, but the walking—when you are going and doing these cold calls, you have to be dressed appropriately. You cannot walk in jeans and running shoes. You have to be dressed like a professional or a semiprofessional. You cannot walk 15 blocks in high heels. I am sorry, it does not work.

Mr. Sale: Thank you.

Ms. McGifford: Ms. Ansell, I heard you say that there were no supports for your employment search as far as bus fare, as far as xeroxing or preparing resumes. I understand—and I would like you to confirm this if you know—does that also apply to child care?

Ms. Ansell: I am sorry, I cannot confirm that. I do not have any children.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your perspective and sharing with us this evening.

I would like now to call on the next presenter who is a spokesperson to be named for the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. Maybe when you come forward, you could identify yourself and circulate your brief, sir.

Mr. Sid Frankel (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and U of M Faculty of Social Work): Yes, I am Sid Frankel. The brief is being presented on behalf of both the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba and the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg. This is Ellen Kruger, a board member of the Social Planning Council who will participate.

* (2000)

First of all, our brief is being distributed. We think it is a thoughtful brief based on hard analysis of data. We are very sorry that we will not have the opportunity to present it in detail. We think that the decision of the committee and the government in the House has been very unfortunate.

The benefits of this legislation are by no means self-evident, and just to summarize, we think there are three

serious problems. First, we think the legislation will have exactly the opposite impact than that which is intended. It will erode self-sufficiency; it will erode self-confidence; it will erode health; it will erode skills; and it will make it more difficult for people to move into the labour market.

Secondly, it contains harsh and wholly unnecessary penalties. There is strong evidence that social assistance recipients always have been interested in working, work when they can. The problem has nothing to do with the attitudes or behaviours of social assistance recipients. The problem has to do with the supply of jobs, and this is much too convenient a scapegoat.

Thirdly, we think that this legislation invites blatant unfairness. It has an unreasonably huge amount of discretion. The new discretion that is put into place with regard to the director's decisions about reasonableness of seeking work, we think this will lead to unfairness. In the research that has been done on social assistance systems, this kind of discretion generally does lead to unfairness. Operators of the system are much more sensitive to the cost containment desires of their political masters than they are to what the legislation says or to issues of fairness.

We would like to focus on our recommendations. First of all, this bill erodes the guarantees of adequacy of benefits to meet basic necessities. We think the legislation has to go the opposite way. Therefore we recommend that the legislation guarantee an adequate income to meet basic needs, that these be defined as food, clothing, shelter, health and education.

Secondly, we think that the rate-setting method has become a political football and an extremely unfair one. Therefore we recommend that an alternative rate-setting process be implemented, and this should be an independent commission which reports to the Legislature, much like that which establishes MLA salaries, and we hope that recipients do, as well. This will remove benefit level determination from its role as a pawn in electoral politics. We think this is very important.

Thirdly, we recommend that this commission be required to use objective references and regular pricing of goods and services to establish assistance rates which are adequate to meet basic needs in Manitoba, and we have

listed some of those references, some of them produced by departments of this very government.

Fourthly, we recommend that the rates be automatically adjusted to keep pace with inflation as measured by the appropriate categories of the consumer price index. We feel this should be guaranteed in the legislation and that there should be no question.

Secondly, our concerns regarding the broad discretion and the harsh penalties, we recommend that this broad discretion and extreme penalties be removed from the employment requirements. As I have said, we find them harsh, unnecessary and unfair. However, we do feel that supports are necessary to help people attain and maintain employment. Therefore, we think that the legislation should obligate the government to provide affordable child care, subsidized transportation and counselling to help recipients attain and maintain employment.

We recommend a raise in the minimum wage and an enhanced program of income-tested subsidies for the working poor, and we think this would help people to move off of social assistance. Manitoba has a very good income-tested subsidy for the working poor. Unfortunately, it has, over the last 15 years, fallen far behind, where it should be, to make any kind of difference. I am talking about the CRISP program, of course.

We also recommend that the legislation require an Advisory Council on Poverty, that includes those living in poverty, to provide government with some good ideas about how to help people into the labour market. Another recommendation with regard to the movement of the City of Winnipeg tier onto the provincial tier, we feel quite clearly that the way the province delivers social assistance in Winnipeg will be inadequate for city of Winnipeg residents, most of whom are employable. We recommend that if the City of Winnipeg tier is taken over, the province has to develop a more flexible system, a more responsive system and one that contains many more supports for moving people into work.

Finally, with this increased discretion, we are concerned with the very poor appeal system which exists in Manitoba, and this will become even more of a concern if this legislation passes. We are wanting to recommend some changes based upon issues of fairness

and independent tribunals, so we recommend that benefits not be eliminated or decreased until the director's decision is automatically reviewed by the appeal board. This, I think, is a reasonable control on this very large undefined amount of discretion which this legislation provides to the director. We recommend that the legislation guarantee no-cost legal assistance so that recipients have a fair opportunity before this appeal board. We are very concerned with the limitation that the current Social Allowances Act contains with regard to further appeals, so we recommend that Bill 36 contains a provision that establishes further appeal to the courts on matters of fact as well as on matters of law, jurisdiction and public importance.

We are concerned that the decisions of the Social Service Advisory Committee be open to review by the judiciary. Now, we are very concerned that the Social Service Advisory Committee is clearly not an independent tribunal. It is appointed at pleasure by the Governor-General-in-Council and removable at any time by the Governor-General-in-Council. Of course, the Minister of Family Services is effectively the one that makes the appointments and is the one that administers the act, so in a number of ways this violates basic notions of natural justice. Therefore, we recommend that appointments to the appeal board be made by a committee of the Legislature for a set term of five years, that members be removable only for cause and by that committee, and we think this is a very important recommendation.

Finally, we think the government could do something positive to help social assistance recipients integrate into the community and into work, and therefore we recommend that The Social Allowances Act contain a provision that makes it an offence for the following, but not limited to the following: landlords, employers, businesses and institutions, to discriminate on the basis that people are social assistance recipients, notwithstanding whatever is included under human rights legislation.

To summarize, social assistance recipients, other citizens and governments all have a positive interest in enhancing the ability of recipients to work. Harsh and discriminatory measures which encourage insecurity and unfairness are unnecessary; they are ineffective; and they are palpably harmful. Instead of what is now in Bill 36,

The Social Allowances Act should contain (1) a guarantee of benefits adequate to meet basic needs for nutrition, shelter, clothing, health and education; (2) provision of affordable and accessible supports to help recipients attain and maintain employment; (3) recognition and financial support for unremunerated, socially useful volunteer work performed by recipients—we think this can be a real route to employment for many recipients when the labour market does make those jobs available; (4) an improved appeal mechanism which requires automatic preimplementation review of decisions to lower or stop benefits; (5) provision of no-cost legal services guaranteed in the legislation for recipients making appeals; (6) broader appeals of the decisions of the Social Services Advisory Committee; (7) impartial appointments to the Social Services Advisory Committee; (8) the disallowance of discrimination by landlords, employers, companies, institutions and others.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Frankel. Ms. Kruger.

Ms. Ellen Kruger (Social Planning Council of Winnipeg and U of M Faculty of Social Work): Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. I wanted to outline a little bit, in my day-to-day work most of the people with whom I work are social assistance recipients, and I have learned a lot over the past number of years. So we wanted to bring a few personal stories of people without any identifying information, for you to understand how much in need of reform this system is right now.

* (2010)

I am going to speak mainly to the issues that the Social Planning Council addressed around adequacy of funds for food and rent and other necessities and the work incentive program. I will give you an example. For instance, a person with a physical and mental health disability who required additional supplement for his rent for apartment access because of his physical health. He also needed proximity to his child's daycare centre and proximity to a day treatment program. This had been approved by the director of welfare. Because of his physical and mental health needs that he had, he was allowed an additional supplement to the usual rent. However, after six months, when that was reviewed, it was withdrawn, and this appeal did go all the way to the minister. The area

director said that this man would then have to just use a portion of his and his children's food allowance to subsidize his rent. The area director also stated that probably about 70 percent of all of the clients of that particular area already do that, and he would have to do likewise or move to cheaper accommodation in the core area and find new daycare and find new health treatment and, if he could not find something that would adjust to his physical disability, well, that is life.

That is one story that tells you a little bit about how our system is working now. We find people also where there are restrictions now in allowable prescriptions, elimination of over-the-counter health aids. Even when those are prescribed by doctors, they have been now said, sorry, you cannot have it. That means that many people are being forced to choose between food and their nonprescription medication and sometimes between food and their prescription medication because their prescription medication is not on the right list anymore.

We already have spoken to the issue of the fact that food money is totally inadequate, so if you have to use your food money for your medications, you are really in trouble which leads, of course, to food banks. We know, we have a huge proliferation of food banks. In speaking to the people that I know on social assistance, the routine is for many people, you get your cheque, you pay the rent, you pay your bills, you go to the grocery store and you buy a month's worth of groceries, however much you can get for whatever money is left and you hope that nothing else comes up that month because you do not have any other money.

Mr. Chairperson: As promised, there are now three minutes left.

Ms. Kruger: Thank you. Certainly we have dealt with many people that face these kinds of situations. The work assistance program is another program we need to talk about. And speaking about the whole concept of workfare, here is someone that I met, a person who had suffered with mental health problems for 20 years, had lost many jobs due to this illness, had been very hopeful that with retraining he was really coping well, he would find employment again. He completed a course in computer skills but had been unsuccessful in finding employment and finding himself very discouraged. In order to keep up his skills and feel useful, he went back

to the training agency and said, can I help? They said, wonderful, we need someone to help. So he started going there to help others who were learning computer skills because he had been so unlucky.

His welfare worker called. He was not home, and he was not home, and he was not home because he was off doing volunteer work. The welfare worker determined that if he could do volunteer work he could work, so he was cut off welfare. This man, who suffered from mental health problems and had many physical problems, tried to look for work. His health went downhill. He had to quit his volunteer work. He could not find work. He ended up going to a day treatment program for mental health difficulties, could no longer either volunteer or work or barely maintain himself during his day-to-day life.

I think these kinds of things, what we have is a work incentive program that really should be called a disincentive program. People are allowed either to earn 50 bucks a month or they can earn 30 percent of whatever they earn and give everything else back dollar for dollar. Now many people do that because they want to work. However, what happens very often is that once you get on work incentive you have got to report your wages, and they will not issue your next month's cheque until you report your wages. And if you do not get your last cheque on time to put your stub in, then your rent cheque is late, and then your landlord is on your back.

We dealt with a person who had this difficulty, and the landlord started not only harassing this person but then started charging day-by-day late fees. The last contact I had with this person, he said, I think I am going to have to quit this job, I cannot stand the stress of having welfare on my back, late fees, owing bills, and now I owe more money than I ever did when I was on welfare, and I am working full time. I have lost contact with this person, but he may have quit his work because the system is designed to disincent him, to stay where he is, not working.

So I think these kinds of examples speak to the fact that we have a welfare system now that has become harsh, judgmental, insensitive and disrespectful and a system in desperate need of reform. Bill 36 does not do it. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: A couple of quick questions.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): I was wondering here as you were going through your No. 3 recommendation where you are proposing to have a commission establish assistance rates which are adequate and so on, do you have any idea, do you have any data, that would show the gap or the difference between say the price of a dozen eggs and fresh milk, say in Winnipeg, compared to The Pas, for example?

Secondly, I do not really know exactly what the unemployment rate is in Winnipeg, but I know in The Pas it usually hovers around 25 to 30 percent. That is in the town of The Pas, and it is higher as you go out into the outlying areas. So I was wondering, you know when you talk about the price of goods and you have—what did the woman say—\$161 a month, it must be pretty hard.

Mr. Frankel: Two issues. I think we argue for a rational standard about what should be in the market basket, but also for local pricing. The present system does not really allow local pricing. There is a small northern allowance which is clearly inadequate. We have asked many times, and there is no evidence of pricing studies. Even in the city of Winnipeg, on the basis of local pricing rates, the city of Winnipeg rates have historically been higher until they were forced down by this government than the provincial rates in the city. So we agree. I mean, clearly the cost of food is more expensive in The Pas, and we think that rates absolutely must reflect that.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Frankel and Ms. Kruger, for a very comprehensive brief on behalf of the Social Planning Council and the Faculty of Social Work. I regret that, because this government wants to limit freedom of debate and freedom of speech, we will not be able to ask you extensive questions. However, that was their choice.

When you recommend that the broad discretion and extreme penalties be removed, were you thinking of specific provisions in the bill, for example, if you quit a job, education or training or if you refuse a job, education or training, your benefits can be eliminated entirely or reduced by \$50 a month and then \$100 a month?

Mr. Frankel: Yes. I mean, obviously we are concerned with those provisions. We are even more concerned that

the bill leaves so much more to the regulations, which even there do not define very clearly what reasonable attempts to seek work are. That is even more of a concern. There has always been a positive obligation of social assistance recipients to seek work and training, and there have always been efforts by recipients to do so, by and large. There have always been problems of the kind that were just accounted where the department makes some unreasonable accounting. We are very, very concerned, especially with this very broad discretion around reasonable efforts to seek work.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Professor Frankel and Ms. Kruger.

I would now like to call on the next presenter, Fiona Muldrew. Is Fiona Muldrew present?

Floor Comment: She is not here yet.

* (2020)

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. She will then be placed at the bottom of the list. Lorna Wilson, please. Oh, I have a note that Lorna Wilson is unable to attend and has sent in a written submission. Is there agreement from the committee to include this submission in Hansard? [agreed]

I would now like to call on Frances Evers. Is Frances Evers here? Frances Evers not being here, she will be placed at the end of the list.

Annie Marie Partanen. You may proceed, Ms. Partanen.

Ms. Annie Marie Partanen (Private Citizen): The reason I asked to be here today and to be part of this process is because I need to know that you people have a clear understanding of what it is like to be on social assistance.

I kind of just now had a thought about my plastic bag. The ones of us that are on social assistance are probably bringing their briefs in plastic bags from the Foodfare not far from where I live. I had a crazy thought this afternoon. A friend of mine was going to Value Village and to the Salvation Army Thrift Store on Regent. For a crazy moment I thought I would ask her to see if she

could find me some sort of a briefcase that I could use tonight. That is what it is like when you are on social assistance.

I draw from my personal experience and from the experiences of friends and family who are on social assistance. I work as a community rehabilitation worker and my clients are persons with mental illness living in boarding homes throughout the city of Winnipeg. Most of my clients are subsisting on social assistance. I have been a volunteer at Winnipeg Harvest this past year. Most of us at Winnipeg Harvest volunteers are persons on social assistance who are certainly poor people. I work on the referral lines taking calls from people who are not able to buy enough food to feed themselves and their families.

I need to tell you about Jo-Anne, a single mom with a four-year-old son, who is living on social assistance. Each month Jo-Anne receives \$669 from the province and \$102 child tax credit. This year she received \$58.60 income tax refund and her GST refund is \$440. Her total income this year will be \$9,750 or \$812.50 a month. Last year Jo-Anne received \$500 GST refund. Her income tax refund last year was \$352.78. Her income last year was \$842.07 a month. Her income has dropped by \$29.57 per month. That hurt. As your expenses have increased this last year, so have hers. I have included, in my brief, Jo-Anne's shopping list for a month, how she spends her \$669.

Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, repeals the title of The Social Allowances Act to The Employment and Income Assistance Act, but the act still indicates that the province and each municipality may take measures to provide to residents of Manitoba those things and services that are essential to health and well-being, including a basic living allowance, an allowance for shelter, essential health services and a funeral upon death. All this is subject to this act and regulations. The maximum that Jo-Anne is allowed per month for shelter is \$386. Jo-Anne shares the rent for a two-bedroom apartment with a roommate and her shelter costs are \$245 per month, half, of course, of what the apartment rents for. This arrangement allows her to live in a clean, warm and secure building—\$386 per month would not allow that. This arrangement, an obvious benefit to Jo-Anne

and a savings to the province, was actively discouraged by the Social Allowances Program worker.

The act refers to the provision of things and services that are essential to health and well-being. I contend that any one of us would have difficulty maintaining our health on the \$73 per week Jo-Anne spends to maintain the health and well-being of herself and her child. There are some among us that feel that recreation and a social life are essential to our well-being. Jo-Anne is unconcerned at this time with her funeral costs.

Winnipeg Harvest helps to feed an average of 16,000 households per month. Union Gospel Mission, a soup kitchen in the city of Winnipeg, served 3,160 meals during the month of August of this year. Jo-Anne has needed to access Winnipeg Harvest for food assistance. When the changes to the Social Services Programs were implemented in May of this year, the calls to Winnipeg Harvest took on an alarming tone of fear and desperation.

A young father of two small children called Harvest. He has been out of work for two years. He has used up his UI benefits, all of his family savings. He has sold his car and is now on city welfare. He has tapped out his family and friends and cannot feed his family. We listen to his story, we offer him support and encouragement and an appointment at a food bank half way across the city. We referred him to a soup kitchen for supper tonight. Can you empathize with this person his desperation?

The honourable minister of social services, Bonnie Mitchelson, in her remarks to the House about Bill 36, refers to reforming a system that fostered dependence and reliance on government and which encouraged a cycle that created generation after generation of families on welfare. You may call this bill anything you like, but please do not buy into the erroneous belief that anyone is on welfare because they choose to be. Please do not buy into the belief that if a person on welfare develops and executes a job search plan that he will find employment. Please do not buy into the belief that if he just tries harder he will get off welfare. No one is on welfare because they choose to be.

Poverty is quite simply not having enough money to meet the basic necessities of life, not being able to afford decent housing, food, clothing, transportation cost, not really having enough. People living on welfare are living

in poverty. The poorest of all, who will be the poorest for the longest time, are female single parents. In Canada, one out of every 25 teenage girls will become pregnant before they turn 20, so a lot of single moms raising their children. Two of every five marriages will end in divorce and, of these, 75 percent will be unable to collect support from their spouses. More than 60 percent of single-parent families live below the poverty line. These same single parents are raising children in substandard housing, poor food and with little hope. These children are not living up to their potential. They are unable to learn as well as children who are not living with poverty. Children living in poverty are sicker more often and take longer to recover from the usual childhood illnesses. Juvenile delinquency and poverty are directly related. Marital discord and socioeconomic circumstances of poverty are being found to be the major contributors to youth misconduct.

I need you to understand the control and intimidation people existing on welfare live with. Persons on welfare must submit to surprise visits from Social Allowances program workers. They may have their homes searched for evidence of their sharing their homes with partners they may not have declared. Their landlords might insist they have their rents paid directly by Social Allowances. Their benefits may be reduced, suspended or discontinued if they fail to comply with employment obligations or fail to undertake an employability enhancement measure. The Social Allowances Program allows a single parent with one child to earn up to \$50 per month. If they earn more their benefits are reduced dollar for dollar. If a single mom is to receive spousal support or child maintenance payments, her benefits are similarly reduced. A major problem arises if her ex spouse is delinquent in making his support payments.

* (2030)

The Social Allowances Program may require you to sell any assets you may have acquired or been given. A social allowances recipient is not allowed to accumulate a savings account and must declare to her financial worker any gifts of value. If a recipient fails to comply with the regulations, his benefits may be suspended or discontinued. It is the golden rule. He who has the gold makes the rules. In no other place in our society are people required to live like this, with this little control or input into decisions that will directly affect their very basic needs.

Jo-Anne's story. I will try to read it. I sometimes get weepy. Jo-Anne's words to me, I asked her if I could get from her a statement: We live from cheque to cheque. Every penny is gone—if my voice begins to crack, just bear with me, I will just keep right on trucking—no clothes are bought, no haircuts, a huge pile of laundry that will never disappear, no light bulbs, no dish detergent left. I would really have liked to take that parenting workshop on discipline but it cost \$28 and I am still using the last of the laundry detergent to wash my dishes. With \$15 for laundry every month at \$2.25 per load, I can do almost seven loads a month. That is only a load and a half a week.

Although I must use some of my food money to do laundry, I have a small child who makes a mess when he eats, occasionally pees his pants and sometimes he wets the bed. I cannot wash my sheets and pillows and blankets. I did not know what I was going to do when my son and I had the stomach flu. He was sick all night. He vomited on our pajamas, the sheets, blankets, pillows, and everywhere else between the bed and the bathroom. If it had not been for a kind neighbour who had noticed we were sick and saw and smelled my pile of sheets by the door and given me some money to wash it, I do not know what we would have done. We happened to get sick in the middle of the month when we did not have any money.

Sometimes people, after having their independence, dignity and self-esteem ripped away, need a little push once in a while to go in the right direction, but to help and encourage clients to create and execute job-search plans? Who on welfare does not know how to look for work? It is awful, you do not forget. It is just like being on welfare, it is awful, you do not forget.

Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson refers to the system as creating a cycle of generation after generation of families on welfare. I was never raised on welfare; I was raised in a middle-class family. So, so close to being poor, you do not realize it. After an incident I cannot change, I went on welfare. I needed to stay with my son and raise him the best I possibly can. Because I am a single parent, but mostly because I am poor, we are in a high-risk group. I have to do all I can to prevent my son from being labelled. Labelling sets limits and heading in the wrong way like into gangs or crime, et cetera.

I believe by being with him and loving him and caring for him, teaching and supporting him, I have set the groundwork for a wonderful, kind and productive member of society. Circumstances led me to welfare, so I could do this. I am thankful for the opportunity, but let me tell you, it is very hard to keep up and do the best I can with what I have. When my life is so controlled and people are trying to rip away my self-esteem, my dignity and pride, what kind of role model for my son does that make me?

