

Third Session - Thirty-Eighth Legislature
of the
Legislative Assembly of Manitoba
DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS
Official Report
(Hansard)

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Eighth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy, Hon.	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ALTEMEYER, Rob	Wolseley	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
BJORNSON, Peter, Hon.	Gimli	N.D.P.
BRICK, Marilyn	St. Norbert	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CULLEN, Cliff	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
EICHLER, Ralph	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GOERTZEN, Kelvin	Steinbach	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HICKES, George, Hon.	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
IRVIN-ROSS, Kerri	Fort Garry	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
JHA, Bidhu	Radisson	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MELNICK, Christine, Hon.	Riel	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
OSWALD, Theresa, Hon.	Seine River	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim, Hon.	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
ROWAT, Leanne	Minnedosa	P.C.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan, Hon.	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
SWAN, Andrew	Minto	N.D.P.
TAILLIEU, Mavis	Morris	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 16, 2005

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: I would like to take this opportunity to draw the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us visitors from Ear Falls Public School from Ear Falls, Ontario. We have 22 Grades 7 and 8 students under the direction of Mr. Gerald Soltez.

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 207—The Medical Amendment Act

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): I move, seconded by the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), that Bill 207, The Medical Amendment Act, now be read a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to support this legislation which has been developed initially by the member from Russell and then consultation with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, with other groups and with ourselves, amended slightly in committee. I believe that the bill is important because it seeks to strike a balance between the evolution of appropriate new therapies which are not traditionally considered as part of the existing basket, at the same time protecting both practitioners and patients from people who would advance therapies that are inappropriate, are unproven, and, in some cases, could be significantly dangerous. For example, one of the therapies that often comes up is chelation therapy. It has been consistently proven to be of no medical value including most recently in a double-blind study in

Calgary. So I think that the bill seeks to strike an appropriate balance. I believe that balance has been found in the wording that was agreed to in committee.

I think that it is also though important to recognize that we now have wording in this bill which is consistent across western Canada and so now there will be, I think, the evolution of guidelines and procedures to ensure that the intent of the bill which is to allow new practices to emerge and to be appropriately tested without the practitioner being in jeopardy by virtue of simply using a new procedure which is not harmful and may be of more benefit than traditional procedures. I think we will see an evolution of the kind of appropriate guidelines that patients need for their safety.

Again, I would thank the member from Russell and those who were advocates for this bill. I think we should recognize that we have made great strides in Manitoba in improving new as well as traditional treatments in cancer care, cardiac care, diagnostic services, and use the example of acupuncture which only a very short time ago was seen as an unproven and invalid therapy and is now widely practiced and widely agreed to be an appropriate therapy. So, Mr. Speaker, I commend this bill to all members of the House.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to indicate that we in the Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party will support this legislation. I want to, you know, commend the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) for bringing this forward and the Minister of Health for making sure that there were some useful consultations which happened to bring forward minor amendments.

I do want to say a few words on the record, however, as a physician who has had experience in cancer, as a physician who has had experience in using nutritional and a whole variety of experimental therapies in a whole lot of different settings. I want to say this just to make clear, in part, because of some of the comments that were brought up that there has been a feeling at times that there have been two great barriers to the introduction of new approaches. There have not been ways in which new

approaches could be brought in as effectively and as carefully as they might have.

In my experience with a whole range, some nutritional, some behavioural, some therapies which dealt with traditional chemotherapy, some therapies which dealt with novel approaches in terms of trying to turn off cancer cells and make them normal again that we have had historically, and in this province and in most other provinces, approaches which would allow for such novel ideas to be put forward by physicians like myself and others. That approach which comes forward is that one presents these ideas at meetings, brings together options with others often at other centres and that these ideas are screened very carefully, often through funding agencies, but certainly in each case through a local ethics board where I was working at the faculty of the University of Manitoba, including people who are laypeople as well as people who are very knowledgeable in the areas of science.

* (10:10)

The point that I want to make is that there are some fundamentals in the application of new treatments which still apply and will still apply here and that is that the patient has a right to be fully informed of the benefits and the risks and the status of what any experimental treatment is. There needs to be, when you are using experimental approaches, just as there are with traditional approaches, ways of reporting and following if there are adverse consequences or adverse effects so that we are on top of problems as well as benefits which may derive from new treatments.

I want to talk with some additional comment in terms of nutritional therapies because again, I have worked with the introduction and the study of nutritional approaches. I have worked with people on evaluation of Canola oil, as an example, along with a number of other oils. Of course, we now know that there are some major advantages to Canola oil. The study or the trial that I was involved with involved people from the Home Economics Department of the university faculty at the University of Manitoba and people in the Faculty of Medicine, and had support through the Canola Council. Here was a venue in which producers had an option to have input as well as people who were involved day to day. The studies that I was involved with had ethics review, funders' review and all sorts of things to make sure that the

approach that was being taken was the best possible approach that it could be.

I say this just to emphasize that there have been ways in which novel treatments can be introduced. These novel treatments sometimes may be a bit more difficult for a general practitioner than somebody working in a university setting. As an example, one of the things that I was involved with at the University of Manitoba was a summer Bachelor of Science and Medicine program where we had up to 30 or more students involved with a variety of different projects, and some of those students were involved with general practitioners, with northern medicine. I think one involved issues of vitamin D and nutrition in the North, as an example. In each case, here was a venue or an approach that is possible and continues to be possible, and to look carefully at novel, experimental approaches which may have value.

There have been some blind ends. I remember early on, in the years that I was involved with cancer, there was a lot of enthusiasm for apricot pits, but that turned out to be more of a problem than any benefit. There has been enthusiasm for things like shark cartilage interestingly, because it can potentially turn off the growth of blood vessels going to and block the nutrition, the blood supply and the feed for cancer. This approach in some form or another may still end up having some benefit, but was thought at one point to be the basis for the use of shark cartilage widely in China.

Some of the novel approaches with retinoic acid, certain forms of leukemia and some of that work came from China. I think that there needs to be a more general understanding that there have been a broad array of approaches to try and bring new and potentially important treatment approaches, many of which involve nutrition or behaviour or other things. I did some work on Type A and Type B behaviour as another example. This is work which needs to be done. One of the things that the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale) could do more is to provide better support to the Manitoba Health Research Council so more of this work could be done here in Manitoba.

Clearly, out of all this, I think that this will allow a little bit more freedom in terms of the use by physicians of novel medicines. This has to be done with care. This bill is based particularly on experience in other provinces where there have

been physicians who have felt that they have been threatened in introducing new ways of working. What I would say is let us proceed with this legislation which now matches other western provinces, but let us make sure that patients are well informed about what they are being recommended. Let us make sure that we are doing the appropriate follow-up so that if there are problems, as there are with other approaches to medicine, we identify these early and move to make sure people are aware of them and look at ways that they can be corrected. With that we will support this legislation.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand and close debate on this bill. First of all, I want to, I guess, express a vote of gratitude to the Leader of the Liberal Party as well as to the government for supporting this legislation, and not because I brought it in but because it is the right thing to do in this day and age.

This is legislation that I think is overdue in all of Canada, not just in Manitoba. But, unfortunately, we did not go as far as I would have hoped with this legislation because we still have the college controlling through regulation the types of alternative medicines and alternative treatments that are legitimized, if you like, by the college, and that poses a bit of an issue for those of us who believe that it is time to look at alternative therapies for treatment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just relate a bit of an issue that goes back to ancient native remedies for treatment of wounds. We had a personal experience where an employee of mine cut his hand extremely severely to the point where you could see the bones and the tendons at the place where the fingers meet the palm of the hand. We were nowhere near a place where we could get treatment immediately. We were, at that time, fishing and so we were sort of in the wilderness if you like and it would have taken hours to get to a medical doctor.

There was an Aboriginal person with us who said, "I think I can fix this." He went to a poplar tree and took the bark off and then proceeded to scrape the pulp of the poplar tree between the bark and the actual tree and made a pad of this pulp and placed it directly on the wound and wrapped a rag, for lack of a better term, around the hand and said leave it there for a couple of days. So we did not bother going to the doctor. The guy did not feel too much pain, and he said, "Let us just see what happens." He said

that we will go to the doctor when we get back. It was a day later, he repacked it again, and when the gentleman finally got to see the doctor, there was evidence of where the wound had started to close and it was not dirty, it was nice and pink. The healing had already started quite significantly where it was noticeable.

So it was bandaged at the hospital, but the gentleman came home, took off the bandages and had more of this pulp placed in his hand and carried it around for a week or so. It was amazing. We thought he would have lost the use of his fingers and the movement in the hand, but indeed the hand healed to where. If you were to look at his palm today, you could see the scar, the little white scar on the two fingers, but that is about all the damage that occurred to him.

