



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

Chairperson
Mr. David Newman
Constituency of Riel



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Members, Constituencies and Political Affiliation

Name	Constituency	Party
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
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ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
ERNST, Jim, Hon.	Charleswood	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian, Hon.	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LAW AMENDMENTS

Friday, October 11, 1996

TIME – 9 a.m.

LOCATION – Winnipeg, Manitoba

CHAIRPERSON – Mr. David Newman (Riel)

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

ATTENDANCE - 11 – QUORUM - 6

Members of the Committee present:

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

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

Substitutions:

Mr. Laurendeau for Mr. Downey

APPEARING:

Mr. Gary Kowalski, MLA for The Maples
Ms. Ann Bailey, Legislative Counsel

WITNESSES:

Ms. Louise Simbandumwe, Private Citizen
Ms. Margot Lavoie, Oblate Justice and
Peace Committee
Mr. Thomas Novak, Oblate Justice and
Peace Committee
Mr. Percy Flett, Private Citizen
Mrs. Martina Flett, Private Citizen
Ms. Deborah Graham, People
Empowering Themselves Against the System
Mr. Eric Cote, Private Citizen
Ms. Cyndi Ellman, Vice Chair, Board of Directors,
Village Clinic
Ms. Mary Pankiw, Manitoba Society of Seniors
Ms. Yvonne Naismith, St. Matthew's-
Maryland Community Ministry
Ms. Irene Sale, St. Matthew's-Maryland

Community Ministry
Ms. Linda Churchill, Community Action on Poverty
Ms. Bonnie Caldwell, Private Citizen
Mr. Glen Nicoles, Manitoba Northwestern Ontario
Conference of the United Church of Canada
Ms. Rhonda Chorney, AIDS Shelter
Coalition of Manitoba
Ms. Monique Foucart, Private Citizen
Ms. Marlene Vieno, Manitoba Network for
Mental Health
Mr. Charlie Housley, Private Citizen

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS:

Ms. Bonnie Caldwell, Private Citizen

MATTERS UNDER DISCUSSION:

Bill 36—The Social Allowances Amendment and
Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Chairperson: Good morning. I would like to call the Standing Committee on Law Amendments to order. When the committee met last evening, we were hearing public presentations for Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

This morning the committee will continue with hearing public presentations. A new list of presenters should now be before all committee members and posted at the back of the room, beginning with the person we left off at last night. This is Margot Lavoie from the Oblate Justice and Peace Committee.

Before we continue with the public presentations, I would just like to remind committee members and the public present this morning that the committee did agree last night to a 15-minute time limit on each presentation, including questions and answers.

As well, the committee did agree to the process whereby, if a person's name was called and they were not present, their name would drop to the bottom of the list. If their name is called a second time, their name is

dropped off the list. As an indication of persons who have had their name called once already, they are on the current list at the bottom with a number sign beside their name.

At the outset this morning, I was asked by the person numbered as the 10th presenter, Louise Simbandumwe, as to whether or not, because of a personal work circumstance, she could move higher up the list. Is there anyone, of the first nine presenters, who would object to that, and would the committee be prepared to agree to that? First, are there any in the room who would object to that taking place? If not, is it the will of the committee? Okay. Louise, would you come forward, please? Do you have copies of a presentation?

Ms. Louise Simbandumwe (Private Citizen): No, I am just providing an oral presentation.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you can begin your oral presentation.

Ms. Simbandumwe: First of all, I would like to thank the other participants for letting me speak earlier. One of my co-workers just phoned and told me that he was ill and would like me to relieve him right away, so I will try to be brief.

Before I begin, I would like to tell you that there are many people who have important things to say from this committee, derived from their own experience, who are not here today. They are not here because they do not feel that their government genuinely wants their input. They are not here because they are afraid that they will be punished by the welfare system for speaking to you about their experience, and I think you heard from someone yesterday who indicated a fear of being audited once again for speaking to this committee. They are also not here because they do not believe that you really care about them and their experience. They do not believe that you are really here to listen. They just think that you are here to go through the motions in terms of the process and that you are not genuinely interested in their own experience.

So I really encourage you to listen very carefully to the people who have come to present here today, especially the people who are on social assistance. It is taking a great deal of faith in you, that their words will make a

difference. I know because I spoke personally to a lot of these people in terms of encouraging them to have faith in our political process.

I actually have a degree in commerce with a major in economics. I also have a masters degree in comparative social policy from Oxford University. So I could come before you and talk about how the plans that you outline in Bill 36 do not make economic sense given this economic climate and also given the government's contribution to creating this economic climate. I can also come and talk to you about it from a social policy perspective and the experience in other regions of Canada and the experience in other countries who have tried some of the measures that you outline in Bill 36 and tell you that they will not work in terms of your stated objectives. But I am not going to do that because a number of the other presenters have done a very fine job in terms of doing that sort of rigorous analysis. Instead, I will speak to you from my own experience and also the experience of some of the people that I have had the honour to interact with.

Early yesterday morning I was rushing to open the bookstore and coffee house where I work, and out of the window I saw a woman that I often see. She is an elderly woman with a very slight build; she is probably half my size. I remember her because she also works in the neighbourhood where I work, the Exchange District. She works very hard. She works especially hard on Tuesdays and Fridays because that is when our restaurant and all the other businesses put their garbage out on the streets. She has a cart and goes through all the garbage very carefully, very methodically, picking out anything of value and putting it in the bags on her cart.

I also remember her because she reminds me of my history. I grew up in a number of different countries. I grew up in Burundi, in India and Kenya before arriving in Canada 15 years ago because I am a recent immigrant. The reason why I grew up in so many countries—a lot of people say well, were your parents diplomats? I say, no, we were actually refugees. But I have been very lucky because we always had our basic needs met. There was never a time when I asked my mommy for food or when I was hungry or when I did not have enough clothes or anything like that. But we were very lucky, and it took me years to understand how close my family lived to the margins. All it would have taken was one roll of the dice

and my family could have been destitute, rotting in some refugee camps, you know those camps that you see on TV, or put in a situation where my parents were forced to undertake dangerous, exploitive and slave-like labour in a foreign country where they had no rights.

* (0910)

This did not happen to my family because of systems that had been established that we were able to take advantage of to support refugees. But not only because of that, because there were many gaps in the system, which is why you see many refugees rotting in refugee camps. We were also lucky because of the generosity of many people who helped us out when things got really tight. Those people helped us out to the extent that I was not aware how close we were to being completely destitute until years later when I talked to my parents about it.

When, because of the generosity once again of people in Canada, I found out that we were coming to Canada as sponsored refugees, I was thrilled, because even at the age of 12, I knew that Canada was a promised land relative to the situation that our family had been in. It offered a security, it offered me a chance for education, and it offered me a chance to live to my fullest potential.

However, it did not take me long to realize that Canada was not the promised land for everyone. I was able to take advantage of these opportunities, but not everybody in Canada has been able to. While my family lived a privileged middle-class existence, people who had fallen between the cracks in Canada were stigmatized and punished for their poverty. I have often asked myself the question, would I prefer to be poor in India and begging on the streets, or would I prefer to be poor in Canada? I do not have an answer. I think I might choose India actually even though in terms of my basic needs I would have less of a chance of having those met in a country like India that does not have the sort of social safety net that we have in place sponsored by the government, and that is because of the stigma attached to poverty here. It is soul destroying.

You actually see people turning in on themselves and destroying themselves because of the way they are generally perceived by society, and it breaks my heart. I did not see that same situation in India, where you saw

people's bodies actually reflecting their poverty in terms of the emaciation of their bodies, in terms of how thin they were, in terms of the potbellies that children sported which showed their hunger as opposed to having a lot of food.

The only saving grace, I believe, was that at least there was a floor, a minimum level below which no one could fall so that their basic needs would always be met. I believe that was guaranteed in Canada, but Bill 36 places even this basic standard in jeopardy. It gives the government the power to deny assistance to people who lack essential necessities such as food, shelter, clothing, health care. It expands the power of welfare workers to punish people for failing to meet employment expectations, and it introduces the possibility of workfare, which I think in terms of the punitive approach that workfare takes is absolutely misguided. From my experience of talking to people who find themselves on social assistance, they do not need to be beaten over the head with a stick in order to go out and find work. If there are good, structured programs in place, an actual job creation scheme in place that provides them with decent working conditions and a decent living wage, they are there. Added to the recent reductions in welfare rates that went into effect in May, this puts many people in extreme jeopardy.

Already, I hear people I work with in PETAS talk about being hungry. PETAS, the acronym stands for People Empowering Themselves Against the System, and it is a group of people mostly on social assistance who are getting together to try and improve their situation. We sat down, and we had this huge brainstorming session for an hour. We came up with a list of about 30 names that filled two flip charts, and that was the name they picked, which I think is in some ways a real indictment against the current welfare system, people empowering themselves against the system. They see themselves as standing in opposition, as being in a state of war with the welfare system, which is on paper designed to provide them with support.

Now, why would that be the case? So when people started talking about being hungry, I remember thinking to myself, this is Canada? I was surprised. I asked them, so what about the food banks, the soup kitchens, and they told me that they were very worried because these food banks are stretched to the limit.

One of the people who attended one of our very first meetings where we were trying to figure out what projects we wanted to work on, I was very silent throughout all the meetings and I was walking back with her because we were walking in the same direction, and I asked her, well, what did you think of the meeting? She goes, oh, it was really good. I said, you did not speak very much. Did you have any ideas? She said, well, I had one idea when people were talking about the food banks not having a lot of food, but I thought it was stupid, so I did not want to talk about it. I said, oh, what was your idea, and she said, well, I am very worried—and this is a person on social assistance who does not have a lot of money—she goes, I am very worried that my food bank does not have enough food for everybody, so I would like to plant a garden—this was in the spring—and donate the food to the food bank. I said, really. I said, that is a really good idea, because we have community gardens and we can get you seeds. She goes, oh, no, no. She says, I have the seeds. They are really, really good seeds. They are top quality seeds. I went out and bought them and I am keeping them with me because I am afraid that if I leave them at home somebody will steal them. I am just looking for a place where I can plant these so that I can donate the plants, the food that is harvested in the fall, to the food bank.

I got her in touch with someone who got her in touch with one of the community gardens, and she did plant her seeds. I met with her several weeks later, and she was really thrilled. But this was her most heartfelt desire at that point in time, the contribution that she wanted to make to her community, that she sacrificed what little money she had to buy those seeds and was carrying them around with her just looking for a place to plant them. To me, that spoke volumes.

People also tell me about being put in training programs that simply provide businesses with cheap labour while leaving them earning less than minimum wage. Another person who also is a member of PETAS, he has worked managing a business. He has extensive work experience in a number of different areas. At one point, he was earning over \$30,000 a year. At this point, he is quite ill—he is HIV positive—and he talked about (a) the harassment that he faces. He has had to produce letters systematically updating his welfare worker on his condition, which is terminal. He keeps getting asked, well, do you need these medications? Provide

documentation that you need these medications. On the little form it says, well, when do you expect to be better? On the form, he has to write all the time, it is terminal. I do not understand why he has to keep doing this.

Anyway, he talked about this one training program that he was put in which consisted solely of painting. That is all he did in this training program for under minimum wage was paint. He says, there are so many things that I want to learn, and they put me in a training program that just involved painting. That is all he did, was paint the walls. That is it.

People also tell me about being forced to drop out of educational programs that they were very enthusiastic about and directed to low-wage exploitive sectors of the economy. People tell me that people they know are becoming increasingly desperate and turning to crime, and I wonder why we are so shocked by the increase in gang activity. I also wonder why we are prepared to invest money in jails rather than people. I recently had a friend from South Africa visit, and she described the same sort of process happening there, where the government is starting to invest a lot of money in their judicial system, in jails, because the crime rate is really increasing, because the aspirations and needs of the people who faced the system of apartheid for so many years and were completely exploited under it are not being met by the government.

Mr. Chairperson: You have two minutes left.

Ms. Simbandumwe: So I found that very interesting that this was reflected in Canada as well, and I am sure, if we looked at the statistics of the people who we find in our prison system, we would find aboriginal people disproportionately represented, poor people disproportionately represented, and that just is not right. I think there is a better way of dealing with these people.

So Bill 36 is moving us ~~further~~ away from the vision of Canada that I had before coming here. I still want a Canada where everybody is entitled to a minimum guaranteed income that ensures that the basic needs are met and that this minimum guaranteed level of income is indexed to inflation, a Canada where the government seeks to create real jobs instead of forcing the poor into hazardous and exploitive jobs, a Canada where individuals can choose the type of work they want to do,

a Canada where a government is generally interested in a dialogue with the citizens and sets up a system that facilitates that dialogue rather than hinders it. I still want a Canada where nobody falls through the cracks, a Canada where I am not confronted with an elderly Asian woman looking through my garbage, a woman who does not speak any English when I offer her some of the food that was too unattractive or stale to serve to our customers. Instead, she hugs me tightly.

I am reminded of how small the space is between the woman who is looking through the garbage and the customers whom we cannot serve this food to, because it falls below their minimum expectations of what a restaurant can serve. These people, these customers, and possibly many of us in the room today, are perhaps one pay cheque away from being in her position without an adequate social safety net. Many of us who have jobs do not realize how close we are to this reality. It is just a matter of our privileged background, a matter of luck—in my case—and the generosity of others. Without that, I would probably be a bloated corpse floating down the river in Burundi right now—or maybe just simply a matter of time that separates us from them. It is our social service system which is the buffer between our situation and the situation faced by people who look through our garbage.

* (0920)

Mr. Chairperson: Your time is up, so if you want to have any questions, we had better do it in fairness to everybody else, to have the same rule. Maybe, if you could just wrap up, please.

Ms. Simbandumwe: I just have one more sentence. If you were to lose your livelihood and your savings, your RRSPs, would you want to live in a world which Bill 36 proposes to create? Would you really?

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you for giving us an insight into your life. I certainly appreciate hearing what you have to say and the experiences that you have had. The first thing, at the outset, you said that you were hoping that we were here to listen, and I want to assure you that we are. Another good point I thought that you brought out was the fact that your family, when they had—it is a number of years ago, but the experience you had with people helping one

another, I think that is a very prime important part of our whole economy, of the system that we live in. Certainly, as a government, we have a responsibility, but I certainly appreciate hearing the fact too that as individuals we also have a responsibility to each other. I wonder if you could elaborate on that just a wee bit.