Honourable Bonnie Mitchelson refers to jobs in the apparel industry, call centres she indicates she is morally against, and transportation. This placing of welfare recipients in these jobs at minimum wage will take jobs away from those who would otherwise have had them. It makes the vicious job search unequal for everyone. Are more people going to go on welfare to get equal opportunity at a job? It will keep welfare benefits down which keeps the minimum wage down. How can the economy grow and how is that helping?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Partanen. That still gives two minutes for questions.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you for a very good presentation.

On the first page you referred to the GST refund. I am wondering if you really should consider that as income since it is really to replace money that she has already spent. In my opinion, it probably should not be counted as income. It is just a refund from the federal government for a low-income person.

Also, I wonder if you could tell us or expand briefly on the alarming tone of fear and desperation that you detected in the voices and perhaps the stories of people phoning Winnipeg Harvest.

Ms. Partanen: To the \$400 or the \$500 GST refund, it was spendable income for Jo-Anne when she got it, of course; that is why it is included as part of her income.

Winnipeg Harvest, I worked there on a Friday, which is their slowest day—thank you, God. The tone has changed. It did immediately in May with those first couple of city welfare cheques that were reduced. People

were just making it, and now, suddenly, we are going to have to make it with less than they had last month.

It is frightening to think that I just barely got through, I just barely did it, and now I am going to have to do it this month with less money, and fall, with school coming and a thousand things. You hear it in people's voices. They are saying to you, well, lady, what am I going to do? How am I going to feed my children? Like I say, Friday for me—thank you, God, I work a Friday—we have the fewest calls come in on a Friday, and there is a chance to go the bathroom and cry between calls. It is desperate, it is really desperate.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you very much, Ms. Partanen, for your presentation, I found it very moving. I do not have a question, but I have a comment, and I want to thank you particularly for reading into the record the plight of adolescent parents and single female parents. We speak of this situation very often in the Legislature, but, as you can see from this bill, to no avail.

I am glad also that you have highlighted the really ludicrous situation where maintenance support is deducted from social assistance, and when it does not arrive, of course, children suffer. I would like to point out that my caucus proposed an amendment to The Maintenance Enforcement Act in June 1995, whereby this would not happen, whereby support would not be deducted from social assistance but the government rejected it, which made us very sorry. So thank you again for your presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Right on time. Thank you very much, Ms. Partanen. The next presenter, please. That will be Michelle Forrest. Michelle Forrest, you may proceed.

Ms. Michelle Forrest (Private Citizen): Initially, my presentation concerning Bill 36 was designed to explain the ramifications of Bill 36. Then I realized that the proponents of this legislation understood and wanted the inevitable results of this draconian response to unemployment and the resulting devastating poverty.

The focus of the brief changed. As a cultural anthropologist, I have decided to focus on the nature of the bill and will use an analysis of abusive relationships as the motto.

Part 1, individual behaviour, the abusive partner externalizes blame. This means that the reasons they abuse others is always someone else's fault. The abusive partner has a variety of punishments ranging from emotional and psychological abuses to physical violence.

Bill 36 incorporates this type of process. The bill implies that people on welfare do not want to work. The punishment is denying, suspending or reducing income support if the client does not obey the ever-changing rules, cannot find a job or simply leaves an unfair or unsafe workplace. The legislation does not take into account that a person's skills, education or training simply might not meet the current needs of an increasingly difficult job market.

Bill 36 also ensures the increase of physical punishment in the form of hunger, homelessness and isolation for a welfare recipient. The current basic rate for single people, excluding rent and utilities, is \$175 per month or \$6.25 per day in a 28-day cycle of welfare payments. This amount covers food, clothing, personal needs, telephone and transportation. People on welfare will have these benefits reduced by \$50, then \$100 per month if they cannot find a job within the allotted time frames. This will absolutely increase their hunger, homelessness and isolation. Fear of such measures mirrors the victimization felt by an abused spouse.

Like an abusive partner Bill 36 follows a control ritual. From the moment people enter the welfare system, they lose control over their lives. Everything from housing to food, from defining medical needs to training and education is absolutely ruled by others.

Victims of abuse feel that there is no hope and no end to the pain. They often come to believe that they cannot, nor can anyone else stop the erosion of their lives. For people living in poverty, the situation is often the same. Denied dignity, education or training, adequate food and clothing, despair becomes a constant companion. Because others are in control of their lives, they cannot see an end to their pain. When government legislation and actions support and foster such hopelessness, we see a rise in crime, including child abuse, substance abuse and spousal abuse among the poor. But, in this instance, we can blame both the abuser and the victim, avoiding any responsibility for the social ills poverty underscores.

Indeed, we can applaud our efforts to force these unsuccessful people to get jobs.

* (2040)

Part 2, cultural issues, one of the ways our culture supports abusive relationships is the mythology we create about the victim. Everything ranging from "you have made your own bed, now lay in it" to cultural and gender stereotyping becomes part of the cultural framework.

With Bill 36, we see the end result of the mythology government and media "spin-doctoring" have created concerning poverty and people living in poverty. These myths include:

Myth 1: There are lots of jobs; people just do not want to work.

Fact: People on welfare are unemployed people. It is ludicrous for anyone to believe that people want to live in poverty. People want to work and get on with their lives. They have the same goals, ambitions and needs as employed people.

A casual survey of the current unemployment figure should tell you why people are unemployed. A conservative figure for job loss as a result of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, is 850,000 jobs. We have created 350,000 jobs to make up for these losses. That leaves 500,000 people still unemployed from NAFTA alone. When the current economic climate and downsizing by private enterprise and government is factored in, more reasons for unemployment become visible. Everyone simply is one job away from being on welfare.

Myth 2: The establishment of the fraud line creates the fiction that people on welfare are liars, cheats and thieves.

Fact: People on welfare are no different from anyone else. The absolute silence on the part of government concerning the numbers of those convicted of fraud speaks for itself. In reality, the percentage of those who are convicted of abusing welfare is less than the percentage of people convicted of similar offences in the larger culture.

Myth 3: People on welfare are responsible for high taxes.

Fact: What employed people pay towards welfare payments amounts to less than \$30 from their pay annually. This means that employed people give about \$1.20 per pay cheque, if they are paid biweekly, to support welfare payments. This is not excessive to ensure adequate food, shelter and clothing for individuals and families. I would also like to point out that people on welfare pay taxes, too. They pay property taxes through their rents; they pay for social services through tobacco, alcohol and sales tax.

Myth 4: People on welfare are drunks or worse.

Fact: People on welfare are unemployed people. They face the same personal and social issues as employed people.

This casual survey of government mythology concerning unemployed people living on welfare should give us all pause. Like the abusive partner who blames the victim, proponents of Bill 36 would have us all believe that poverty is solely caused by the poor. Abusive partners accept no responsibility for the anguish and physical damage they cause. This government also does not accept any responsibility for the despair, hopelessness or hunger it causes. Abusive partners say the abuse will end if only the victims will do what they are told to do when they are told to do it. However, the rules constantly change. The legislators who would give us Bill 36 say similar words and constantly change the rules, forgetting that many of their victims are too young to understand the rules or are too young for employment enhancement programs.

The acceptance needed by abusive partners and governments only happens when we accept the myths they promote and remain silent in the face of the abuses. I do not believe the myths and I will not be silent. I believe that everyone is entitled to adequate employment. When it is not available, I believe we must provide for the basic needs of people. I also believe that in the face of 8 percent unemployment, a Conservative government estimate, governments and private companies must make job creation a priority.

In closing, I would like to speak directly to the proponents of Bill 36. If you really believe that Bill 36 is the best we can achieve for unemployed people in families, I challenge you to live for one month by the

economic conditions and social justice concepts contained in this legislation. Of course, for you, it will be a fiction and a myth because you have a job.

Thank you so much. Are there any questions?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Forrest.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Forrest, for an excellent brief. I wonder if you could expand on a couple of comments that you made about an increase in homelessness and an increase in crime as a result of this bill. I am wondering if there are reasons for you saying this and also examples, particularly of crime, other than the ones that you gave in your presentation.

Ms. Forrest: I am not sure I heard that as well as I should have.

Mr. Martindale: I am happy to repeat it. I am wondering if you can expand on your comment that this bill will create more homelessness and more crime, and if you could tell us why you think that? Or other examples.

Ms. Forrest: When a government gives itself permission, such absolute permission I might add, to deny welfare to people who are unemployed, perhaps you can tell me where you think they will live, what clothing they will have and where they will get food? Homelessness is a direct result of Bill 36. Direct.

Crime is also. In fact, this morning on CBC I heard a very interesting comment on Information Radio. They were commenting on the absolute tragic death of the young boy that was murdered, perhaps by his father. The doctor that commented on CBC this morning said that we are seeing an alarming increase in these kinds of crimes in Manitoba because of the despair and hopelessness caused by unemployment and the lack of appropriate social and economic supports for people in this province. I wholeheartedly agree.

Mr. Chairperson: For the record, that was Ms. Forrest speaking, not Mr. Sale.

Mr. Sale: Ms. Forrest, I think that you have done a great service by doing a cultural analysis because this is one of the ways in which we perpetuate the kind of structural

injustice of poverty is by living off myths that we create for ourselves, and I think to do that kind of analysis is both appropriate and really helpful.

I wonder if you could comment on one other myth that has always puzzled me, and that is that the rich seem to need low tax rates to stimulate them to work more whereas the poor need extremely high confiscatory tax rates in order to get them to work at all. Is this another myth that we might add to your list?

Ms. Forrest: I think so. The myths that I outlined were only the most glaring ones, the ones however around corporate welfare. I am unsure in Canada how much money is spent on corporate welfare, but in the United States it is \$185 billion. I would think that population percentages, being what they are, you could probably say the same kind of percentage of our gross national product goes into creating corporate welfare which works out to be welfare for those who are adequately clothed, adequately housed, adequately sheltered, and certainly have many supports in place.

Mr. Martindale: I appreciate you attacking the myth of welfare fraud. I am wondering if you know what this minister's figures are on welfare fraud in Manitoba, and how that compares with the literature about welfare fraud in terms of percentages.

Ms. Forrest: I am unsure about the current rates of convictions. The last time I checked they were under 3 percent which certainly does not, to my mind, rate an entire phone line, a staff, a prosecutor and the time of Manitoba courts.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Martindale, three minutes to go.

Mr. Martindale: It is my understanding that most estimates are 3 percent or less, but in Manitoba it is under 1 percent. If you want to make a distinction between fraud and minor offences, there is very little fraud—fraud being a Criminal Code provision and almost nobody is charged under that. So I am glad that you attacked this myth because it is very, very small in terms of percentages in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Forrest, for your presentation.

Ms. Forrest: Thank you for allowing a voice.

Mr. Chairperson: I would like to call on Councillor Glen Murray, please.

* (2050)

Mr. Glen Murray (Councillor, Fort Rouge Ward, City of Winnipeg): I have a brief. The last time I was here, I was here to complement the government on a heritage tax credit initiative. In the seven years that I have been here—I am not sure with such favourable reviews today I regret to tell you—but it has always amazed me when we have come to tax breaks for those who own property and buildings—and I have no problem doing that. I am not anti-investment as you know. The minister and I worked very hard together, and I think successfully. We are not exactly ideological soulmates, but in the political forum I come from, it involves stretches across lines sometimes to achieve things. I just wish the poorest were treated as well as the wealthiest. I want to tell you, I am kind of personally offended as a Manitoban. You see this amount of change. This usually falls out of my pocket when I go and do laundry. This is what you are taking out of my pay cheque this week to support the welfare system. So I just thought I would double my contribution this week.

I want to tell you as well, when I read such specific wording as protections, I came from a family that grew up in poverty. My parents were immigrants. My mother and father grew up in families with nine children in a two-bedroom apartment in the east end of Montreal. Had it not been for social services and literally, because I am adopted, and had I had to grow up in the system that you have created today, with the challenges that you have put before young people and families, I doubt I would have ever succeeded to have created a business and probably employ dozens of people in my life through the jobs and partners that I have had in business and go on to productively contribute to my—fortunately, I had affluent parents and when I was 14 my father phoned a friend of his, the manager of a large department store, and like most affluent middle-class people that you represent, we had the connections that I could work through my teenage years and my father was very Presbyterian and told me at 14 I had better learn how to take care of myself because I was going to have to do it the rest of my life. He was a small “c” conservative businessman in the extreme who

came from great poverty and fortunately had the benefit of those.

So when you take clothing and food out in this bill as a specified right of people who were unemployed, it was redundant because you have already done that. Why have you already done that? I do not know why you need this bill except we are going to play a bureaucratic shuffle that you say is cost-neutral, that is not going to save the city or you any money, because five years ago if you were a single person you got \$5,479. Ten years ago, you got \$4,214. Today, in 1996 dollars, those constant dollars, you are getting \$3,155. That is the real income. Do you know anyone who has seen an income decline in the last decade like that? Would you work today as an MLA for that kind of pay cut, 40 percent roughly in real spending power? No, you would not. You just gave yourselves a raise, because that is not realistic. You would not see good people coming into public office if you cut their pay by 40 percent over 10 years. You have not done any differently to families with two children. Ten years ago, they got \$10,486. Today that same family gets \$9,295, soon to be substantially less as these latest reductions and penalties get in. All you have done is institutionalize poverty.

I am bewildered in the extreme. There is this thing on the right in politics about talking about personal commitment and that is going to end poverty. Well, we do that. I have been a foster parent. Every year I go out and raise \$12,000 and two of the MLAs to my left here, Ms. McGifford and Mr. Sale, help do that for Habitat for Humanity. Lots of us do those things and most of those are here telling you that we think we as a community are fulfilling our responsibilities but you are not. You have switched from a global basket and avoided accountability. Under the old system as recently as three or four years ago, we had to account, you had to go out and shop for clothes, for food and for shelter.

Now you have global budgets and if you total them up they do not amount to anything. How does someone live on \$418 a month? How do you do that? How do you freeze my taxes year after year after year, my spending power grows and my poorest neighbours cannot even afford fresh fruit for their children? Do you think I as a Manitoban, do you as Manitobans think that is the kind of society you want to live in? When you go into public life, you enter a privileged class and all of us can afford to pay a little more.

The irony of this is that you are spending more of my tax dollars wastefully. That brief I gave you actually, as you may notice, is something that some of you in the government benches had seen because I met with Mr. Ernst and Mr. Gillehammer and a parade of ministers. You turned down this proposal to employ people because you said you did not believe, for five years now, that it would actually save money, so you said two years ago, do a test project.

This is a program that hires people rebuilding infrastructure. As you know, the city is \$280 million short in its capital budget, that it cannot afford to repair streets, and we said, if you hire people who are long-term unemployed to fix up neighbourhoods, parks and streets, you would save money. Well, as you can see, the federal government on this small \$1 million, \$2 million program would save \$533,000, less than the status quo, than allowing the level of those people being on social assistance. You save nearly \$100,000, and this has no economy of scale. It multiplies. If you did a program like this, something creative, something inspiring, people in Winnipeg would wake up to lower taxes, streets that were fixed and drivable, and people would have jobs and hope.

Why not do it? Why, when we are smart, they are probably smarter. Why can we not when it costs us less money do that? You announced infrastructures where you had to raise debt, and we had to raise debt as a city; you had to raise taxes, this Liberal federal, provincial Tory job infrastructure program. Could you have spent more money to create a job? You talk out of one side of your mouth, saying we do not have money, and then you introduce a job creation program which you all stand behind which costs more money. You have to raise taxes; you have to pay debt, and the unemployment statistics, city welfare in the '70s went from 4,000 people on city welfare, in the '80s recession to 8,000 to 17,000, that is 30,000 people, 35 percent of which are children; sorry, 18-24 is 35 percent. Over 50 percent of the people living off welfare are under the age of 24, are basically young adults and children.

Do you think these people are not getting their first job because the economy has jobs for them? You freeze taxes, then you take VLTs. The federal government cancels the national housing program. We are the only industrialized nation without a national housing program.

We are not building one single new house. Housing deteriorates. The provincial Conservative majority on council eliminates recreation funding, so that recreation centres like Norquay in some of your constituencies are open for four hours a week, so kids have no place to go. Then you reduce the welfare levels to subsistence that your own medical officer of health tells you are insufficient for proper standards or minimal standards of child nutrition, and what do kids do?

Gangs take over; housing deteriorates; there is no jobs; there is no hope. One hundred and seventy-five dollars a month, that is what those people live on. No jobs, no hope right now, and we cannot do anything better than that?

Then gangs come along. You think if you have 30,000 people out there living subsistence, almost forced to steal because you cannot eat properly on that, with no hope, the gang comes along and says, look, we are running booze. We run booze cans. You only have to walk over there. We will offer you security and status and employment, and it is all illegal, but, heck, who believes in the system anyway anymore, and you can at least have some income security and status. No wonder they are rife, and you acknowledge the problem because you give us \$4 million more for policing.

Why do you not give us \$4 million more to get people back to work, to recreate inner recreation programs that used to be there, to help rebuild families, get rid of those VLTs which are a tax on the poor. What kind of values do you have when there are not jobs, you cannot even do something like that that costs you less money, and you introduce lotteries instead of work ethic? When people come to Christmas, you have parents who cannot afford when they turn on televisions, the few that have them, and they see this consumer drive to toys, and the kids are asking for the same things that some of us can afford to buy for our children. They go down and pump their welfare check into a VLT machine sometimes out of despair, so they hope they cash in 500 bucks, so they can buy their kids the same basic toys and clothes that many of our own children take for granted, and we would never do that to our own children.

Why do we not, why you as parents and I as a parent cannot love that child, ensure that child is fed and has proper nutrition, because we would never want our own

children to go hungry? They do not have jobs and they do not have choices, and you have taken it away. I know the game. I have been elected for seven years. I work in a city that is a have-not city with tight budgets, and I have to make tough choices, and I have come here with one suggestion that I have presented to you for five years. Your own economic analysts and your own advisors have told you it would work and you could not even launch a \$10-million program. Not even that? Not even offering some hope?

* (2100)

I believe in this province. I believe we can get that real unemployment rate, according to you about 11 percent to 18 percent in my ward depending on the neighbourhood, down to a level where only those people who cannot work. I know these people want to work. I know what they have to do. It is horrible to tell someone that if you have not gotten 15 job interviews and you have \$175 income, we are going to take \$50 or \$100 away. What do you think these people are? We as politicians who have some problems with public esteem should know better. We expect to be treated with respect. We would like to see our profession restored to the place where we grew up with inspiring leaders, whether they were John F. Kennedy or Lester Pearson or Tommy Douglas or Duff Roblin, whoever you happen to hold in esteem.

No wonder people feel let down. Take another 20 cents from my salary. This sweater can last another month. You can afford to give a little more. I know what we have to do and you have no problem giving breaks. I do not think you have to be antibusiness to do that. Great-West Life has had tax breaks. It is paying 50 percent less business tax to the city. It made \$88 million profit last year and laid 314 people off from its computer science department.

Jeremy Rifkin wrote a book called *The End of Work*. We lost 10,000 jobs. We used to have 10,000 people working in the Transcona Shops; there are now less than 2,000. We used to have 4,000 in Weston, even less today if you read the paper; there are less than 700. All of those people do not have jobs. They are 40 and 50 years old. They are not easily retrainable. It is not that they do not want to work. These people are not any different. Why do you have to believe they are different? Why do we have to get so miserly that we take food and

shelter out of a language bill? We are playing with language when people are going hungry?

I do not expect you to spend more money. I realize budgets are tight. I did not come here asking you to spend more money. I have given you about 60 pages there of one way for five years that everyone from David Aschenhauer [phonetic], who was one of Ronald Reagan's, a very radical leftie, that guy. David Aschenhauer [phonetic] is the foremost republican economist who has quoted, who supports that. You can look at his work if you do not want to believe me. He argues for this.

Ruben Bellan, a Manitoba home-grown economist, is quoted often in there, who has also put forward the same ideas. Right or left, it should not be an ideological issue. We have a responsibility to do something more than tamper with who is going to run welfare and what the language is we are going to use to take something from people.

Mr. Chairperson: Two minutes to go, Councillor.

Mr. Murray: Thank you. I am asking you to raise your eyes. I am asking you to be inspired. I am asking you to stop practising the politics of fear, of holding up what is different about each of us, that telling if some people who are unemployed right now get some sort of break it is going to take something away from those of us who are afraid about our jobs. We have far too much fear. We have fear in the middle class. We have fear in the investment community and we have great fear in the reality of pain amongst the poor, and leadership is about representing everybody.

I came here and complimented you when you went to the wall and took some things and did something to help us rebuild the Exchange District and give 50 percent tax breaks to people who own older buildings, to wealthy people so that the economics of our downtown changed, and I applauded you then.

I am disappointed profoundly that you will not make the same measure of effort to those people who cannot even afford to live in one of those buildings. Thank you.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Councillor Murray, for a very powerful presentation and, as you can hear from the

applause, it resonates with the many people in attendance here tonight.

Rather than ask you specifics about what you said, I have questions instead about the takeover of city social services by the province. The Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) has said that it will be cost-neutral. I suppose there are a number of ways of doing that. I suppose one way would be for the province to absorb the cost of social assistance and the Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer) to reduce the grant to the City of Winnipeg by \$20 million or \$25 million. Regardless of how the province does it, it means that city property taxpayers are going to be paying, in perpetuity, for welfare for a service they do not even deliver. Does that strike you as strange and unfair?