This is an example of how, you know, there are therapies out there that do work. There are medications that do work. There are natural herbs that do work, but we need to broaden our scope in how we address this whole issue of alternative therapies. The member from River Heights just said very clearly that the patient has to be aware. We have to do a better job in informing the patient about these things so that the patient understands very clearly exactly what it is that is being prescribed and what it is that that patient is going to be taking.

* (10:20)

Alternatively, I look at the issue of—the Minister of Health raised the issue of chelation therapy and the double-blind study that was done in Calgary. It takes me back to acupuncture because, if you go back to how acupuncture started, there were also studies that were done about acupuncture that said it was absolutely a useless therapy.

Again, I have another story about one of the presenters who was with us last week and relayed a story about a person who had had heart failure. The physician indicated to this patient that the patient would be dead within six months because the heart was in such poor condition. The patient undertook to have chelation therapy done, not in his jurisdiction but in another province at his own cost. As the story goes, it has been 16 years since the therapy, and I guess he is still on chelation as far as I know, but the patient is still alive. The doctor has since passed away of heart failure.

So sometimes we have to understand that it is not always the traditional approach, the types of medications that we know that have been proven time and time again that worked, there are other therapies that do work. The acupuncture one to me is one that really stands out because I remember the debates about, you know, these little needles being placed into your body could not ever help to cure pain or to relieve some of the suffering that you have, but yet today it is a recognized therapy that works.

Mr. Speaker, although some of us who have been trained in the medical field sometimes are supposed to be the ones who have the broad minds that look at things broadly, unfortunately, because of the politics within medicine, tend to have our blinkers closed. If you look at the work that is being done, the member from River Heights mentioned the Canola oil, and I remember the debate on Canola oil. At one time Canola oil was considered to be a hazard, you should not use too much Canola oil because it was not healthy for you. Well, then, as the studies went on, it became evident that Canola was healthier than some of the other oils that we were using in our diets and today Canola oil is recognized as having not just one purpose but has many purposes for good and healthy living that still need to be explored.

So this bill just opens the door a little bit to allow alternative therapies and alternative medicines to be used to enhance the quality of life, to enhance our healthiness and to also reduce costs in the health care system because, if we really want to look at this, we are not asking that the health insurance contributes through having this covered under our health insurance, Mr. Speaker. We are simply asking that doctors not be penalized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons simply by prescribing alternative forms of therapy and medicine.

Mr. Speaker, I think this is an important step. It certainly is not where I would have liked to have ended because it still gives considerable amount of control to the College of Physicians and Surgeons to prescribe through regulation the types of therapies that they would consider to be appropriate. However, what it does is it does not make the college anymore the final authority, if you like, on determining whether a physician's licence is going to be yanked or not. The physician now, under this legislation, will have the right to stand before a court of law if, in

fact, he has done something that is against the health of the patient and has prescribed something that will injure or be negative to the person's health.

So, with those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate also and thank those people who came from a distance. We had an individual, Helke Ferrie, came from Toronto to present before the committee. We had another couple from Alberta who came to present before the committee. One individual, who was relentless in his lobbying to make sure that this bill, in fact, was passed, was a Mr. Ian Breslaw who yes, may have an agenda, but on the other hand, understands that in today's world we need to look at all types of remedies, herbs and natural ways of treating problems that are effective. So those people, Mr. Speaker, are the ones who should be credited in lobbying and making the change possible.

We are the vehicles of these people, Mr. Speaker. We are the ones who are supposed to bring the message from out there into this Chamber and to affect change. In that regard, I think we have allowed this to happen. So with those few remarks, I certainly would ask that the Chamber support this bill unanimously and that we take this small step towards a process. I think that is going to open the doors in Manitoba to allow for a broader range of treatments and alternative care. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

An Honourable Member: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is Bill 207, The Medical Amendment Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? *[Agreed]*

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS— PUBLIC BILLS

Bill 200—The Personal Information Protection Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on second reading, Bill 200, The Personal Information Protection Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

What is the will of the House? Stand? *[Agreed]*

Any speakers?

**Bill 201—The Legislative Assembly
Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 201, The Legislative Assembly Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck).

What is the will of the House? Stand? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 202—The Health Services Amendment and
Health Services Insurance Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 202, The Health Services Amendment and Health Services Insurance Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minto (Mr. Swan).

What is the will of the House? Stand? *[Agreed]*

**Bill 203—The Manitoba Public Insurance
Corporation Amendment Act**

Mr. Speaker: Bill 203, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

What is the will of the House? Stand?

Some Honourable Members: Stand.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. It has been denied.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Just hold on a second. I just have to clarify this. There is some confusion here on my part. I am going to run this over again.

I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members when I am moving a motion to please indicate just yes or no, not pass and all that because it really confuses what I am hearing.

Bill 203, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

What is the will of the House? Stand?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: It will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for—

Point of Order

An Honourable Member: Point of order.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Official Opposition House Leader): Speaking on a point of order, can I just have a moment to consult with the Clerk, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

It is the request to put the question again so I will do that.

* (10:30)

Bill 203, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

What is the will of the House? Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere, say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to the bill standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: So the bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere, and I will recognize the honourable Member for Charleswood to speak to the bill.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity—

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Inkster, on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Just on a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I was not a hundred percent sure, but I had always thought that, if leave was denied for someone to have a bill remain standing, it just took one person to deny that leave. Just for my own personal clarification, it takes a majority of the House in order to deny leave for a bill to remain standing?

Mr. Speaker: The Manitoba practice has been that if leave is denied and one side says yea and the other side says nay, the Speaker has always put it to a vote for the House to determine if it will remain standing or not. That is a Manitoba practice. So that is why I had to put the question.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now the honourable Member for Charleswood will speak.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am honoured to have an opportunity to speak to this Legislation, Bill 203. This bill amends The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act and allows an accident victim who receives an income replacement indemnity to keep any part of a disability benefit that is paid to the victim under the Canada Pension Plan as the result of a division of pensionable earnings.

Bill 203, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act, in effect, ends pension clawback. This bill was introduced by the member from River East actually last year, and she has reintroduced it again this year, hoping that the government will find it in their heart to look at passage of this bill.

Presently, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Act is required to reduce an income

replacement indemnity paid to an accident victim by the amount of any disability benefit received under CPP. This amendment will allow the accident victim to retain rather than have clawed back any money received from CPP as a result of a division of pensionable earnings from the victim's spouse, former spouse, common-law partner or former common-law partner.

Mr. Speaker, as has been mentioned by many people speaking to this bill, it was introduced by the member from River East last year, and it died on the Order Paper. We are all hoping that all members in the Chamber will join us in supporting this because it will fix an injustice within the act. It will right a wrong. It is the right way to go.

This is a bill that we hope that the government side of the House will look very seriously at, consider supporting and passing this session of the Legislature. We are asking them to open their hearts and minds to the fact that this is going to be helping some people that need a lot of help.

This amendment is a result of a case-specific issue that was brought to the attention of the member of River East and it is a unique situation.

A constituent of hers who had a sister that was severely injured by a car accident many years ago had been dealt with through the personal insurance protection afforded under no-fault insurance. She was an individual who was married to a disabled person who was receiving CPP disability. After her accident, she was compensated through the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for her disability. Subsequent to the accident, she and her husband split up. As a result of that marriage breakdown, she applied, as is afforded for her under the law, for the opportunity to apply for income splitting with her former spouse. She applied and was granted, and it was about \$160 per month as a result of that income splitting. It was not a significant amount of money. Nonetheless, she was granted that, but after the fact, found out that the money that was being taken from her husband, the \$160, was clawed back from her under her no-fault insurance through MPI.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have two individuals here, very disadvantaged individuals, two disabled individuals. These are not wealthy people. These are people living below the poverty line, and we have a woman, through no fault of her own who was

involved in a car accident, being disadvantaged and her disabled husband now also being disadvantaged.

We see the clawback from one individual was not even provided to the other. We have two individuals living in very difficult circumstances who are both being penalized by something that can fairly easily be fixed through this amendment. This amendment would address this issue, and it would allow this woman to be able to keep the \$160 a month that has been clawed back through MPI.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Speaker, this is a wrong that needs to be righted. We do need to do more to help disabled people in situations like that. This is just wrong, but more than that too, it is also unkind and unjust. These two individuals are struggling enough, and we all here in this House have a responsibility to stand up for them, to make these injustices known and to bring these injustices forward and to act upon them. I would hope that the government would be open about this.