Ms. Simbandumwe: I completely agree with you and particularly those of us who have had a lot of privilege heaped on us. I am completely conscious of the educational investment that has been made in me by Canadians, and I think that that entails a responsibility to give back to my community and to work on behalf of people who do not have that sort of privilege. At the same time, however, I think that while people such as me are putting quite a lot of energy into our community, our government is stepping back, and the thing that government can do that individuals cannot do is provide a very broad safety net through which nobody can fall. That is something that individuals cannot do, because I can just respond to things that I see here and there. That particular woman that I saw picking through the garbage, I can give her the bread, but I cannot respond to everybody picking through the garbage. The government can do that, the government ought to do that, and the government is not doing that.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Thank you, Louise, for an excellent presentation. I understand, and I am disappointed, I guess, that there are people who would like to present, but they are afraid or intimidated or feel they might be punished, and I am concerned that you feel that the government does not want your input. I think there is some evidence to suggest that that is true. For example, this same minister appointed the MLA for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) to consult the daycare community about changes in daycare, and he is travelling throughout the whole province and meeting with dozens and dozens of daycare centres and hundreds of people before changes are made in regulations or legislation. This same minister appointed the member for River Heights (Mr. Radcliffe) and 11 other people on a panel, and they are having public hearings throughout the province to consult the public on changes to The Child and Family Services Act, a year in advance of the changes.

With major changes to social assistance, there has been no public consultation until the committee stage of the

bill, and I will have a chance later to ask the minister. If she is outraged, she can put her answer on the record now, but as far as I know, she did not consult the social planning council, and I would be interested in knowing what other organizations she consulted, but would it surprise you, Louise, if you knew that the government consults employers about payroll taxes, about Workers Compensation premiums, consults the Chamber of Commerce, consults with their friends before they make changes to legislation that affect them? Why do you think they do not consult with poor people and people on social assistance first before they make major changes?

Ms. Simbandumwe: I am going to come across sounding more cynical than my years of age would suggest, but I think that in some ways our political system is structured to respond most strongly to the needs of people who already have a lot of power. I would suggest that the reason why there has not been the sort of consultive process in place to hear about the experience, genuinely listen, not what you were doing last night—I spent quite a lot of time watching the expressions on people's faces as different people presented and also looking for some dialogue, particularly from this side of the table. That was not forthcoming. I also noticed some people with sort of glazed, bored expressions on their faces. I noticed somebody that looked as though they were sleeping at one point in the evening, and I found that profoundly disappointing, because a lot of people came here at a lot of risk to themselves.

So I think that in a very cynical way there is a recognition that people in poverty are so disenfranchised from the political system that there are not a lot of necessarily votes to be gained from that sector, although I am working really hard to change that. But more importantly, there is not a lot of money to support the sorts of campaigns that parties need to mount in order to win elections.

Mr. Chairperson: I just wanted to intervene because I came down in my car this morning, and I heard Mr. Sid Frankel quoted as saying that the government members looked like a bunch of smiling pumpkins last night. Then I hear your comment describing looks on their faces. It certainly is not consistent. I thought that everybody on this committee conducted themselves with a great deal of concern and patience, sitting here for over six hours, and a great deal of interest and compassion.

That was my impression as the Chair, for the record. I really have concern when people come here and make those comments to the media and broadly, and then people accept it as true. Everyone here is an honourable member of the Legislature who is a conscientious—both sides—service provider who stands for public office. I just wanted to clarify that. You are entitled to your perspective and your views, but I just wanted to put on the record what mine was, and I feel very proud of all of my colleagues, whatever their political persuasion, and the role they played last night and the role they are playing today. I just wanted to say that for the record.

Ms. Simbandumwe: I cannot respond to that?

Mr. Chairperson: I will let Ms. McGifford ask her question and, at the end of her question, you can respond to what I just said.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Just one question. Thank you very much for your presentation. You talked about people you knew who were forced out of educational programs. This, it seems to me, flies in the face of current wisdom regarding the importance of training and university education for employment. I wondered if you could expand upon that a little bit. Have you got specific programs in mind? Could you give us a few more details? I think it is a very serious matter.

Ms. Simbandumwe: I will respond to the comments of our honourable Chairperson first. Again, I stand by what I observed through some of the presentations. That is what I observed, and I also noted that during some of the presentations that actually spoke to people's experiences that were very passionate, that the people on this side of the room, who I would suggest are also honourable citizens of Manitoba, they were visibly, emotionally moved. There were many points where most of the people on that side of the room were crying. I did not notice that same response on this side of the room.

As I was walking home last night, I wondered, why is that? Why would there not be that same sort of emotional response? We might disagree about the reasons why people are in that situation, and the most appropriate strategies for addressing that situation, but people cannot deny the pain and the anguish and the sheer waste of talent and human energy that was brought to this committee last night.

I guess the only conclusion that I can come to is that I have empathy because I do not see myself as being that different than the people here. I know that it was only just a matter of luck, and a matter of some people who invested a lot in certain systems, that provided me with the opportunity to do what I have been able to do. I know that, and I know that it could just turn around tomorrow, just like that, you know, but I do not know if the people on this side of the room have that same consciousness. Do you see yourselves in the faces of some of the people that presented last night? Do you see the possibility that you could be them or not, or do you think that if you had been in that situation, you would have just pulled yourself up by your bootstraps and gone on with your life and been able to accomplish what you have been able to accomplish?

* (0930)

One thing that I was really struck at while studying at some of the institutions that I have studied at, particularly Oxford, is how uniform the background of the people that I studied with were, middle class, upper middle class, private schools, tons of privilege, families that came from high educational backgrounds, and they just felt that they deserved all of this privilege.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Lathlin, one last question. You had your hand up before.

Ms. Simbandumwe: Oh, I forgot to respond to your question.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. McGifford, did you—

Ms. McGifford: She was going to answer.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay, you are going to respond to Ms. McGifford.

Ms. Simbandumwe: Yes, really quickly. In terms of the educational programs, it is something that is very near and dear to my heart because I think that is one of the ways for people to move out of the situation that they are in. I think, if someone enters into an educational program that they have a commitment to, that they believe in and that is consistent with realistic expectations about what is going to happen afterwards, they should be allowed to continue with that.

One of my concerns is, because of the fiscal constraints that are being imposed on the department, they would like to see people off the welfare rolls immediately and as a very short-term perspective in terms of putting them into these low-paid—like putting them in training programs. They will put them into low-paid, low-wage, sort of the secondary labour market, where we are not seeing an enormous amount of job creation, and it is just going to be, you know, a short-term gain for the department, as well, in terms of getting these people off the welfare rolls temporarily just to get them back on after putting them in a substandard training program that trains them, in some cases, to do work that does not exist. So there has not been a lot of thought put into that. It is just, you know, we just need to make sure that our budget this year meets the targets, and I think it is very shortsighted from a number of different perspectives.

Mr. Chairperson: Mr. Lathlin, with the last question. We have taken up twice the normal time, so if you make this one brief.

Ms. Simbandumwe: I also want to get to work right away.

Mr. Chairperson: Well, we have accommodated you in that respect.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Mr. Chairperson, I do not have anything to say. Thank you.

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

Ms. Simbandumwe: Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Chairperson: I would now like to call on Deborah Graham—I am sorry, Margot Lavoie.

Ms. Margot Lavoie (Oblate Justice and Peace Committee): Good morning. I have with me my co-worker, Mr. Tom Novak, and also I have invited two members of my community, Mr. Percy Flett and his wife, Mrs. Martina Flett. So I will start with my presentation. I will skip some parts to give them a chance to speak.

My experience has been similar to the former speaker. I had a number of other people who were going to come

and tell their story but at the last moment have backed out. They have backed out because they felt that they might jeopardize the little bit that they are now having.

Mr. Chair and dear friends, we come to you today representing the Manitoba Oblate Justice and Peace Committee. The committee is composed of priests, brothers, laymen and women. For over 150 years, Oblate missionaries have served many of the most vulnerable and marginalized people in what is today the province of Manitoba. Many of these people are among those who will be the most affected by Bill 36.

In the midst of the controversy that surrounds the many changes that are being made to our system of social services, we remember a thought-provoking parable that was given to us by Jesus. It is about the rich man who, in living the good life, ignored the needs of the poor, of the poor man Lazarus who longed to fill himself with the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. Today we are here to speak for the many Lazaruses of our province. We come to ask you not to be like the rich man of that story. We ask you to be compassionate as you consider new laws that will affect their lives. Compassion does not mean feeling sorry about their hardships and then forgetting about it. To be compassionate means to feel compelled to do something about it to make sure that the injustices do not occur.

Compassionate social allowance legislation would not leave loopholes that leave the recipients of social assistance at the mercy of their workers. For example, the previous act specified that no Manitoban should lack, and I quote, such goods and services as are essential to his health and well-being including food, clothing, shelter and essential surgical, medical, optical, dental and other remedial treatment care and attention and an adequate funeral.

We believe those are essentials, and we are deeply concerned that these essentials are not spelled out in the new legislation. We might add that to this we would add education. It deeply saddened us to learn about the situation of one of our parishioners at Kateri church in Winnipeg's inner city. When he left his last job, he had to turn temporarily to welfare, realizing that he no longer has the health to keep on indefinitely doing the manual work he has relied on in the past. He was determined to go back to school to try to improve his education. As he

could find no financial support to help him pay his tuition at the Winnipeg Education Centre, he decided to pay for it out of his already meagre welfare allowance. Of course, there was never enough to pay the bills, pay school expenses and buy food. So he began saving the limited food that he could buy every week for his nine-year-old son, himself eating only one meal a day except when he could scrounge a meal from his friends. This man has the slimmest body around.

We are deeply concerned that a stipulation that was included in the current law, that the amount paid must be, quote, sufficient to enable the applicant or the recipient to obtain the basic necessities for himself and dependents, has been omitted from the proposed legislation. We have deep fears about how the proposed legislation appears to open the door to workfare. We fear that we are paving a road to working conditions that are not too dissimilar from third-world countries where the rights of workers are nonexistent, where people are required to work in situations when they can no longer ask questions, where they can no longer have a right to at least minimum wage. This is slavery in disguise. The national rush towards workfare appears to be based on an all-pervasive myth that those who receive social allowance chose to do so because they are too lazy to work and have no conscience about living off the hard work of others. So in June of this year the Ontario government unveiled its new workfare program promising that 54,000 people would soon be working for their benefits. Pilot workfare projects were set up in 20 Ontario municipalities. On September 29, the Toronto Star was able to report that not a single job had been found for all the able-bodied welfare recipients that the government had promised to put to work.

What is the problem? Why is there such a discrepancy between the popular myth and reality, between government projections and what people actually live? Perhaps it is because we see those who are unemployed or unable to maintain a wage-paying job, as so many statistics, as coming all from the same mold. That is why it is important that those of us who are secure and powerful take days to listen to those who are not, who live from day to day and crisis to crisis, who are all too embarrassed to identify themselves in public as recipients of social welfare. Those who have come here during these two days to tell their stories are not parasites. They are very courageous individuals who take the risk to

reveal some of the pain of their very difficult lives in order to help the rest of us understand just how excruciatingly difficult it can be to live on social allowance.

Now I will leave the mike to my two friends here for a few moments.

* (0940)

Mr. Thomas Novak (Oblate Justice and Peace Committee): We had a story for you, that you can read at your leisure, in our text, but we have people to bring their story in person today instead. There are Percy and Martina Flett who came to Winnipeg from the North several years ago because of extremely serious health problems in their family, and they have consented to speak with us today.

Mr. Percy Flett (Private Citizen): Good morning, Mr. Chairman, honourable members, ladies and gentlemen. I came here this morning to present myself and my wife here, Martina. First of all I would like to say just recently, with respect, we are married, and my wife recently lost her wedding ring. Where am I going to get the money? First of all, I want to say this.

Okay, for six years I have been living in the city, and for five years I have been working in the city part time. I get a supplement of \$26 a week for food and clothing. I get \$9.77 a week for a family of five children. I am trying to support my children, and my wife here is a diabetic. She gets \$2.22 a week; that is her diet allowance. She has been diabetic for 15 years. It is hard to make a schedule, to make a budget, for my family I am trying to support. For school supplies I only get \$80 for the whole year for my five children that are in school. On top of that, I have to buy runners for my five children to leave it there at school. Where am I going to get that? One time my 10-year-old son, Elijah, came home. I sent him to school; he came back crying. His winter jacket was torn by a dogfight. Who is going to replace this? It could not be sewn up because it was really torn apart. These are the things that we have to look at, trying to survive with my children and my job, trying to hold on to my job, and the special needs with my two boys. I never asked for special needs ever since I got here. Because of the fact that I have given these things what I have told you for the supplement, I do not think they would give me

any special needs. Sometimes I have to walk to work and save money to come back by bus in the evening, because now it is dangerous to walk.

You tell me that you are going to cut the welfare allowance, and you tell me to look after my children of seven. Two are on their own right now, and right now I am talking on behalf of my two grandchildren. Where are they going to go from here? I am very concerned about my grandchildren. That is why I come here.

Thank you, and I would like to have Martina, my wife, talk too.

Mr. Chairperson: Mrs. Flett.

Mrs. Martina Flett (Private Citizen): Yes, good morning. I always have a hard time talking because of my English. I was brought up with a native language, and my grandfather taught me everything. It is very hard for me to talk, expressing myself with what I have been going through ever since I came down to the city. I am not accustomed to the city life on top of that. I try to teach my children not to lose their language, but I got three smaller children, and they are losing it already.

With my condition, I have a hard time climbing the stairs; I have a hard time with my diabetes. It is really taking a toll on me because of my legs. I got a disease of muscle; it is called myopathy, and of the nervous system, neuropathy.

With my two children that are in special needs, one of my boys, my baby, just went into a regular classroom this year. He has been in special needs for two years, and at first I had a hard time taking him to school because he was not accustomed to the regular classroom of 20 people because he was always in special needs of 10 students.

So these are the problems that I have, and with the job that he has, we always have a hard time getting into the budget that we were accustomed to when we were up north. It is very hard for me in the city. Sometimes I would cry at night and think about the things that I used to do. We would go out on a trapline every spring and every fall. These are the things that help us up North, and with these things in the city we cannot do that to provide the food on the table almost every day. Like, I usually go to the food banks every two weeks in just one

month, and sometimes we do not have food on the table in one day before we get our welfare. These are the things that I am not accustomed to, because on the reserve we had plenty of food like fish, meat, and with the things that are in the city, we have to pay everything.