Mr. Murray: It strikes me as strange and unfair—[interjection] I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, I should wait. My apologies. I appreciate your patience. I realize that this is an emotional and difficult issue, and I will apologize if I offended anyone with my, let us say, unbridled concern.

I think it is sad that—I mean, I am going to be very candid—the relationship between the city and the province is at an all-time low. It is not particularly the province's fault. I do not think we have a very communicative or responsive leadership at City Hall right now, and I am sad to see that we are constantly bickering. I think it is even sad that the discussion about poverty and about unemployment between Manitoba and its largest city would be about who should run it and who should pay for it. Obviously, in principle, things like social assistance should be on income tax rather than property tax. I mean, I think most thinking people agree with that. But that is not the big point. Who cares? That is small potatoes. That is an issue five times on the line.

The issue that I think the public, whether we are unemployed currently or not, wants us to be gripped with is the dialogue about how we solve the problem. I do not think that any of you find the level of unemployment acceptable. I hope you do not. If we do not, and if that is sincere, then we should be talking about that motion that just passed council unanimously recently about here is a solution from the city. I wish the mayor—my colleague Amaro Silva, who is supposed to represent the city, decided not even to show up. I think the city

took a selfish position. I mean when you are representing, when you have got the poorest neighbourhoods in the country right now right north of here, why would you be concerned, why is the driving concern you have, which level of government pays for it?

Do you think the public cares? What they want is efficient use of tax dollars. They want to see a system to get people back to work. They want to see a system that respects people that are unemployed—because, God knows, we are all very close to that on some days and some of us have experienced, and may experience, it again—that values those people and sees them as positive.

I wish that we as a city and a province could understand two things: The people who are unemployed for a long time do not get jobs because very few employers in a surplus labour market hire people who have been on welfare for two years. They fall to the bottom of the heap. The other thing is, when you look at people—and I have friends who have been unemployed who have university degrees who got dumped, who had technology jobs that we celebrate as being important, who have been unemployed for two years, whose self-esteem is in the toilet. These are people who did master's degrees in engineering, who were not lacking in confidence, who after two years of doing 15 every two weeks do not get out of bed any more because they have expectations. They feel like failures.

What we should be talking about is, how do we build self-esteem? The phone line from the government should not be a rat line; it should be a help line. It should be a line that says, you are a good person and we are going to help you get a job. It should not be a fraud line.

Why we are not talking about those kinds of things, why Mrs. Mitchelson and I and Mr. Reimer and you and my colleagues on council have not all sat down in one room and made a promise to behave ourselves, treat each other with more respect and start dealing with the real issues like unemployment and stop bickering over who has got the worst financial problems and who has got the bigger tax problem: the province is so mean to us at the city because they do not give us enough money and enough authority; and the province says, well, you get your house in order because you spend too much money. I mean, it is so childish. Let us all grow up, you know, and start dealing with some real issues for a change.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Lathlin, quickly.

Mr. Murray: I am sorry. [applause] That is why the mayor likes me so much.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Murray, I also would like to thank you for your presentation. I do not have a question, but I would like to relate to you a bit of a reality that I am dealing with right now as a parent.

I guess I am telling you the story to more or less illustrate. You know, people ask us, you do not know because you are not in that situation. I should also tell you that in my younger years I was on welfare and I know what it is like for your mom to tell you, go to the grocery store and get some groceries, and you know darn well that your money for that month is gone, but you are going to go there anyway and ask the storekeeper to maybe go over \$50 or \$100, because you are going to pay him from your next month's cheque anyway. I know what that is like. Also, at that time, as I was growing up, I told myself that I would never, never go on welfare again, that I would die first before I go on welfare.

My daughter and I, this week—she is going to the University of Manitoba—we will be looking for an apartment for her. So I tell her, we have to look for something that is safe, that is clean, that is secure. We figured we have to spend \$400 on an apartment, but so far we have not found anything. They are over \$600, \$700 a month. I wonder about that person who has \$178 to live on. Wow, it just blows me away. We are going to go again tomorrow evening, and I have a story to tell my daughter about what I have heard here today. She and I, this evening before I came here, were complaining because we cannot get a place that we like for the \$400 that we have set aside for ourselves.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Lathlin, and thank you very much, Councillor Murray.

Mr. Murray: Thank you.

* (2110)

Mr. Chairperson: Jim Finlay is the next presenter. Would Mr. Finlay please come forward.

Mr. Finlay, you can begin your presentation.

Mr. Jim Finlay (Community Action on Poverty): This Bill 36 should not be passed because several sections are violating the Charter of Rights.

I see, such as on the amendment No. 5, with your removing the surgical, medical, dental, you are leading to medical discrimination right there and contradicting the present act. That way, you are going to lead to treating people in the more extreme, blatant, life-threatening discrimination way of all. It violates several sections of the Charter of Rights. It should be changed altogether to a national standard equalization guaranteed income, which, you find, will cut down crime cases, chronic illness, too. It will make it a more specific standard of decent living, too, because you are not going by the adequate standard of living.

If you read page 1 of the press release, a federal court declared that you cannot bleed people from the poverty line or lower, which means the poverty line would be the standard equalization guaranteed income, too. I have the decision statement right here that shows it, too.

You see, with the way you are on the work incentive, too, you are discriminating against people by penalizing them on every dollar over the \$50 you deduct. If you want people to work, you strictly have to stop deducting earnings even if they earn \$20,000 a year; nothing must be deducted. I can give you strong proof, if you look at pages 9 to 12 of the press release where I was provided a special grant by the Minister of Labour and Industry and Commerce for business training. When welfare came across this, they went and deducted it steady for 48 months which was, as you will see on the letter, included. Industry and Commerce stated it was in lieu of welfare. See, that is written by the Industry and Commerce because this was a complete, separate program altogether.

So, until you learn to stop deducting earnings, people will not look for work. Plus, you have to learn that there are standards that you are not counting that are the most extreme basic necessity to life, which is transportation and phone, because there is no way you can expect people to look for work in any way with you not providing transportation and phone as basic needs, because that way you are life-threatening people with not counting those, to see with the Social Allowances Act, stating for telephone where it is for health and safety. There is no

way any people have safety at all. I know there are about 80 percent that do not get phones, too.

I can show you proof that people cannot live on what they get, and you have not increased these special diets since '82. I have it all worked out with the inflation since '82, where the regular food was \$99.70. It has increased to \$335.82 today by the Canada Statistics inflation figures I get each year. I can show you where people are only getting \$1.04 per meal. Here, I have it all worked out of how much it is per meal, where, for regular food, of the \$153.80 people receive, it works out to \$1.69 per meal. So how can you live on that per meal, where the inflation works out to \$3.68 per meal? The bland diet I am on, that is six small meals a day, works out to \$1.04 per meal, and the inflation figure is \$2.38. I have all the special diets right here, too, worked out of the unit cost per meal. They start from 117.75 percent to 169 percent difference in costs.

* (2120)

So you have to learn. You have to go back to 1974, when the rates were all worked out according to the index. They were all worked out separate such as it was increased by 22 percent on food, 13.9 percent on clothing, 13.8 on household. Today we do not even receive the average retail cost of Canada Statistics on food and household supplies, such as the section in Section 5(4) is not going to work in any way of Bill 36 because you do not count the transportation and phone basic need. It is going to force people not to look for work until you put a stop on the deduction of earnings.

With this Bill 36, you are not going to be following doctor's statements, and this has been carrying on for a slew of years because I have proof of 20 statements that were frequently written of prescriptions by doctors that have not been followed, where they have been neglected, denied, abused and not followed, a violation of several sections of the Charter of Rights.

Now here is the most major one that you do not have. You have no information on people with epilepsy because I have investigated eight offices of yours here, and you do not have a single bit. There was a case not too long ago of this one person drowning at the Windsor group home. You do not have the home safety stuff for these group homes which I have. I got hold of a judge on

this case, and this cleared it with the information I have. A lot of schools do not have the first aid instructions and shopping centres too, as you will read on the second page of the press release to explain all about the medical that has been ignored and refused.

Then, here is the major one. When sales tax was increased from 6 percent to 7 percent, you did not adjust the social allowance cheques at all by the 1 percent added on where it makes it from May 4 of '87 to December 31 of this year. You owe every citizen \$164.78. Then, when the GST came effective too, that was not added on to the social allowance cheques either. From January 1 of '91 to the end of this year, you owe every citizen \$745.62 each. Plus, with the way you have been doing the food rate, you have been doing it illegally by decreasing the food rate first, where you start making the new year rate for '88, as you will read, of how the poor are becoming more extremely extra poor today. The 1987 rate was \$120; you decreased it by \$12.70 and cut it down to \$107.30 and then added the \$21.50 to it.

You see, that is illegal of decreasing the rate first of the previous year. It should have stayed the same way. That has been going on steady since January 1 of '88. To the end of this year, you owe every citizen a total of \$2,158.80 because it was completely illegal to decrease those rates of food. See, right now, people are having to use 8 percent of the food money for the taxable items to make up the 8 percent tax they do not get in their cheque today at all. They have to pay taxes. Until you learn, because this should have been adjusted immediately, you will not find people living decent, worthwhile at all. There is no way people can live on today's rate, even with the special needs not being adjusted since 1962, because I have proof statements. I have been on assistance for 37 years and I am extremely experienced on this because I have been keeping records on the system too. I have legal history on this too.

Mr. Chairperson: You have three minutes now, Mr. Finlay.

Mr. Finlay: The special diets such as the one I am on where it is 476 today, I only get 190, because I do documents with University of Manitoba school of social work and keep it up every month, on the cost, and compare it with the rates. I see the same thing with Manitoba's agricultural living guide, you are not even

meeting those figures at all. I gave Doug Martindale a photocopy of it. I have been providing him copies and he could see it where you are not even meeting it at all. Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Finlay.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I do not have a question particularly for Mr. Finlay. I just want to recognize that he is a person who has dealt with and overcome very, very significant handicaps in his life. He has been a tireless advocate on behalf of justice for people on social assistance and he contributed to a major Supreme Court decision on justice and fairness. I want to thank him for that over his long, long years and thank him for his presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: I would now like to call on Cheryl Bryton. Cheryl Bryton. The next one, in her absence, will be Pauline Riley, and Cheryl Bryton will go to the end of the list. Pauline Riley. Welcome. You may begin your presentation, Ms. Riley.

Ms. Pauline Riley (Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women): I am speaking on behalf of the Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women. We strongly oppose the manner in which the provincial government has chosen to ram through 75 bills in the current legislative sitting. There has been little or no time for the public or organizations, unions and other concerned parties to respond or for any process of debate or consultation. We were given 24 hours notice to be present here today. Manitoba Action Committee asks, is this really a democratic process?

We are told by the Filmon government that all the changes are mere housekeeping. MACSW says, this is not housekeeping. This is remaking and reshaping the province of Manitoba. The passing of these bills will lead to the abandoning of the sick and the poor, the eroding of basic human rights and will ultimately create a province which will allow the rich to get richer and the rest of us to be left by the wayside. The common thread that runs through the 75 bills is a move away from a democratic and accountable government decision-making process to one where a single minister will be given control to make all decisions. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) says government can wield power because it is elected. The Manitoba Action Committee does not want the

Filmon government to wield power over our heads, especially in the form of the 75 draconian bills we are now facing. We are not opposed to change. We are not stuck in the past. We are not a special interest group, but we do want to see the social fabric and quality of life in Manitoba change for the benefit of us all.

The Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women is strongly opposed to several components of Bill 36. We see the problems of Bill 36 in several ways, but, first of all, I would just like to speak to the existing system. The existing system is already causing many, many people to be living in circumstances which I am sure none of you would like to be in their place. We look at Section 2 of the bill entitled Provisions of things and services, states that Bill 36 will provide residents of Manitoba with those things and services essential to health and well-being.

Frankly, what concerns the Manitoba Action Committee is the unanswered question of how exploitive work conditions in temporary, contract, nonunionized employment and cuts to social assistance while the cost of living is increasing facilitates the health and well-being of Manitobans. There are statements in Bill 36 that claim the reason and need for changes in Manitoba's social assistance is to emphasize employment. However, it is crucial that the conditions under which the employment is created be carefully examined. For instance, to be employed at all costs in exploitive work conditions would not benefit welfare recipients and is not the kind of emphasis that does everything to effectively erode poverty or address the issue of the working poor. Under Bill 36, the implementation of workfare advocates the false notion that employment and poverty are mutually exclusive when in the city of Winnipeg, in the province of Manitoba, and throughout Canada we are seeing increasing numbers of working poor becoming an identifiable body of citizens.

It is also evident that several provisions and protective measures of recipients have been deleted or adversely altered in Bill 36. In order to provide for a one-tier system, the Province of Manitoba will take over the City of Winnipeg's caseload. Since in some cases the provincial rates are lower than the City of Winnipeg, we are concerned that rates will be reduced to bring the two systems into line, therefore, causing financial hardship. However, we are not opposed to a one-tier system. We

just feel that there are some concerns in how that will be administered.

The act previously allowed, the government may take measures as are necessary for the purpose of ensuring that no resident of Manitoba lacks such things, goods and services, as are essential to his health and well-being, including food, clothing, shelter and essential surgical, medical, optical, dental and other remedial treatment, care and attention and an adequate funeral.

The act now reads that the province may take measures to provide residents of Manitoba these things and services that are essential to health, well-being, including a basic living allowance and allows for shelter, essential health services and a funeral upon death.

* (2130)

We are concerned that these amendments will cause persons to be denied optical, dental, medical, et cetera, as these are no longer spelled out in the amendment. The act also previously reads, persons to whom social allowance is payable, ensured that the social allowance be paid only to Manitobans who, if the social allowance were not paid, would, in the opinion of the director, be lacking the basic necessities, whereas under Bill 36 this clause has been repealed. We ask to whom will benefits be then payable?

Consideration for eligibility and amount payable has also been altered to the detriment of social allowance recipients. Previously, the director of the municipality would in writing state an amount payable that was sufficient to enable the recipient or the applicant to obtain the basic necessities for him and herself, including dependants. The depletion of this provision, stating the basic necessities be met, warrants serious concern.

The category of employability enhancement under Bill 36 is a fancy term for workfare. Contrary to this government's opinion, workfare is not fair. Workfare which is exploitive and demeaning entitles the business sector to enjoy the benefits of labour for virtually no pay, and this does not increase the self-esteem of welfare recipients, and so it seems that the employability enhancement is nothing more than a poor-bashing enhancement.

It is a fact that recipients will have to budget from existing money to do their job search, and people will have to prove that they have been looking for work to be spared penalty. Obligations for employment which is a new clause clearly indicates that an applicant, recipient or dependent who does not comply with obligations to satisfy the director would be subjected to having their income assistance discontinued, denied, reduced or suspended at the discretion of the director. This aspect of the bill warrants particular concern, because if single parents who cannot get child care do not find someone to watch their children while they are searching for work or a job, this will result in more children staying at a home alone and unsupervised.

Since the onus is on the claimants to prove that they neither refused employment or terminated the employment, the likelihood of employment expectations being met is low. It is highly probable that a \$50 deduction in benefits per month for six months and \$100 per month thereafter or complete termination of benefits for both one- and two-adult families without children will result in an increased poverty rate.

The changes in Bill 36 overlook the fact that workfare does not increase the likelihood of long-term, gainful, fair wage employment, because the so-called employment created by workfare is temporary, part time, contract, nonunionized and without benefits. This further increases the likelihood of women and other workfare candidates being abused in the workplace via racism, sexism and sexual harassment. Critical also is the fact that the overwhelming majority of people who will be adversely affected by this legislation are women, many of whom are single-parent mothers. This bill does not take into consideration the long-term impact these changes may have on the children whose parents are recipients. This bill ignores the fact that many recipients want to work and have job skills but remain unemployed because there are no jobs. Countless numbers of women who have been enrolled in training programs, including the Taking Charge! program, remain jobless today.

The reality for many poor residents living in the city of Winnipeg and the province of Manitoba is that the consequence of regressive welfare legislation and further cuts to social programs create social problems that the community will be forced to shoulder, and it is the children whom Canada calls its future who will pay the

highest price. The Manitoba Action Committee on the Status of Women is saying no to Bill 36, no to workfare, no to exploitive labour conditions, no to regressive welfare legislation and no to legislative poor-bashing.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks, Ms. Riley.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Riley, for an excellent presentation on behalf of the Manitoba Action Committee.

I am particularly interested in your comments about children, particularly of parents who are now deemed employable because the youngest child is over six, partly, I guess, because Family Services not only includes social assistance but includes the child daycare office, so this minister is responsible for both of those.

Do you think that if these parents go back to work that their children will become latchkey children, or are there enough subsidized spots available in before- and after-school daycare programs?

Ms. Riley: I do not think there are enough places available and that parents will be forced to leave their children without professional or reliable daycare. I think this will lead to a situation of more latchkey children.

Mr. Martindale: You have said that you think that workfare will contribute to a number of problems, including the likeliness of increased sexual harassment of women in the workforce, and I am wondering if you think that women will put up with this because they are so desperate for wage employment or will they use remedies that are available such as the Human Rights Commission? Do you think that the Human Rights Commission is effective? Will women use it if there is sexual harassment in the workplace or will they just put up with it?

Ms. Riley: I think that given the circumstances that people are going to be forced to take jobs under the duress of having their benefits cut off that they will probably accept any working condition that is offered and, therefore, will be more liable to be harassed in the workplace.

Mr. Martindale: One of the training programs that you mentioned is Taking Charge!, a program that took a year

and a half to get going, so it earned the nickname "taking time." I suppose by now some classes have graduated. Do you have evidence that some of these graduates are unemployed, or do you know of people that took training programs through Taking Charge! that are now unemployed?

Ms. Riley: I have been told that there are some people who have taken programs that still have not got employment. What I would be really interested to know is exactly how many people are going through this program, and at the end of it, how many people graduate, also how long, if they do get a job, are they employed afterwards. Because I tend to think that this is a temporary measure.

Mr. Chairperson: Three minutes. Ms. McGifford.

Ms. McGifford: I want to just thank Ms. Riley for putting women's concerns on the record. As the critic for the Status of Women, that is very important to me and to my critic area.

I wanted to return to the question of women deemed employable once their youngest child turns six and ask you if you are aware if there is any flexibility in this kind of decision.

Ms. Riley: I am not sure that I understand the question.

Ms. McGifford: I am sorry, I have not made my question clear. Then perhaps I could speak about a specific situation which should clarify. I have a constituent who has two children who are over six. One of her children is eight and one 11, and they are both asthmatic. She wonders whether she should leave the 11-year-old asthmatic to look after the eight-year-old asthmatic. They are quite some distance from any possible child care, even if there were spaces. I wonder if this kind of situation is something you and other women at MACSW have heard of before.

Ms. Riley: Women are having to make choices which I do not consider to be choices at all. There should be some flexibility in this age level of which children's parents are supposed to be deemed employable. There are lots of variations, and I would be very concerned in these legislative changes that these variations are never taken into consideration because at the moment I do not

think they are either. I think there are a lot of people who are taking desperate measures in order to comply with the already existing regulations of welfare.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, that certainly has been my experience with some of my constituents.

Are you aware of any women who have been enrolled in the Manitoba Fashion Institute and taken their training? If you are, have they been successful in obtaining employment?

Ms. Riley: No, I am not personally aware of any.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Martindale, one last short question.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I guess the minister could ask you a question and then answer your inquiries about Taking Charge! However, after the presentations, I will ask the minister and try to get the answers and also I will have a chance to ask identical questions during the Estimates of Family Services next spring and we will find out how many graduates got jobs.

* (2140)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Ms. Riley.

Ms. Riley: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: The next registered group is a spokesperson to be named for The Canadian Union of Public Employees of Manitoba. Please identify yourself, sir, when come to the mike. Spell the last name, please.

Mr. Allen Bleich (Canadian Union of Public Employees of Manitoba): B-L-E-I-C-H, and the first name is A-L-L-E-N.

Mr. Chairperson: You can begin, Mr. Bleich.

Mr. Bleich: We, CUPE, are making a couple of presentations here tonight. So Local 500 will deal with another aspect of it. CUPE Manitoba is addressing our concerns around what possibly could be the introduction of workfare into Manitoba and specifically Sections 5.4(1) and 5.4(2) of Bill 36 which are entitled:

Obligations re employment, and Where employment obligations are not met.

We suggest that these two sections clearly pave the way for the introduction of workfare in Manitoba, and I think that has been indicated by a number of other groups. We are suggesting that this is a regressive and punitive approach to poverty and unemployment and that the real issues are not being dealt with. It will hurt workers as well as the people on assistance. Moreover, principles that we as a society hold dear, such as equal opportunity, dignity through work and freedom of choice, will be undermined through the implementation of workfare. People who work in social services and child care sectors of CUPE come to this issue from the perspective of working with some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

The major problems with workfare are as follows: 1. The concept of workfare is based on the false assumption that people on welfare do not want to work, so they have to be forced into it. The reality is that for most people being on assistance is not their preference. It is a humiliating, helpless, stigmatizing experience. It is also boring and unfulfilling for those who can only dream of utilizing their skills and being fairly compensated for them. There are many life stories and circumstances which bring people to being on assistance. Laziness is rarely one of them.

There is plenty of evidence to support the notion that people will work if given a fair opportunity. SEED Winnipeg, for example, has a steady flow of social assistance recipients trying to start their own businesses. Staff at the City of Winnipeg have said that, whenever they offer employment opportunities such as the infrastructure program or the Dutch Elm Disease Control Program, they are deluged with applications from welfare recipients. I think we have seen that on a number of other occasions. When Grapes opened up their new restaurant on Pembina Highway, there were over 1,000 applicants for those few jobs. The most important reason why people are on assistance is that there are not enough quality jobs which pay a living wage. Workfare ignores this central issue.