My understanding is that the government is not addressing this amendment; the government is not standing to speak to this amendment; the government has refused to articulate why they are not willing to look at this and make this small amendment. This amendment is not going to cost, you know, a huge amount of money. It is a very, very small amount of money that is going to help two individuals, extremely disadvantaged, disabled and living in poverty.

I cannot believe that we have an NDP government that is not willing to open their hearts and their minds to even look at this, to talk about it within their caucus, to make a decision to move forward on a fairly simple private member's bill that will make a big difference for people. It is somewhat surprising, Mr. Speaker, because we have a government here that pretends to be sensitive to the needs of people in situations like this, but when they actually get challenged to walk the talk, they do not. They stumble and we have seen this now in more instances than just this one. We see this more and more as this NDP government is in office that, while they put out a lot of rhetoric, they pretend to be the people that, you know, talk about protecting the disadvantaged. When they have an opportunity to do

that, they drop the ball. This is not a bill that is going to hurt them or hurt the Treasury or hurt anybody. It is going to help disabled people that, through no fault of their own, have been put in a horrible, horrible situation.

* (10:40)

We continue to hear that poverty rates are going up in Manitoba, yet we have an NDP government when they were in opposition howled about this. I mean, they made so much noise about people in poverty, living in poverty. They said they were going to fix this and they were going to fix that, and what do we have? An NDP government that is well into their second term and poverty rates are going up in Manitoba. So there is something dreadfully, dreadfully wrong with this picture. This government needs to more than just talk, they need to act and when they have an opportunity like this one that is before them right now, it is shameful that they are not taking this and passing this private member's bill.

Now, I know, sometimes they do not like to let the other side score any points in here, and they probably think that with this particular bill, because it is a private member's bill, they do not want the Tories to be seen to be moving ahead and addressing poverty issues or disability issues. So rather than do the right thing, they are going to play punishment politics again here and not allow the Tories to bring something forward that is going to be good for people that are poor, people that are in poverty. Rather, they are going to sit there smugly and continue with the rhetoric that they are the party of people that are disadvantaged. Well, they are not. They have demonstrated this more and more and more. Today, we are seeing a very sorry example of them not willing to go forward with something that they really should be opening their hearts and minds to.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, they refuse to say why they will not support this bill. At least, as parliamentarians, as legislators, they should at least have the courage to put forward their own comments in terms of why they are not even willing to support this particular legislation, instead of sitting there smugly, with their common rhetoric, and not indicating why they will not pass something like this.

You know, Mr. Speaker, as a former nurse, I have seen people in situations like this. As a

former executive director in Child Find, where we were dealing with a lot of people in poverty, I have seen situations like this where people struggle. Sometimes when you have a simple solution like this put forward, I do not understand why an NDP government does not do more than just talk about situations like this. Why they can sit here, so easily turn their chairs around, put their heads on their chairs and be resting, why they do not actually take a situation like this, deal with these challenges and move forward on it. Help these people out. These people not only are dealing with their own challenges from their disabilities, they are dealing with some poverty issues. This is not a huge amount of money that is going to make them wealthy. This is just a little bit of money that is going to help them get through the next day.

We have seen what the NDP have done in other situations where they talk about supporting seniors and poor, and yet we have seniors in this province, because the NDP have increased Pharmacare deductibles 5 percent every year for four years and it is now sitting at 20 percent, we have seniors that are poor, we have seniors that are on fixed incomes that are now struggling between whether they are going to pay for medication or pay for milk. We have seniors in this province that are foregoing their medication because they cannot afford it.

I do not understand why the NDP government is allowing their own reputation to become so tarnished, and tarnished it is. The glow is off. This is not a government that is standing up and speaking up for people like this. Or, while they might speak up, they are certainly not putting any action behind it. It is nothing more than a lot of empty rhetoric and hot air that is coming from the government.

Mr. Speaker, for humanitarian reasons alone, this government should have paid attention to this amendment. This has come forward two years in a row. The government has had plenty of opportunity and, as I said, if they felt that they did not want to give the Tories any credit for bringing something forward that was helping the poor, the disadvantaged, the disabled, they certainly had enough time to look at this legislation and put something forward to help people. I mean, the intent here is let us move forward and let us help some people that really need help. Instead, we have a silent NDP caucus on this issue and it is a slap in the face to the people that need their help. How many times do people have to beg the NDP for help before they act?

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that we see an NDP caucus in here right now that does not even want to pay attention to some of the comments that are being put on the record with their chairs turned around, with conversations going on, with newspapers being read. Like, where is the party that is supposed to be fighting for some of these people that need their help? Where is this NDP that is supposed to be so sensitive about issues?

Right now they have demonstrated nothing but insensitivity and an uncaring attitude. Where has the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick), the minister responsible for disabled people, been in lobbying her Cabinet to move this issue forward? I mean, we should be hearing from a number of them. They should be standing in this House and saying this is good legislation. Instead, they are all heads down, backs turned, not even willing to acknowledge that there is a good piece of legislation in front of them.

So where is their compassion? Where is their caring? Where is their action? That is what this NDP is beginning to stand for more and more, and that is a lot of inaction to a lot of issues because they really are showing their true colours right now. They either do not have the compassion or caring or they do not know how to act, or they are so busy cranking up the debt in this province with their wild spending sprees that they do not even have a few thousand dollars to put into situations like this where people need help. This government should be standing up and speaking for these people.

You know, poverty is more prevalent for women. Where is the Minister for the Status of Women (Ms. Allan) in addressing this issue with her caucus? We are talking about a \$160 clawback. Like, what is wrong with this NDP government? No wonder we have women in poverty at an increasing rate. No wonder we have disabled people that are struggling when we have a government that is not standing up for them. I just think that it is shameful for a government that thinks they can go out and talk out of one side of their mouth to a certain group of people, and when they are challenged to put something behind that, they do not even act. I think that not only the Cabinet, who had an opportunity to do something, there are an awful lot of caucus members that should be doing something and standing up and fighting for these instead of burying themselves in their books and papers and cleaning out their desks. They should be listening to what this

amendment is about and have the courage and fortitude to stand up for the people.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Order, please. The member's time has run out.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Madam Acting Speaker, I was not planning to speak on Bill 203, The Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation Amendment Act. *[interjection]* Well, because I was prepared to speak on another bill, Bill 208, but when I hear the member who just spoke saying that the NDP is not doing anything for the poor and the disabled, I felt I had to get up and rebut some of these comments because they are just not true. We have actually been doing a lot for poor people and for the disabled. So, to say that we are not doing anything deserves a rebuttal.

For example, when the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was in Cabinet, and the federal government gave all provinces more money or all poor families more money through the National Child Benefit, the minister had a choice of either clawing it back or allowing families employment income assistance to keep the money, and what did she do? She chose to claw it back from people on employment income assistance.

What did our NDP government do? We ended the clawback. We phased it out, and now all families on employment income assistance keep all of the National Child Benefit money. That is what we have done since forming government in the year 1999.

Secondly, we increased employment income assistance benefits. That has not happened since April 1, 1992. In 1993, they stopped annual increases, and in 1996, when the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was the Minister of Family Services, they reduced employment income assistance benefits. The Member for River East does not like to hear this.

Point of Order

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): The Member for River East, on a point of order?

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): We have the Minister of Family Services (Ms. Melnick) sitting in her seat, telling us to be quiet, when they have clawed back \$2,000 a year from two disabled people,

and she will not stand in her place, and she will not stand up as the Minister of Family Services responsible for people with disabilities, Madam Acting Chair, and advocate, on behalf of the disadvantaged individuals that would be served well if this government would have the courage to stand up and walk the walk—

* (10:50)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): The Member for River East, would you please make your point.

Mrs. Mitchelson:—not only talk the talk and pass this legislation today. We would give them leave, and we would give leave to go longer for the Minister of Family Services to stand in her place and take some action.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): The Member for River East, order, order.

Order, please. The Member for River East does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Martindale: Madam Acting Speaker, to continue the long list of improvements that our NDP government has made for people on social assistance before I was interrupted, we gave an increase of \$20 a month a couple of years ago, the first increase since 1992. Then, subsequently, we increased rates for people in northern Manitoba, because as everyone knows, the cost of living is much higher in Northern Manitoba. So we are going in the direction of giving the poorest people in Manitoba's society increased benefits, whereas the previous government went in the opposite direction and reduced benefits. We will continue to do that as we are able.

We also increased asset exemption levels and increased the work incentive levels so that people could keep more money of earnings. We also changed regulations so that people who receive large lump-sum settlements could put it into a trust fund and could, in fact, keep the money.