* (0950)

On top of that, you know, I am going to tell you one story that happened this week. I had to take two of my children to the emergency. My 15-year-old boy had a cut in his eyes, and on the way back home we had to take a bus. We had a ride from one of my daughter's boyfriends to go down there to the emergency, and on the way home I asked for the bus tickets from the Children's Hospital. As we were going home, we took a bus, and in our area where we get off on McPhillips to Burrows, we were waiting for a bus, because it takes so long for the bus to come. One of my sons, my 15-year-old boy, he only had a summer jacket, because we cannot afford a winter jacket for him yet, and he had to run home because he was getting cold waiting for the bus. So by the time we got home, we were all shivering.

These are the things that we have to look after. I have a family of seven and two grandchildren, and we have to look after them too.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much, Mrs. Flett. Very eloquent.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to thank all of you for speaking today, and I really appreciate the fact that the Oblates are encouraging and supporting people in the community to speak for themselves.

I used to have a poster on the door of my office here with a quotation by Bishop Desmond Tutu, and it said, we no longer want the scraps from the white man's table, we want a hand in planning the meal. I mention that because of your biblical quotation about Lazarus, and at the end of the brief you talk about, or you ask the question, do we have a vision and the will to distribute the bread equally to all?

I am wondering, what you think giving people a hand in planning the meal would mean in Manitoba, and what

is your vision? What would our society look like if the poor had a hand in planning the meal? What would you change, and how?

Mr. Novak: Before I begin, I would like to clarify that Mr. Flett works almost full time, but because he gets minimum wage there is absolutely no way he can support his family. I mean, that is very common in our experience of people we know.

What would society look like? I suppose, as someone mentioned this morning, maybe the first thing we would do is we would sit down first and listen to the stories. We said in our brief, we know there is a lot of people that are living on social assistance, and there might be—there is some abuse for sure—but there are many more people who are struggling to get by, but to them they are just statistics. I think it is very important that we all get a chance to share the opportunity that Margot and I have working very closely with people in the inner city, to know that there are very concrete, specific circumstances and sometimes, as others have said, it would make you want to weep.

I think that is the first thing that might change, is that we would try to find a way to incorporate people who are the most vulnerable in society in our decision making. These are often people who have less education, or because of circumstances—imagine raising seven kids—you just do not have the time it takes to get involved and to read newspapers. You cannot even afford a newspaper half the time. So you get out of the loop, and so those of us who are powerful and have the time, it is easier for us to keep informed and know how to make these kinds of contacts. We know to come here, but most people who are trying, struggling to raise a family do not. I think that is one of the first things we would do. I think if we had more of that contact we would develop a society that was more able and more compassionate, willing to share, when we realize that people who are vulnerable are not necessarily that way because they want to be or because they are unworthy. It is because the circumstances of life are very different.

Mrs. Flett, who is very ill herself, not only looks after—she has a couple of children that are ill. She has a large extended family in this city that she looks after daily, and welfare does not provide for a phone. They pay a phone out of what they have. Welfare does not have an

allowance for that. That is her only way to keep in touch with her sisters. One sister is blind, a brother is blind. She looks after all these people. She is not employed, but she is doing the work of a social worker. She could be almost a full-time social worker.

There are a lot of people—I think another thing we would do is realize a lot of people, maybe that are not in part of the wage economy, are really contributing in different kinds of ways, and we maybe need to evaluate that and recognize that.

Ms. Lavoie: Just to add to that, I think my image would be that in every home there would be a table where there is enough to eat every day, and people do not have to worry if there will be a crumb the next day. They would not have to think in terms of crumbs.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you for those thoughtful answers. Do you think we should raise the minimum wage? Many people have suggested that there needs to be more bridging to help people coming from rural and northern Manitoba to the city in terms of, I guess, assisting people in adjusting to life in the city, and also affirmative action programs like the Winnipeg Education Centre Access programs for which this government has cut funding, but which are crucial for people to get into the paid labour force and off social assistance.

Mr. Flett: Yes, I would like a raise for a minimum wage, because right now I barely make enough to feed my family. As I was saying, you know, that supplement I get does not make my family eat because, like my wife said, I am one day short when I have food on the table.

Mr. Dyck: Again, I want to thank you for the information that you have given us. You certainly, again, have given us an insight into your lives. Being church based, I am just wondering, and I said this to the previous presenter as well, I believe that as a government we have a tremendous responsibility, but I believe as churches and communities we also have responsibilities. You are working through a church organization.

Would you have some insights and suggestions of how we can co-ordinate and work together closer with the faith groups to assist those in need? Certainly, we do have responsibility. I just wondered if you could give us a little more insight into that.

Ms. Lavoie: This is not the first time that officials have turned this question against us. When we speak to the church, we speak to the church, and we tell them of their responsibilities. Right now we are speaking to the government, and we want to tell you of your responsibilities.

Mr. Novak: Mrs. Flett wanted to make a statement about the question about minimum wage and education.

Mrs. Flett: Another thing just popped out when you mentioned about social work. Sometimes you get calls from my reserve to go and check on the patients at the hospital. It takes quite some time to reach the hospital from where I live. On top of that we usually take a bus. It takes about an hour to reach the hospital. I have to look after my family too. It takes about a full day's work when we do things like that.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very, very much for your presentations in the aggregate. Mr. Kowalski, one final question?

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Just before I ask the question, that in regard to your answer about valuing the contributions made by people who are not necessarily in the wage economy, many people know that I was a community constable in the Lord Selkirk development area for a number of years, and I still remember the people who served as volunteers at David Livingstone School and Turtle Island Recreation Centre. That volunteering was a full-time job for them. They received no pay, and many of them were on assistance. Your answer rings true for me.

The question I had was, I am very interested in the direct relation between social conditions and crime and, because of your organization's work, I was just wondering if you wanted to put on the record your answer to this question. Can you see a direct relation between the changes in this act and an increase in the crime rate?

* (1000)

Ms. Lavoie: I am not a statistician, but I know from my gut that there is a relationship between poverty or putting people into situations of poverty, of desperation and the rise in crime rate. When you have no hope you have nothing to lose.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks again for your collective presentations. I would now like to—

Ms. Lavoie: As I leave, would like to leave you a symbol. There is enough bread for everybody, surely, in Manitoba, in Canada. It is just, do we have the will to distribute it equally?

Mr. Chairperson: Deborah Graham. Is Deborah Graham here? I suggest, before Ms. Lavoie leaves, maybe you should take that bread, and you could give it to the Flett family. Do you want to take it for the Flett family?

Ms. Lavoie: As long as you do not forget the symbol.

Mr. Chairperson: The symbol, the point has been made well. Let us now use it will. Deborah Graham, you may proceed.

Ms. Deborah Graham (People Empowering Themselves Against the System): My name is Deborah Graham. I am representing PETAS today. PETAS is People Empowering Themselves Against the System. I am also a welfare recipient.

As Manitobans, we are living in the second richest country in the world. We want our government to end poverty, not to increase it. In this, the United Nation's Year for the Eradication of Poverty, that we as Canadians agreed to in 1976, it is ironic that the government of Manitoba is in fact increasing poverty by attempting to enact this meanspirited bill.

Poverty is wrong and immoral. We must seek to have standards for social and economic programs that uphold people's social and economic rights. These standards must ensure that nobody is forced to live in substandard housing or, worse still, go homeless or go without proper food, clothing, education or adequate health care.

This government seeks to eliminate our present welfare rights and abandon basic social and economic rights. This is, in fact, poor bashing. Who are these people that this government is attacking? They are the 60,000 children of Manitoba. Winnipeg, Manitoba, is the child poverty capital of Canada. Forty thousand Manitobans are officially out of work. This rate is increased by 50,000 when one considers those who want to work but

are not included in the employment statistics. There are 84,750 people on provincial and municipal welfare in Manitoba who are severely affected by these government attacks. These statistics do not include the ranks of the homeless. These people are invisible to cold statistics.

We, the poor of Manitoba, are seeking dignity, retraining and full employment. As the government market shrinks, more people with excellent education and good employment records are being affected. We demand a right to an adequate income, the right to appeal our welfare rights, the right to work and retraining.

This province turns a blind eye to the real causes of unemployment. Instead, they blame the poor. These causes include the lack of decent jobs, low wages, unaffordable housing, free trade, automation, high interest rates. This bill assumes that there are oodles of jobs available for people on welfare. This is something that is simply not true. This bill makes the former social safety net more and more precarious. Work enhancement does little to help the welfare poor. Instead, it gives the employees who want subsidized cheap labour, increasing profits, at the expense of the poor. In essence, these employees exploit the vulnerability of the poor. This system aims at a one-tier system of provincial welfare. This too often means eliminating essential services.

Under this bill, jobs are top priority. This is interesting, as unemployment has been running at extreme high levels for quite some time, and little has been done to combat this situation. I wholeheartedly agree the welfare poor want full employment. At the same time, this government policy amounts to a verbal sleight of hand that attempts to turn unemployment into employment without creating any jobs. This bill states that we will invest in people's futures. Ironically, there has been no increased funding to provincial retraining and education programs for the past 12 years. At the same time, tuition and book rates have increased. Transportation, food have gone up. The numbers of those seeking and needing retraining and education have increased. It is also interesting to note that the areas of employment targeted by this government, i.e., the garment industry and call centres, are noticeably low paying, reinforcing further ongoing impoverishment.

This program undeniably leaves the welfare poor with no recourse if their employer is abusing them. They

cannot terminate or refuse employment. This forces them into situations such as unsafe and low-paying employment, thus penalizing the already impoverished. Harsh penalties include reduction in benefits of \$50 per month for six months, and \$100 per month thereafter/or complete elimination of welfare benefits if one or two families are involved. This is particularly harsh when one considers that these people are already desperate and living below the poverty line.

The situation that allowed for this bill was the removal of the Canada Assistance Plan by the federal government. The removal of this plan gave the provinces the latitude to do anything they want regarding provincial social policies and rates. Previously, such measures as no residents of Manitoba that lack such things as goods and services as are essential to well-being, including food, clothing, shelter and essential surgical, medical, optical, dental and other medical treatment care and decent funeral upon death. Previously persons would not be otherwise, but at the discretion of the director, be likely to obtain basic necessities for himself or herself and their dependants. This provision that basic necessities be met has been eliminated. Harsh justice when one considers that these basic necessities were barely covered in the past.

* (1010)

The provisions regarding employment require that the recipient meet employment obligations and has taken employability enhancement measures. If these same recipients do not comply with stringent measures, the director may deny, suspend or discontinue income assistance. Unlike other employees, the welfare poor cannot quit abusive situations as they will have their welfare rates drastically reduced or totally terminated. This program increases the uncertainty of more low-paying jobs. Jobs that are currently done by better-paid, usually unionized workers will now be open to stiff competition by desperate and poorly paid welfare recipients. Hard-pressed employees are quite likely to find it financially advantageous to use this work enhancement program participant rather than to hire new better-paid employees. Participants of this plan may even be used to replace regularly paid employees. Ordinarily, these employers would have hired people at full wages as they would have had no access to this cheap source of labour.

Work enhancement is senseless, bad economic planning and unfortunately it relies on sheer coercion. This policy is insensitive. It drives social assistance rates down in the belief that lower rates will increase the incentive to work. This is ludicrous. People on welfare assistance want to work; in fact, we are demanding the right to work for decent wages. As this program drives down wages as jobs formerly done by better-paid unionized workers are now subject to stiff competition by desperate welfare recipients, hence eroding the living standards of a substantial segment of Manitobans, how can better-paid employees compete with these desperate welfare recipients in a high unemployment market without reducing their living standards or they, themselves, joining the ranks of the unemployed? In effect, the work enhancement program drives down wages and weakens labour unions.

In conclusion, I ask what excuse is there for poverty in the second richest country in the world? How long should the poor and the homeless take the brunt of these government attacks? This government, by cutting social programs, is severely cutting into our quality of life. We have been subjected to a severe 20 percent welfare cut this past spring and, in addition, we have lost our entitlement to income tax rebates. These rebates meant simple things like clothing, furniture, small appliances. While clothing is supposedly included in our monthly allowances, this clothing allowance is generally applied to our meagre food allowance.

While the cost of living continues to rise, we the welfare poor are forced to accept 20 percent cutbacks on subsistence allowances that fall below the poverty line. This government is robbing our children of their future and impoverishing the lives of the welfare poor and forcing more people into the ranks of the destitute and the homeless. Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you. When you referred to the 20 percent welfare cut, were you referring to the changes made May 1 this year whereby you lost, I believe, it was actually 21 percent for single people of food, personal needs, household needs, clothing allowance? Of those four items, I believe it works out to 21 percent. Those are the items that you were referring to that were cut?

Ms. Graham: That is what I am talking about. I am talking about money. Before this came into effect, I was

always borrowing—I had a \$50 revolving account with my brother. This was for basic food, and I did this. Now I do not borrow money anymore. I just go hungry, and there are people in worse situations. There are people with small children, people with special diets that are going hungry and not meeting their bills and their financial commitments as a result of this.

Mr. Martindale: You mentioned that one of the reasons that could be used, I suppose, certainly is used by this minister to explain why this bill and cutbacks on social assistance rates are necessary is that the federal government replaced the Canada Assistance Plan with the Canada Health and Social Transfer and also reduced the amount of money to provinces like Manitoba, I believe, over \$100 million the first year and over \$200 million the second year. However, are you aware that, first of all, this government had choices that they could have made and, secondly, that governments in other provinces like Saskatchewan made different choices so that, for example, in Manitoba, where there were cuts to health, education and social programs, which are a part of the Canada Health and Social Transfer now, in Saskatchewan the provincial government backfilled dollar for dollar in social spending and in health and \$11 million out of \$15 million in education. Do you think that Manitoba, given the fact that they have \$215 in the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, could have made a similar choice?

Ms. Graham: I am more than sure they can, and I suspected all along that this was a poor excuse, a lame excuse for doing this. They are affecting the poorest segment in our population. Let me remind you, when I am talking about people that are becoming homeless, I am talking about middle-class people, too. This has been going on for 17 years, that middle-class people are now becoming homeless. If it does not affect you that the poor are going homeless, let me remind you, it could happen to any one of you.