2. Workfare undermines quality jobs. If a company whose goal is to maximize profits as a choice of paying workers a fair and living wage or utilizing a workfare

participant at no or little cost to the company, the second choice would obviously be most in line with making profit. The end result would be layoffs, which would exacerbate the real problem, unemployment. Some of the work done by workfare participants might be worthwhile to the community. If this is the case, then it should have a pay cheque attached. Workfare forces people into work which should be freely available as real jobs with real wages as well as employment standards for safety.

3. Workfare is an insult to the dignity of people. Workfare is just one example of ways in which people who are the most vulnerable are blamed for economic stresses in society which have nothing to do with them. For a country that prides itself in caring for people who have had less opportunities, for whatever reason, workfare is the wrong direction. At the very least, people deserve the dignity of having a minimum level of choice about how they are going to manage providing for themselves and their families. People move toward fulfilling their potential when their range of options are opened up and not narrowed down, i.e., participating in cheap labour or you will be cut off welfare.

In conclusion, it is true the federal government has left the provinces in a difficult position through the drastic cuts in social program funding and the removal of standards and how they are delivered, but there is no evidence that workfare will save money. In several U.S. jurisdictions, for example, workfare was abandoned because the administrative costs were too high. In Florida they were spending \$1 for every 16 cents they saved. The same kind of loss was experienced in Georgia and Connecticut. A little closer to home, Quebec experimented with workfare only to find that it was not working.

The removal of standards by the federal government can provide an opportunity to set our own standards in Manitoba, standards to ensure that everybody is taken care of, that no one is forced into cheap labour and that any work worth doing is worth a decent living wage. Attached to that, we also have a number of appendages for you perusal.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Bleich.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I really appreciate the thorough research that CUPE has done on this and many

other issues on which they have presented briefs. The American experience you quote in Florida, do you have any further information on that particular program?

Mr. Bleich: I do not have it on me. I will look into it and try to get it to this committee.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I wonder if Mr. Bleich would be able to supply that to all members of the committee and have it included in the brief? I do not know if they would be able to supply it in the next day or so. Is that possible?

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Bleich said he would.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, one experiment that is close to home that has received a lot of favourable press is Milwaukee and Wisconsin, in particular. Are you familiar with any of the experiments there in terms of workfare?

Mr. Bleich: No, I am not. I was looking more at the Quebec one, and I guess Ontario has been finding out they have not had much success in their endeavours.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, just for the record, Mr. Bleich, the Milwaukee and Wisconsin experiments found, just as you have stated about Florida, that this is an expensive program. Its up-front costs are significant because of the supports needed in terms of child care, the costs of finding work, job search, resumes, all of those kinds of costs of getting out there and finding employment, which I do not see any provision for here, but the more important issue that was pointed out rather later in the documentation was that Wisconsin has an unemployment rate of about 3.5 percent. So there are jobs available to be found in an economy where the unemployment rate is down at that kind of level.

Do you have any views about the likelihood of finding real jobs in an economy where the unemployment rate is between 8 percent and 9 percent, in the city of Winnipeg, for example?

Mr. Bleich: I think we have seen numerous examples of people looking for work. We see, as I mentioned earlier, an example here in Winnipeg. When Grapes opened up its restaurant, there were a thousand applicants. Clearly there were not a thousand jobs there. People are looking

and want to work. When the City of Winnipeg did the infrastructure program there was a handful of jobs there. Yet, they had hundreds of applicants, just from social assistance recipients, wanting those jobs. Those were voluntary and there was a wage attached to those jobs. I think, yes, there are some jobs out there, not a lot.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you for your presentation. I am particularly interested in your observations about workfare, since I have done some reading and research on this. I wonder if you could expand briefly on the experiment with workfare or the experience of workfare in Quebec?

Mr. Bleich: Actually, there is a newspaper article in the appendix pages 5 and 6 which sort of points out that it was not working. They found that, in fact, people were not really finding new employment, that employers were just filling existing vacancies and then taking advantage of the subsidized rate by the province.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Bleich for your presentation.

The next presenter is Leslie King and Brent Rosnoski.

Mr. Brent Rosnoski (Manager, Intergovernmental Affairs, City of Winnipeg): Good evening, Mr. Chairman, honourable ministers and committee members. My name is Brent Rosnoski. I am with the City of Winnipeg's Intergovernmental Affairs office, and joining me is Leslie King, our Director of Social Services.

* (2150)

We are here tonight on behalf of Councillor Amaro Silva, who is our chair of the Committee on Planning and Community Services. Councillor Silva was to have presented the city's position with respect to Bill 36 but, unfortunately, due to scheduling problems, he is unable to be here tonight. So he has asked us to be here on his behalf to present the position of the City of Winnipeg with respect to this bill. I believe I have tabled a letter from Councillor Silva to the Chair through the Clerk that deals with it in that regard. Having said that, what I would like to do is ask Leslie then to present our position paper on the bill. Thank you.

Ms. Leslie King (Director of Social Services, City of Winnipeg) Tom Yauk, the city's commissioner of

Planning and Community Services is here, as well, somewhere.

I would like to begin just by saying that the city has chosen only to speak to certain aspects of the bill. The City of Winnipeg agrees in principle with the integration of municipal and provincial social assistance in Winnipeg. However, the city wishes to register very serious concerns about Bill 36. Most particularly, we are concerned about the financial implications of the merger for the City of Winnipeg. City Council would like the Manitoba government to take over full responsibility for all social assistance in Winnipeg, but that includes the costs of the program. We have an urgent need to reduce both our expenses and our reliance on property tax revenues.

Many cities throughout Canada do not pay welfare costs. Most other provinces have recognized that property taxes are not an appropriate source of funding for a social assistance program. They understand that income support programs need to be funded through a progressive income tax system, not a regressive tax base. In the past 15 years, unemployment levels and social assistance caseloads have risen dramatically all across our nation.

During that same period, the City of Winnipeg's share of social assistance costs quadrupled to over \$20 million. That huge increase has placed a considerable strain on both the City of Winnipeg and on Winnipeg property taxpayers. Last year, City Council applauded the Manitoba government's initiative in moving forward on the one-tier project. We believed it represented an opportunity to reduce the financial burden for Winnipeg property owners. However, Bill 36, as it is currently framed, seems to snuff out that hope. Specifically, Section 17(1) of Bill 36 indicates that, in one fashion or another, the City of Winnipeg would be required to pay a share of the ongoing costs of delivering social assistance. The bill must be amended to ensure that future social assistance costs are not borne by Winnipeg property taxpayers. That same section also indicates the city would be expected to pay some portion of the development costs for the transfer.

The integration of services is a large undertaking. It will affect over 30,000 Winnipeg residents and their families who are dependant upon employment support

services and financial assistance. Hundreds of local employers, landlords, vendors and senior citizens, served by the community service projects, will be impacted by the change. The two programs are delivered out of nine office sites located throughout the city. There are about 350 staff working in the two systems whose employment will be affected. Three bargaining agents are involved. In short, transition costs are likely to be substantial, and the City of Winnipeg cannot assume any more expense right now.

Section 17(2) indicates that the transfer of responsibility would occur on a relatively cost-neutral basis. What does relatively cost neutral mean? In the past 15 years, Winnipeg's annual share of social assistance costs has varied between \$4 million and \$21 million. In recent years, caseloads and costs have been at the high end of that range, but they are now on a decline.

Does relatively cost-neutral mean today's costs? Does relatively cost-neutral take into account our history as well as future cost projections? Does relatively cost-neutral encompass administrative expenses as well as social assistance payments to recipients? If the intent of the merger is to reduce costs, how will the city share in any future savings? These are very critical questions for a municipal government.

The City of Winnipeg and the Manitoba government need to reach agreement on all of the service, staff, timing and cost implications of the merger. The City of Winnipeg must have the chance to negotiate transfer terms which are affordable in both the short term and the long term. The best possible service and financial outcomes for all of our citizens are only possible with co-operative action on the integration.

Bill 36 must be amended to ensure that the City of Winnipeg's interests are protected. Thank you for the opportunity to present the City of Winnipeg's position on the legislation.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. King. Are there questions?

Mr. Martindale: Thank you for your presentation on behalf of the City of Winnipeg. In a previous brief we heard that, when jobs were available through the City of Winnipeg job creation programs, your staff were deluged

with work applications from welfare recipients. I wonder if you could tell us how many approximately for which programs.

Ms. King: Okay. I am here presenting City Council's position on this particular bill. I will speak not on behalf of City Council, but as the director of Social Services. In terms of applications for employment, anytime we get good jobs, we have loads of applications for those particular positions. We never have difficulty linking suitable clients—clients with employment potential up to suitable employment. The unfortunate part is a lot of the employment is short-term, temporary, casual. It is not long-term, full-time work right now.

Mr. Sale: I defer to Mr. Martindale to continue, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Martindale: Well, for example, infrastructure renewal and Dutch Elm Disease Control Program, how many positions might have been available, and how many applicants might you have had approximately?

Ms. King: I cannot rattle numbers off to you right now, sorry.

Mr. Martindale: I understand that proportionately you have many more staff with social work degrees. I wonder if you, as the director of Social Services, could tell us what you think the advantages are of having staff with social work degrees, and why you would hope that when Social Services is taken over by the province that those people would continue to be employed providing service to clients?

Ms. King: I think I would be placed in a very difficult position to speak to that particular question right now.

Mr. Martindale: Does the City of Winnipeg have any idea of the transition costs? Have you any estimates on what it might cost?

Ms. King: The City of Winnipeg has some guesstimates on the cost of the venture.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, can you comment on the wisdom of the city finding itself in the position where it is still going to pay approximately what it is paying now because it is being advertised as a cost-neutral

proposition? So the city is not going to gain anything, as your brief has point out. Yet, it is going to lose all of the ability to set social policy or to influence social conditions among the low-income people within the city boundaries. It seems to me that the city has cunningly achieved the worst of all possible alternatives.

Ms. King: The reason for the brief speaks to that particular concern. The City Council is asking for the opportunity to meet with the Manitoba government and negotiate terms that are favourable, both in the short term and the long term, for both levels of government and for all the people that the government serves.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, a question on the Social Services Department, if Ms. King is able to answer. You indicated earlier that there are approximately 14,000 employable people on city welfare, technically considered employable?

Ms. King: Mr. Chairperson, 14,539 as of October 1.

* (2200)

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, my question is: Of that number, what roughly would you think would be the number that could be employed if there were reasonable jobs available to them, more or less, you know, a fairly high probability that they would make it into the workforce and stay there? What numbers do you think as director?

Ms. King: In terms of today's labour market?

Mr. Sale: Yes.

Ms. King: We could probably have another couple of thousand move off the assistance roles and into the current labour market. We have a very high return rate, not because people lose their positions, but because the positions themselves end.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, then would the program that was tabled earlier with us by Councillor Murray generate approximately the number of jobs that you are talking about? Would those 2,000 people approximately have jobs through the program that Councillor Murray shared with us earlier?

Ms. King: It would depend on the match between the available jobs, the nature of the work and the qualifications of the people that we have.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder if you can tell us what the recent maximum was for caseload? I understand it was over 18,000 and now it is down to 14,539, I think you said. Could you tell us why you think it has declined recently?

Ms. King: The caseload was 18,060 in April. It is now 14,539. I would attribute it to an initiative that we have entitled Employment '96, where we have hired some additional staff to work directly with recipients in matching them to available employment.

Mr. Martindale: Since the province has a caseload of around, well, between 25,000 and 26,000—I get these monthly stats, I just do not have it in front of me—some of whom are deemed employable, many of whom are in the disability category, do you think the same approach would work with the province if they were to hire more staff to move people into jobs, that they could be equally successful?

Ms. King: It takes greater resources to work with people than to mail them an assistance cheque on the short term and particularly if people have been sitting on assistance for a long period of time. They have lost a lot of hope. They have lost a lot of skill. They have lost current job references. There is generally a fair bit of work that has to be done to bring them to the point of being job ready.

Mr. Martindale: How many more staff did you hire, and was there a net savings in terms of the difference between the cost of assistance and the cost of staff salaries?

Ms. King: We have not reached the end of the project yet. I was given authority to hire the equivalent of 21.5 full-time staff for a seven-month period.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, could you then indicate what have been the results to date in terms of jobs attained by the efforts of the staff you have had, allowing that it is not finished and that you may not have your full complement?

Ms. King: Well, we have closed approximately 3,500 cases in a four- or five-month period and the substantial

percentage of those were to employment. A number of people get employment, they do not necessarily phone us when they leave. If they come back to our program, at that point in time we find out that they have gotten a job. So there is a percentage of them who have left the program and their status is unknown, but the substantial percentage of them we were able to connect with available work.

I will come back to my other comment to say that not all the jobs are full time, long term, but they are employment.

Mr. Chairperson: One last short question and answer.

Mr. Sale: Would it characterize the approach fairly to say that you work on self-esteem skills, positive incentives, support, as opposed to threats, coercion and the kind of totalitarian approach that is implied in the workfare provisions of this bill?

Ms. King: We like to believe that we do provide support to the people that are coming in. That is not to say that there are not sanctions within our program for people who fail to co-operate with an employment search or who refuse to accept reasonable employment.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentations, Mr. Rosnoski and Ms. King. Good night.

Paul Moist, CUPE, Local 500.

Mr. Paul Moist (Local 500, Canadian Union of Public Employees): Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, there is a presentation being presented to you which is a short presentation and a number of appended documents and pieces of research to buttress some of the comments that I will make.

Local 500 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees represents about 140 employees of the city's Social Services Department, and we are going to speak to Bill 36 from the following perspectives: The proposed one-tier system, the proposed or contemplated rate reductions which seem to be out there, and workfare. Bill 36 contains a number of punitive and regressive measures which, if enacted, will hurt the poorest in our community. Our hope is that this submission will sort out fact from fiction and offer constructive alternatives.

With respect to the proposed one-tier system, the amalgamation of the city and provincial social services departments has been the subject of discussion for decades. Throughout this period the notion of huge dollar savings through movement to a single-tiered delivery system has been floated without any documented evidence to support such claims. I cite in our submission, Hansard from 1995, with the current Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) alleging that there will be savings and indicating a preliminary document of sorts would be out soon to buttress that comment. I cite a citation from a letter from Mayor Thompson to the same minister where she says there will be substantial savings to both the City of Winnipeg and the province.

The facts are that when administrative savings are discussed, what is being talked about is approximately 5 percent of the combined costs of both systems, 95 percent of departmental budgets goes to the clients of both systems. The other fact worth noting is that the city and the province, their systems serve different clients, and in terms of the delivery of the city's system, including its unique employment programs, the former director of city Social Services made the following comment, and I quote: The provincial auditors and other senior people have reviewed the city social services program and have indicated there would be no administrative savings in taking over the program. They do not believe that the province could run the program any more efficiently than the city does now. Close quote. That was Mr. Simmonds in a letter dated October 27, 1994.

The Faculty Council of the U of M Faculty of Social Work unanimously adopted a resolution in July 1995 opposing the provincial move to a one-tier system and reversing the position they held since 1983, and quoting from that resolution the full text of which is appended, quote: Whereas the delivery of a direct service such as social assistance is most effectively delivered at the municipal level in the City of Winnipeg. Close quote. The full text of the resolution is appended.

Other factors which contribute to the conclusion that the movement to a one-tier will not lead to administrative savings include the following: Questions of facility integration and expansion; question of technological compatibility; incompatible computer systems today and collective agreement obligations that both levels of

government will face. There is an appended position paper which canvasses those issues cited as Appendix 2.

Provincial auditors apparently concluded there were no administrative savings to be gained from movement to the one-tier system after a 1994 review. More recently a provincially commissioned consortium of external consultants was used to develop the phase one business case for the proposed merger. To date, the results of this independent review have not been released. CUPE believes they ought to be released, and we are confident that this group as well will conclude that the administrative savings argument is largely politically based and not fact based.

* (2210)

Lost in much of this political debate is the fact that the city's Social Service Department is an efficient operation which has lived up to its mandate under some extremely trying economic times in recent years. The following appended documents speak to the efficiency of the city's operations: There is a report on the tri-government infrastructure program that the previous delegation was being asked about. There is a Province of Manitoba evaluation of the City of Winnipeg's community service programs, from 1995, where they conclude they are effective programs which put people into meaningful work. There is a fact sheet as Appendix 5 outlining some facts and figures regarding city social services, and there is an internal city report to Planning and Community Services which speaks to the one-tier myths dated September 5, 1995, attached as Appendix 6.

The following questions concerning Bill 36 also need to be answered:

First, the request for proposals issued in December, 1995 stipulated, quote: The intent is to apportion the costs of the merged system to the province and the City of Winnipeg on a cost-neutral basis which reflects their respective contributions during 1994/95—close quote..

The 1994-95 year was an all-time high in city caseloads, and we question how such an approach will be fair to city taxpayers.

Second question: All savings alleged or contemplated within the RFP issued last December accrue to the province. How is this fair to city of Winnipeg taxpayers?

Third, what is meant in Section 17(1) of Bill 36 where the province stipulates that the transfer to a one-tier system is to be based on a relatively cost-neutral basis.

The fourth question we have is: Section 17(1) also vests the government with the authority to bill the city for a portion of the costs of the one-tier system. How is this fair to Winnipeg property taxpayers? Should the province not be required to achieve the agreement of the City of Winnipeg on such matters in deference to the interests of the citizens of Winnipeg?

As mentioned, there is a long history around discussions about merging the city's Social Services Department with the province. The city has approached the one-tier discussions from the perspective of removing social allowance costs from the property tax bill. Bill 36 does not achieve this end.

The 1989 SARC report concluded, quote, that municipalities should contribute to the cost of assistance as long as they continued to be involved in the delivery of it—close quote.

Bill 36 proposes the opposite to this, with the city continuing to pay for social assistance while ending its delivery role. In short, this Conservative government is ignoring the advice of a review committee struck by the previous Conservative government of Mr. Lyon.

Proposed rate reductions. Implicit within Bill 36 is the almost inevitable movement to reduce rates for certain assistance categories, and the minister herself in Hansard in June '95 has stipulated this. The city's social assistance rates were previously exclusively based for children on a formula outlined here in our brief based on the Nutritious Food Basket and Health Canada's Nutrition Intakes for Canadians formula. This formula has generated assistance rates designed to meet the needs of the city's children. The provincial move to reduce rates further than they have already been reduced is ill conceived and unconscionable.

A recent Statistics Canada study, appended as Appendix 7 to this submission, has analysed the often-used argument that increased social transfers actually encourage low family employment earnings resulting in more children in low-income situations. In short, the argument is that welfare serves as a disincentive for

work, thereby causing poverty for children. It strikes us that this is the consensus view of the current administration. Statistics Canada has concluded, there is no basis for such conclusions. Quoting from that study, just released this past August: It is unlikely that work disincentive effects of transfer programs were the major cause of declining earnings for most young parents. It is much more likely that the transfer system responded to changing labour market conditions—close quote.

In a similar vein, CUPE recommends that the province abandon plans to punish the poor of Winnipeg through further rate reductions.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, with respect to workfare, Bill 36 paves a legislative path towards the introduction of workfare in our province. If the Manitoba version of workfare follows patterns adopted in New Zealand or the U.S. or in other Canadian provinces, it will likely result in the same failed performance.

Forced labour and the punish-the-poor approach has been a proven failure everywhere it has been tried. Such programs are not effective and they in fact often cost more than they save. We cite New Zealand's high commissioner to Canada with his, quote, quite frankly, with workfare, we did not succeed, close quote. Negative experiences abound in Canada as well, with Southam News, and these are cited in Appendix 8, reporting on experiences in two Canadian provinces, and I will only speak to Quebec.

"One of the most recent experiments . . . took place in Quebec in 1990. Welfare recipients could earn back \$50 per month . . . through a program called EXTRA. Unfortunately, after the program, 97 percent of recipients returned to welfare. The program was further shown to be exploited for free labour as employers refused to hire the now-trained worker, and opted to sign for another free EXTRA worker instead." I contrast those numbers with numbers in the appendix on the city's infrastructure program, where over 50 percent of participants have not made their way back onto city social assistance.

"Workfare schemes throughout much of Canada are punitive and smack of a blaming-the-poor attitude. The province would be well-advised to avoid such an approach, and this advice has been made by many commentators," including the Winnipeg Free Press,

where editorially they offered the following advice to this government. They said that Manitobans are offended by the fact that a large number of Manitobans are living in poverty because they are unable to find a job and they are also offended when a government minister implicitly suggests that people are on welfare only because they are not willing to work. Mrs. Mitchelson should remember the goal of reforming welfare is to help those who have fallen on tough times and not to make the poor pay, close quote.

Bill 36 charts a punitive and ill thought out course which will have negative consequences for both Winnipeg's poor and Winnipeg taxpayers. For the foregoing reasons, we recommend that the bill be withdrawn.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Moist. There is three minutes for questions.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I want to thank Mr. Moist and his colleagues, particularly for the evidence cited in Appendix 8 in regard to workfare. This may sound like a rhetorical question and it probably is, but let me ask it anyway. What in the world do you think disposes people such as the government opposite to pursue policies that have been proven over and over again to be failures? Sweden had the experience that it worked as long as unemployment was below 3 percent. That is why it worked in Milwaukee. The same experience over and over again, the data seemed to be clear. Why do you believe we are going down that road?