The previous speaker also said that we have done nothing for the disabled. That is also patently not true. I was on a task force on people with

disabilities and we travelled throughout Manitoba. We had public hearings in Winnipeg, in Steinbach, in Brandon. We heard many excellent briefs from the public. The results of the public input resulted in a policy document, a white paper called "Full Citizenship," and we are in the process of implementing those recommendations and those policies. We were the first province, I believe, in Canada to appoint a minister responsible for persons with disabilities when the previous Minister of Family Services was in office. We opened a disabilities office and the second director is now helping the government to implement those policies.

So for the member from Charleswood to say that we are not doing anything just is not true. I am very pleased to be able to put on the record some of the things we are doing for poor people and for the disabled. I am proud of this government's record. I am hoping that we are going to do more in the future. I am going to conclude my remarks here which were just intended to correct the record. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Just to indicate, as my colleague, the MLA for Inkster, has already done, we support this legislation. It makes sense. We hope that the government will see to have a vote on this this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): As was previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg).

Point of Order

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I would like to speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Is there unanimous consent of the House for the Member for Minnedosa to speak to the bill? *[Agreed]*

* * *

Mrs. Leanne Rowat (Minnedosa): I would like to speak on behalf of Bill 203 that has been presented by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). It is an MPI amendment act, and I think that the Member for River East has presented a bill that has provided an option or some recognition to enhancing the MPI legislation as she has so clearly indicated a serious deficiency within the income replacement indemnity section of The MPI corporation act.

A constituent of the Member for River East, Barbara Harron *[phonetic]*, who is on a disability and income replacement, applied for income splitting which was a result in the deduction of her former husband's Canadian Pension Plan. In accordance with the current act, the amount she received from income splitting was deducted off her income replacement, a clawback in clearer terms, thus leaving her with no increase in the amount of money she was receiving. Since applying for income splitting, her former husband's CPP is being deducted yet Ms. Harron *[phonetic]* is not receiving these benefits.

I believe this amendment allows for the accident victim to retain rather than have clawed back any money received from CPP as a result of a division of pensionable earnings from the victim's spouse, former spouse, common-law partner or former common-law partner. I believe that the amendment introduced by my colleague from River East would address this issue and allow this woman to be able to keep the \$160 per month that has been clawed back through MPI. It is a very simple amendment, Madam Speaker, and I think that disabled individuals and family that is struggling—I think that \$2,000 a year is a substantial amount of money and can actually help enhance the quality of life for them. I cannot believe that this government is causing hardship to not only the family but obviously others that are likely facing very similar situations.

I have to give Ms. Harron *[phonetic]* and others credit for coming forward and trying to help enhance the quality of life for individuals such as themselves and had the courage to come to the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and share their concern with her. I have to commend the Member for River East for reintroducing a very serious and a very important piece of legislation that would help individuals and families who are struggling and who feel that MPI, as a heavy-handed organization not looking at all interests, would consider something like this and move forward.

This bill has been debated not only in this session but has also been debated in prior session. I guess I, as other members of this side of the House, am very discouraged with this government's inaction and inability to stand up for persons with disabilities, women who are facing hardships in family situations. By not listening to or giving reasons why they would not support this legislation just goes to

show that they may speak outside of the House one way, but when it comes to action and their ability to ensure that people's best interests are taken at heart, have shown very clearly that they do not care and they do not take action.

They could easily support this legislation. It is \$2,000 per year for this family, this individual. With an increase in revenues for this Province of over a half billion dollars, I cannot understand why this government, and I guess I question their commitment and their concern for the general citizen in this province.

Members opposite had indicated that they had introduced an office for persons with disabilities and I have been hearing more and more often, Madam Speaker, that concerns have been raised that policy is being developed without consultation with that office. I guess Portage centre is a good example of a situation where they were not even consulted prior to the announcement made by the Minister for Family Services (Ms. Melnick). I think that this is not unusual. This seems to be the way of government and it is very unfortunate. It is catching up with them, and I think people have been coming forward and indicating their distaste for this government who has lost its interest in the grassroots of the province and the issues that are affecting everyday citizens.

I am very discouraged that this government would not look at Bill 203, support Bill 203 and move forward on providing a better life for Manitobans with disabilities.

* (11:00)

I also was interested to hear that the member from Burrows was interested in speaking to Bill 208. I was encouraged to hear that, and I was hoping that maybe he would be wanting to move that the bill would be passed, and that would be my grandparents' rights bill. It seems to be that the legislation that has been coming forward from our side of the House has great potential to improve the quality of life for all Manitobans, and it is unfortunate that politics is taking over on that side of the House and not rhyme and reason of the importance in the quality of the legislation that we have been proposing.

On that note, Madam Speaker, I would like to again indicate my support to Bill 203, presented by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). I think

she is absolutely right in what she has presented here: \$2000 per year for an individual such as Barbara Harron [*phonetic*] is critical to improving the quality of life for her, as a person with a disability, as a woman who is struggling to make ends meet and, through no fault of her own, that she is in a situation that is putting her in a very desperate and disadvantaged situation.

On that note, I encourage the government side to think seriously, to move this bill forward, and if they do not, Bill 203 will be back, as will Bill 208, but Bill 203 will be back, and the Member for River East will be introducing it. Maybe the government will have a different heart at that point and see the benefits of such a piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

RESOLUTIONS—DRAW SELECTION

Res. 4—Global Economic Disparities

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Resolution 4, the Member for Wellington, Global Economic Disparities.

Mr. Daryl Reid, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale), the following resolution:

WHEREAS prior to this century, living standards had never diverged so widely across different countries and regions of the world; and

WHEREAS the divide between the richest 20 percent of the world's population and the poorest 20 percent has doubled in size over the past 30 years; and

WHEREAS despite record lows of disparity in the southern hemisphere, Canada has reduced its foreign aid to an all-time low; and

WHEREAS the divide between the North and the South has serious repercussions, as inequality and economic deprivation contribute violence and war within and among countries; and

WHEREAS by failing to address global poverty, conflicts between the North and South over the control of important resources such as oil and strategic minerals are likely to persist; and

WHEREAS many countries in South America and Africa are in debt to international banks and often cannot repay their loans and provide basic services to their citizens simultaneously; and

WHEREAS eligibility for loans or debt relief requires the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) and the World Bank's seal of approval, which is obtained by following prescribed, uniform and strict relief packages; and

WHEREAS these programs are designed to foster foreign direct investment, whereby national applicants must liberalize their economies, cut back on social services and institute a flexible labour market, often to the detriment of their citizens; and

WHEREAS in order to attract foreign direct investment, developing states must appear attractive to multinational corporations; and

WHEREAS the multinational corporations (MNC) have significant leverage and superior bargaining positions when deciding where to locate their operations and as a result they are able to exploit labour and escape environmental regulations; and

WHEREAS the yearly sales of the largest MNC dwarf the gross national products (GNP) of a vast majority of third world countries thereby raising concerns that MNC are more powerful and influential than democratically elected governments, putting shareholder interests above those of communities and even customers.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to encourage the federal government to conduct meaningful dialogue with multinational corporations (MNC) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and work to promote global responsibility; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Assembly direct the Clerk to forward a copy of this resolution to all members of Parliament from Canada.

The honourable Member for Wellington on the last THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED indicated that a copy of this resolution be forwarded to all members of Parliament from Canada. Did the member wish to indicate that it was from Manitoba, as was written?

An Honourable Member: As written.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reid): I thank the honourable member.

It has been moved by the honourable Member for Wellington, seconded by the honourable Member for Burrows—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reid): Dispense.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Acting Speaker, our main proposition can be stated as follows. Since economic inequality can analytically be broken down into cultural, financial and political domination by the rich resulting in the oppression of the poor, then the remedy seems to be reforms towards cultural integrity, financial equality and democratization with accountability in societal structural changes through, preferably, peaceful rather than revolutionary means.

The first domain needing reform is the cultural aspect of the county. Culture is the totality of the values, beliefs, habits, arts, organizations, institutions and other areas of human endeavour taken together as distinctive characteristics of a particular people, community or country. Culture includes preferences, feelings, thoughts, tastes, manners of a people, the development of body and mind through education and training and the inculcation of socially acceptable behaviour collectively determined and the language, verbal or non-verbal means of communication among the members of a particular cultural group, community or country.

George Orwell, in his essay entitled "Politics and the English Language," stated: "One ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay in language, and one can probably bring about some improvement by the verbal end . . . Political language, and with variation, this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists, is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind."

Mr. Acting Speaker, reform has to start somewhere. The best place to start any reform is with ourselves. Let us, as honourable members of this Legislative Assembly, say clearly, concisely and completely what we mean and mean precisely, sincerely and truthfully what we say.