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

Ms. Graham: You are welcome, thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Morgan Brock, please. Morgan Brock. Is Morgan Brock here? Morgan Brock will be placed at the end of the list. Rhonda Chorney. Is

Rhonda Chorney here? Rhonda Chorney, not being here, she will be put at the end of the list.

Eric Cote. You may begin your presentation. Is it Cote or Co-te?

Mr. Eric Cote (Private Citizen): Co-te.

My name is Eric. I am poor, and I am married. I am, like my relatives, friends, people I have heard about, people all over the world, in Canada and in Manitoba, a human being. We are all entitled by birthright to basic and fundamental human rights. I am sick and tired of the constant violation of those rights by governments passing the lies like the Canada Health and Social Transfer Act, Bill 36, which, by the way, is in Order-in-Council right now—so in other words people are getting affected by it right at this moment—and other bills and acts passed by this government and other governments that hurt people, not only the passing of laws, but the lack of initiative in passing laws that benefit all.

These laws, who do they benefit? For example, Canada Health and Social Transfer Act and others. Not me, that is for sure. Not my family or my friends or anybody who is different, disadvantaged or out of work because of greedy corporations and greedy governments. It is those same corporations which employ temporary workers or slaves and who back certain political campaigns.

Well, I could go on for another hour or so, but I do not have another hour, but, very simply, it is those people who use and abuse people just so they can make that extra billion dollars. We people have rights guaranteed by the UN Declaration of Human Rights and Freedoms of which Canada's signature was the very first one on that document, the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Canada ratified in 1976, just in case you forgot, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I could go on about that too.

What happened? That is not rhetorical, by the way. I know and other people know what happened. At first, Canada had a very good record of honouring and respecting human rights. Now I see more and more things we cherish disappearing, and Canada looks to me to be turning into the U.S. No, I do not want this bill to pass. No, I will not put up with BS and people being

hurt, and no, we are not going to take it anymore. Any questions?

* (1020)

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Cote, I understand that you believe that you have been denied social assistance because you refuse to work, and you explained to me that the work was less than minimum wage and the work was unsafe. So I have made some enquiries on your behalf, and you have the right to file a complaint with the Employment Standards branch, and I will ask the Page to give you this claim form. It was faxed to me yesterday, so you have the right to put in a complaint, and it will be investigated.

Also, under The Workplace, Safety and Health Act, Section 43, you do have the right to refuse work but you also have an obligation to report the refusal to your immediate supervisor, foreman or any other person in charge of the workplace. Did you do that?

Mr. Cote: Yes, I did.

Mr. Martindale: Okay. Well, we will follow up and see if—well, certainly we can request an investigation as to whether or not the workplace was unsafe since, as a worker, you have certain rights under this act. Are you also aware that you may be entitled to interim assistance before your social assistance appeal is heard?

Mr. Cote: Yes, I do. I am aware.

Mr. Martindale: Do you have a lawyer who is going to represent you at the appeal?

Mr. Cote: Yes, I do.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation, Mr. Cote.

Marlene Vieno. Is Marlene Vieno not here? She, not being here, will be placed at the end of the list.

A spokesperson for the Village Clinic. Please identify yourself when you come forward.

Ms. Cyndi Ellman (Vice-Chair, Board of Directors, Village Clinic): Hi, my name is Cindy Ellman. I am the

vice-chair on the board of directors for the Village Clinic. There are copies there of my presentation for you this morning. We really appreciate the opportunity to—

Mr. Chairperson: Could you speak into the mike, madam? The Hansard recorder is having difficulty picking it up.

Ms. Ellman: Can you hear me now?

Mr. Chairperson: Maybe you could spell your last name to me.

Ms. Ellman: E-l-l-m-a-n.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

Ms. Ellman: The first name is C-y-n-d-i, and as I already indicated, I am the vice-chair on the board of directors for the Village Clinic.

We appreciate the opportunity to address the amendment that you are dealing with today. We are concerned that the proposed changes will further harm recipients who depend on social assistance. Our experience at the Village Clinic supports current research which indicates that there is a strong correlation between poverty and physical and mental illness. Various social problems can be linked to poverty. A literature review also suggested a strong link can be made between poverty and HIV.

Decreased benefits to welfare recipients will result in increased social and economic costs. According to the world health organization, all humans share basic rights including access to such things which influence health as an outcome. That is, all individuals share a right to clean water, shelter, nutritious food, education, employment and the access to medical treatment when required. Intelligent social policy must require adequate benefits for all, including individuals with acute and chronic disabilities.

The Village Clinic believes that the government's proposed changes to The Social Allowances Act will further widen the gap between the rich and the poor and does not adequately address the realities of people's lives. The Village Clinic's goal of integrated service is to maintain the health and wellness of HIV-positive people

by addressing the determinants of health. One objective of the Village Clinic is to guide people living with HIV and AIDS through the complex maze of social support programming that confronts all disabled people in Canada.

In our experience, the overall health and well-being of HIV-positive people prevents vulnerability to AIDS-defining illness. Ultimately, if HIV-positive people cannot maintain their wellness, it will create extra costs and additional financial burden not only to their individual friends, family and community, but definitely to the governments as well in increased costs to health care due to hospitalization for preventable illnesses.

An analysis of patterns of social programs indicates that basic necessities like adequate food and nutrition, housing and medical costs are beyond the financial means of people living with HIV and AIDS. It has been proven over and over that the combination of HIV infection and poverty means people die earlier and faster than if their state of health was well maintained.

Immune-compromised individuals already live 30 to 50 percent below the poverty line. Reductions in benefits only serves to further reduce the quality of life and life expectancy for people living with HIV and AIDS.

Under the present system, people living with HIV and AIDS do not have access to therapies proven to promote the quality and longevity of life. Lumping individual benefits, food and clothing into basic allowance prohibits recipients to being legally entitled to each benefit separately. The same is true when combining everything under essential health benefits. Ultimately, this may mean that authorizing any of those provisions will be left to the discretion of individual workers. We are concerned that those who are most vulnerable will be targets for unfair treatment by those staff left with the discretionary powers.

People living with HIV and AIDS often experience degradation, humiliation and stigmatization during interactions with welfare workers. This serves only to diminish their overall state of well-being. The recommendations that we have are that we recommend that clearly defined guidelines be developed to ensure the accountability of workers. We recommend the creation of an unbiased appeal process that can be initiated, when

deemed necessary, so disciplinary action can be taken against any offending workers, if there are any. We further recommend that clients be informed of their rights to services, when necessary, of their right to appeal.

Nutrition is also an extremely important factor in maintaining the wellness of an HIV-positive individual. Providing people with their food and nutrition, supplements that they need to maintain a quality of life and to improve their chances of survival, would therefore seem to be relatively straightforward. However, our experience at the Village Clinic is that people living with HIV and AIDS receiving social assistance at the moment cannot afford adequate food and nutrition even at current social allowance rates.

Village Clinic houses donations for an emergency assistance fund which is utilized to enhance the quality of life in Manitoba for people living with HIV and AIDS. An increased number of clients receiving social allowances apply to this fund for financial necessities, for bare necessities such as food and clothing and utilities. The recommendations that we have are that financial assistance programs need to better define the nutritional needs of immune-compromised people. Financial assistance programs need to identify and increase the provisions for nutritional requirements for all recipients, including acute and chronically ill people. Financial assistance programs need to reinforce healthy eating practices in order to address the overall health and well-being of Manitobans, period.

Cost for HIV therapies are not covered through welfare benefits. Experimental therapies, nontraditional remedies, nutritional supplements and other care costs are currently not covered by either provincial or municipal governments. These costs have forced people to choose between therapeutic options which may be beneficial or between medical and other basic needs like adequate food and clothing.

* (1030)

Often people living with HIV and AIDS are forced to leave work, temporarily or permanently, due to fluctuating health problems. Eventually these same individuals are forced to apply for provincial and/or municipal assistance. Our clients report that welfare workers are often misinformed and uneducated regarding

the disease. This contributes to a lower self image and feelings of anxiety regarding disclosure and confidentiality. We recommend that essential health services be expanded, include complementary therapies which are supported by research proving them effective, and we also recommend that social welfare workers receive training and are comfortable in working with HIV-positive clients.

Housing is very important. Safe, secure, clean and adequately heated housing is critical to the health of people living with compromised immune systems. In Manitoba, there is a limited number of subsidized housing units available to people living with HIV and AIDS, and waiting lists are long. People are forced to live in rundown, unsafe areas due to inadequate benefits, which places them at further risk for physical, medical and psychological harm. We recommend an increase in subsidized housing in an effort to reduce waiting lists. We also recommend that full rent and utilities be paid. We recommend that certain special privileges be made, for example, telephone and transportation to be paid in order to address the health care needs of HIV-positive people. We also recommend that a raised base of community housing standard would ensure safe, adequate housing in safe communities.

In conclusion, governments have a social responsibility to ensure that all Manitobans have access to adequate food, housing and medical care. Attempts by government to further reduce allowances can only increase costs in other departments, causing a ripple effect. For example, failing to maintain wellness after an HIV diagnosis places greater burdens on social programs, health care and financial assistance programs. Governments must work together to ensure a fair and equitable system for all. We recommend that access to adequate levels of income assistance for all HIV-positive individuals be established, and we also recommend that the legislation establish the principle and adequate income and policies to ensure that basic needs are met, including food, clothing, shelter and general medical services.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you very much for your presentation. As somebody who used to work in the AIDS community, I am very glad to hear from the Village Clinic. I know, from my experience, and you certainly alluded to it in your presentation, the roller-coaster nature of AIDS, where somebody may be fairly healthy for a

period of time and then extremely ill and certainly unable to work and then perhaps fairly healthy again.

Could you expand on the difficulties that that might present recipients with, or potential recipients?

Ms. Ellman: A lot of HIV-positive clients, whether they disclose or not, eventually, as the virus takes effect and they end up becoming very ill, it is, as you say, a real roller-coaster effect. They can be forced to be in the hospital or ill at home for any length of time. It is a very uncontrollable disease when the HIV virus takes effect and the immune system is compromised. People can be forced to be in the hospital and then again back at home and able to work. But there is a roller-coaster effect. People are able to work and then not able to work. Looking at it from an employer's point of view, it is very difficult to employ somebody whom you cannot rely on in such a way, whom you cannot rely on necessarily to be there or to be available to do the work that is required by the employer.

Consequently, HIV-positive people are forced into leaving their jobs or trying to find another avenue of raising funds so that they can live adequately, pay their rent or housing, look after their food, necessities and medication, of course, which is very, very expensive.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, I remember one particular client whom I worked with. He had an agreement with his worker where he topped up his income by doing certain things from time to time. Actually, I think he worked in a restaurant. Whenever he worked, after a week or so, he would become increasingly ill and then need to go back on full-time assistance, sometimes need to be hospitalized. So I think, as you were suggesting, it would have made sense for him to be on social assistance and have an adequate income.

Is that the kind of thing you were alluding to?

Ms. Ellman: Yes. A lot of people, I mean, these people do want to work, and that is why they will continually go back to work, but they are really forced into a position where they can no longer work, where they really should be on social assistance permanently.

A lot of people that I have come into contact with, not just in Winnipeg, I have been in other cities where I have

been involved in these agencies, the people who are volunteering and giving their time are also people who are compromised, if you have the HIV virus, because they want to be doing things. They want to have that importance and have something that they are doing in their lives; it is not that they do not want to work at all. It is very much so that they want to work, they want to contribute, and that whole issue is also part of their health and well-being. If you have someone who is able to work or contribute, it also contributes to them being a person who is contributing to society. So, very often people are forced into a situation where they cannot work full time. They try to go back to work part time or they try to go back again, they are ill, and at some point in time they realize that they are not able to contribute to a job.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you.

One last question, Ms. McGifford.

Ms. McGifford: One last question? I do not know which one to ask then.

You mentioned complementary therapies, and I certainly appreciate what you said about complementary therapies. What about access to regular pharmaceuticals? Is that a problem, or is that running smoothly?

Ms. Ellman: No, actually it is very much a problem. Medications are very expensive. A lot of medications that are discussed and are talked about are not necessarily available to a lot of clients. Whether they are not on the market or pharmaceutical companies are not willing to release them, any medications that clients do need to take—and these clients need to take these medications, their immune system is compromised and the medications that they need are for survival—it is a matter of life and death that we are talking about.

The medications that they require are to help their immune system, to ensure that their general health and well-being is adequately looked after. The medication is very, very expensive. A lot the money that they might get on social assistance basically goes, a lot of it, towards their medications, period.

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

I would now like to call on Julia Segal. Is Julia Segal not here? Julia Segal not responding, that name will be put to the end of the list.

Monique Foucart? Monique Foucart not being here, she will be put to the end of the list.

Dr. Mary Pankiw? I think I saw Dr. Mary Pankiw here.

Welcome, doctor, you can begin your presentation.

* (1040)

Ms. Mary Pankiw (Manitoba Society of Seniors): Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity of permitting me to appear here and present some of the concerns of seniors.

As you know, Manitoba has the third-highest poverty rate in Canada. Welfare cuts in Manitoba have already had a severe impact on the poor. The elderly form a significant segment of Winnipeg's population. Forty percent of Manitoba's seniors qualify for the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

Poverty in the non-inner city remains the exception rather than the norm. The rate of poverty among households in the non-inner city rose from 16.5 percent in 1981 to 18.3 percent in 1991.

While household poverty levels in the suburbs remain below the city average, lone parents and nonfamily households exhibit higher than average poverty rates. Lone-parent households in the non-inner city had a poverty rate of 38.1 percent in 1981. The rate declined to 35.1 percent in 1986 but increased to 37.3 percent in 1991, still below the 1981 rate, but well above the non-inner city average.

Poverty among elderly households is once again on the rise. Between 1981 and 1986, the proportion of elderly households below the low income line dropped from 38.7 percent to 33.2 percent. In 1991, the rate rose to 35.1 percent. The situation worsens in the inner city, where 47.8 percent of elderly households were below the low income line in 1991, up from 45.2 percent in 1986 but down from a high of 49.5 percent in 1981. The proportion of elderly households in poverty in the non-

inner city fell from 33.7 percent in 1981 to 28.5 percent in 1986 before climbing to 30.9 percent in 1991.