Mr. Moist: Well, through the Chair, I guess, simply put, I think it is because the right in our world is more ideological than the left ever purported to be and, with respect to another level of government that is a party to this bill, I am quite frankly appalled that the City of Winnipeg does not take a stronger position to preserve a decent social services system, not even here in the presence of an elected official from the majority of City Council to protect the interests of taxpayers. I will not for a minute attempt to understand why they are not here, but I think the answer to your question is, ideology is running amuck through North America and much of the western world, and it is not left-wing ideology.

Mr. Martindale: I have a question based on a quote on page 2 about the provincial auditors and, maybe for the

benefit of people in the audience, it should be pointed out that the auditors are one of the few parts of government that are independent and are not under the political thumb of governments, regardless of which party. Auditors audit the financial books and programs of the government and make comments on them and table these reports in the Legislature. So we appreciate the advice and the comments and observations they make because it comes from an independent source and a very important source. So I think it is quite significant when you quote the former director of social services as saying that the provincial auditors and other senior people have reviewed the city's social services program and have indicated there would be no administrative savings in taking over the program. If that is true, why do you think the provincial government wants to take over city social services?

Mr. Moist: Well, through the Chair, I cannot answer for why the government is doing what they are doing. They ought to speak to these hearings and perhaps say so for themselves. I will say, though, that it is not only the Provincial Auditor. The government has recently paid for a trio of external consultants to do the self-same study that the government's Audit department did in 1994, and our brief and my answer to your question now challenges the government to release unedited the results of those consultants' reports. We are talking about 5 percent of the system. The conclusion of the government's own auditors was that the City of Winnipeg is a very lean operation that provides good service in very difficult circumstances. Let us put the report of the external consultants on the table unedited for all to view, and I have no doubt whatsoever they have come to the same conclusion.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for a very comprehensive and detailed presentation as usual, Mr. Moist. Mr. Doug Lambier?

* (2220)

Mr. Doug Lambier (Private Citizen): Ladies and gentlemen, I am a welfare recipient. I have four kids and a wife, loving wife. I got a notice in the mail about this Bill 36. I do not think a worker should have the power to eliminate benefits. I have dealt with government agencies, you name it, in Ontario, Manitoba and B.C. If you give the worker the right to eliminate somebody's only means of support, you can—it should not fall on that

person. A person can look at the person—a worker can have a bad day, see somebody, cut them off. Nobody can appeal that decision.

I think, I believe, that the welfare recipient should retain their benefits until they get a hearing regardless if the person is on workfare, he did not get his names of employers to seek. I have a couple of examples of welfare workers who would go ahead and demand that certain things be done. For example now, I was on city welfare. I had acquired a job, and the city welfare worker wanted me to take a stupid form to give to the employer, to have this employer write it out and send it back to the welfare. I said, no, I did not want to do this for the simple reason, a lot of employers do not like to deal with people on welfare, because the simple reason is that welfare to them is free money. They will hire you for about six months. You go on unemployment; then you go on welfare. That is their idea. My idea is, I had better find a job.

Of course what happened was, I did not get this job. I went after the city welfare worker. Of course, everything fell on deaf ears. Workfare '95, my wife had bowel cancer. She had a very difficult time. She had a colostomy, the whole works. She had chemo through April of 1996, a very difficult time for my family. I have nobody living in Manitoba. The workfare people wanted to see her. I tried to tell the person that my wife has scars all over her stomach. She is not feeling up to it because of the chemo and everything, but she insisted. I had to get a hold of my MLA to inquire that this—that my wife does not go to this workfare thing in '95. The person phoned me back and said, oh, it was a computer error and something like that.

Lowering benefits. According to Stats Canada, the poverty line in Winnipeg for a family of six is \$39,236. You can double my provincial welfare, and I am still shy of the poverty line by about a thousand bucks. I only get a raise when a child reaches a certain age. Provincial welfare cut out income tax refunds for a welfare recipient. I received fifty bucks last year—no, \$43—should return that because a thousand dollars in my pocket will go a long way.

The wife and I do not smoke, drink very little. I have myself never stepped into one of these gambling halls. Only about two or three blocks away from one. I can

walk there. I have never, I have only been about two blocks away from the Stock Exchange Hotel. I have not stepped in there since they expanded it, and that was about three years ago.

Housing, a beautiful subject. The cheapest housing is not the safest or comfortable. Last summer the city Health Department knocked on my door. There are people downstairs; I live in a duplex as a matter of fact, just the other side of the virology lab. In an unrelated incident she came upstairs; she noticed water damage. She knocked on my door. She says, what is this all about? I say, you want to see water damage, come on in. I live on the second floor of the duplex and in my water closet or washroom when it rains, it pours in there so bad you have to have a bloody umbrella to do your business. I took her upstairs. There is a musty smell on my third floor where my three kids, three boys, sleep; it is very damp when it rains. I said to the young lady: The roof is really bad. I will take you outside and show it to you. She said, do I need field glasses? You know you need field glasses to see up. I said, no. No, come on out. You can see the bare spot. The east side is not too bad. There are a couple of bare spots. On the west side it is all bare. It has wooden shingles and you do not see the red shingles anymore. Oh, the roof has to be repaired. Okay.

That was last year. The city welfare and the landlord got together and they said, well the landlord cannot afford to pay for the roof, so we will see about getting a RAP Program, \$5,000 or something, to get the roof fixed. It was agreed that the landlord would apply for it in January, the roof will be put on in the springtime. The landlord brought in a whole bunch of estimators, roofers, and they said it would cost—they talked to us before the landlord got there and said around \$10,000 to \$20,000 to put a new roof on this place.

April come and gone. July, we had that great rainstorm. You remember that? Hail, the whole bloody works. When am I going to get this roof on? Phone up the Health Department, the City of Winnipeg. Oh, the file has been closed. Come out, check out the same thing but now we have a new situation. On the one side, there is a little—on the third floor, the thing split like somebody took a knife right down to bare plaster. That is the water damage when it came onto the plaster. It would heat and split it away. Well, all said and done, our new deadline is September 17. It has come and gone. My MLA

suggested that I get in touch with the landlord tenants branch to make a report to them, also report to the Ombudsman of the City of Winnipeg about the delay of the Health Department.

The 17th of September came and went, no roof. I contacted the tenancy people. They came right down. They had not done anything. I wrote to them about the 23rd of August. They had done nothing. The City of Winnipeg Health Department had done nothing. Oh, the tenancy and Ombudsman's office did nothing. I contacted them. They ended up contacting the City of Winnipeg Health Department and asked what was going on here. So I get told the next due date is today. The City of Winnipeg Health Department says the roof has to be repaired by today. People, the roof has not been repaired today.

* (2230)

Rich people have more power. I am dealing with people that live in the west part of the city just off Portage Avenue. I do not know what I can do. I can probably move. Maybe I should have moved. We have lived in the house for eight years. The roof had been done about eight years ago. I do not have money to move. Provincial welfare, I do not know.

To make a long story short, I went on that workfare program. Mrs. Mitchelson, your people are honest, caring, I do not know. They are not that caring, but they are. They told me I cannot work because of my disability. For years, the Workers Compensation Board of Ontario told me there was nothing wrong with me. I have problems with my hip, if I do not move it around or sit too long. I have problems with my back, my hip, my arm. I went to a doctor a few years ago. He checked out my arm. He put some doohickey here and shot juice up my arm. They do not tell you anything.

Welfare. I have never been on welfare. When I worked before I got injured I was an above-average worker. I consider myself a working, middle-class person but because of government stupidity, I do not care what you call it, Workers Compensation Board, unemployment insurance, welfare, it is still government stupidity that has put me in the position I am in today. The day your boss was going around the city trying to get elected, he had a great big bus and everything, just in front of the glove

works on Logan Avenue and he stood up there and he stared at me. I was walking down Logan Avenue. The reason why I was walking down Logan Avenue, to catch a bus or walk across the Salter Bridge, was to hock my watch to get 20 bucks so I can buy bread and milk for my kids.

Mr. Chairperson: You have two minutes, sir.

Mr. Lambier: Thank you.

Seventeen thousand, if you doubled the amount I get to live on, it does not even come close to the poverty line. Like I said to you before, the accident was not even my fault, so I kind of wonder, when I look at this, you are going to have people telling people that they will not collect any more welfare because—like, okay, I understand that you are using it for people on workfare. If they do not find a job, you cut them off. If you can do that to them, you would be doing it to us. Your own people say I am disabled.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Lambier, for your presentation. It is good to see one of my constituents here.

Mr. Lambier: I am sorry, I did not know how political you can get.

Mr. Martindale: That is okay. I am quite happy to say that I am your MLA. I can tell you, I will follow up with the City Health Department. I will phone Roger Barsy, the director of the Residential Tenancies branch, tomorrow, and he returns my calls in about 10 minutes. So we will follow up on those two concerns that I talked to you on the phone about before.

I presume that you are on provincial assistance in the disability category. Is that right?

Mr. Lambier: As far as I understand, yes.

Mr. Martindale: So you would like to work, but you cannot because of your injuries.

Mr. Lambier: I have worked in the city for the City of Winnipeg cleaning out community clubs, lifting out tables. Actually, it is pretty good because, if you lift up a heavy table, you do not feel your back anymore because

the pressure on your spine hits a nerve. You know, you feel great.

Now you look at me, Mrs. Mitchelson, like, are you nuts?

An Honourable Member: No, I do not.

Mr. Lambier: You do, you look at me like, are you nuts, why would you do something as stupid as that? It is because I have been dealing people that are telling me there is nothing wrong with me for years. Your people did a mistake telling me there is nothing—there is something wrong with me; I cannot work.

I have bureaucracy in Ontario telling me that there is nothing wrong with me. I have a doctor's—believe it or not—note, and his name is Dr. Nassar [phonetic]—believe it or not. Everybody knows who that guy is, and he says there is nothing wrong with me. He has it down in black in white. He sent that to Toronto.

Mr. Chairperson: One last question, Mr. Martindale.

Mr. Martindale: I guess you are aware that you can appeal any decision made by any social assistance worker. Are you?

Mr. Lambier: Well, yes.

Mr. Martindale: Earlier this evening, there was—

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Martindale, I indicated it was the last question before.

Will we indulge in one more question? One more question, this is it, Mr. Martindale.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Earlier this evening, it was recommended that we make a change to the way the panellists on the social services appeal panel are appointed. Right now, they are basically political appointments of whoever is the government in office, and rather, it was suggested that the committee of the Legislature appoint members of the appeal panel. Therefore, they would be appointed for their competence or experience rather than their political connections.

Do you think that this would be a good idea?

Mr. Lambier: Yes, I really do.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Lambier: Thank you, Sir. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Chairperson: The next presenter will be Kay Slaunwhite. Kay Slaunwhite?

Is Kay Slaunwhite here? She, not being here, will be put at the end of the list.

Raymond Blue? Mr. Blue? You may begin, Mr. Blue.

Mr. Raymond Blue (Private Citizen): I have been on social allowance for a few years. Like most of the people on social allowance with health problems, most are unable to work. Being on social allowance is not easy with the amount of money we receive, which covers rent, food, clothing, shaving cream, toothpaste, soap, et cetera. It is mighty hard to keep your teeth in good shape if you cannot afford toothpaste, which I have developed a problem with. A person needs to have a good balanced diet and keep in good health. It is important to keep a healthy diet. Every time you go into a store something has gone up in price, while your issues get smaller. We may not pay income tax, but we have to pay PST and GST on items that we purchase.

The government spends money to help the poor in other countries, but they need to spend money on the poor in this country as well. We should be putting this country first. It seems the government is trying to turn the country into a Third World country. They also turn a deaf ear to the United Nations. While a lot of wage earners do not realize that if they cut welfare payments, companies will also cut your wages to save money, since you do not need the extra money because with the cut to the welfare payment, your extra wages are not needed.

Maybe everyone in the government should go on social assistance for two months to see how well they can live on what the average social allowance recipient lives on and tells us how to live on welfare budgets. No one knows how to live on a welfare budget unless they have done so.

* (2240)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mr. Blue, for your presentation.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Mr. Blue, for coming tonight. I probably should have thanked other people here tonight in addition to you for having the courage to come here. Many people are here tonight for the first time, and it is not easy to stand at the podium in front of MLAs at this table and speak and talk about what it is like to be on social allowance. So I commend you for your courage in appearing here.

Are you on provincial social assistance?

Mr. Blue: Yes, I am.

Mr. Martindale: Did you ask your worker for approval for false teeth?

Mr. Blue: I did. I went to the dentist, and he was supposed to recommend to the social allowance. I have been waiting and waiting so far for the social allowance, but I did get word that Social Allowances did send a recommendation on September 17. I have not talked to the dentist yet because I assumed he would want to give him time to order the teeth, whatever. If I do not hear in a few days, I am going to phone the dentist and find out if he got word or not.

Mr. Martindale: And how many months did you wait for the approval?

Mr. Blue: Somewhere from six to eight months.

Mr. Martindale: And now the problem seems to be solved. Is that right?

Mr. Blue: Hopefully, it has been solved because, if you notice, I have no front top or bottom teeth; that makes it difficult to speak, to eat. There are a lot of things you cannot eat anymore because you cannot chew into it, and if you notice, even when I am reading this, some of the words were hard to come out. You do not know how much you miss your front teeth until you have not got them.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation, Mr. Blue.

William Seymour? Is William Seymour here?

Mr. William Seymour (Choices): Good evening, my name is William Seymour, and I represent Choices, a coalition for social justice. I am here today to address this committee about Bill 36, which is The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act. As you may already be aware, Choices has analyzed the Progressive Conservative government's legislative package of over 75 bills, including Bill 36. That analysis has resulted in a document titled Two Manitobas, Widening the Gap, plus a shorter, four-page tabloid newspaper, both of which we intend to make available to the people of Manitoba. Choices is also holding a public forum on the government's legislation Wednesday, October 16, at the Planetarium auditorium beginning at 7 p.m. Members of the Progressive Conservative government have been invited to debate Bill 36 and the other pieces of legislation. I hope you can be there.

Choices believes that this government's legislative agenda will increase the already escalating division between rich and poor in this province. In the future, there will be two Manitobas. One will be for those who can afford to buy government corporations at fire sale prices, those who can afford private health care and education and those who profit on cheap labour. The other Manitoba will be for those who depend on social assistance, a public education system, universal health care and on labour unions, all of which help to improve their and their children's living standards. However, with this package the people in the second Manitoba I mention, whom I feel are the majority of Manitobans, will have their options quickly eroded.

Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, is one of the bills in the government's legislative package that will contribute to the quick erosion of options of that second group of Manitoba citizens. Bill 36 is a direct attack on the most vulnerable in our society, those of us who carry the double burden of being poor and being forced to rely on social assistance because there are simply not enough decent-paying jobs for everyone.

Through Bill 36, the Progressive Conservative government is carrying out this attack through several clever sleights of hand. Through the act, the term social assistance is replaced by the term employment and

income assistance. This is an attempt by this government to turn unemployment into employment without lifting a single finger to create jobs for the people of Manitoba.

Bill 36 creates a single welfare system across the province by allowing the province to take over the administration of welfare in the city of Winnipeg. In recent years, 90 percent of Manitoba's welfare recipients have lived in Winnipeg. The City of Winnipeg has also done a better job than the province of helping people on social assistance find work. The taking over of the city welfare system by the Conservative government has resulted in lower welfare rates. This latest change allows the province to cut even further.

The phrase, any employment enhancement measure as set out in the regulations, which appears in this act, is quite disturbing. This amendment lays the groundwork for workfare. The Conservative government is contemplating workfare because it creates a large supply of cheap labour that drives wages down and weakens labour unions. Hard-pressed employers will discover that it is to their advantage to use a workfare recipient rather than hiring a new employee. Many private companies that have made use of workfare in other jurisdictions admit they would have hired people at full wages had they not had access to this pool of cheap labour.

Workfare does not make good economic sense, and its reliance upon coercion sets a dangerous precedent. Having said that, I would like, in the strongest of terms possible, to dispel a common myth, or at least attempt at this time to dispel a common myth, about people on social assistance. That myth is—you have heard it all before—welfare recipients are lazy. I can assure you, speaking on behalf of myself only right now, as a City of Winnipeg social assistance recipient myself, that I am not lazy. And speaking on behalf of other welfare recipients that I have had the pleasure of meeting, they too are not lazy. We are on social assistance because there are not enough decent-paying jobs for everyone, and you know it.

If you wish to discuss this further, I would be happy to after this presentation at another time, but I can assure you we have absolutely nothing to prove to the provincial government. The burden of proving such accusations rests solely with the Progressive Conservative government, not with us. The government's approach through Bill 36 is to drive assistance rates down in the

belief that this creates incentives to finding work. This coercion is not necessary. Most people on social assistance do want to work, but many do not have the opportunity or the means to do so. The better approach, provided this government has the political will to do so, is to undertake meaningful child care and job creation initiatives. Choices has produced several alternative provincial budgets which include some excellent ideas on child care and job creation, and we would be more than happy to forward the government a copy of our latest effort for 1996-1997 for its members to consider.

I understand fully that this hearing is focusing solely on Bill 36, but I would also like to briefly point out how some of the other pieces of legislation in the government's package affect people on social assistance. Bill 67, concerning MTS, the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone system, we at Choices believe will result in higher local telephone rates.

* (2250)

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Seymour, I wonder if maybe we could focus on the particular bill in question.

Mr. Seymour: All right. Certainly, Sir, considering the time frame that we have, I will move on.

I have two final points then I need to make. Bill 36 reflects one of the government's other themes, the need to get big government off of people's backs. Instead, Bill 36 is a clear example of this government forcing its will on the most vulnerable in our society. Bill 36 and the rest of this government's legislative package is a contradiction of this government's own right-wing ideological theme of less government. Spot the irony?

Finally, Choices holds this government responsible for its derailing of the democratic process, if such a thing actually ever existed, by ramming through as many bills as quickly as you can in a short period of time. By preventing full debate on these issues and by hiding their true intentions under a mountain of seemingly innocuous and highly confusing language, you have created a system which is bankrupt. There is no doubt that this Progressive Conservative government of Manitoba is democratically elected, and, quite frankly, I have serious doubts about that as well. I use that term loosely, quite frankly. But democracy ends when the polls close, the ballots are tabulated and the winner is declared. After

that, there is no more true democracy for another four or five years.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Seymour, one of the issues that has been raised by a number of people is the issue of telephones, and while I appreciate the Chair's concern that we not talk about a different bill, I think it is appropriate to talk about the importance of telephones for people on social assistance. I wonder whether you could comment on whether your experience, your view, is—well, simply, give us your comments about your views of the need for allowances for telephones.

Mr. Seymour: Well, it is quite simple, really. I do not think there is an employer out there that actually makes house calls when they are hiring new employees. So somehow, if they are hiring employees, they have to get in touch with that new employee. The telephone seems to be the easiest way. Now, if people on social assistance do not have telephones, cannot afford telephones, tell me, tell me, somebody, how in the hell are they supposed to find employment when nobody out there who is hiring has any way possible, any way, in order to communicate with them? It is really quite simple. It is a form of communication. Like I said, employers do not make house calls.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, is it your view, Mr. Seymour, that the cost of telephones in Manitoba, which is the lowest in North America, are likely to escalate sharply in the next little while?

Mr. Seymour: Yes, I do have that fear. Choices does have that fear. We have considered, for example, Alberta government telephone, and I unfortunately do not have the information handy, but if I recall, their attempts at privatization have also resulted in local telephone rates increasing. If it happens there, I suspect it is going to happen here too.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Seymour, you are a relatively young person. Is it your experience that young people, say under 24, under 28, continue to have more difficulty finding employment than perhaps you thought you would have when you started to go through school? I believe you have gone through university and you have a skilled background, but you have still been unable to find employment. Do you have many friends in that situation? Can you talk a bit about why you think that might be?

Mr. Seymour: The reason why many young people have trouble finding employment, for one thing, I suppose you can say they are born too late.

Mr. Chairperson: Three minutes, Mr. Seymour.

Mr. Seymour: Thank you, Sir. People my age currently live in an economic climate where profitable corporations are laying off employees and not hiring anybody else. We have a climate where access to education—in order to put something down on a resume that looks solid, something they can present to a future employer and say, look I got the skills, I have done the training—is becoming increasingly difficult. Right-wing governments and their backers have made it extremely difficult, almost impossible, cutbacks to education and cuts to wages and the increasing inability to find jobs because employers simply will not hire. I hope that answers your question.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Seymour just spoke, now Ms. McGifford.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Seymour, I think I only have a single question for you. I wonder if you could tell the committee how you feel about your future, and perhaps you could speak for some of your contemporaries as well.

Mr. Seymour: I could probably speak on behalf of myself. Compared to other social assistance recipients, I feel that I would consider myself I guess one of the lucky ones—I hope I am, knock on wood—simply because of the fact that I feel I have some access to avenues which a lot of people do not have. I am not as worried about myself, to be quite frank, I hope. I am deeply concerned, however, about there are many other people on social assistance out there who do not have the avenues which I have. I am probably worried about them right now. I feel I can survive. I am not sure how, but sometimes I find myself saying, look, if social assistance cuts me off, cut me off, go right ahead. Get it the hell over with, but for God's sake, do not go after anybody else.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Mr. Seymour, for your presentation. Valerie Price, please. Valerie Price.

Ms. Valerie Price (Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties): Good evening. I am speaking on behalf of the Manitoba Association for Rights and Liberties.