Where, within the cultural domain, where is the inequality among the countries and nations? Let us look at the level of literacy and education. In terms of level of literacy the people of the poor and developing countries, collectively referred to as the Third World countries, has been, and still is, undeniably low compared to the literacy level in the developed and industrialized countries. There are more than 800 million adults today, year 2005, who are illiterate and about 115 million children who have never seen any school at all in their life. Clearly, Canadian foreign aid will be most useful if directed to the goal of promoting literacy and educational opportunity to the people of the recipient country. Why is that? What is the reason?

Lord Brougham stated the basic reason. Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern but difficult to enslave.

* (11:10)

Now, let us look at the public health situation worldwide. In the year 2000 there were roughly 790 million people who were undernourished. Now, after five years, 2005, there are at least one billion undernourished people out of a total of six billion inhabitants of the planet Earth, one billion people who live in extreme poverty at less than \$1 a day. Results: two out of every five children suffer from growth retardation, leading to at least 30 000 children dying every day. Imperatively, a larger portion of Canadian foreign aid should be for the promotion of public health among the people of the recipient countries.

A second area of human activities where economic inequality exists is the world's current financial system where the various currencies float freely. Since the abolition of the gold standard, there is no more comparability for the valuation of the different monetary units that exist in the world today. The United States dollar is practically the currency that is recognized anywhere in the world. Unless a country has a large dollar reserve, such a country will have disadvantage in trade and commercial

exchange. Despite the fact that there are countries that are relatively well endowed with natural resources, such underdeveloped and poor countries are not able to undergo economic development without external aid, usually in the form of foreign loans.

As of the year 2000, the foreign debt of the poor and undeveloped countries in the world today is in excess of \$2.5 trillion. A trillion, as understood in the United States and in Canada, is the number one followed by twelve zeros. That is, a trillion dollars is a million million dollars. Why and how such huge amounts of external debt are incurred by poor and undeveloped countries? Why is that?

When a cataclysmic event struck, whether it is man-made like war, or a natural calamity like drought, earthquake, or tsunami, the government of the ravished country will usually do what it needs to do. Being in a bind to get foreign aid dollars, the country will almost always agree to whatever sweeping internal policy changes are attached to the loan and demanded by the international lending institutions, such as the profit-oriented World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization. To be able to get needed foreign aid in the form of loans, arbitrary conditions are imposed by the lending institutions, such as the regulation of the market, maximum privatization of government-owned or government-operated enterprises and government withdrawal in managing its own economy. Worse, the World Bank may declare the borrower war-ravaged country as a nation-state of limited sovereignty, which means that it is too unstable, too unskilled to manage the foreign aid money going to that country, by placing the money into a trust fund managed by the World Bank itself as the lending institution. For example, in the case of Afghanistan, having established a trust fund, the World Bank administrators refused to dole out the foreign aid money to the ministry of health of the country. Instead they funnelled the money directly to private health clinics in the form of three-year contract basis in pursuit of lender's policies, a policy of privatized health care.

In addition, the World Bank mandated increased roles for the private sector in the reconstruction of the country's water system, telecommunication, oil, gas and mining facilities, and also directed the Afghanistan government to withdraw from the electricity sector and to leave it to foreign private

investors. The usual strategy is to offer loans that the international banker knows the country cannot possibly repay otherwise an external debt. Once an external debt, the debt continues to grow, feeding on itself in a vicious cycle where money had to be borrowed to pay interest charges, eating up all the public resources of the country to the detriment of the people in those poor countries.

The dominant new world order agenda being promoted in the globalized economy by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization, have subjected the people of the world to more economic instability, speculation, unequal trade exchanges between the rich and the poor countries. There is greater tendency for financial crisis to occur where poverty and hunger continue to take place, with the poor getting poorer and the rich getting richer.

To partially elevate the increasing instability in the world economy and to avoid the financial liquidity crisis on the part of the debtor countries, there was a program called, "Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Reduction Initiative." But only four out of thirty-three poor countries qualified for debt reduction due to its stringent requirements.

One economist, William Easterly, pointed out that from 1989 to 1997, debt forgiveness for 41 countries designated as highly indebted poor countries reached \$33 billion, while new borrowings for the same countries totalled \$41 billion. This writer concluded by stating, "Despite its overwhelming popularity among policy makers and the public, debt relief is a bad deal for the world's poor. By transferring scarce resources to corrupt governments with proven track records of misusing aid, debt forgiveness might only aggravate poverty among the world's most vulnerable people." From "Think Again: Debt Relief," *Foreign Policy*, Nov/Dec, 2001, pages 220-26.

As a result, this year, very recently, the Finance Minister of the Group of Eight leading industrialized countries had agreed to 100% debt cancellation for 18 heavily indebted countries, located mostly in Africa, countries who submit to minimum standards of good governance on condition that whatever savings there are would be used for health, hospitals, nurses, education, schools, teachers and infrastructure like roads and bridges. As a result, Tanzania was able to abolish primary school fees.

Uganda was able to have more clean water for its people.

The Member for Wellington believes the better solution, in the long run, for economic inequality between the poor countries and the rich countries is to have a common standard of value in all the currencies of the world by each country adopting the same monetary unit as the medium of exchange in the international market in the globalized world.

For example, if a poor and developing country like the Philippines had a parity ratio of 50 pesos to one U.S. dollar, this means that the poor worker in the Philippines has to work 50 times harder than the American worker to earn the same value of a dollar of income, of goods and services. Due to the unequal parity exchange ratio, a barber in the Philippines has to cut the hair of 50 clients, whereas an American barber needs to make only one haircut to earn the same dollar. But if the dollar is universal currency everywhere in the world for similar services, a barber anywhere in the world will earn the same income for the same number of haircuts he performed anywhere in the world, and human labour will be worth the same wherever work is performed.

According to Gordon Bigelow, writing for *Harper's* magazine, orthodox Western economic theory does not necessarily conform to reality. Bigelow wrote, "But mainstream economics also fails at a more fundamental level: it is the way that it models basic human behaviour. The core assumption of standard economics is that humans are fundamentally individual rather than social animals. The theory holds that all economic choices are acts of authentic unmediated selfhood, rational statements reflecting what we are and what we want in life. But in reality even our purely economic choices are not made on the basis of pure autonomous selfhood, all of our choices are born out of layers of experience in contact with other people Economics must begin to recognize the social. Until it does, generations of college students will continue to have their worldview distorted by basic economic courses. Free markets do not promote public virtue; they promote private interest.

Mr. Acting Speaker, let me conclude now and say that this resolution for the Member for Wellington is a resolution about economic inequality among the peoples living in the world today. Inequality is the condition or situation of being

unequal, hence, inequitable. Economic inequality is the disparity in the production, distribution and consumption of commodities pertaining to the material necessities and amenities of life.

* (11:20)

But how do social scientists measure economic inequality? The usual quantitative measure in tracing the evolution of economic world inequality among various countries is the value of the Gross Domestic Product per capita as the proxy for the measure of the quality of life of the peoples of the different countries, Gary S. Becker, an article, "The Quantity and Quality of Life and the Evolution of World Inequality," *American Economic Review*, Volume 95, No.1, March 2005, pages 277 to 291, at page 277.

However, material gains, although objectively measured in terms of the monetary unit of value of the dollar, is only one of the many aspects of life that contribute to and enhance economic well-being. On the whole, human economic well-being should be defined in terms of both the quality of life measured by a country's domestic gross product per capita, and also by the quantity of life measured by the number of years over which such income is to be enjoyed by individuals. Thank you.

Mrs. Mavis Taillieu (Morris): Mr. Acting Speaker, I certainly recognize the significant challenges the world is facing in terms of poverty, hunger and inequalities, but I am extremely disappointed in the member and this government for not recognizing the plight of many people here in this province of Manitoba. Just in the last week, rural Manitobans are facing enormous disasters with flooding which has wiped out their crops, which has flooded their market gardens. They are also in a situation where they will lose their livelihoods. The member has not recognized some of the failures that this government has in this, our own province, not only with rural Manitobans but certainly low-income families here in the province and Aboriginal communities in the province.

Manitoba remains a have-not province, something this government would like to continue with a hand-out for the federal government. The NDP has done little to address the poverty within our borders, and it has actually worsened the state of our economy. A recent newspaper report says, "Our

economy will only grow by 2.7 percent this year, and likely that will be revised downward because of the failure of crops in rural Manitoba," Mr. Acting Speaker.

The NDP government has implemented policies that have stifled economic growth and expansion within the province. They have taken a high tax, high spend approach to Manitobans. These policies hurt and hinder our economic development. How can the NDP government support such a resolution when they have created such a mess in their own backyard?