With reference to Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment Act, as has been reiterated by presenters before me last night, there must still be an appeal mechanism. That is most important.

Now I want to touch upon the content of the bill. Last night Pauline Riley and other presenters touched on some of these clauses, but I think it is also important that I add our concerns. This act previous allowed that no resident of Manitoba lacks, and quote, such things, goods and services as are essential to his health and well-being, including food, clothing, shelter and essential surgical, medical, optical, dental and other remedial treatment care and attention and an adequate funeral, end of quote.

Now the act reads that the province may take measures to provide to the Manitoba residents, quote: those things and services that are essential to health and well-being, including a basic allowance, an allowance for shelter, essential health services.

Now I ask you, are there nonessential health services that immediately struck our minds? Furthermore, the essential health services are not specific and accordingly there are no rights.

There is also another clause. Previously in this particular clause, persons to whom social allowances are payable, the act provided that social allowances shall be paid only to a Manitoban, quote, who, if the social allowance were not paid, would in the opinion of the director be likely to lack the basic necessities, end of quote.

Now that provision has been repealed. You know, as we are entering the third millennium, we should be taking progressive steps and going forward. To many of us, that seems a backward step.

My next point brings me to eligibility and amount payable. Previously, the director of a municipality would in writing say, well, the amount to be paid sufficient to enable the applicant or the recipient to obtain the basic necessities for himself and dependants. Now the provision that basic necessities be met has been eliminated, so we have to give some more thought there.

Before I go into obligations re employment, I want to comment on the labour force participation with respect to the elderly. For many older workers, the onset of retirement or decline in health can reduce their involvement in the labour force. In 1991, seniors had a labour force participation rate of 7.7 percent as 5,910 were still employed or looking for work. The participation rate drops to 7.1 percent in the inner city and rises to 7.9 percent in the non-inner city. Participation rates are higher among senior males, 11.9 percent, than senior females, 4.9 percent. In the inner city, 11 percent of senior males and 4.7 percent of senior females were in the labour force. In the non-inner city, the rates were 12.1 percent and 4.9 percent, respectively.

Now I want to touch upon unemployment rates. Unemployment rates among seniors are comparable to the population in general. In 1991, seniors had an unemployment rate of 8.1 percent compared to 8.8 percent for the general population. The rate climbed to 11.6 percent in the inner city but dropped to 7 percent in the non-inner city. Among the general population, the inner city and non-inner city rates were 15.1 percent and 7.6 percent, respectively. While more senior males participate in the labour force, their unemployment rates were well below those for senior females. In 1991, the senior male unemployment rate was 6.1 percent compared to 11.4 percent for females. In the inner city, the senior male and female rate increased to 8.6 percent and 15.8 percent, respectively. The non-inner city rates dropped to 5.4 percent for elderly males and 9.6 percent for elderly females.

Now I will move on to income. Average household income among the elderly in 1991 was \$31,177 compared to \$42,169 for the general population. Income disparities in the inner city narrowed, as the average elderly household income of \$25,682 was only slightly below the inner city average of \$27,483. Now, the average household has seen its purchasing power decline. In today's society when costs are escalating, we all know that costs are going up and no costs are going down. We need more money to live, not less, because we cannot meet our basic needs.

* (1050)

Now I will move onto obligations re employment. This is a new clause. Under it a recipient or dependent has an

obligation to satisfy the director that he or she has done everything in their power to get a job. If these people do not comply, the director has several options, and general assistance will be discontinued. On behalf of seniors, I want to ask this question: Who will hire people whose ages are between 55 and 60? These people too have to live. They have made a contribution, and they have basic needs to be met.

Further, all clients must complete an employment history as we know, and 15 job contacts per reporting period are expected. The new system can impose workfare in the private or public sector. Clients must apply for CPP at age 60. Now, forcing people to start receiving Canada Pension Plan benefits at age 60 reduces retirement benefits by 30 percent. This reduction in their pension is for all of their retirement years. Now, seniors are anxious and worried about proposals that would reduce their income, because everything in society is going up in price.

Further, the onus is on the client to prove that he or she did not terminate employment or refuse employment. As you know, this can result in not meeting employment expectations, can result in a reduction in benefits of \$50 per month for six months and \$100 per month thereafter or a complete termination of benefits for both one- and two-adult families without children. So when we look at that we see that people will be punished for being out of work. Now, blaming the victim and punishing the victim are punitive measures.

Mr. Chairperson: I just wanted to warn you that there are three minutes left for your portion of the program.

Ms. Pankiw: Okay, I am almost finished. I want to end with the following: A nation's most valued resources are its people. Accordingly, a province's most valued resources are its people.

Now, meeting the cost of basic needs is intertwined with living in dignity and maintaining self-worth and self-esteem. We are entering a new millennium. How will the history of poverty record us? Ladies and gentlemen, the challenge is yours. I thank you.

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): I just wanted to thank you very much for your presentation, Mary. I know that you and I have shared various venues

from time to time in our quest for trying to be the advocates for seniors, and I compliment you for your presentation today as president of the MSOS. I believe you are aware that you mentioned briefly about the CPP and some of the changes that are happening with that.

You are aware that our Finance minister, Eric Stefanson, has been in consultation to a degree with I believe one of your board members in some of the recommendations that he is going forth with for the next Finance minister's meeting, so I just wanted to, along with saying thank you for your presentation, just to give you an update as to what is happening with some of the things that we are trying to accomplish in our negotiations with the federal government on the CPP.

Ms. Pankiw: Thank you, Honourable Mr. Reimer.

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Thank you, Dr. Pankiw, for your presentation. The MSOS have been tireless and vigorous advocates on health policy, on income policy, pension policy and I appreciate that.

Could you comment on what might be called the cascading effect of cuts on seniors? I think MSOS has raised these issues, and Bill 36 is one such effect, but we have doubling, trebling, quadrupling of Pharmacare deductibles; we have nursing home fees. I wonder if you could comment on some of the broad effects of the cuts that have happened in the last few years on particular senior populations.

Ms. Pankiw: Yes, I can. As you know, it takes a certain amount of money to live in our society and you do not have to live extravagantly. People are living from pay cheque to pay cheque. As noted in the paper this week, the proposed changes to pension plans for seniors had many seniors say that some of them would have to resort to going to food banks. Now, with the way Pharmacare has gone with the new changes, we have had phone calls into the office from seniors who said, well, they are going to have to make a decision whether it is going to be to buy groceries or it is going to be to give up their medication or perhaps change the rate of medication that they have been prescribed. For example, rather than taking it every day, they said, well, I am thinking of taking it maybe every second day or every third day because my medication, this person said, was very, very expensive. When that cuts in, we really have to give it

some thought because we are lucky if we have our health. I think that is our wealth, but many people, even the younger people, do not have their health and require medication.

With regard to the increase in fees for the personal care homes, we have also had calls. I realize this is based on income but slowly by slowly, seniors incomes and whatever they have saved will be eroding. This one gentleman had phoned and said, my wife is in a nursing home; I am going to have to sell my house because I am not going to be able to keep this up much longer. I have also had phone calls from widows who are alone. They are saying, you know, today's cost of living is quite high, and we do not know how long we can keep our houses because property taxes are going up. So everyone is affected, because as you know, nobody's income is going up to meet the costs that we have to face day by day, and therefore people are becoming very depressed and very despondent. That is unfortunate. If somehow our living costs would not be as high, that might make a difference.

Also, with the privatization of the Manitoba Telephone System, if the rates do soar, then many of our seniors would not be able to afford their phones and they may have to just give that up. Phones are not a luxury because sometimes you know you have to use the phone in case of an emergency, a health emergency or a safety emergency and also for social contact for your own mental health. Many of our seniors are bound right in their homes and especially in the winter, they cannot get out. So if telephone rates were raised very, very high and seniors did not have affordable rates, as I say, many would have to give them up. Then I am thinking also of the rural areas and people up north because automatically their rates for telephones would go up also. So you could say that in almost every area seniors would be touched.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much. One last quick question, Ms. McGifford.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to turn to senior women.

Ms. Pankiw: Yes.

Ms. McGifford: I understand from reading I have done that about 75 percent of Canadian women who are seniors spend the last 15 years of their lives living in poverty. I wonder if you could comment on whether you

think Bill 36 will increase that or what the possible effect on Manitoba senior women might be.

Ms. Pankiw: Yes. Thank you for your question. This will depend on whatever the woman has to live and in what circumstances. For many women who have remained at home and have not gone out into the workforce, they have not contributed to a pension plan. Therefore, they have no pension plan. In all probability, they did not have the extra money to buy RRSP plans and make investments, and then if they did not have a spouse, you know, or the spouse is dead, how much money he left them or what kind of pension plan he was able to leave them, this is another thing for consideration. I know that at one time the government had been considering a homemakers pension plan, and then it was dropped.

* (1100)

I realize this is an extra challenge for women, because what are they to do in their situation? How are they to meet their basic needs? It will mean that if they have something, if they had a home, they would have to sell, and moving, of course, as we know, is quite a trauma for senior people because you are giving up your memories and your place where you have been accustomed to being, and any kind of change is significant. But financial change, even with married couples, causes rifts. If there is not enough money to meet day-to-day needs, then that is mainly the cause for many divorces and for seniors especially, you know. And for women, how are they going to go and get a job? Who is going to employ them? Where is their extra source of income going to come? So everybody will have to be looked at on an individual basis, depending on their circumstances, because not all senior women are living in luxury. I know many who are living in poverty.

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

Ms. Pankiw: Well, thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Chairperson: Yvonne Naismith and Irene Sale.

Ms. Yvonne Naismith (St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry): Thank you for the opportunity to meet with you this morning. I am Yvonne Naismith, and I have my colleague Irene Sale here this morning.

We had hoped that two of our community volunteers who were here last night would be with us this morning, so I would like to share with you some of my difficulty this morning in reaching them, because neither one of them have a telephone. I went to their homes this morning and rapped on the door quite vigorously, and no one answered. So about half an hour ago, I managed to reach one of them at the Community Ministry and inquired as to where were you. I would not answer my door was his response, because of his feeling of unsafety in the community, so would like to share that as some of the difficulties that the folks in our community have with safety and with communication.

The other thing was a real sense of being torn between coming here and doing his job which today at St. Matthew's-Maryland is food day. This is when we get our Harvest delivery, so he was really torn between coming here, his responsibility to be here, and to the community, and he chose to put his loyalty to the community. So I would just like to share that with you in the hopes that you will have some understanding of the complexity of some of our folks in our community that they live in.

St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry is a joint ministry of Winnipeg Presbytery of the United Church of Canada and the parish of St. Matthew's Anglican Church, serving the west-central area bounded by Portage, Notre Dame, Balmoral and Arlington Avenue. Compared with the city as a whole, the neighbourhood has a much higher concentration of recent immigrants—these are statistics from the '91 census from Stats Canada—20 percent versus 4 percent; First Nations people, 12 percent versus 3.5 percent; single-parent families, 26 percent versus 15 percent; adults with less than Grade 9 education, 26 percent versus 13 percent; low-income families, 38 percent versus 15 percent; and single persons, 60 percent versus 42 percent. In short, a community which will be directly affected by the proposed changes in The Social Allowances Act.

The changes proposed in Bill 36, we believe, are cruel and unjust to individuals and to families, based on false assumptions and stereotypes of people who receive social allowances. Bill 36 assumes that people do not want to work. It plays on stereotypes that the poor are cheats, lazy parasites, out for a free ride and really need an incentive to work. People in our community are in fact

are hard working. As an example, our ministry—and as you have heard last night and this morning—all our groups really depend on volunteers, and the groups would be unable to function without the active participation of community volunteers. People are indeed working, but you are refusing to recognize their volunteer efforts and hours that they put in. People do not need incentives to force them to work. They want to work, and they are already making a useful contribution to the community. What is needed are meaningful full-time jobs that allow people to support themselves and their families with dignity, that provide an adequate income to sustain them.

I think I will read Mark's presentation. Mark Smith was one of the folks that was going to come this morning.

So, Mark's presentation says: I am Mark Smith. I have been looking for full-time permanent work constantly for several years. People refuse me work because of my age, telling me younger people work much faster. I have had several short-term part-time jobs caretaking. People will give me this work if I accept less than minimum wage. So I can never get enough to get off welfare.

It also needs to be recognized that not everyone has the skills, training or life experience to qualify for work. It is evident in our ministry that there are folks who are struggling with mental and physical disabilities whose limitations do not allow them to participate fully in the workforce yet are not severe enough for them to qualify for federal or provincial disability. I will share with you Ed's presentation.

My name is Ed Harvey. I have several medical conditions that stop me from working full time. I cannot get my federal disability pension. I work very hard at St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry volunteering for many hours each week in the Food Bank, Food Buyers Club and the Community Garden. There are many dedicated volunteers like me working here. We do not get recognized for our work. People say we are lazy and do nothing. That is not true. We want people to recognize the work we do in the community as valuable.

What is a caring community's response to them? Surely not the enforced job search that this bill proposes, requiring 15 job contacts per reporting period, where failure to comply could result in a reduction of \$50 per

month for six months or a further \$100 reduction or a complete termination of benefits. It is unrealistic and cruel under the current situation to expect people to successfully complete a personal job plan, given the limited resources available to them. Effective May 1, city social assistance rates for singles, after rent, were reduced to \$175. The cost of buying a monthly bus pass to conduct the job search alone represents a quarter of an individual's income for the month. No resources are being made available for this or other job search related expenses, such as copies of resumes, child care, toiletries, other incidentals. No money will be left for food. Since the May cuts, a phone has become a luxury which many in the community can no longer afford. Potential employers are not able to make contact for interviews.

* (1110)

Ms. Irene Sale (St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry): So it seems ironic to us that the government is willing to offer loans, tax cuts, to the well-off as an incentive to work and, yet, removes dollars from the pockets of our poorest citizens as an incentive for them to work.

We believe that it is morally and ethically unjust to pay the rich more to get them to work harder and pay the poor less to try to get them to work harder. Benefits are being removed from the most vulnerable in our society on the chance that some of the proposed benefits might eventually trickle down. But history has shown us that this never happens. Removing dollars from the pockets of the poor not only harms those individuals and families but inner city businesses and neighbourhoods as well.