We are an organization that is concerned largely with human rights and civil liberties. Our objectives are to promote respect for, and observance of, fundamental human rights and liberties and to defend, extend and foster the recognition of these rights and liberties in this province.

So the remarks I will be making with reference to Bill 36 will focus primarily on one aspect of the bill, that being the new Section 5.4 and the additions to subsection 19(1). As a matter of principle, we must express our opposition to forcing people into work or training as a condition for income assistance. The employment obligations imposed in this section appear to be founded on an unfair stereotype, that those on social assistance do not wish to work. It is unwise and unfair to base legislation and public policy on unfounded myths. The truth is, the vast majority of those receiving social assistance have simply been unable to find work.

While we consider it desirable to facilitate the successful transition from welfare to employment, we find the idea of coercion to be repugnant. We would argue that the freedom from forced labour and the freedom to choose one's occupation are fundamental aspects of liberty that most of us in this room probably take for granted. The imposition of employment obligations and employment enhancement measures, as they are called in the act, under the threat of withdrawal of assistance, would constitute a form of involuntary servitude, a condition that is generally condemned.

Further, such measures will serve to only exacerbate social inequality. Those who are among the most vulnerable will be forced by the state to, quote, make a contribution to society. No similar compulsion is imposed on those who are not in need of assistance. There is also the danger that so-called employees so coerced would be vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace since their employment is a condition of receiving public assistance.

We recommend that the government reject this section of the act. We further urge the government, when developing measures intended to reduce dependency upon welfare, to do so with respect for the spirit of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to which Canada is a signatory.

In signing that covenant, Canada recognized the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing and housing and to work which is freely chosen and accepted. The provisions of Section 5.4 do not meet this standard. In this, the International Year for the Elimination of Poverty we urge the government to reject the sections of this bill which will punish the poor for their poverty rather than working to improve their condition.

That is all I have to say.

* (2300)

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks very much, Ms. Price.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Price, for providing a very concise brief on behalf of MARL. You have said in a couple of pages what other people were saying in much longer briefs, so we appreciate your ability to sum it up so precisely.

You used a couple of expressions, one on the first page and one on the second, namely freedom from forced labour and involuntary servitude. It almost sounds like a polite way of saying slavery.

Ms. Price: Yes. It is a polite way of saying slavery.

Mr. Martindale: And you speak of exploitation in the workplace. I wonder if you could be more specific and enumerate examples?

Ms. Price: I think others have made references this evening to the potential opportunities for workers to perhaps experience unfair working conditions or harassment of various forms and be afraid to do anything about it because if they lose this job, they are afraid they will lose their social assistance. It could take sexual harassment or simply extremes of working hours. There are any number of potential abuses, and when people feel so vulnerable and so dependent upon that employment situation, they are unlikely to take perhaps legal remedies that most of us who feel more secure might be likely to explore.

Mr. Martindale: You have pointed out that Canada is in violation of the United Nations covenant. I think most Canadians have a lot of respect for the United Nations.

Do you find it embarrassing as a Canadian that we would be in violation of a UN covenant?

Ms. Price: Yes, I do, especially when we are always bragging when the United Nations rates Canada highly as a place to live and yet we have signed these covenant and yet fail to fully implement, live up to the spirit of them.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I am grateful that you pointed out that because not only do Canadians take pride in the United Nations rating us No. 1, but the Premier uses that in speeches. So I think it is good to be able to remind the government in Manitoba that, in spite of being a good country to live in, we are also in violation of a UN covenant. I am wondering if MARL looks at the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to see if we are in violation of any sections of the Canadian Charter.

Ms. Price: I would need to look at that more closely. A preliminary look at it, I would have to say no. We did some work around Bill C-76 back late last year and early in the spring, and there is not exactly a guarantee around these kinds of assistance in the Charter. No.

Mr. Martindale: I do not know what the case is now, but at one time MARL used to assist people who approached them with problems, and MARL provided service to them in terms of intervention with the Human Rights Commission or various government departments. Does MARL still provide that kind of service?

Ms. Price: Well, in those days we had several staff members. Now we have me, so we are not able to take on individual cases anymore. Our advocacy tends to be at the level of an issue or a policy, and on occasion we take matters to the level of—we do have a case before the Human Rights Commission at the moment. We have on occasion taken cases into the courts, but due to limited resources we have to be more selective.

Mr. Martindale: Do you anticipate that because of Bill 36 that you might have court challenges or individuals who feel that their rights have been violated?

Ms. Price: I do not know. It is hard to say. The whole area of social assistance is not one that we have been terribly active in until recently, and we are still attempting to work with other community groups and look at not just this legislation but changes at the federal

level and see what ways there might be of protecting people and the standards of human dignity that a lot of us have grown up taking for granted in this country that seem to be perhaps threatened these days.

(Mr. Mervin Tweed, Vice-Chairperson, in the Chair)

Mr. Lathlin: I do not have a question or a statement to make in regard to your presentation, Ms. Price. I thank you for your presentation. I, however, would like to ask the minister, Mr. Chairperson, why the minister has not said a word. I have been here since seven o'clock this evening. The minister and her government members have not said a word. They have had no input whatsoever to this process. They sit there looking very bored; some of them earlier were doing their work and they were paying no attention to this process.

Can I ask the minister to maybe—is this how she usually does it, or is it just for this process only?

Mr. Vice-Chairperson: Order, please. The questions are to be directed towards the presenter, and I would ask you to do so. Thank you.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I do want to indicate that in order for us as a government to hear and listen to as many people as possible and not keep people waiting for any length of time, I do want to indicate that I have listened very intently to the discussions, to the presentations. I will continue to do that throughout the process, and I take very seriously the presentations that are made.

(Mr. Chairperson in the Chair)

I attempt to make eye contact with all of the presenters and thank them for their presentation. I will indicate that I have spoken about the issue, have introduced welfare reform, and I am very interested in hearing the comments that presenters have made. In the interests of time and to allow the opposition who have had several questions that they have wanted to ask and comments that they wanted to make within the time allocation, we give them the opportunity to do that.

I thank everyone for their contribution. I do not want to take any more time because I know the hour is getting late, and there are still a lot of people that would like to get their presentations made tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, honourable Minister.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to return to the question of exploitation in the workplace—

Point of Order

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, on a point of order—

Mr. Chairperson: You are interrupting your own—

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I am sorry.

Mr. Chairperson: Is the point of order with respect—

Mr. Sale: On a point of order, the member just called me a slime, and I just wonder if he would like to repeat that for the record or withdraw it; he could choose.

Mr. Chairperson: I am sure, if that was what you thought you heard, there would be a willingness to withdraw that misinterpretation or that interpretation.

* (2310)

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, I have sat here patiently listening to all the presentations tonight. I feel that the members opposite seem to be—I think they feel that there is an election right at this point in time.

We are here to listen; we are listening intently. I have thought the presentations have been very well presented. The purpose of government is to listen to the people, and that is what we are here to do.

Mr. Chairperson: Is this again on the point of order, Mr. Sale?

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I asked for your ruling in regard to the appropriateness of the language. I believe you asked the member to withdraw, and maybe I did not hear it properly.

Mr. Chairperson: I said, if that was the interpretation—I, of course, did not hear what you said was said, so I have no ability to rule. There is a dispute on the facts, and I would rule accordingly.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: There are two minutes left. Ms. McGifford?

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to return to the question of exploitation in the workplace and your concern that this legislation would leave or may leave people vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace.

I wanted to ask you if you think there is one particular group or sex that is more vulnerable to this exploitation than another.

Ms. Price: I had not given that a lot of thought. Off the top of my head, I suppose, I think women might be particularly vulnerable, but, as I say, I had not gone into that in any depth.

Ms. McGifford: Would you say it is fair to say then that this legislation also has inbuilt a bias against women?

Ms. Price: I suppose it is possible to conclude that. Well, to be charitable, I would conclude that that is inadvertent, but the risk is there.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: One last short question and answer.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I think there is an implication in this bill for the effectiveness of some of our other institutions in Manitoba. For example, if an aboriginal person is experiencing discrimination in the workplace or if a woman is experiencing sexual harassment, they may not want to quit that job knowing that either they will get no welfare or they will get reduced benefits. So their ability to continue working or to complain really depends on whether they think that they will get a fair hearing—or even win—at either Employment Standards and the Labour Board or the Human Rights Commission.

Ms. Price: If they are willing to go that far. I mean, what do they live on in the meantime? You can win in the long run, but some of those processes are very slow. I think that might constrain people further.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Price, for your presentation.

Alison Norberg

Ms. Alison Norberg (Church in Society Committee, Winnipeg Presbytery, United Church of Canada): I would like to introduce my colleague. With me this evening is Garry Loewen, who is also a member of the Church in Society Committee. We are here presenting on behalf of that committee which is a mandated committee of Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church of Canada. We would like to thank you for the opportunity to appear tonight and to address you regarding Bill 36.

You will see that we have a brief prepared for you. I want to start first with noting a correction. At the bottom of page 6—it is written in but I want to be clear so that it is on the record, the second last line at the bottom of page 6 reads—there was a glitch in the computer— The companies were reimbursed for half the cost of employing workfare workers. So that correction we have noted there for you just so that is clear.

I want to start off tonight by sharing with you the perspective that we bring, acknowledging that it is certainly a perspective that is particular to the Christian tradition and to our denomination and by no means stating that is necessarily the majority view of society. But we want to be clear that the concerns that we raise are grounded in our understanding of the faith and our understanding of theology. So we share that with you so that you know that this is coming out of those concerns.

For us, the basis of much of what we say is from an understanding that the world is created by God and that gift is intended for all people to share equitably in the resources that God has given us. Justice means sharing resources with all members of the community, particularly the most vulnerable, so that no one is left out of its wealth.

In particular, for us the message and ministry of Jesus was to bring good news, good news to the poor, recovery of sight to the blind, liberty to the captives and to set the downtrodden free. For us as followers of Jesus, we are called to do the same. It is this perspective that has formed much of the United Church of Canada's positions and statements on various issues of social and economic policy, and that is part of what brings us here tonight.

We recognize that part of the impetus for Bill 36 comes as a result of the federal government's action in eliminating the Canada Assistance Plan. We want you to

know that through other parts of the church that we have opposed that, and we are on record as opposing that change on the part of the federal government. We will continue to protest any changes that reduce federal responsibility for social programs, but despite that reality and the dilemma that has created for the province, we need to also state that we do not believe that it is fair for the government to deal with that dilemma at the expense of the weakest and most vulnerable members of society.

One of the things that we were especially concerned about with the elimination of CAP was of course the elimination of the rights that were protected through that. I believe that those will be well known and hopefully well understood by members of this committee. As a result of that, our committee prepared a resolution. We have included that in appendix I that that was endorsed by Winnipeg Presbytery that we carried forward to the annual meeting of Conference this past June. That resolution which addressed both the rights that were eliminated under CAP and the need for those to be enshrined in provincial legislation and, as well, expressing concern about the reductions in welfare allowances, that was almost unanimously supported by over 500 delegates who were represented at that gathering, that is representatives of every United Church congregation in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. So we come to you with a fairly broad endorsement of some of the concerns that we are articulating tonight.

One of the concerns that we have about Bill 36 is that, in fact, one of the provisions, specifically Section 5.3(1), seeks to eliminate the existing protections around basic necessities with eliminating that clause as proposed in Bill 36. So we are really concerned that rather than strengthening by including the CAP protected rights that this language in fact weakens those protections. So we would urge you to in fact do the opposite. I will turn it over now to Garry.

Mr. Garry Loewen (Church in Society Committee, Winnipeg Presbytery, United Church of Canada): We also would like to speak to some of the provisions in Bill 36 about employment obligations. We want to commend the government for its determination to provide more employment enhancement opportunities to social assistance recipients, but we do not believe that the coercive measures that are contained within the bill are necessary. We notice that in the speech that the Minister

of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) made to the House when she was introducing this legislation, she said we know that Manitobans want to work and we agree with that statement. By and large, we think that employable social assistance recipients are not on welfare because they are too lazy to work. They are on welfare because there are not enough jobs.

Our experience has been that when social assistance recipients are provided with job opportunities that they generally accept them. I have personally over the last five years been working with Mennonite Central Committee running a number of different kinds of programs, both placement and training programs for social assistance recipients, and in every program that we have ever run there has been a strong flow of applications to the programs. In the most recent one, the opportunities for employment program that we have been working with in conjunction with the province, the initial publicity that we stimulated generated close to 80 applications to the program before we had our doors open and were ready to do business.

Earlier this evening somebody had talked about SEED Winnipeg which is another project that I work with. We have a steady flow, hundreds of social assistance recipients every year who come to us and who are desperate to find a way to maybe use self-employment as a way of getting off welfare. Then earlier this evening we heard others talk about the City of Winnipeg's experience with things like the infrastructure program and the Dutch Elm Disease Control Program where when job opportunities were made available to people on social assistance, there was no trouble finding candidates.

* (2320)

According to our calculations, there is about 20,000 employable people on welfare in the city of Winnipeg today between those on the city caseloads and those on the provincial caseloads and while some of those people may be on welfare, because they have lost the will to work, that is not generally true. Most people, as we have said before, are on welfare because there is just not enough jobs to go around. So it feels to us like until there are enough jobs for those who want to work, that it is unfair and even counterproductive to use coercive measures to force the whole group to live under the threat of losing their benefits.

So those are some of the concerns that we have about the employment obligations as they exist today, but we have an even greater concern and a number of other groups have named that concern today and that is that the current wording of the bill opens the way for a workfare program. Workfare, in our view, is a really seriously flawed concept, and we would like to name six of the concerns that we have about workfare. A few of them have been named already this evening and a few of them possibly are being named for the first time.

First of all, as we indicated, it is based on a false premise. It is based on the premise that people are on welfare because they are too lazy to work and that they have to be forced to work or they will not go and apply for jobs. We think there has been lots of evidence that shows that this is not true.

Secondly, we feel that it undermines the dignity of the worker. Often the type of work that is planned under a workfare program is actually quite good work. It can involve things like environmental restoration or urban beautification or education assistance or child care, elder care or any of those kinds of things. Good work really and work not lacking in dignity. The problem with the program is the forced labour aspect of it. It is the fact that participants are not given any choice about taking that kind of work. We are convinced that, if the government were to create real jobs in those areas and open them up to welfare recipients, they would have no difficulty filling those jobs.

Thirdly, we note that in other jurisdictions where workfare has been attempted, often workers are not provided the kind of protection that is afforded under employment standards legislation. Workfare arrangements often do not reflect employee-employer relationships. So workplace safety and health standards sometimes do not apply; the opportunity to go out and unionize to get representation for you and your employee group often does not apply; minimum wage laws sometimes do not apply. So it is a concern.

Fourthly, workfare often replaces the work of other workers. It does not result in new work, new jobs. It simply replaces the work of other workers. A few people have talked about Quebec tonight. We found in some of our research that one of the things that was happening in Quebec was that companies like McDonald's, Harvey's,

Zeller's, Canadian Tire and others were being provided a subsidy of half the wage of the employee to hire people off welfare. They were under no obligation to eventually hire the workers they were being subsidized to employ. After the program was over, quite a number of them indicated that they really were only hiring people as a way of achieving cheap labour and that they in fact had not created any new jobs and were not really doing much in terms of providing assistance to people on welfare.

Also, we have examples from Alberta where workfare recipients in Red Deer, for example, were used as nursing assistants in a hospital at \$6 an hour and then at the same time regular nursing assistants who were making \$12 an hour were either laid off or were reduced to part time. So you replace somebody who is making a living wage by somebody who is making a really difficult wage and, again, no overall benefit to the community as a whole. The same thing in New Brunswick with teaching assistants.

Others have talked about the administrative costs of workfare and about the fact that they violate United Nations agreements, and so we would add those. We are actually quite pleased that the Province of Manitoba has so far chosen not to implement workfare, and what we would urge you to do is change this legislation to specifically exclude the possibility of implementing a workfare program in the future.

We also wanted to remind you of some of the principles that we named at the beginning of this brief, to say particularly that we think that one of the first priorities of the government is to protect the interests of its most vulnerable citizens and at least from where we would come, we believe that the character of a community is most profoundly determined by how well it provides for all of its citizens, but particularly those who have had difficulty providing for themselves. We are really regretful that the province chose to reduce the level of welfare support for most welfare recipients last May.

Last spring, before the welfare cuts were announced, the United Church went out to its membership and asked them to try living on a welfare budget for a month just as a way of doing some education about what that is all about. Quite a number of our members tried that, and we had various forums to obtain their experience after they were done.

Mr. Chairperson: Three minutes.

Mr. Loewen: Almost unanimously they came back and said, we could not do it. We did all kinds of stuff; we postponed all kinds of expenditures; we changed our lifestyle enormously, but there was no way that we could live on those rates. Of course, those were the rates that were in existence before the cuts that happened in May.

We would urge the government to restore the welfare rates to the levels that existed last March and to make a determination to maintain a generous level of support until solutions for the jobs crisis can be found.

Ms. Norberg: I just want to say, thank you for your time and be glad to answer your questions, because I think it is in the dialogue that we can come up with creative solutions as a community. That is very important to us.

Mr. Chairperson: That was Ms. Alison Norberg speaking. Now, Mr. Martindale.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you for your brief. It is a pleasure to be in fundamental agreement with the United Church brief. It will probably feel quite different when I am in government and you are presenting a brief, but I encourage you to continue doing this.

Ms. Norberg: No. I have had both experiences. Believe me. I have done this a long time.

Mr. Martindale: I am pleased that at the beginning you began with the United Church's theological rationale. One of the quotes that I think should be read into the record, I first read in the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops new year statement in the early 1980s, when they said, and you have said, the needs of the poor must have priority over the wants of the wealthy, the freedom of the dominated must have priority over the liberty of the powerful, the participation of the marginalized must take priority over the preservation of an order that excludes them.

Thank you for including that wonderful theological rationale.

My understanding is that—well let us begin this way. A lot of people tonight are concerned that this bill opens the door for workfare, but it is my understanding that

workfare is definitely going to come in Manitoba. The bill specifically says, in the for-profit or nonprofit sectors. I do not know where it is coming from, whether it is coming from the minister's office or the deputy minister's office or the assistant deputy minister for income security or area supervisors, but I understand that nonprofit organizations are already being approached and asked if they will take welfare recipients.

What do you think nonprofit organizations should do? For example, if the United Church was asked to take a welfare recipient on a workfare plan, for example, in the conference office or the Presbytery office or local congregation, should you say no, or would you take somebody on that was a workfare client?

* (2330)

Mr. Loewen: I think we would want to make a distinction, first of all, between measures that are designed to improve the employability of somebody who is on welfare and measures that simply coerce somebody who is on welfare to do work that they do not freely choose. I think there are ways that the government could approach nonprofit organizations, including an organization like the United Church, and ask for certain work experience to be provided to people who have freely chosen to do that kind of work experience as a way of providing experience, training, a resume, a reference, that kind of thing, but our committee intends to go to the United Church and to ask it to develop a policy that it will never participate in a workfare program, that it will never allow any of its units to take somebody as an employee who is being forced against their wish to go and do that work.

Mr. Martindale: Do you realize that under this bill you would not get volunteers? I take it from your remarks, if someone came who was on social assistance and wanted to volunteer, that you would consider that person, but do you realize that under this bill, if they are sent and they refuse to go, either they will get no benefits or their benefits will be reduced by \$50 a month for six months and \$100 a month after that. The worker, I presume, has the discretion to choose any one of those three options, so certainly they would be sent to you under a coercive system, which is in this bill.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Loewen, in response to that leading question?

Mr. Loewen: It is problematic. I am not sure we have an answer for that, Mr. Martindale. It feels to me that there may be the potential to still make a distinction. To me the key words are freely chosen versus forced or coercive, and it would be a matter of whether we could find a way to make that distinction. I think for us what is important is if we felt we were providing an opportunity to a social assistance recipient who really desired that opportunity, we would want to find a way to provide it. If we felt that we were providing an opportunity that was under heavy coercion, and was being done only for that reason, that would be where we would want to decline it. It is problematic. We are not quite sure what to do about that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you, Ms. Norberg and Mr. Loewen. Is Tammy Sutherland here?

Ms. Mary Helen Ross (Inner City Ministries, Volunteer Project): Good evening.

Mr. Chairperson: Maybe you could speak into the mike, Madam?

Ms. Ross: My name is Mary Helen Ross. I live at 522 Sherbrook Street. I would like to tell you a little bit of a story. I went to a workshop—

Ms. Tammy Sutherland (Inner City Ministries, Volunteer Project): I should introduce myself as well. I am Tammy Sutherland. We are both going to speak to you this evening. I am going to start off, I think, and I am a voluntary service worker with the Mennonite Central Committee. I have been placed with something called the Volunteer Project, and it is an organization that provides support and training to those who volunteer with three different church-based, inner city agencies. Those are Anglican and United agencies.

Through my work I have the opportunity to meet and work with residents of Osborne Village as well as folks living between Balmoral and Arlington from the Assiniboine River to Notre Dame. It is a pretty big area. Well, I would like to invite you to a party at the Oak Table. It is a drop-in in Osborne Village. The volunteers and guests planned a meal of chili and pumpkin pie to celebrate the harvest and Thanksgiving. Michael, a regular at the drop-in, showed up at 9 a.m. to begin the preparations. Michael is in his late 30s. He is

unemployed and on social assistance. He spent the whole morning cooking, cleaning and directing others who were helping out in the kitchen. Finally the party began and the food was served. Everyone was very impressed and commented on how excellent it all tasted, and at the end of the day as Mike was packing up to leave he said, "Wow, I feel like I have really accomplished something today. It's been such a great day, I feel so good."