According to the Canadian Association of Food Banks, Manitoba has the second highest per capita use rate of food banks in Canada. Food bank usage in Manitoba has increased 10 percent over the previous year and 182 percent since 1997. In March of 2003, 42 000 Manitobans, equal to almost the entire population of Brandon, used a food bank. When I recently toured the Winnipeg Harvest, I was amazed at the huge warehouse of food that flows in and out of there on a regular basis to families in need within this province, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The Manitoba Institute of Chartered Accountants states that Manitobans had the second lowest growth rate of real disposable income in all provinces west of Québec over the last five years. Since 1998, the disposable income has grown by only \$786 or 4.4 percent. During this same period, the disposable income in Alberta grew by 9.6 percent, more than double. Even Saskatchewan grew by 6.1 percent, and the national average is 6.9 percent. The ICAM points out that this slow growth is impacted by a loss of higher paying jobs in Manitoba and a slower rate of tax cuts than anywhere else in Canada.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, small and medium-sized employers in western Canada consider Winnipeg to be the worst western city in the following categories: reasonable property tax levels, value for money for public services, fairness of by-laws and regulations and government's awareness of the business sector. And I can tell you that, living in a small community outside of Winnipeg, when businesses want to come and relocate to Winnipeg, they find the myriad of bureaucracies and rules and regulations that they have to go through, they find that very disconcerting and difficult to deal with and much rather go to surrounding communities that do not have that huge

maze of bureaucracy to go through. It is much easier to do business outside.

According to the Manitoba Institute of Chartered Accountants, the rate of business investment as a percentage of GDP has declined since 1999 to 11.8 percent and is now well below the national average of 12.4 percent. The rate of new businesses incorporated per 1000 of population, is the lowest for all provinces west of Quebec since 1999. And Gary Hannaford of ICAM says, "Our indicators are good, but our results remain mediocre."

I would like to just go back to the food banks issue. I just heard some statistics this morning on the radio as I was driving here that significant increase in the food bank usage has, of course, always calling for to donate to the food banks and, certainly, that is what we would intend to happen, because so many of these people that are using the food banks are families with young children. From the Hunger Count 2003 report *Something Has to Give: Food Banks Filling the Policy Gap in Canada*, for Manitoba statistics, total number of food banks, 37 food banks; number of people assisted by food banks in March of 2003, 38 584, that is an enormous number of people that would be in need of using food banks; households, 17 000. And certainly, many, many, I think 47 percent was the statistic I heard on the radio, 47 percent of these, would be children.

There is a total lack of economic growth in this province, Mr. Acting Speaker. The best way to produce a stronger economy is job creation, and not job creation in the public sector, but in the private sector. We need to encourage people to be entrepreneurs, to be self-employed. We need to encourage and promote people to not only find jobs, but create jobs. We should not disparage people that want to be employers and create jobs and employ people. We should be allowing that to happen. We should be supporting and encouraging small business to come here and to employ people, serving two purposes: building the economy and providing job creation. But the NDP government has failed to create an economic climate that promotes job creation and to attract people to the employment sector away from the welfare sector.

* (11:30)

Just recently, we saw in the paper the number of welfare recipients is on the rise in Manitoba and, certainly, over the period of time from 1999, there

were 68 000 people, 68 700 people, on welfare, declining slightly, but now we are going up again. Those years up until '99, there was a healthy decline of 3000, 4000, 5000 people a year off the welfare rolls, and now we see a levelling, and now an increase of 1.25 percent, almost another 1000 people on the income assistance, Mr. Acting Speaker. This is the second-highest boost in all but one of the provinces and well below the national average. If you look at the statistics, you will see that other provinces, except for one, all had a decrease in the number of people on welfare and Manitoba has an increase. Certainly that does nothing to stimulate the economic growth of the province as job creation in the private sector is what is necessary to stimulate economic growth.

We still see Manitoba in a high-debt position, Mr. Acting Speaker. Only in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island do taxpayers pay more than in Manitoba. Considering that we are a western province and much closer to Alberta, B.C. and Saskatchewan where taxes are lower and business is booming, this is a real problem because we see businesses choosing to relocate in the West. Are they going to choose Manitoba or are they going to choose Alberta? And why are they going to choose Alberta?

An Honourable Member: Why?

Mrs. Taillieu: Because Alberta has a very much more competitive and healthy approach to the business sector. In fact, I can say my own son went to Alberta because, as a young entrepreneur, he found it much easier to go to an economy of prosperity that welcomed young people, that provided opportunities for young people and provided help and initiatives for young people, something that is extremely lacking here in this province of Manitoba. He is not the only one. There are many of our young people have gone out to other provinces to seek employment, Mr. Acting Speaker.

In fact, speaking about the debt here in Manitoba, only Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and P.E.I. have a smaller basic personal exemption than Manitoba. This has a profound impact on low-income families in Manitoba. Raising the basic exemption to at least the federal amount would be a tremendous benefit to low-income Manitobans. Every Manitoban then would have about \$300 more every year. The debt here has increased by \$3.5 billion under the NDP's watch.

The per-capita debt has grown by almost \$2,500 under the NDP. The per-capita debt in this province has grown in the last five years, \$2,500 under the NDP. Certainly, what legacy do we leave to our children? Do we leave this terrible debt to our children as we move on? We see children in the gallery today. Do we leave this debt to them? I should hope that we would not. I should hope that we would want to improve the economy in our province to keep our young people here and to give them a healthy and prosperous future, Mr. Acting Speaker.

We are concerned, of course, with the disparities, the inequalities, that the world faces in terms of hunger and poverty, but we are concerned that our government here today does not recognize this, does not speak to those inequalities, the poverty and hunger that many of our low-income families and Aboriginal communities experience right here, right in our own backyard, Mr. Acting Speaker. We need to address those concerns at home before we can address anything else.

This NDP government continues to spend with reckless abandon. They increased spending by half a billion dollars this year alone, and will spend more than \$8 billion of our taxpayers' dollars. What have they done to look at what is happening in this province? What happens when our economy grinds to a halt and revenues decline? What happens then, when we do not have the revenues coming in to this province? Then we are in a crunch situation.

We need to look very carefully at stimulating our economy with private sector growth, entrepreneurs, people that will bring business here creating a climate where people can and want to do business. That is what we need here in this province. So with those few words, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would just like to say that recognizing the world has significant problems here in this province, low-income families, families in poverty, families that are hungry and low-income Aboriginals. Yes, we have to look at all of the people here in our province, and similarly, the same thing that has happened with rural Manitoba in the last week or so, just been totally ignored by this government. Thank you.

Introduction of Guests

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Reid): Before we proceed with the next speaker on this resolution, I would like, for the information of the member of the

House, to introduce guests we have in our gallery here with us today.

We have, from Steinbach, Southwood School, the 75 students under the direction of Mr. Trevor Neufeld, and we would like to welcome the Southwood School students here this morning. We also have with us in the gallery here today students from Linwood School, in the constituency of the honourable Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski). We have some 22 students from Linwood School under the direction of Ms. Anna-Marie McAleer [*phonetic*], I hope I have pronounced that name correctly, and we welcome all visitors to our gallery here today.

* * *

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I am very happy to be able to speak in support of the resolution from the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos). I think he paints a large picture, a global picture and a picture we should all be acquainted with. We have to take our global responsibility in aiding international development seriously, all of us, and I would like to say thank you to the Manitoba Council for International Cooperation, MCIC, for the sterling job they have done for many, many years. They are certainly very much involved in overseas development, and our government has been very much supportive of MCIC. In fact, over the next four years, we are giving them \$1 million, and I know that they raise a lot more than that—10, 15, 20 times as much from volunteers and supporters.

As well as MCIC, under that umbrella, we have projects in the province, particularly the Marquis Project which has done wonderful jobs over the years, and I want to thank Zack Gross, who has done such a good job over the years. The Marquis Project, by the way, is located in Brandon. Zack Gross has worked very, very hard to make that development education project work, and I know because my wife was involved with it as well. Before that, I think Gary Grant [*phonetic*] also did a sterling job working for the Marquis Project.

An offshoot of that project was a development education organization in northern Manitoba called DENIM, Development Education North in Manitoba, started by the Reverend Fletcher Stewart, a good friend of mine. In fact, many people got involved in

that in Cranberry Portage, in Flin Flon, in The Pas and also in Thompson.

We used to have yearly meetings, annual meetings, in Simon House Bible Camp, and these are very interesting meetings. We used to have speakers from South Africa, Zimbabwe and the Philippines. You name it, from third world countries, they were there. My wife was co-ordinator for many, many years, and was also involved in trips, with, I think, sometimes in conjunction with Marquis to places such as Nicaragua when the Sandinistas were fighting for their life against the Contras, which were basically a bandit group supported by some nations.