Walk west on Broadway, any of you, and see the results of the last few years, fewer businesses, boarded up houses and shops, a once healthy neighbourhood in decline. Removing dollars from the pockets of the poor forces desperate people onto the street, causing increased violence and crime, greater youth gang involvement, making our community and our city an unhealthy and a dangerous place for individuals, for families and for businesses, for all of us, not only the poor. We believe that this proposed legislation is a recipe for social disintegration.

In this United Nations International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, we would demand that as a

caring, responsible government you withdraw the proposed legislation and replace it. Replace it with legislation that enshrines the five basic rights that were previously guaranteed in the Canada Assistance Plan.

In particular, we call for legislation that ensures the right to adequate income when in need, the right to appeal decisions about social assistance, to really be heard, the right to freely chosen work or training, the right to assistance without discrimination based on any criteria, either sex or race or national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, age, mental or physical abilities or source of income. We would call for legislation that provides jobs and job training that leads to permanent, full time, meaningful work for those who are able to work, and that also provides accessible literacy and academic upgrading to those that need it. Thank you.

Mr. Martindale: I would like to ask you, how does it feel to be recommending the things that you are recommending about providing adequately for people's basic needs, but in your day-to-day work, and I believe on Monday and Friday you have a handout of food from Winnipeg Harvest. Do you see any sort of contradiction between what you are recommending and what you are doing on a day-to-day basis?

Ms. Sale: Yes. It is incredibly difficult and incredibly painful. We see increasingly large numbers of folks come to us day by day in desperate situations with no resources in a panic. We know there are major problems that need to change, and yet the best we can do is sometimes be able to offer them a loaf of bread or a can of soup and not always even that. One time in the last few weeks we received our Harvest delivery, which is what we get for our food bank and what we received that day to give out to the families that came looking for food was ketchup and apple juice and that was all. People's needs are enormous and deep for a meaningful life, but they are trapped in not even being able to meet their survival needs, so there are enormous contradictions and it is hard for us to know where to put our energies.

Mr. Martindale: Do food bank outlets, of which yours is one, which are basically a charity solution to the problem of unemployment and inadequate benefits, achieve the goals of alleviating poverty or do they substitute in any way for a lack of jobs?

Ms. Naismith: You were asking if the food banks actually alleviate jobs?

Mr. Martindale: Poverty. A substitute for inadequate jobs.

Ms. Naismith: I do definitely do not think yes/no for all those reasons I just said. No. Poverty and food banks are not a solution to any kind of employment for people. In fact I think that the whole notion of having to come and basically beg for handouts really attacks people's self-esteem and their dignity, and so you end up with people who are feeling that they could not possibly come to a situation like this. They cannot even see themselves sometimes applying for a job. They feel worthless. The whole notion of food banks alleviating any kind of poverty situation is absolutely unrealistic.

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

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I received a lengthy fax from Winnipeg Harvest this year about their 10th anniversary, and it is full of statistics which I already read into the record earlier this week so I will not repeat them, but needless to say there is a huge increase in the amount of food being collected and the amount of food being distributed. But if you were to go to Winnipeg Harvest, you would see that there are three or four people answering telephones. In fact they are so busy on the phone that they all wear headsets. They all have computers in front of them, and I understand that people have to register with Winnipeg Harvest before they are given food and that there is a limit of twice a month. So what is happening to the people that come to St. Matthew's-Maryland Community Ministry in terms of their needs versus the limits that Winnipeg Harvest is being forced to put on people that seek food?

Ms. Sale: I guess the problem continues to escalate. The numbers of people, the numbers of children who are hungry grow day by day. We cannot meet the needs. Winnipeg Harvest cannot meet the needs. I guess it is quite desperate, because people's survival needs are at risk and so they have no energy for anything except struggling to get from day to day, from morning to night. Yet, the purpose of life is much deeper than this, and these are people who have gifts and skills to offer, who want to work, who want to make meaningful contributions to their community. So we cannot meet

their basic needs, and it is hard to even imagine being able to help them feel like a worthwhile human being and find the ways that they can contribute.

So it seems to me that each step in Bill 36 is only going to escalate this problem considerably, we believe, puts more and more people on the edge to the point where they do not feel they have a place to participate at all. Anger is growing and the sense of any kind of social contract makes no sense to these people because the society has abandoned them. So I think we need to recognize that they are not going to be able to function in society in any way that is going to be good for all of us together.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your presentations, Ms. Sale and Ms. Naismith. Linda Churchill.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, just for the record, I do want to affirm and confirm that Irene Sale is my partner, and I am humbled and proud to be part of that partnership. That is the reason that I thought it was not appropriate for me to ask questions of that group.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for exercising such discipline, Mr. Sale. Ms. Churchill, you can begin.

* (1120)

Ms. Linda Churchill (Community Action on Poverty): I represent the Community Action on Poverty. CAP draws participation from educators, clergy, social workers, community activists and poor people, together representing various groups and agencies. We have cause for concern about Bill 36. We come at this concern out of our work with and for the poor people of this city. We witness the effects of this government's policy decisions. We watch the lineups grow at missions and soup kitchens. It has been said that if one wishes to judge the life of a given group or culture, then watch how its most vulnerable members are treated. We take issue with the way in which this bill treats persons needing social assistance.

Clauses 5.4(1) and (2) indicate that employment obligations and enhancement initiatives are required of social assistance receivers. This statement presumes that full employment is available to all able people. We are,

as yet, aware that full employment in this province is still a distant dream. Better to focus on job creation and child care than to force employment for jobs that do not exist. What we fear is that by setting the stage for workfare, as this clause would suggest, a more fertile ground for business would be cultivated, but with a forced, cheap labour pool held as its hostage. While this may be agreeable in business terms, it is neither beneficial nor just in human terms, and this is our primary concern.

One creative alternative in stimulating employment would be to create extra shifts within industries that demand a lot of overtime on existing workers. You have doubtlessly heard several creative alternatives towards stimulating the economy without doing a disservice to the vulnerable. In this vein, we also take issue with the language change from the term "social assistance" to the terms "employment enhancement" and "income assistance." What form will this assistance take? Will poor people actually benefit? Will the lineups to missions and soup kitchens shorten? These are the kinds of results we would seek.

If the intent in developing a one-tiered system in Manitoba was to benefit clients, we question why it is they now receive less rather than more income. These are folks for whom an extra tube of toothpaste or fresh milk daily would be considered luxuries. We implore you not to take from them what little they already have.

CAP is intent on challenging the many myths that prevail around the causes of poverty and the victims it creates. One of those myths is that the poor choose poverty and that the poor choose joblessness. We have research and data to prove otherwise. You have doubtlessly heard and seen it, as well. We implore you to act upon the precepts of justice and mercy, calling upon the intelligence and wisdom of those closest to poverty, not merely those who have never, ever been trapped in its clutches.

Thank you for this hearing.

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

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Churchill. We have been here for a long time. We sat from 7 till after midnight last night. So far, we have only heard one

presentation supporting Bill 36 and the government. All the rest have been opposed, and the one person who supported the government is not affected by these changes to the best of my knowledge. Many of the presentations have been made by people working for the United Church or in one case the Mennonite Central Committee and this morning the Oblates. I wonder if you could tell us why you think there are so many Christian communities concerned about the poor and wanting to stop this bill and change this attack on the poor.

Ms. Churchill: Churches espouse—many churches are concerned about the issue of poverty and anything that disenfranchises people. Anything that jeopardizes human worth is something with which we take issue for not only humane reasons but for theological reasons. In other words, we believe in a God who ascribes to us dignity and worth by virtue of the fact that we exist, and our very existence is the basis upon which our dignity and worth gives rise to other sorts of benefits within the society in which we live.

We also espouse social responsibility. We believe that if the God that we believe in is a god of love and justice, then we are a people of God and justice who consider ourselves agents of this in the world in which we live. Love and justice is not merely an abstraction for us. It is something we do; in other words, that they are verbs, not merely nouns.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for a very moving presentation.

Bonnie Caldwell. Welcome, Ms. Caldwell. You can begin your presentation.

Ms. Bonnie Caldwell (Private Citizen): Good afternoon. I was up till four o'clock this morning trying to get this typed, and it is not quite finished. I would like to know if you would indulge me, that if I get this typed in the next couple of hours, that I could have the written copy put in the record.

Mr. Chairperson: Certainly, you can have an oral presentation, and then you can present your written submission which will be circulated.

Ms. Caldwell: Okay, thank you. This may be a little disjointed because I have quite a bit of stuff written here,

but a lot of it has already been said, so I do not want to keep belabouring some of the points that you have heard before but rather bring up a few new points that I have.

To give you a quick picture of what it is like to live on welfare and how I got there, I graduated from high school in 1967, when a high school diploma meant something. At the age of about 14, I actually had the foresight to go to Tec Voc and to get a career as a secretary, because I knew I could not go to university. I would not be able to afford to. So I came out of high school, and I have done a number of jobs since then and very successfully. I have been a legal secretary. I have worked in offices of all kinds at the University of Manitoba, chartered accountants, an insurance company. I went into the hotel and restaurant business when I realized that a secretarial job was not getting me anywhere. I was not getting paid very much, and there were a lot of prejudices against moving women up into management.

Now, at the time, I was making pretty good money back in the '70s as a cocktail waitress, \$50 and \$100 a night in tips, but that did not last. However, I still could work in the restaurant business if I could get a job, if I did not have to start at the bottom in part-time work, if some kid with a restaurant management diploma from Red River was not hired over my head. Even with the experience that I have, I still cannot get hired as restaurant manager even though I have managed restaurants in the past.

Okay, I have worked in the casinos, was very good at that. I even trained some of your dealers, 15 years ago, that were the best roulette deals you had in those days, but I cannot get into casinos either. I have to start off putting in about six weeks unpaid training, and then I have to go on part time. I have to be available for all hours that the casino is open, which means I cannot get a second job. I am single. Who is going to support me while I am doing this part-time work, trying to work my way up? I mean, at the age of 46, I can no longer start at an entry-level position at \$5.40 an hour, that, to me, is just not a livable wage. People cannot live on \$5.40 an hour.

Okay, so what is happening with people like this, like me? We have most adults working nowadays, either because they have to or because they want to, but we have people working minimum wage, a full-time job,

both parents working jobs and one or the other is still out getting a second job, thereby taking away a job from somebody else who could use that job, working two and three jobs because they cannot make enough money on one job. Why should any adult in this country be working a 40-hour week and not be able to make enough money to survive?

* (1130)

The next thing that I see happening is really appalling, and that is child labour. Just this summer a friend of mine asked me about a job that I had had, a part-time job delivering ad mail for Canada Post. He said he wanted to get his two children started working, his two oldest, and he thought that would be a good job that he could sort of supervise them from home. Do you know how old his two oldest children were that he was putting out to work? Nine and a half and eight years old. I have not heard one parent of my friends, even in the middle classes, who say that they give their children an allowance anymore. Their children are expected to work, and this is not for extras and spending money anymore. These kids have to work for necessities, like their clothes and school supplies. This is appalling.

While these children are working—they are no longer working at babysitting and shovelling snow—they are taking jobs away from adults who should be working those jobs in order to support their families. Children should only have two jobs while they are children: No. 1, being children and, No. 2, getting an education, but these children are lured too young, too often, into the working world at a young age and find that a high school diploma is not going to mean much anyway, so they quit school. Then they are unprepared for the working world, and what do they end up on? Welfare and unable to work. I mean this is disgusting. They should be back at school with an enhanced education, not an educational system that is losing its funding all the time. These kids need to be able to work by the time they graduate from high school and they need to be able to have job skills, trades, whatever it takes in order to actually get them working and not just at garbage jobs. I mean all of these jobs have to be done, granted, but again, they also should be paid a decent living wage.

Okay, so how did I end up on welfare? Well, in the 1980s, when I was in social services and daycare, I really

began to realize I could not make any money doing this, and I had just purchased a starter home—\$45,000. This is not really living outrageously. I do not live very far from the U of M, and I thought that I could rent out some bedrooms. I had a four-bedroom house, but with the declining enrollment in the U of M, my house was just no longer suitable. It was a little too far away, et cetera. So I looked around, and I thought this is ridiculous. Without a degree, as a woman, all of the jobs that I do, no matter how good they are, no matter how willing I was to work, no matter how willing I was to change jobs to try to find something better, I could not earn over \$25,000 a year, and I could not afford to pay for my house. So I started asking around, what do men do for work? Is it really true that men make more money than women? Let us find out.

I found out that I could go to work as a truck driver for about \$10,000 or \$15,000 a year more than what I could earn as a very intelligent working woman. By the truck drivers' own admission that take these jobs, they still look at this job as one of the lowest jobs on the scale for men. I have seen men with a Grade 4, Grade 7 education doing this job because they do not think they can do anything else, and they are earning \$35,000, \$45,000 a year. Do you want to know how fast I got my Class 1 licence? For the last five years, my main occupation has been as a truck driver on the highway.

Three times in the last eight years, my UIC benefits have run out, and I have been forced onto welfare, luckily, for short periods of time. This time it has just been two months so far. But why? Why am I on welfare? I have 140-plus I.Q. and graduated with the highest average in my graduating class. Am I stupid? I have Grade 12 and some college and university. Am I uneducated? I have worked in umpteen businesses up to management positions and very successfully. Am I lacking in experience? When I did not see enough opportunities in one business I moved to another. Am I lacking in ambition? When all the women's work I could do was only paying me \$25,000 a year and not paying the bills, I learned to drive a truck. Am I lazy or lacking in problem-solving skills?

I had a car accident when I was a child and was so afraid of cars that I did not get a licence to drive a car until I was 32 years old. Yet, in 1991, I got a Class 1 licence to drive a truck. Am I a wimp? I have also

learned how to drive a school bus this year. I would like to go and take a course in driving instructors that is offered through Red River Community College and the Vehicle Licensing department. It would only take a few days, but I need \$1,000 and I do not have it, and the government will not help me pay for it even through a loan. Am I lazy? Do I not want to work? If I cannot work and am on welfare, what about people with more problems and less opportunities than me? What about single mothers on welfare with no adequate daycare, where minimum-wage jobs, even if they could get them, would not make it worthwhile to work? If you wanted to help them get off welfare, you could enforce maintenance orders from the noncustodial parent to help them get the money that is due them. Similarly, you could help me go back to school even for a loan of \$1,000.