I am telling you this story not only to make you hungry, but also because I think it is a good example of what I see every day, so called lazy welfare recipients hard at work. Michael is only one of over 100 volunteers that I work with. Many of them are actually here tonight and they are going to be speaking too under different organizations.

In 1995 volunteers with the Volunteer Project contributed at least 13,240 hours to the inner city ministries. These hours represent the equivalent of approximately seven full-time staffpersons. At a salary of \$24,000 a year, which I think would be somewhat reasonable, their work represents in real dollars a contribution of \$165,600 and, of course, this donation is not tax deductible.

There is a widespread assumption that people on social assistance need to be motivated to work. This assumption undergirds the movement towards forcing welfare recipients to send out a certain number of resumes or do odd jobs in order to receive their cheques. This assumption led to the drastic cuts to social assistance that folks faced this spring. But my experience tells me that this assumption is false. Many people want to work; folks come to my office every week looking for work. When I ask people why they want to volunteer, they almost always say that they are looking for a way to give back to their community. They do not want to take all the time; like most of us they want to give too.

It is my understanding that Bill 36 is laying the groundwork for workfare, but is it not the goal to get people off of welfare? Workfare does not accomplish this. People like Michael want real work, they want real jobs for real wages with all the benefits and rights that should go along with being a paid employee. Some of the volunteers I work with are like Michael, able and willing to work, but they cannot find work. Others are like Robert; because of physical and mental illnesses, he

is simply not able to work regularly. He is not considered disabled, and yet his ability to work is seriously hampered by his condition.

Others lack the social skills that employers usually require. Our society's obsession with productivity and efficiency have forced people out of work, yet these folks have valuable skills and gifts to share with us. Mary here is a volunteer with our program. I would like you to listen to a little bit of her story.

Ms. Ross: All right. My name is Mary Helen Ross. I live in the Sherbrook area of Winnipeg, Manitoba. I live at 522 Sherbrook.

When I came to Winnipeg I was 17 years old, and I could not go to school because I had six children in my family that I had to take care of. We came to live here in 1958. I am not exactly sure of the date that I went over to work in the sheltered workshop. I worked there for 23 years. I got paid \$5 a month when I first started. Then the money started getting a little bit better and a little bit better.

Then after that, after the 23 years I was there, I went to another place to volunteer and work in an office. I got paid for what I did, but the manager was not there half the time, and I had no one to speak to or no one to talk to or no one to tell me what I was supposed to be doing at my job, so I finally gave up because the boss got mad at me and started getting unreasonable with me. Then I stayed home, and then one day I decided I was going to go back to the sheltered workshop. I went there, and they would not take me back because I left of my own free will.

* (2340)

My husband and I went over to the welfare to get some forms that he had to work with. I asked the worker there if I could get myself a job, and she said no, so I have been out of work ever since. But, before I got married, I was on provincial welfare, and they cut me right off provincial welfare. Now I have no job. I do not know where to look. I want to do some work, but the worker told me I could not.

Anyway, there is one thing I would like to say about Bill 36 is that I wish that some people—I am not saying you in particular—in this government here would step in

our shoes for a change and see what it is like to be on welfare, see what it is like to work in a soup kitchen like I do everyday, see what kind of people come in, poor people, people drunk, people on drugs. It is terrible the way things are going for those kinds of poor people. I beg the government to do a little bit better in helping get them social assistance and better monies for their families and things. Well, anyway, good luck to you people. Thank you.

Ms. Sutherland: I still have a very closing comments. As you can probably see, Mary is a very perceptive and caring and compassionate person. She has a lot to offer society. Finding a job, however, is very difficult. I just want to ask you, what do cuts to welfare say about the value of people like Mary in our society? When I ask the volunteers I work with what they would like to see happen, inevitably they say that they would like to have more job opportunities. Some folks require further training to access employment, and some need a very supportive and flexible atmosphere in which to work and learn. Those who cannot work at all need to receive social assistance cheques that enable them to live a healthy lifestyle.

I urge you to please remember Mary and Michael and Robert as you consider Bill 36.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very, very much for that dual presentation.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank Ms. Sutherland and Mary for your presentations. It is good to see people speaking for themselves instead of other people speaking on their behalf. It is wonderful.

I would like to ask Ms. Sutherland if you think that it would be a good idea for the government, say the federal government, to have a refundable tax credit for people's volunteer work. Obviously, people who are on very limited incomes have an extremely limited ability to make charitable donation receipts, and unlike those of us who are working, they get no tax benefit from it. However, if there was a refundable tax credit they could get an income tax refund for their volunteer hours. Is that something you would be in favour of?

Ms. Sutherland: Yes, I think that the way our tax credit system is set up, it excludes the work largely of women

and of people who are living in poverty because we only value being able to give money. We do not value when people can actually give of their time, and that is what a lot of people have. They have time but they do not have a lot of money.

Mr. Martindale: Well, I can see that you and many other people in the inner city ministries volunteer project appreciate the time and the efforts and the gifts of volunteers, and that is a good thing. I think it is good for the individuals. It is good for society. It is good for the organizations that they are volunteering at.

I am wondering though if, because of the employment expectations that are put on such large numbers of people on assistance, that they will still have time to volunteer. I am sorry, I do not have my social assistance administrative manual here, but I am trying to find out if people are required to do 15 job searches every two weeks or every month. I cannot remember what I read in the new directives, but if people are out pounding the pavement looking for jobs that are not there, how are they going to volunteer?

Ms. Sutherland: Well, they are not. At the Augustine Oak Table we had 10 volunteers, and we lost three who were out looking for work. I am a little bit confused about the system, because one day they will have a job and the next day they will not. The volunteers never have any sense of when they are going to work or when they can come in, so it makes it really hard for people to volunteer.

Ms. Ross: I would like to add something to that. I have been working as a volunteer in a soup kitchen for more than five years, and I would like to say that we get volunteers and, as she says, we lose volunteers. Another thing is that right now my husband is under the City of Winnipeg, and he gives me money whenever he can, and it is very hard for us sometimes, but we manage.

Mr. Martindale: I wonder, Ms. Sutherland, if you could expand on your comment that people sometimes get work, but it only lasts for periods as short as one day. Are they getting jobs in the casual labour market?

Ms. Sutherland: They are usually doing things to do with the welfare system, either attending a training program—one fellow has attended three training programs

now—or working for I guess it is home services, I cannot remember the exact name, or they are raking leaves and cleaning sidewalks.

I am always glad to lose a volunteer to full-time paid employment, but that does not happen very often. It is usually either that or there are some temporary agencies that give one day of work.

Mr. Martindale: Would it be your observation or experience that people who are hired by the Community Home Service Program of the City of Winnipeg to do yard work are happy to have this kind of employment, that they go willingly, that they are pleased to be able to find even short-term work like that?

Ms. Sutherland: I would say that the situation right now is so desperate in terms of people's self-esteem that some of our people are glad to have any kind of work that they can say, I worked today. I do not think that is acceptable, but that is how desperate people are right now. They would do anything. I think it is sick.

Ms. Ross: Mr. Chairman, one more thing I would like to say is we have people that come into our free kitchen who if they have committed an offence or forgot to pay the parking ticket or whatever, they are sent to us and it is called fine option. We get people and they have to work for us for so many hours and then they go back into the community and they do community work.

* (2350)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very, very much for your very heartfelt and sincere presentation.

Denise Flett, please. Is Denise Flett here?

Just so that everyone will know where we are at, earlier in the evening we were going to do an investigation to determine who was interested in continuing on this evening and who wanted to go tomorrow morning. You will be relieved to know, all of you have been so patient, that we just have Denise Flett now and followed by Kristine Barr and Catharin Johannson, and in accordance with what I think was the agreement of all concerned, that would mean everyone would be presenting that wanted to present.

The honourable minister raises with me the name of an individual who might have been overlooked, and that is the name of Morgan Brock. Is Morgan Brock here and desirous of speaking this evening? No? Okay. Then is it the will of the committee that we would proceed with these two further presentations and then call it a night?

Is there anyone else who might have been overlooked that wants to present this evening? [interjection] What is your name, Madam?

Ms. Susan Bruce (Private Citizen): My name is Susan Bruce, and I am No. 42, and if I come here tomorrow I would probably—

Mr. Chairperson: Is it the will of the committee to allow this individual to present?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Fine? Okay. Anybody else?

Ms. Sharon Olson (Private Citizen): I would like to also speak, as I am getting a ride this afternoon.

Mr. Chairperson: What is your name, Madam?

Ms. Olson: Sharon Olson.

Mr. Chairperson: Sharon Olson. Is that okay with the committee?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed. Anybody else? Okay. Denise Flett, and you have some other gentleman with you.

Ms. Denise Flett (West Broadway Community Ministry): Yes, I have my colleague, Ray Despatis and Bill Rockwell also.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, Mr. Rockwell and Mr. Despatis. Proceed, Ms. Flett.

Ms. Flett: On behalf of Rev. Ted Nimik and Riky de Bakker, an outreach worker at West Broadway Community Ministry to the Legislative Committee for Bill 36.

Every weekday the drop-in of West Broadway Community Ministry opens its door to the people living in one of the poorest areas of Winnipeg. On an average day we welcome 100 to 120 people. Last year we totalled more than 21,000 visits. Over the past five years the numbers of visits have at least doubled.

About 10 to 15 percent of our guests are transients and a good 95 percent are on city or provincial assistance, mainly young males drifting from place to place. We also have females with children, who come in looking whether they do not have enough food for their children and their cheques do not make it till the end of the month. The vast majority consists of neighbourhood people. Almost all who come are malnourished and suffer from bad health. Besides rampant nutrition and a state of general neglect, we meet many people with mental health problems and people who are developmentally challenged.

The government has abdicated its responsibility for maintaining adequate support levels for its most vulnerable citizens and keeps talking about merits of the churches and the voluntary sector taking on the task of helping the poor. Although agencies like West Broadway Community Ministry are important resources in their struggle to survive, it is only a band-aid solution. Moreover, inner city churches are feeling overwhelmed by the steady increase of the demands on their resources. They are facing dwindling membership and shrinking resources that are unlikely to continue their current level of commitment.

The situation is bleak. Unless structures that empower the poor are put in place, the mass pauperization of a significant minority of Canadians will continue.

Christians and others will have to vote in a manner consistent with the gospel message of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all mankind. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Flett. Mr. Rockwood.

Floor Comment: No, this is Despatis.

Mr. Raymond Despatis (West Broadway Community Ministry): Good evening or almost good morning. My name is Raymond Despatis.

Before I get to the written presentation that was handed out to you, maybe I should tell you a little bit about Raymond Despatis. I left home at the age of 12 years old and went to work at the carnivals, the Royal American Shows, Conklin Shows, and I worked at that job for 23 years until I had two heart attacks. The last heart attack that I had was right in the middle of the CNE on a tear-down which ended my career as a carnival worker. After my second heart attack I was forced to retire, after my savings were gone, UIC was gone, I went on to welfare.

I have always been a proud person. I have never taken anything for nothing. I had the opportunity to do some volunteer work out of the Agape Table soup kitchen, and later on volunteer work out of West Broadway Community Ministry. Now, for somebody to come up to me and say just because I am on welfare that I am a lazy person, that person does not know who Ray Despatis is.

Getting into the presentation here, you are going to find a very interesting definition for a bird of prey. The definition for bird of prey is a hawk, eagles, owls, vultures, carnivores and government. They attack the weak, the vulnerable, for example, rats, mice, dead animals and people—and where I include the people on this, I include the government as birds of prey. It seems to me that whenever the government—it does not matter whether it is NDP or Conservative government or Liberal government, right around election time we are all handed a bunch of bull.

* (0000)

In my brief, I am talking mainly about—quite a bit about those that are on social assistance, but I am also talking about the elderly, I am also talking about students, I am also talking about those that are working at a minimum wage which is at \$5.40 an hour. The minimum wage in this province is not adequate. A person that is working making minimum wages is better off on social assistance, whether it be city or provincial. The reason why I say this is that a person that is making minimum wage, if this person has a family and one member of his family gets sick and that person has to get a prescription for whatever, or dental work, or eye care, that person is up the creek. There is no government supplement that I know of that is going to help that person. Believe me, I have done some checking to find out whether there is some government supplement for this person working at minimum wage, and there is not.

So again, like I say, minimum wage is inadequate. Again, a lot of people that are on social assistance, they are on assistance because they have no other choice. Myself, I have had two heart attacks, I have high blood pressure. I have arthritis in both my knees. I have early stages of rheumatoid arthritis in my hands, and one of my main passions is I love to cook. A simple thing like opening up a can of soup or a can of beans or to slice meat, to chop vegetables, I go through excruciating pain in my hands. There is no remedy for rheumatoid arthritis.

Therefore, I am just one out of many that are on assistance because they have no other choice, whether it be medical, physical or mental. There is no other choice for them. With Bill 36, these are some of the people that are going to be punished for it. Workfare? I have been doing volunteer work out of Agape Table in West Broadway for the past eight years. To me, what I receive on social assistance, those are my wages. When social assistance budgets get cut, my wages are getting cut. I make \$95 a month working out of West Broadway, which is a small pittance of volunteer hours that I put in. I am there five days a week. I put in four hours in the afternoon at West Broadway, sometimes more. I am constantly going to various meetings where there is talk about welfare budgets. I am constantly going to meetings trying to improve the conditions in my community. I work and live in the same community. I do my volunteer work, and that is my way of giving back to my community.

I can go on and on but I do realize we are out of time, so I am going to drop it at that. If there is any question, go for it.

Mr. Chairperson: Any questions for any one of these three?

Mr. Sale: I had something to do with the rebuilding of the church out of which the centre is, and I know it is place that has welcomed many different kinds of folks and continues to be a place of hospitality for the community. Can you comment on the safety in that neighbourhood and the impact that welfare cuts have on safety?

Mr. Despatis: The safety? Where the crime increases is when there are cuts in the welfare budget. People are looking for places and how to get money to feed their

children, to feed their family. If you give a dog a bone and you take that bone away from that dog, that dog is going to retaliate. You do that to a person, you give him X number of dollars—as a matter of fact, before the last welfare budget on city, I was receiving \$204 a month; now I am receiving \$150 a month. That excludes my rent—my rent I do not see that, it goes directly to the landlord—but my personal budget is \$150 a month. Now that is reduced from \$204 a month. I am angry. You have cut my wages. You have taken part of my bone away. I am angry. I am not the only one that is angry.

When you come into West Broadway drop-in centre or the Agape Table and talk to any of our guests that come in there, they will tell you they are angry. Every time there is an election, when we hear the bull—again, it does not matter what party it is, oh, we are going to make sure that you guys are not going to be affected by any of these cuts, we are going to tighten the budget. But, while you are tightening the budget, you are also digging into the poor. You are also taking a part of that bone away from the people that cannot afford to lose any more of that bone.

As far as the safety issue goes, I have worked with all kinds of people. I have dealt with all kinds of people, both Agape Table and West Broadway. You cannot ask for some of the nicer people that go into both those places. As a matter of fact, West Broadway and Agape Table are a safe haven off of the streets.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, I have a question for Ms. Flett. I know the two people who wrote the letter on Bill 36, both Reverend Nimik and Riky de Bakker, but I am wondering, how do you feel when welfare rates are cut and when you hear about workfare? I wonder if we could get some personal responses from you about how you think these policies affect you and your family.

Ms. Flett: Well, I am single, so I am living with just my own family. Our numbers increase a great deal, especially—with the workfare, I do not know. I cannot answer that one.

Mr. Martindale: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Ms. Flett.

Thank you for your presentations.

Next, I am wondering, one of the presenters to come indicated she was expecting a ride. Is that fair that she should proceed next? She was ahead in the list, too. She was 38. Is this Sharon Olson then?

Ms. Olson: It is very good to be here this evening and meet you all.

I am a single mother. I am on assistance, and I have a lot of health problems due to the cuts as well as stemming from my childhood. I wrote this one night when I came home from a meeting with one of the churches that I belong to. I was really ticked off, and I had pen in hand. I was writing so fast that I could not even see the paper for the tears, but this is what I wrote.

Dreams, I too had dreams, ambitions and hopes when I was a child. I dreamt that my knight in shining armour would come and rescue me, that I would have children, live in a big house with a white picket fence and have a nice big yard and live happily ever after. Today's reality is that I am a single mother, but my children do not live with me. They live with my mom. I have health problems. I had an eye injury in 1967 that has left me legally blind in my right eye. It is artificial. I had a head injury six months after the eye injury, when I was a little girl, when I was eight. That has left me with epilepsy now. I do not have a very good education, due to my having the health problems that I had when I was a young child. I was put into what they called a slow-learners class all my life. I was taking the same math and reading skills for four years.

I got pregnant when I was 18, had my daughter when I was 19. She is 18, well, 17 and a half now, and ever since then I have been living on welfare off and on for about 18 years. Today's reality is also that I volunteer at St. Matthew's Church and Crossways. I am one of their leaders with a craft group I am very proud of. I do eight hours a week of volunteering, and then I go and I help out at the food buyers club at St. Matthew's Church, and I am there from 10 in the morning till seven at night. I do not get paid for that, and I put in hard work. I lift boxes of fruit and vegetables, I talk to the poor, but I do not see the people as the poor, I see them as my friends. You know, it really hurts me that I have lived in Winnipeg all my life, I have never seen poor people until I moved down here, and I never saw the devastation till I moved down here either. Part of my heart aches because I had

never seen this ever in my life. I never knew what poor people were, and I am one of the poor. I do not accept myself as poor, yet I quote, unquote, am.

Yes, I go to the soup kitchen in the morning just to meet people and, yes, some of these people I do call my friends. I see old and young and mentally challenged people trying to live on what you get on social assistance. I have seen people who have had the same dreams I had, but because of circumstances that are out of their hands they are on assistance. There are people on assistance who cannot speak for themselves or are scared to, for fear that they might be discriminated against for the way they are living.

I just want the government people who have family to sit back and take a long, hard look at the way they are living and realize that there are poor, hungry, homeless people out there, people who count as human beings. We have rights and needs too, just like you. Thank you.

* (0010)

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for that presentation.

Mr. Dyck: Yes, could you please tell us where you moved from, where you lived before you came to the city.

Ms. Olson: I have lived in Winnipeg all my life. I grew up in St. James. My parents were hard workers. I came from a family of four. I am the oldest. I have a sister who lives in Kenora who has a family, who has a husband, has four lovely children. I have a brother who lives with my mother who raises my children. My children are 17, 15 and 13, and they know the situation that I am in. I have been very blunt with my children, very open. My kids do not make fun of people who are physically challenged in any way. They realize, you know, that I have had some turbulent times in my life, and they say to me, Mum, we are very proud of you even though you gave us up due to your health.

They realize—like, somebody earlier mentioned maintenance enforcement. I, too, had an ex common-law husband, but due to him being pigheaded and bullheaded, he did not want to support my daughter who was not his, and in his mind and capacity and his way of thinking thought that my daughter and I had to earn his name. So

I lived with this man for seven years. This is going back like '79, okay? I have learned a lot. I am 37 years old; I am getting grey; I am getting older. I have learned. The older daughter has followed in my footsteps; she is dating young boys who, I guess, are in the same boat that my ex common-law husband was in.

I have dated three alcoholic men that were very abusive to me. The last one was two, almost three years ago, and I came home one night and I got a beating. I got kicked ass over teakettle—pardon the language—into the porcelain tub and ended up with cracked ribs and a perforated lung. Well, I escaped. I went to the Health Sciences Centre. The police came. I could not find him, my old boyfriend, for two days, so they put me in the Sherbrooke Hotel. Great place to live—here I am downtown. So anyway I lose all my furniture, all my belongings because this young man was in and out of Stony Mountain Pen for seven years. I lose all my possessions, and I was told by the police that there is nothing they can do. I wait a year to get into court to have this man charged. He was not even charged; all he got was a suspended sentence. He walked away with possessions of my mother's and my own that I have had from Day One.

Mr. Dyck: I just want to thank you for taking the courage to share your life with us. Thank you very much.

Ms. Olson: Thank you. I get very angry because something has got to be said.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Sale, I think, had a question, and then Mr. Martindale.

Mr. Martindale: I guess I would like to ask if you realized that under the new guidelines you may be asked to do 15 job searches a month.

Ms. Olson: I have a question to bounce back with that, but that is okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Martindale: What kind of job would you like to be doing, and what education skills do you think you have to get a job? Do you think 15 job searches a month is realistic? Are you going to get a job if you are forced to do that kind of job search?

Ms. Olson: If I have no choice, I will have to, I guess. I do not know. When you are pushed up against a wall,

what other choice do you have? I really do not know; I have been through the appeal system to try to get on to provincial assistance, because I am on city. I take medication due to my epilepsy every evening. Now I take Tegretol which is a pill that helps my brain activity, so that the nerve lengths do not act up and cause a seizure. So I take that, and some days I wake up with severe headaches. It feels like my head is going to explode.