Later on, also in Haiti, just before the coup, before the legally elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was deposed, later was elected again and deposed again, unfortunately, so we sometimes see movements where democratic leaders who try to work with the poor, try to raise the standard of living, do not meet the, I guess, the criteria for some powerful nations, and then these people are sort of shuffled off into the sunset.

That is very unfortunate because the struggle goes on. Poor nations are struggling, and there are a lot of people willing to put a lot of effort into making sure that that situation changes, and I am actually heartened by the fact that there is light at the end of the tunnel. The Member for Wellington has alluded to it that the G-8 nations are involved in an initiative where they would forgive about \$40-some-billion worth of loans outstanding to the poorest of the poor nations in the world. I think that is a tremendously important development.

* (11:40)

Many churches have been asking for this for many, many years, and some of the cultural groups as well have been pushing very hard. I know in the past that bands such as U2 and Live Aid and so on, so the cultural community has pushed for this. The churches have pushed for this. Local organizations have pushed for this, particularly the Mennonite Central Committee. I have always said that Mennonite Central is one of the most important organizations in this province. I am very proud to work with it, and they take very seriously the plight of poor people, and when they give aid they tend to do it without blinkers on, whereas I know other institutions still see things in ideological terms and if

they do not like it, well, they do not give aid to that particular country because it does not happen to be right-wing enough or left-wing enough, whatever. So I am very happy with the Mennonite Central Committee because they do such a wonderful job.

I saw a cartoon not too long ago, and I think it sums up the aid we give third world countries. It was a big palm tree with its roots in Latin America and the fruit being plucked in the United States and Canada, and that sort of, I think, simplifies the picture. We, on the surface, give a lot of aid to poor countries but very often that is tied aid, that is, aid with all kinds of strings attached, and when you look at it, it is really to help our economy and our country rather than the recipient country, the country that really needs the aid. We have to let those people and our NGOs here helping those people be in charge and not have too many restrictions how that money is to be used because, after all, these problems, the haves and have-nots that the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos) raised, are ancient-age-old problems. They are justice problems. They are problems of justice. And you will never have peace unless you have justice, and that means economic justice as well.

So we have to support the NGOs that are working hard with poor countries. We have to make sure that the IMF and the World Bank do not get too gung-ho in their structural adjustment policies, which means that poor countries have to tighten their belt when they really do not have a belt to tighten, they are that poor, but, as I said before, there is light at the end of the tunnel. We are going to forgive \$40 some billion but that is just a promise. Let us hope that actually happens.

It is interesting to note while I am speaking, and I am only speaking for about five or six minutes, maybe ten minutes, that during that time somewhere between three or four kids will die of starvation. I was looking at the figures yesterday. I think it is something like 560 to 600 a day, and that translates to roughly, say, 25 an hour. That is unconscionable, unacceptable, particularly in a world where we are spending trillions of dollars in fancy defence gadgets to make the world safer for, allegedly, democracy, interpreted in a certain way. The military spending goes wild, but spending for poor people, well, that just does not happen.

Now, I know the member who spoke earlier, before me, did raise issues in this province and she is

right. There are poverty issues in this province but I assure her, if you visit a third world country, the poorest of our poor is still pretty rich compared to a lot of the people we meet. I suggest you go to Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and see where people have to rent a bed, sleeping on the sidewalk for one hour. I mean, that is the kind of poverty I am talking about, real poverty. Very often, these countries that are facing this real poverty have been caught in a geo-political tug-of-war between the Soviet Union and the United States. Let me tell you a fact, that neither side is very nice when it comes to geo-political realities and sometimes, you know, they would support a country which is now heavily in debt and this country now has to pay back, but it was the dictatorship that put the country in debt and now the people are expected to pay back. That is not acceptable.

A lot of nasty stuff happened in the past. I think we are in a new age now where I think there is more co-operation. We do not have a red devil to kick around anymore but we always seem to be looking for enemies instead of ever looking at ourselves and how we have to change our own structures. What we want is economic justice. We want to put people before profits and, yes, economic growth and competition is great, but what about a little bit of sharing? What is wrong with sharing? That is the model churches are talking about, co-operation.

The western world, the developed world, if you like, the old term, the capitalist world, is well off, thank you. Even our poor people are relatively well off. We are talking about people who cannot make it day to day. We are talking about kids that are dying, like I said, 25 this hour. That is who we have to help, but we do not seem to find five cents of medicine but we can find a million dollars to build another bomber without a problem and this goes on and on and on. Just take a look to the neighbour to the south, the trillions of dollars they are spending on defence weapons. But in order to defend yourself, you have to have an enemy. It seems to me they always have an enemy. They are always fighting somebody; a war against drugs or a war against communism or a war against poverty or a war against terrorism or a war against something.

I am not saying that there is not danger out there but I think when you narrow it too much and you put in the context of purely economic theory, that means if we develop more then it is going to be really good. Let us just get more entrepreneurs, let us just make

more profit and this rising tide will help everybody. I beg to differ. Sometimes that money that you are developing does not go to the people who need it. It certainly does not happen that way in third world countries.

So what we need is economic justice globally, and we have to work towards those large scale goals. Now, they are hard to put into perspective, I know, it is so big it is sometimes overwhelming, but at least the member from Wellington brought this forth, because he realizes that, and we all should realize that we have a serious problem out there. And it is not good enough to say, "Well, let us just focus on our own backyard." And, yes, I should, too. I have reserves in my constituency and I see poor people, but I will tell you something. As poor as they are, it is nothing compared with some other parts of the world.

So, we have to show a little more compassion. For some of us, I guess, that is Christianity. We have to be serious about taking our neighbours seriously, that they are of equal value as ourselves, that democracy has to be real democracy, and I point that out. Real democracy, not dollar democracy, because very often we have supported regimes that had nothing to do with democracy, but they fit our so-called security blanket, our security reasons.

So we have to be honest, we have to be fair, we have to work with organizations that have a history and a tradition of justice, and I suggest the Mennonite Central Committee, and, in fact, that particular view of the world, which is a pacifist view, a just view, and, you know, I think a fair and equitable view. People like that make a lot of sense, and we have to start working in that direction. I think we should be sharing a lot more instead of fighting each other a lot more. I think I would like to see a little bit more of, how would we say, share the wealth rather than too much going to one particular group or segment.

It is not so much that we have to grow in terms of the economic pie, I feel. This is globally speaking. I think it is much more a question of let us share that global pie a little more equitably, and I think that everybody would be better off. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. Gerald Hawranik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Acting Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to be able

to say a few words on this resolution. I thank the member from Wellington for bringing this resolution forward to the House today. I have listened to some of the comments from the member from Wellington. I can say that I agree with most of your comments, and, as well, from the member from Flin Flon, who brought some pretty cogent arguments, I think, to alleviate global economic disparity. And the member from Morris, of course, I agree with everything she said, and I want to elaborate a little bit on that, as well.

It is important, I think, to recognize the charitable works of all our churches, and in particular I name one in particular because of their outstanding effort to help the poor people around the globe, and that is the Mennonite Central Committee. I think the work that they do is wonderful, and I know that I appreciate them and I know members in this House, all members in this House, obviously appreciate all of their efforts that they do toward alleviating world poverty.

I also have to mention, though, too, that in my constituency I have a couple of Hutterite colonies who, in fact, are very charitable, as well. They do work, not only within our constituency, but also throughout the province and throughout Canada and, indeed, throughout the world. And it is important to recognize that there is poverty in underdeveloped countries around the world and there are countries such as Haiti, which was mentioned earlier, that is among the poorest of the poor. As a result of that, I have to recognize the efforts of two of my constituents, Sharon and Mark Dugard, who, in fact, have spent weeks, if not months, within Haiti to help the people there to alleviate poverty. And they have recognized that there was a particular need in Haiti a couple of years ago with respect to orphanages. There is a lack of orphanages within the country, and they have taken it upon themselves to raise enough money to try to establish an orphanage in Haiti, and for that I congratulate them, and I thank them for their vision. I thank them on behalf of all of the residents of my constituency, as well.

The one thing that this resolution ignores, I believe, Mr. Acting Speaker, is it really ignores Manitoba and it ignores Manitobans, and our primary responsibility here, as an MLA, is to ensure that the needs and concerns of Manitobans are met. That is our primary responsibility. Of course, we should recognize that we also have a responsibility

across Canada, and we also have a responsibility globally, but our primary responsibility should rest with Manitobans. And it is interesting how this resolution really lacks the ability to deal with that issue and ignore it as Manitobans, I believe.