Okay, so what is it like living on welfare now? Do you want to know how scared I am, two months on welfare, that I may lose my house? Welfare says that they will pay my mortgage only for three or four months. By December they will cut that off, and I will have to dispose of my house. It will be the middle of December. If I move from a house into an apartment, where will I put my belongings? If I cannot afford to pay for the house, how am I going to pay for storage for my belongings? What am I supposed to do, have a yard sale in January to get rid of all the possessions I have worked for 46 years to acquire? So in another couple of months these are the choices that are facing me. As you have heard, welfare will not even pay for a phone so that I can look for a job. It seems to me that a phone and even a bus pass would be very useful for people that are trying to look for work.

Yes, granted, I have a house, and some of the money is going towards the equity in that house, but if the welfare could see fit to pay my mortgage, taxes, some of the extra things that I have because I have a house and make it a loan and put a lien on my house, I would be glad to pay that all back when I get working. At least I would not be drowning in another couple of months, lose everything that I have worked for.

A number of people have mentioned the dangers of abuse, harassment, et cetera. In the trucking business this is very real. Once I got into it, I realized how dangerous it was for women. It is a very real possibility that I could be a victim of rape or violent assault by a male co-driver.

In the last five years, I have filed five sexual harassment complaints against former employers or potential employers for discrimination and harassment. As a result, I have been blacklisted in the trucking industry. The human rights legislation in this country is a joke. It has been four years for the first case, and still nothing has happened, and I cannot continue in my chosen career because of it, and yet the government says that they are protecting us.

Besides that issue, particularly for women, the whole business is dangerous even for men. Did you know that the Liberal government has disbanded the National Safety Code office which regulates trucking? The federal government never enforced the code anyway. It was up to each individual province to enforce it if and when and however they wanted to or not. What is the point of having laws that are not being enforced?

I had the president of one of my former employers say right to my face, when I raised the issue of safety of the trucks, I cannot afford to fix my trucks. Every dollar spent on truck repairs comes right out of my profits.

So we go out on the road with trucks that we know are unsafe and unfit and probably would not pass vehicle inspection if the government ever stopped to inspect them, and yet, when you phone Manitoba Highways and ask them to go and inspect, they said that is not the way they operate. They have to catch the trucks out at a weigh station or something like that, and yet most of the time there are not mechanics out at the weigh stations inspecting those trucks anyway.

In three years of being on the road, 300,000 miles back and forth across two countries, I have been stopped in Canada only twice to have my truck inspected, and both of those were at the same inspection station going to and from Saskatchewan near Regina.

Mr. Chairperson: You have three minutes left.

* (1140)

Ms. Caldwell: A girlfriend of mine, married with three children, once told me, I would have left my husband because we are not getting along. Not getting along? Their life is a hell of screaming and yelling and stress. But, she says, what would I do? How would I survive

with three children on my salary? I would lose everything, our house, car, security. Before long, my husband would remarry, and I would never get money regularly from him. It would be a fight all the time, and I would still be dependent on him. When I see all the trouble and stress you are having surviving alone and finding decent men to date, I realize I would be no better off. At least my husband has a steady job, and he does not beat me.

What criteria for marriage. He has a steady job and at least he does not beat me. Some women, a lot of women do not have that luxury. Women are painfully aware that society sees marriage as one solution to our problem of survival. How many times have I been told to get married, find a man, just for this reason? Is this what I have to stoop to, simply selling myself to survive? This is nothing more than legalized prostitution. We wonder why there is so much domestic violence. At least my home is still a haven and peace and rest for me. Why would I want to disrupt that simply to eat and not lose my home. Do I not have a choice of what man I would enjoy spending the rest of my life with?

I have been asked to speak to young women at Tec Voc about the advantages of getting good secretarial training. How can I in all honesty encourage them to do any job which I know will not pay them enough money to live decently? I was asked to speak to some women to go into nontraditional occupations. How can I encourage them to take up nontraditional occupations that may pay them a decent wage and they may be good at without warning them of the very real dangers of sexual harassment, discrimination, abuse, even violence and rape that await them if they choose these jobs? They may be capable of this kind of work; that does not mean that men, employers and society in general is going to let them do this work without a fight.

I will tell you how I learned about democracy. I am the only girl in a family of three boys. My older brother is four years older, my two younger brothers are three and four and a half years younger. When we first got a television, we could only get two channels, and there was always a fight over which channel we would watch. Inevitably I would want one, and the three boys would want another. Finally, one day my older brother came home and said he had learned about democracy at school. So the next time we had an argument over which channel

to watch, he said, let us vote. Obviously, I voted for one channel and my three brothers voted for the other.

So it did not take me too long to figure out that this was not going to work, that I would always be powerless and this was no way to live my life. I knew that I needed to go to a higher power to help me solve this problem, so I went to my mother—my parents were divorced—and asked her if she would mediate this situation. She told me I had better get used to it, this is what life was like, and I said, I will not accept a life in which I will always be powerless simply because I have three brothers. I did not realize that this was going to be what society was like.

Does democracy simply mean, he who has the power wins? Does your power in the democratic process not carry with it the responsibility of a social conscience? Are you simply going to act like my three brothers, abusing your power, or will you be like my mother and try to mediate a solution where all people can live decently together?

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your submission, Ms. Caldwell. Your time has expired. Thanks very much for your presentation.

Ms. Caldwell: Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Kathy Sinclair. Kathy Sinclair not being here, she will go to the end of the list.

Paula Mallea. That is the second time Paula Mallea has been called so she has now dropped off the list.

Karen Tjaden. I believe it was indicated last night that you might be making the presentation if she was unable to come on behalf of the Manitoba Northwestern Ontario Conference of the United Church of Canada. Your name, sir?

Mr. Glen Nicoles (Manitoba Northwestern Ontario Conference of the United Church of Canada): Mr. Chairman, my name is Glen Nicoles. I convened the political action committee for the United Church of Canada Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario. Karen Tjaden is a member of that committee, and in her absence I would like to present this brief. I thank you again for the opportunity to do so.

I thought that perhaps I might just make one comment prior to referring to the brief. I think it has been very important for you and for those of us who have been able to hear presentations to note the particular stories of individuals. I know that I attended the hearings about three years ago in relation to unemployment and it seemed to me consistently that those people who were unemployed were the most close to the situation and were able to respond appropriately. What I think is important in relation to faith communities, and we have had others present, is to indicate that these are positions of the church, in our case the United Church, that they are not positions of individuals, but, in fact, have come as a result of the democratic process within the church.

So the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario represents six presbyteries within the conference. Anything that is contained in this presentation has the approval of presbyteries, has the approval of the conference and, in fact, is in keeping with presentations which the national church has made to the federal government.

The political action committee's mandate includes assisting the conference in its prophetic and pastoral responsibility to speak and act in the public realm. I think it is important that the church does speak in the public realm, that it does not exist solely as a comfortable pew. As people of faith, and based on our work in the community and previous presentations to government on issues of economic justice and social justice, we make this submission regarding Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment Act.

We want to express our concern at the impact Bill 36 will have on our most vulnerable citizens, particularly in relation both to policy and rates regarding social assistance. As we have communicated previously to government in a brief presented for example last spring, we are very concerned at the reduced assistance rates announced by this government earlier this year. At the annual meeting of our conference in May, where nearly 600 United Church people from Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario gathered to represent our church in this region, we passed a resolution calling upon this government to restore the cuts which have been made to welfare allowances during the past 12 months. That communication has gone to this government. Our direct experience of ministry among the poor in Winnipeg and

across the province convinces us that people, who are poor and rely on social assistance to support themselves and their families, cannot and should not be required to carry any more of the burden of deficit reduction in this province or indeed reduction in transfer payments. Whether this assistance is called social assistance or income assistance, it is clear to us that the poor among us were already unable to provide adequately for themselves and their families with the assistance they were receiving. Further cuts will only cause more despair and hopelessness.

* (1150)

Over the past decade and more, we have witnessed ever-increasing numbers of Manitobans forced to accept food insecurity, food at food banks and soup kitchens in our churches and our community centres. People who are poor and our own members who work with them are telling us clearly that this is an unacceptable solution which is seriously compromising our ability to work together to build strong healthy individuals, strong healthy families, strong healthy communities.

The rate decreases create divisions among the poor and suggest troubling categories like deserving and undeserving poor and increase the daily stress individuals and families experience. This directly affects the health and stability of whole neighbourhoods. The introduction of a one-tiered system has been used to reduce rates to the lowest common denominator, without adequately—and I would think we would want to stress this—without adequately assessing human need and basic necessities.

When the resources of a person and his or her family or an organization are all directed towards trying to manage the crises of day-to-day survival, we know that there is little time, energy or creativity left to address the larger issues of planning for the future, accessibility, equality of access, the definition and provision of basic necessities. It is a deprivation of any kind of creativity on their part. When one person or a group suffers, we all suffer. We cannot afford the social, emotional and spiritual costs caused by reduced welfare rates or the ensuing loss of human potential, energy and creativity which we so desperately need.

The justice committee of our conference made a submission to the Standing Committee on Human

Resources in 1994, the federal government's standing committee, in response to that government's review of social policy in Canada and the discussion paper *Improving Social Security in Canada*.

Bill 36 includes some significant word changes. Notably, social assistance becomes income assistance. In this submission, as in other statements on these matters, we must uphold a strong link between social policy and economic policy. Our biblical and theological traditions and our policy framework convince us that how we share our financial resources is profoundly interrelated with how we care for one another. Changing the language does not change the reality of our responsibility to one another.

We want to commend the government for not introducing workfare to date and to register again our concern that workfare or a similar program by a different name not be pursued in future. The proposed amendments regarding employment obligations, employment expectations and employability enhancement raise concerns in this area. In 1994, we recommended to the Standing Committee on Human Resources that consideration be given to disengaging employment development and training from income supports to unemployed persons. Punitive measures such as workfare would thus be avoided, and energy and resources would be directed to preparing individuals for employment and communities for self-sufficiency in a larger industrial strategy.

We know that Manitobans, including people who are now receiving income assistance, want to work. You have heard that consistently over the past few days. People's employability obviously will be greatly enhanced by reduced unemployment levels but, again, with the creation of real jobs at a living wage. Opportunities for work that is meaningful, secure and long term will be the best encouragement for those who are currently unemployed or underemployed. While the government's new initiatives, some of the new initiatives, hold exciting possibilities, it must be acknowledged that they impact only a very small number of people receiving social assistance. Education, training accessible child care and the assurance that basic necessities will be met are the tools people need to succeed. In order for employment initiatives to encourage instead of discourage, they must focus not only on individual job

readiness but also on creating real employment opportunities.

At our annual meeting, we passed a resolution calling upon this government, and that too has been forwarded to you, to enact legislation to restore the citizens of Manitoba the following rights recently eliminated from federal legislation: the right to the basic necessities of life; the right to welfare incomes and social service payments based solely on need; the right to appeal welfare decisions; and the right not to have to accept work or training as a condition for receiving assistance.

We want to express again our concern that these rights are not currently enshrined in legislation in this province and to call upon the government to exercise its leadership to ensure these rights are protected by legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: Thanks for your submission, Mr. Nicoles.

Mr. Sale: Glen, would you have a sense of whether the theology, the faith stance that underlies this brief and other briefs that the United Church has presented is extreme or in some way not consistent with the broad world international sense of theology on the part of the mainstream churches of the world? I think of the Catholic and Reform traditions. Is the United Church out of sync with the rest of Christendom in this area?

Mr. Nicoles: I would think not. I would think that it is in sync with most of the mainline churches. Certainly, I am aware of a recent presentation to the Honourable Mr. Toews from a United Church that had a theological basis, for example, and he would indicate his complete support of that theological basis in relation to his particular denomination. Certainly, it would be in keeping with the oblate submission that was made this morning. I think it is consistent with Christian churches generally.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, to Dr. Nicoles, how is it then that a government with so many nominal Christians from those mainstream traditions can have policies that appear to be so out of sync with the mainstream traditions they represent?

Mr. Nicoles: I think it is difficult for me to respond to that. Certainly, it does seem to me that there is an

inconsistency in their supporting their biblical and theological basis and some of the policies that they are implementing. It does not seem to me that there is a genuine and real response to poverty which seems to me is the basic call that Christians have had from their gospel.

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

Next I would like to call on Fiona Muldrew. Fiona Muldrew. That is the second call for Fiona Muldrew. She will now be dropped off the list. Frances Evers. Frances Evers. Frances Evers is not responding. That being the second call, she will be dropped off the list. Cheryl Bryton. Cheryl Bryton. Being the second call for Cheryl Bryton, she will now be dropped off the list. Kay Slaunwhite. Kay Slaunwhite. That being the second call for Kay Slaunwhite, she will now be dropped off the list. Morgan Brock. Morgan Brock. That being the second call for Morgan Brock, Morgan Brock will now be dropped off the list. Rhonda Chorney. Welcome Rhonda. You may begin your presentation.

Ms. Rhonda Chorney (AIDS Shelter Coalition of Manitoba): I am representing the AIDS Shelter Coalition of Manitoba which is a community-based organization that assists people who are living with HIV and AIDS and their families with housing and general shelter needs as well as income security needs.

We are opposed to the proposed changes in Bill 36, as they are not only punitive and regressive but will cause undue hardship for those who receive assistance, including people living with HIV. There are a number of people living with HIV who receive assistance from the City of Winnipeg. These individuals are often unable for health reasons to either continue to work full time or seek employment. However, they may not qualify under the category of disabled according to provincial standards.

As you know, medical eligibility relies entirely on the medical report that is submitted by a physician. For people living with HIV in rural and northern areas, it is difficult to access physicians who are knowledgeable about HIV and to prepare to complete an adequate medical report. In addition, people living with HIV who are more transient are not seen on a regular basis by a physician. A doctor who has minimal contact with a

client is less likely to fulfill the requirements of the medical report. People living with HIV who are in more disadvantaged situations are further discriminated against because they often do not have access to physicians who are knowledgeable and capable of fulfilling the requirements of the report.

* (1200)

Under the present administration of municipal social services, these individuals are not obligated to seek full-time employment, because there is a recognition of the nature of the disease and the impossibility for individuals to continue employment because of current health problems, discrimination in the workplace and/or psychological impact of the disease.