I do not know. I told the city; I went and got two letters for the Social Services Advisory Committee. I was trying to appeal this, and I went and I got these letters from my doctors. One was a neurologist, and one was my regular doctor. They said, oh, that is not good enough; we need you to go and have psychometric testing. But the welfare people do not tell you how much this testing is going to cost. So I went to this psychologist that I was seeing because I come from a family that has had some sexual abuse. So I went to him, and he found these two psychologists. Well, this first one I phoned, he says there is nothing—

Mr. Chairperson: You do not have to—

Ms. Olson: No, I know, but I want to tell you, because it is important. He told me that the costs were \$750 for the testing, and my appeal was denied. Then they say that I do not have the ability or the incentive to work, yet I volunteer. So, you know, they are going up and down. They are saying one thing but they are doing something totally different, and it is not fair. I put in a lot of hours at Tammy Sutherland's churches. I am embarrassing her. But anyway, Tammy knows me. You know, I do a lot of hard work there, and I have made a lot of good friends.

I just hope you people understand what you are doing. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentation. I would now like to call on Kristine Barr and Catharin Johannson, and then we will finish off with Susan Bruce.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, just for the record, maybe we should say that she was referring to Augustine United Church, West Broadway Community Ministry and St. Matthews-Maryland Community Ministry.

Mr. Chairperson: I think it is important for a clerical person to clarify, so that we do not embarrass Tammy. Who is speaking now?

Ms. Kristine Barr (Manitoba Young New Democrats): My name is Kristine Barr. I am going to begin speaking, and Catharin and I will both be presenting tonight. We are speaking on behalf of the Manitoba Young New Democrats and have come out tonight to speak against Bill 36, which we consider to be just another example of this Conservative government's draconian agenda. This legislation destroys the social right and is unfair and unjust. We could not just sit back silently and watch this government destroy our security for the future, so we are here to voice our opposition.

It is obvious right from the first glance at the title of this bill that the provincial government is attempting to rid itself of the social responsibility that they have to those most in need. Welfare will no longer be considered a social allowance used as a last resort by people who have explored all other options but will become employment and income assistance. The wording used throughout this bill represents the government turning its back on values of compassion, social justice and co-operation.

Throughout this bill, language is used to twist the reality of the situation. You can use the term "employment" all you like, but the reality is no jobs are being created. It seems as if the underlying assumption behind Bill 36 is that people do not want to work and are lacking in incentive. This is simply not true. The stigma that accompanies a person receiving social assistance must be reduced, not increased as this bill will do. This legislation would contribute to a greater stigmatization and scapegoating of those on social assistance resulting in even lower morale. The reality of the situation is that there are not enough jobs available which could provide a livable income to the 40,000 current recipients.

* (0020)

The jobs that are available today cannot provide the basic necessities due to the fact that most jobs that are being created in today's economy are low wage, part time and often short term. A person working full time in a minimum wage job may be able to pay rent and buy food and some clothing, but what about those emergencies that are bound to arise, for example, a prescription, ambulance services, eye doctor appointments, those necessities which are not covered by medicare? Where is this government's faith in the people of Manitoba? To

assume that Manitobans on social assistance will not work is to deny the truth of our economic condition. The truth is there are not enough jobs, so why is this government planning on punishing people for being unemployed?

Mr. Chairperson: This is now Catharin Johannson.

Ms. Catharin Johannson (Manitoba Young New Democrats): Yes, it is. Another significant change that Bill 36 makes to The Social Allowances Act can be found in Section 5.4. Obligations regarding employment are no longer simply the obligation of the applicant or recipient but become the obligation of the applicant or the recipient's dependants as well. An applicant, recipient or dependant must satisfy the director in terms of employment obligations or employability enhancement measures or risk being denied assistance.

The government is essentially introducing workfare not only for social assistance applicants and recipients but for their dependants as well. For example, suppose that a child were to have a paper route. Their income from this route must be reported and deducted from assistance benefits. This not only discourages initiative and entrepreneurship from Manitoba's young people, but almost demands dishonesty. When looking at the wording of the bill, it is obvious that the way that dependants have been added into it.

I have an example of what might possibly happen, under the current wording the way Bill 36 is being presented. So suppose, for example, that I graduated from high school, was unable to find a job—very plausible in today's economic conditions. I have a bit of money saved and after searching for a job and am unable to find one, I decide to take some time off to write some plays, perhaps. Under this bill, if my parents were on social assistance and I remained at home as their dependant, I would be required to satisfy the director in terms of employment obligations or employability enhancement measures. And if I do not, my parents can be denied assistance.

So, if the director finds me a job digging ditches and filling them up again, or with Community Home Services, I have to take it, or I will be responsible for my parents' assistance being denied, reduced, suspended or discontinued. It appears that the government included

this addition in order to punish parents for having children who do not satisfy the director, but it is equally effective in punishing children and youth for having parents who rely on social assistance. Either way, it is mean-spirited and it is antifamily. We suggest that at the very least, at the very least, all references to dependants in this bill be expunged.

Bill 36 also sets the groundwork for the establishment of workfare by requiring people to work or train in order to receive assistance. The impact that workfare will have on working people must be examined. Workfare essentially creates a pool of cheap labour, the thousands of employable Manitobans receiving social assistance. A dangerous scenario could arise if businesses were subsidized by government to train those on social assistance. Well-paid employees could be laid off and replaced with low-paid or perhaps no-paid social assistance recipients. Those who lose their jobs could ultimately revolve into new recipients, and the vicious cycle continues.

This process would not only drive wages down but would also weaken health and safety standards as employed Manitobans become so afraid of losing their jobs that they are willing to sacrifice previously expected benefits. This would also serve as another tool in the government's continued union-busting effort. Workfare is bad for the economy and very expensive to administer. The only purpose it could possibly serve is to sacrifice the working people of this province at the altar of the Progressive Conservative corporate agenda.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. Kristine Barr again.

Ms. Barr: If this legislation is successful, young people do not have a very bright future. We are walking an economic tightrope, and this Conservative government wants to pull the net out from under us. There are no real jobs out there for us today. Even if youth choose to pursue educational opportunities, they are usually unable to find a job in their field, especially in Manitoba. Some may settle for less than ideal jobs here, but many are leaving the province to pursue their dreams elsewhere. Some of us are entering training programs which pay less than minimum wage and depreciate our value as contributing members of society. What are we training for? We will end up on a wild goose chase participating

in training program after training program looking for that golden low-wage job opportunity.

But there is a better way. If you truly want to decrease the number of people on social assistance, undertake a true job-creation program. Implement a comprehensive child care initiative and stop subsidizing the real welfare bums, the big corporations.

As Young New Democrats, we believe that things should be different. We believe that young people should be active in determining the direction our economy is heading. We want to instill hope and faith in young people about the future of our province. We believe that a right to social assistance is a part of that, and we will continue to fight to ensure that social assistance remains a right for each and every Manitoban, a right that is not dependent on workfare.

Mr. Martindale: Well, thank you, Ms. Barr and Ms. Johannson, for your brief. I have a couple of questions. You mentioned students graduating from universities and colleges in Manitoba but going to other provinces to find jobs. Are you aware of students who have deliberately gone to universities in provinces like Alberta and B.C., believing that studying there will help them to make contacts and that it will be easier to get a job after they graduate there, because I have had parents tell me that. I am wondering if you have friends or have heard of students who have done that.

Ms. Johannson: I have two very close friends, one who is currently studying for a Masters in History at the University of Victoria and one who is at Douglas College in Vancouver for that specific reason. That is one of the reasons.

Mr. Martindale: You recommend that the government implement a comprehensive child care initiative. I am wondering if you could tell me what kind of initiative you think the government should bring in.

Ms. Barr: I think we need to bring in an initiative that actually reflects the needs of families in our province, especially the fact that a lot of single mothers have no access to comprehensive child care. They cannot afford it with the benefits that they are being given. There are not enough spaces for the spaces that are available under the current system, and if we do not start to address the

real issues and put in place measures that women can access, then they are not ever going to be able to go out and try and find a job.

Putting in legislation where you have to go and find 15 job contacts a month is ridiculous because we do not have child care available for them to access. That is not considered a necessity. It just makes it completely unrealistic, and it ends up just being, you will have case workers harassing women, especially, who are not fulfilling the obligations that are being set out in this legislation.

Mr. Martindale: Do you believe that child care is effective in helping people get into the paid workforce, and if so, do you know of any studies or statistics that point in that direction?

Ms. Barr: I am sorry. I do not have any of those with me tonight.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentations.

Now, the last presenter tonight is Susan Bruce.

Ms. Bruce: Do not worry, just like me, I will be short and sweet. I got no papers for you. I could give you a story that would make you cry, make you blush, and you would not believe that I have lived five lives in one—[interjection] Okay, I will get the microphone.

* (0030)

What I have are questions. The question I have is—and, Bonnie Mitchelson, please take a couple of minutes out and answer this, because I do not have a lot of time. I am not giving a lot of time to auditory, although, God knows, my family says I got a big mouth and I could. I am just giving you opportunity to answer these questions. Number one, how do you expect the private sector to hire us when your—even though we are on your government payroll, when a job comes up in government, we ain't the first to be hired, and you know it. We are not given priority, whether it is a janitorial job or something with a Ph.D. We are not given any kind of affirmative action. If you really want us employed, just doing that alone would show the private sector that we are not sluts, that

we are not criminals, that we are not lazy. Number one, I would like you to address that one, because that is talking out of both sides of the mouth.

Mr. Chairperson: I think if you complete your presentation, we will take it one at a time, and then she will decide whether she answers tonight.

Ms. Bruce: Number two—and this is personal, this has to do with my own personal case—I was told last January that cuts were coming down the pike, but that they were not coming down to the handicapped. Why is there a two-tier system for the handicapped that if you are under the age of 18 and handicapped it does not matter, you can be like ripped off the system or whatever, you can be cut off welfare. There are no guarantees. There is literally a two-tier system. People under the age of 18 with disabilities—and I have a child who is missing a kidney and a spleen who at any moment could go on dialysis if a kidney infection was to happen to him, and I have a child with a major mental illness, schizophrenia. Both of them are looking at a future of welfare, and I want to know, unless I intervene, why there is a difference, why if they were over 18 they would have some guarantees.

If they were here today—if this was tomorrow I would say you can tell them where their next meal is coming from, but I want to know that discrepancy, and I am legally going to follow that discrepancy up. That is not a warning or anything else like that, I am telling you that because I find that against the Charter.

Those are just two of the things that I have a problem with the system. You know, I could go on here all day. I would like to know why we do not have input when cuts—we are the best ones. You think I cannot tell you how people rip off the system? Do you not think I could tell you how you could better program? I want to know, am I going to be audited, because I have been audited every time I have called your office, and that is four times this year, and I am tired of it. That is harassment. Am I going to be audited for being up here? Will you answer that one alone? Am I going to be audited for being here? No?

Mr. Chairperson: She is going to respond to the question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you. I appreciate your comments. I would like the opportunity to answer in

detail. I want to say to you that you are not going to be penalized for making a presentation in any way.

Ms. Bruce: Every time I phone your office, I am.

Mrs. Mitchelson: I cannot verify that sitting here, but what I would like to do is have the opportunity to sit down with you and go through the issues in detail. If you have children who have difficulties and you are at home and supporting those children, I do not believe there has been any change to your rates in any way, and if that is the case, I would certainly like to know what changes have been made, and I would like the opportunity to sit down, to go through all of the circumstances. I have never spoken to you personally, and I would like that opportunity. I would like to make arrangement for that to happen, to understand the circumstances that you are facing and see what the issues are and what the solutions might be. I will make that commitment to you, not in a way to penalize you in any way but in a way to understand the issues and to see what is happening presently, so I am making that commitment to you tonight.

Ms. Bruce: Might I make a suggestion? Rather than a workfare program, I have two business plans. Just sitting down and—do you think I can get a hold of that director? Has the man gone to Tahiti or something? I cannot get a hold of that man. These business plans would employ these people. I want to work. If I am self-employed, I have the flexibility. If I have to be home with my daughter for six months, then I can, with 10 people on my payroll, but I cannot do that. Why, oh why, oh why are you not sticking—why did Boeing get \$50 million and there is nothing for self-employment for social assistance recipients? I mean, is it because I am Canadian? Because I could have come here as American, and I could have put a suit on if that is what you wanted. I really do not know what criteria you want, but banks do not look at me. I am a financial nonperson, and I have good business ideas.

Hey, look, you know, I could start the next Frisbee. You want to get me in business, I can do this. This I can do; this is flexible for me and my family. Why do you make it so hard?

Mrs. Mitchelson: I hear where you are coming from and I can see from the presentation that you do want to work

and there are opportunities and options. Taking Charge! is one of those, and I would certainly like to link you with that. Have you had the opportunity?

Ms. Bruce: I phoned Taking Charge! and there was a year waiting list, one. Two, they said I was out of the age category, and I do not understand that, because I dyed my hair, you know, I mean the grey is gone, but I am totally out of the age category. Three, I took this year a course that was sponsored by Unemployment in entrepreneurship, and your ministry did nothing but hassle me.

I, oh, the bombardment I got. They did not want me in this program and, you know, like, do you not work with Unemployment and with other programs? I do not understand why I got such a hassle over this, and, yes, I did get audited over that, too. It is like you guys really like my books or something.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can I indicate to you that I will sit down with you, and my staff will sit down with us, and ensure that we go through a step-by-step process of how we can assist you in your endeavours to find work opportunity, whether that be self-employment or whether that be some other form of opportunity? I make that commitment to you tonight.

Ms. Bruce: Okay, and I hope you have a very good supply of Prozac because if these changes are going to go through, we are all going to have to become Stepford Wives.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

We resume sitting tomorrow at nine o'clock, same place. Oh, sorry, we have another written presentation to circulate, distribute. Sylvia Bector, who was a walk-in presenter, has left a written brief behind which is being distributed to the committee members. Is it agreed that the brief be included in the Hansard for tonight's committee meeting? [agreed]

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

The time being 12:40 a.m., the committee will rise for the morning and will meet again at 9 a.m. later this morning. Agreed? [agreed]

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 12:40 a.m.

WRITTEN PRESENTATION PRESENTED BUT NOT READ

Re: Bill 36

I am writing some comments in regard to Bill 36.

1. I am trying to receive more hours from work. I only work 15 hours a week on weekends. When I worked for people at work on vacation or sick during the summer, occasionally my shelter allowance was reduced from \$110 to \$39.05. It is better to work than to receive this as I was taxed on this money even though I understood it was not supposed to.

2. My ex-husband defaulted on his maintenance payments three different times. I had to borrow money for food and rent as Maintenance did not go after him right away, so I had to wait for a replacement cheque from two to four weeks.

Lorna F. Wilson

* * *

Presentation to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments regarding Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

October 10, 1996

My first experience with welfare was many years ago, when I was about 20 years old. At the time it seemed beneficial. I was given a little bit of money monthly while I lived at home. I had grown up in a family where mental illness had struck our home. Let me backtrack a bit. My mum committed suicide when I was very young, almost seven, and my father suffered his pain alone for many years, struggling, trying to raise a family of three without enough help. My dad was strong, but the years took their toll and my dad hit the bottle nine years after my mum died. We had help with the home care service until I was 14, then I had to take over. I went to school daily and came home to the responsibility of a home and a younger sibling who was three to four years younger.

My social life was curtailed. While my friends had the opportunity to date and socialize, I ironed, washed clothes and did other household responsibilities on a

daily basis. When my father hit the bottle I went to Family Services and asked them to give us back home care services. They told me to go to AA. It did not help! My two siblings did not support me on this. As the years went by, I added a job to my responsibilities. The alcoholism progressed. A crisis arose between the members of my family. It culminated initially in a diagnosis of paranoid schizophrenia. Unfortunately, this diagnosis caused a shutdown of some of my physical needs. I could not tie my shoelaces, I could not bathe myself. I drooled when I ate, I suffered from incontinence. By this time I was in university studying to become a social worker.

Many times over the years I became ill as I steadfastly tried to start and complete my Bachelor of Social Work. It was, I think, my third year attending university that I had occasion to be on welfare for the first time. This was a blow to my ego, but at the time welfare seemed more accommodating. I believe one of my social workers did the application in my home. There was no specific criteria as to how I would spend the money. I attended Success College, attempting to keep busy and possibly reroute my life. I received welfare while I took the typing courses. It helped me be productive. That year I decided I'd go back to social work. Unfortunately, it was short lived. I had to go and do some other courses so that I could re-enter the faculty. I took a year of education, then switched over to social work. As a result of the mental illness, I suffered from a lot of physical and emotional isolation from my family and friends.

I was teased about the 100 pounds that I had gained in the hospital. I felt unloved and soon I found the wrong kind of love. I became pregnant, but ashamed of my situation I became sick again. I wound up on welfare for a second time. This time welfare was not as kind to me. The baby was born in May. I was hospitalized in March and stayed until July. During this time my welfare benefits were cut off and I had nowhere to live. My father, who didn't have a lot of money, paid my rent and utilities in hopes that I would go back to my apartment. When I finally returned to the same block in September I was again isolated in terms of shopping and university travel. I tried to go to university while taking my daughter to a sitter. No one told me I could get a taxi to transport my daughter to a sitter. I carried Sarah and my books and my diaper bag and my purse the equivalent of 10 to 15 blocks. I had to be at university only two times

a week; but my days were long. I started at 8:30 a.m. and finished at 10 p.m. Sometimes I got a ride with people I didn't know. I didn't like imposing. By November I dropped out.

By this time I registered for social work four times and had come close to completing one year when I was pregnant. I was actually in the accelerated program. A close friend of mine, a very special friend from Family Services, helped with milk for the baby. It was expensive and money was tight. To save money I bought in bulk. She persuaded a male friend of hers to drive me. I think we bought either 48 or 72 tins of milk. I could never have done that on the bus with my six-month old baby. My neighbour, who was also on welfare, consistently made a habit of cursing and yelling at her welfare worker. I would not act in such a manner. Perhaps I should have. She had numerous taxis for her needs. I didn't think that was fair.

By February following the birth of my child, I was married. I sought not to marry for financial reasons. But no matter which way you looked at, I did not have a secure life for my child and myself. My husband, the child's father, was an immigrant. We had 90 days from entry into the country to marry. Welfare would not let him live with me because I could not support him on my cheque. We got married one month after he arrived. He got a job at 7-11. He had four degrees from Canada and India. He attempted to get a job elsewhere. When he started to work, we came off welfare. The marriage lasted seven and a half years.

We had been living in subsidized housing for six and a half of those years. Then we bought a house. During the marriage I worked at two different jobs. Slowly the marriage ended. The stress of having to support my daughter forced me to leave my jobs one at a time. I hoped to find something nine to four so that I could be at home with my daughter. One of my jobs had been an evening-weekend job. I tried to get a job with the school division that would support us in our home. It did not seem feasible. I hoped that my strong commitment to my marriage would bring us back together. Ultimately I left the school division and thought through welfare and vocational rehabilitation I could ultimately do better. I went back to university, again with the intent of doing a social work degree. I completed a four-year advanced arts degree from 1991 to 1994. Then I attempted to get into social work.

Through these years of schooling I had a close social network. I needed it over the years; I have bought very little in the way of clothing for myself or my daughter. Many things were given to us. In some cases friends of friends. Our food bill for my daughter and myself has been just over \$150/month, including detergent and personal needs. We have, fortunately, had friends who would not let us go hungry if we were visiting. Many times friends paid for a meal at McDonald's or a donut at Robin's. I would have gone without.

I am not a drinker, although I don't have a problem with alcohol. If and when I have had alcohol, someone has treated me. I don't smoke and I don't gamble or play bingo. I conserve water and heat. I go out very seldom and an expensive evening is going to Perkin's for fries and a coke. I have not got an active social life because of money. I don't go to the symphony or the ballet or a concert unless someone pays for me. I save money with my car. I have depended on others for rides unless it's necessary to use my car.

Because dessert is a luxury, I have had to deal with situations where potlucks and church functions are difficult. In some circumstances we've had maybe three to five pounds of fruit in a month. I have never gone to Harvest except to donate, and that was because my parents had a garden.

I purchased a freezer over the six and one-half years I was on welfare. Friends have given me things to freeze. Food was gifted. If it was not for financial help from friends, I could not have purchased appliances. As a single mother, I was given \$150 for special needs. Luckily the difference was made up. I have an excellent credit rating, but many times I could not have done it without the support of many people. I had to appeal to get money from welfare to fix the perimeter of my house foundation.

I believe my education was advantageous. Many times I have had to ask friends to fix my doors, stereo, gate, my lawn at no cost to me.

After six and one-half years on welfare, my child support was settled and I have gained employment, Although my child support is advantageous, I do not consistently earn more than when I was on welfare. I left social assistance in May of 1996. I work three jobs currently with a fourth on hold. My daughter is an "A" student. Like most parents, I hope for a good future for her. She has an excellent reputation among her teachers. I have wanted for years to get my daughter off welfare as I don't think she should pay the price for the past. We are off the system now but without the security of dental or optical benefits and without job benefits as my jobs are casual. We have made some headway, but my personal belief is that all children should have the same opportunities. I have given her what I could with support from her father to some degree, but also to a large degree from the community.

In all my years on welfare, I have felt the "Social Safety Net" is a good thing. We need to provide for people in time of difficulty, but at the same time I feel people need a sense of dignity. One cannot paint all people with the same brush. I have been in the system and struggled with little in the way of my needs being met. It has not been all that far removed from begging at times. Now, I'm off welfare; my income in terms of employment leaves much to be desired. If I could influence policy, I would like to say that life can be cruel and we need to be sensitive to those needs as we could be next. Jobs are important to those seeking to get back into the system. Welfare recipients need security and equity with their peers. Welfare recipients are not second-class citizens.

Thank you.

Sylvia Bector