* (11:50)

There is poverty in our own backyard, Mr. Acting Speaker. One in twenty Manitobans, I believe. There is poverty in our own backyard, Mr. Acting Speaker. One in twenty Manitobans live under the poverty line, one in twenty. I think we ought to recognize that fact, we ought to accept that fact, and we ought to work toward changing that situation in Manitoba, and we ought to start acting now.

I can tell you that in 1991, my wife Pamela and I, we established the first rural food bank in North America. It has been established in 1991. We have been operating it for 14 years. I have been the president for 14 years. I spend probably 10 hours a week for the last 14 years working at the food bank. My wife has done the same, and we are committed to food banks in Canada. We are committed to food banks in Manitoba, and a food bank in my constituency, the Beausejour and area food bank as well as the Lac du Bonnet and area food bank which I helped to establish a number of years as well.

We have helped establish dozens more food banks throughout this province and throughout Canada and other provinces, and we find it is very rewarding to do so because we believe that we are helping those who do not have the most basic of necessities, which is food. In the food bank, we organize and we train 25 regular volunteers. That is what we have to operate the food bank, and we have hundreds of other volunteers who give of their time sporadically as well.

I can tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that in 1999, as president of the Beausejour and area food bank, I wrote the then-Minister of Family Services, who happens to now be the Minister of Health (Mr. Sale), advising him that I thought that government should participate in funding and providing assistance to food banks where it is necessary. I believe that food banks were struggling at that particular point in time: 1999, 2000, I could see the fact that food bank usage was increasing, was going to increase. So I wrote the letter to the minister asking for assistance, and the

answer I got was thanks, but no thanks. I was really quite shocked at that. I had spoken to Winnipeg Harvest about it, and they said that they were trying to get similar efforts going within their food bank to try to get assistance but to no avail. It fell on deaf ears.

We are the child poverty capital of Canada, and it is getting worse. It is not getting any better. I think we all have to work in this House toward alleviating child poverty throughout Canada and throughout Manitoba.

The food bank that we have in Beausejour and Lac du Bonnet service the northeastern Manitoba area, which includes the constituency of Lac du Bonnet and goes all the way almost up to Selkirk and then south down to the No. 1 highway. So it is a very large area. It is about 30 000 people living within that area, 30 000, 35 000. So we service not just Beausejour and not just Lac du Bonnet, but we service all the communities in between.

The food bank depends entirely on money donations. Sometimes we may think that food banks do not require money to operate. Well, we do, because of the fact that food banks have rent to pay, they have utilities to pay, they have got equipment to purchase, if necessary, equipment to maintain. It also has food expense. In fact, that is the greatest expense of food banks today, is actually food expenses. When you receive donations of food from individuals from within the community, you do not get exactly the right mix of food, so you have to purchase food for giving to various members that come to the food bank for food. So you need money donations. You also need food donations.

I am happy to report that in fact the Beausejour and area food bank is probably the only food bank in Manitoba that does not depend on Winnipeg Harvest for food. In fact, if you look at the amount of food that we take into the food bank versus the amount of food that we give back to Winnipeg Harvest, I think you will find that we give more to Winnipeg Harvest than they give us. So there is an exchange of food between us and Winnipeg Harvest. Lac du Bonnet and area food bank operates in much the same way. It in fact gets many food donations from its own community just as we do, and that depends on the generosity of your own community and whether you can provide the community with ownership of that food bank.

It is not my food bank, it is not my spouse's food bank, it is not the volunteers' food bank, it is the community's food bank. If you can convince the community that it is their food bank and it is their responsibility for operating that food bank and to ensure that there is enough food on the shelves and there are enough volunteers in those doors, then you have done your job. That is what we have done within the Beausejour and Lac du Bonnet and area food banks. We have convinced the community that it is theirs. It is their food bank; it is not ours. It is their food bank, and as a result of that, we receive tremendous support from the community. I have to commend all of the community members in Lac du Bonnet and Beausejour and the surrounding communities of Tyndall, Garson, Brokenhead, the R.M. of Lac du Bonnet, Alexander and so on, the R.M. of Alexander, Whitemouth. I have to commend them for all for their generosity toward their food banks and the fact that they have made them self-sufficient.

In fact, last year and the year before, the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth started a part-time food bank within their community. As you have read in the newspapers, I am sure, Mr. Acting Speaker, the Rural Municipality of Whitemouth has been hosting the Christmas Train for the last couple of years. That has raised hundreds if not thousands, in fact thousands of pounds of food and hundreds of dollars in donations. They generously turn it over to the Lac du Bonnet and area food bank and the Beausejour and area food bank to allow us to continue to operate our food banks.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of volunteers, and as I mentioned earlier, we have about 25 regular volunteers that we train on a consistent basis. I can tell you, Mr. Acting Speaker, that we do not spend a lot of time training in the sense that we do not have a lot of turnover. Initially, when we started the food bank, we had about 25 to 30 volunteers, regular volunteers. I can tell you that out of 25 regular volunteers that we have today, 15 have been with us since 1991. That shows the true commitment of the volunteers that we have in our food bank, and the same can be said for the Lac du Bonnet and area food bank as well.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So there is a huge commitment by volunteers when they volunteer to the food bank, and they do

not want to leave. We have a regular schedule at the food bank that they take care of on their own. They know they have to come in on the first Monday or the first Thursday of the month. If they cannot make it for some reason, if they have a dental appointment, a medical appointment, we leave it up to the volunteers to make sure that they make their own switches in terms of responsibility. They may switch with somebody who normally might go on a Monday to volunteer rather than a Thursday, and then they would do their switches. They are very reluctant to give up their time as a volunteer at the food bank, and that is something to be said for what food banks do across this province.

What I have noticed, Mr. Speaker, is that over the years since 1991, food bank use has increased not drastically but in slow increments. Over the last couple of years, I have noticed a dramatic increase in food bank usage, and I attribute that to the BSE crisis in rural areas. We are finding that in fact there are many part-time farmers. There are many hobby farmers. There are many people who have had cattle, say, as a sideline to their business. There are many people who are working, not only directly in the cattle business but indirectly, who come forward and are now asking for food of the food bank. I think that is not unique to the Lac du Bonnet area or to the Beausejour area. I think that is happening right across the province. I think that speaks to how we have dealt with that crisis and how we have really neglected those people who are within that industry.

It has been two years, more than two years since the BSE crisis hit rural Manitoba, Mr. Speaker. In those two years, I believe that little to nothing has been done by not only the federal government but this provincial government as well. They should take that responsibility. I asked members opposite to talk to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), about that because she is obviously in charge of managing this crisis. I believe she has done a very poor job in managing this crisis.

What also makes a difference, I believe, in this province is how you have managed the economy, Mr. Speaker. When I look at the debt going up by \$1.5 million a day in this province, \$1,000 a minute. In fact, when I ask a question in Question Period, the debt goes up another \$1,000. When the Finance Minister or the Justice Minister or the Premier (Mr. Doer) answers, the debt goes up another \$1,000. That

is how fast our debt is increasing in this province. I think we have to look at that because while we have low interest rates today, that does not mean we are going to have low interest rates forever, Mr. Speaker, and those interest rates are bound to go up. They are bound to go up, and as a result of that what I find is that that takes more money out of the economy for direct services to Manitobans.

* (12:00)

This government should bear the responsibility for that. They have allowed the debt to increase in spite of the fact that the Finance Minister has said that he is paying down the debt. Well, he is not paying down the debt, Mr. Speaker. He is paying toward the debt. It has nothing to do with paying down the debt. If, in fact, he was paying down the debt, our debt would be going down and not up.

That is my concern, that if the debt continues to go up, interest rates may climb and the cost of servicing that debt goes up. As a result of that, there is less money to deliver for front-line services such as to the farmers who are affected by the BSE crisis in Manitoba, and that is my concern.

I ask members opposite to speak to the Finance Minister about this. I notice that they have been silent during the budget debate with respect to the debt, and I do not think that that is responsible on their part. I think they should be talking to the Finance Minister and asking him the hard questions. Why is the debt going up? Why are we paying more money to servicing the debt? If interest rates go up, we should all be concerned. We have a \$20-billion net debt in the province. If interest rates go up by 1 percent, that is an extra \$200 million. Mr. Speaker, \$200 million to take out of services. That is almost the entire budget of Justice. That is more than the budget that is allocated for Agriculture alone. One percent would make a \$200-million difference. That is my concern, and I hope that members opposite listen.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet will have one minute remaining.

The hour being twelve o'clock, we will recess and reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 16, 2005

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