Under a one-tiered system the provincial government is proposing new legislation where all recipients would be obligated to satisfy the director that she or he has met the employment obligations. If people do not comply with this obligation, the director may deny, reduce, suspend or discontinue income assistance. We understand that not meeting the employment expectations can result in a reduction in benefits of \$50 per month for six months and \$100 per month thereafter or complete termination of benefits. Obviously such punitive legislative will negatively impact all recipients, including people who are living with HIV who receive assistance from the city and are unable to seek full-time employment for the reasons that I have already discussed.

In addition, with regard to a workfare model that the legislation is proposing, many voting Manitobans want decent education and employment opportunities, not a punitive workfare system that will deepen the divide between the haves and the have-nots.

Finally, proposed legislation concerning benefits does not list allowance for such things as food, clothing, shelter, medical, optical, dental care and instead reads, those things and services that are essential to health and well-being. This enables government to administer social allowance with much more discretionary power in the provision of benefits.

Considering this government's track record with cuts to social allowance, the exclusion of these items will only result in further cuts in benefits. People receiving

assistance are minimally entitled to benefits that are essential to health and well-being, and these must be stated clearly in the legislation. The people of this province cannot afford these regressive changes to social allowance. We need legislation and a government that values health and well-being of all people.

Mr. Chairperson: When you are ready, we will have Ms. McGifford. Thanks very much for a very concise and specific presentation.

Ms. McGifford: Ms. Chorney, you talked about the implications for people living with HIV-AIDS, the implications of a one-tiered system, that proposed in the current legislation. How do you think this should be handled?

Ms. Chorney: Well, the present system seems to accommodate a little more people who are not able to be considered disabled and get provincial assistance, and there is some recognition in how the administration of that system operates in that there is more latitude and just more recognition of the disease and the up and down nature that you were speaking to before.

Ms. McGifford: Do you think it would make sense for people living with HIV-AIDS to receive their social assistance in the same way as a disabled person and not have to fulfill the employment obligations of—I am a little confused whether it is 15 job searches every month or every two weeks?

Ms. Chorney: I was one of those, but absolutely. It is important that people who are living with HIV be considered as disabled and unable to fulfill those kind of employment requirements for the reasons that I have stated and other reasons as well.

Ms. McGifford: Is it the case that in other jurisdictions, especially as people with HIV-AIDS live longer, there is a recognition that HIV-AIDS is being regarded more as a chronic illness than a terminal illness, but a chronic illness which does not allow the person to work necessarily?

Ms. Chorney: That is right. Yes, it is a disease that compromises the immune system which means that things like stress—financial stress, work stress—only increase the progression of the disease and because it is more

considered a terminal, chronic illness versus a terminal disease, partly because of new medications and things like that and the more we know about the disease, that some latitude needs to be given to the differences.

Ms. McGifford: You talked about the restrictions in this legislation, which read, after clothing, shelter, medical, optical, et cetera, reads, those things and services that are essential to health and well-being. My experience in working with people living with AIDS is that what may be essential to an average person changes considerably when you have the disease, and I wondered if you could comment on what things a person with HIV-AIDS may require that another individual may not. I know, for example, food is quite different.

Ms. Chorney: There is certainly a higher calorie, high protein diet, nutritional supplements; transportation and a telephone for medical reasons—transportation to get to regular medical appointments and social appointments is extremely important; things like additional clothing allowance because of people's fluctuation in their weight and often what is considered more of a wasting syndrome; extra bedding because people experience a lot of illnesses that cause them to have night sweats and bowel problems and things like that, those kinds of things.

Ms. McGifford: And all of those things, I am trying to remember the names of the food supplements, the enriched calorie supplements, but I believe that they are all very expensive, and this should probably mean that a person living with HIV-AIDS would require more social assistance rather than less.

Ms. Chorney: Yes, that is right. That is true.

Ms. McGifford: I know that you work with the AIDS Shelter Coalition and, therefore, you have had a lot of experience with housing, and one of the things I know is, people with HIV-AIDS do not usually have a lot of money to move around, and sometimes it becomes necessary for a person to move from a suite on a third floor, for example, because it is too stressful to go up and down stairs, to something on the ground level. My question is, is there any provision in social assistance that you are aware of that contributes to moving costs?

Ms. Chorney: Well, yes, if people are moving into a public housing situation from private housing, then often moving costs are covered. Relationships with workers allow there to be some latitude when people need to move for medical purposes, either to be closer to their medical facilities or, as you stated, more specific accommodations in their housing, and that is important that that remain.

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to ask you about the special situation that women living with AIDS with children are in. What would you see their needs being, and how would they differ even from the ordinary person, a male without children, for example, living with HIV-AIDS?

Ms. Chorney: Well, obviously the difference would be dealing with the costs related to children, the care of children, additional supports. Often women are in a position where they are caretaking others and, when they are needing that kind of caretaking as their disease progresses, that it is not available, so there needs to be other supports for women. Women are extremely isolated and women with children even more isolated.

Ms. McGifford: Have you encountered people living with HIV-AIDS who have not sought social assistance because of the confidentiality issue?

Ms. Chorney: Yes. Some people do not disclose their HIV status because they are concerned about issues of confidentiality and also issues of discrimination because of the stigma that is still associated with the disease. We are working right now with workers within provincial assistance to train workers to be more sensitive to some of those things, and perhaps that might shift it, but definitely yes.

Ms. McGifford: My last remark is a remark and not a question, and that is, this morning when the presenter from the Village Clinic spoke, she pointed out that so many people living with HIV-AIDS become community volunteers, and they contribute to the labour market, but they do not get paid for their work, and I wondered if that was borne out in your experience too and if you wanted to comment on the kind of contribution that people living with HIV-AIDS are indeed making to the community.

* (1210)

Ms. Chorney: Because we are a small agency, we have just a few number of staff, and we do rely on volunteers to assist with the kind of managing of the organization. Also, people who are volunteering, many of whom are living with HIV, volunteer for our food bank, do advocacy, assist in other ways, and we do rely on that kind of energy. They can only usually give so many hours per week. They need a lot of latitude. They would be unable to work full time.

Mr. Chairperson: Ms. Chorney, thank you very much for continuing to share your expertise on a very difficult area. I much appreciate it.

Marlene Vieno—

Floor Comment: They have not come back yet. They have gone for the . . .

Mr. Chairperson: Oh, I see. Okay. Julia Segal. Julia Segal. That is the second call for Julia Segal, so she is now dropped off the list.

Monique Foucart. Ms. Foucart.

Ms. Monique Foucart (Private Citizen): Can you hear me? Okay. Yes—[interjection] What? No, I do not have papers. I just thought I would come up here and speak.

I wrote a couple of things yesterday, and I was looking in the dictionary, just about Bill 36 and the reasons. I, myself, have been a recipient on welfare for about three years. I am a little bit nervous. The reason Bill 36 is important to me, and I would like to see some changes to the infrastructure, is because of the fact that we are not really dealing with—it is always a money issue, and I think we should look at the basics as poor and poverty. In the dictionary, poor means needy and not good in quality or workmanship; poverty is the condition of being poor and wanting and needing, a lack of something.

Billions of people live under these conditions today, and the year is 1996. We still have a concern under our government about how to food and shelter and clothe people. We have to learn from history how to improve the quality of human life, then we must examine both the positive and negative chapters in human history. Economic activity is simply the daily work of mankind performed to acquire what mankind needs and wants, and

the four billion human beings that inhabit the earth all need food, clothing and shelter to sustain life. Earth's resources are to fulfill the needs and wants of people that live in Winnipeg, Manitoba. We are not talking about money, and we cannot be. The reason for these discussions has to be closer to the bone than we think. We live in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and it is proclaimed as the friendly Manitoba province.

We have computers, we have microwaves, we have television, we have phones, we have a lot of things. Who would believe that this country is actually poor? The common person, as we claim as middle class, has all his and her needs met. A person on welfare does not. I like to call these people John Does. They are nobodies and we are the ones sitting around collecting welfare cheques, living on high society and politic's wages. We need to understand the meaning of life. We have to go back to our basics. We have to understand what the value of money is.

If Bill 36 is a money talk, we are in the wrong department, we should be going to banks and applying for loans. We need to address this Bill 36 with all concern. There are so many policies being thrown through the Legislature today and people cannot just—you know, the common person who works full time cannot keep up with the news, but the streets of Winnipeg do know about poverty and about issues in poor areas. I myself lived in the Fort Garry region and it is beautiful out there. You know, there are a lot of working-class people, lots of families, lots of kids, lots of schools. I was really upset when the Legislature actually, like, closed down a few libraries and schools. It was not really saying much for a generation that is about to come up.

Regarding the infrastructure, I think putting the city—I am against that bill totally. Putting the city and the provincial government together, I think, is going to just create chaos amongst the poor people as defined in a dictionary as poor. We need and want. We have farmers—I myself am trying to open a small business, and I have chosen the food category. I was amazed at the amount of knowledge that you can learn from just phoning a couple of government offices and opening up a book.

Again, economic activity is simply the daily work of mankind. We have to all struggle together to maintain the Charter of Rights, freedom and liberty. Through my

small business I am doing research regarding the nutrition of the Canada Food Guide. As a recipient on welfare, I do not believe that the budget allows nutrition and healthy living on what a recipient is allowed. I was living on less than \$400, and I was paying my rent which was the normal thing to do. Exactly what you have been hearing, my concerns were food and paying my bills. So that is exactly what I would do. As soon as I got my cheque, I would race down to the bank, cash my cheque and go buy some groceries, but, again, you work it out to whatever, every two weeks, a week, whatever. You always want to make sure that your children are cared for. You put your kids in front of yourselves. We always put our kids in front of ourselves, and I know a lot of you do have children. A lot of you maybe have daughters and sons who have kids. They are not living on \$400 a month, and I know that. We as people have to be a little bit more concerned about life issues and poverty issues and the poor, less working class. They want to work. This is true. You have been hearing that also in the last two days. They do want to work. We all want to work.

I just received—I had to go on from provincial to city because of the by-laws. If you meet a man, you have to change onto the city. So I did that, and I am a truthful person. So we went on the city, and we were dealing with another budget which took, I think—for a month we were really like in a tornado. That is another thing I wanted to say too regarding tornados. If we had a tornado, we would be taking care of more people in a day than we do people on welfare right now, on the system. We would be accommodating to an emergency. This is an emergency situation. The people that are on welfare are scared to talk out because of the fact that they seem to think that you talk about money too much. We are not money-grubbing people. We just want to support our families and make sure that they eat correctly and are clothed correctly.

Our school divisions are full of children, and they have to interact with one another. When you talk about nutrition, when you see a child with scruffy hair—like maybe mine today, I am having a bad hair day—they do not care about money, they do not care about food, they just want to have friends. I have a four-year-old daughter, and her concerns are not about money. Mine are because I have to support my daughter. So her concerns are more about making friends and smiling and playing with normal kids, and, I mean, our kids are in

Winnipeg. They are all interacted together. My child could be beside one of your son's or daughter's children, and they would still get along.

* (1220)

Through my research with the Canada Food Guide, I was really disturbed that we do have such good programs in Canada and that we are not learning enough about—it is just starting to come out because of environmental changes and nutrition, get up and do your thing. But we are not educating ourselves, I think, as people, how to maintain that nutrition in our own family lives. Myself, that is what I want to do. I want to go out to people and give them some information on how to save money, how to budget correctly, because on welfare you do not have a budget. Everyone seems to think we can save money, that we have bank accounts, that we have all these things. We have furniture. We have what every common person has. We have CDS. We want to buy CDS. We have record players. We want to listen to music. So we accommodate our own needs, but it is not coming from our cheques. Our cheques are mainly for food and shelter and bills.

I can tell you, about 90 percent of people do not have phones. They cannot look for work. There is a concern regarding the phone daily. I was without a phone for a year and a half, and every time I went to apply for a job, it was, well, where can we contact you, Monique, Ms. Foucart? I was like, well, I will give you my friend's phone number, you know, because I do not have a phone. Well, you do not have a phone; this is outrageous. I never heard from a lot of employers because of this fact. I was listening to a lot of people yesterday talking about that MTS is the lowest rate in Canada. I was not aware of that, but if it is the lowest rate, we are really money-grabbing people. We keep grabbing a lot of money from people's pockets, like our pockets especially, because we cannot afford it. I do pay my taxes when I was working. I worked since I was 15 years old. I did a lot of hard labour.

I went through education, secretarial training programs. I went through the whole nine yards, and I am still unemployed. I went through a lot of programs, the WINE program, Women In New Employment. The program was facilitated great. There was a lot of job creation. There could have been a lot of job creation, but

all the women in the program were women on social assistance. Their concern was not schooling at that time. Their concern was how to get in touch with their caseworker because they did not receive their cheque that day. How can they make sure that they get their special needs? Everyone was always so concerned about that cheque. Myself, I have been through that hurricane. You know, wake up in the morning. The mailman comes. It is like the cheque is not there. You have to get on the phone. You have to go down, and you have to make sure. It is not like waking up and finding that you have a card and you can just simply go to your account and just get the money that you survive on.

I think, with the changes, the infrastructure, I am totally against. I think we are all smart Canadian civilians or citizens, and I think that people just have to get together and sit down and really talk about the issues. Canada is a big country. There are a lot of people in it. We are just a small portion. We are called Manitoba, and tourists come here yearly. We are always so concerned about how many tourists we are going to get next year, and is our city good enough? Is our city, you know, facilitating the people that are coming out to see it? I moved down to Furby Street about two years ago, and everyone told me I was nuts, you know. Why are you moving down to such a bad area of town?

Mr. Chairperson: There are three minutes left.

Ms. Foucart: Okay, I said to myself, it is not a bad area unless I look out that door and see it to be a bad area. There are a lot of community resources in these areas. The people that are actually supporting the welfare recipients at this point are doing a better job than, I say, our government. There are a lot of people banding together nowadays, and all because of poverty, all because people are poor and the food banks, Winnipeg Harvest. I mean, I have had to rely on these facilities myself, and I am just really upset that as smart as we are today and as much knowledge that we do have, we cannot simply come up with a simple plan to accommodate more Canadian citizens in this province. You know, we have been slashed. The women are called sluts and bitches. We only hang out at bars to get a rich man or something. I am not, I just do not get it, and things like that. So I am really against these changes. I do want to have faith in our government, but you give up after awhile when there

are so many budget cuts, and you cannot seem to move forward.

We are trying to move forward. We are trying to employ ourselves. I, myself, have a lot of great ideas that I probably could share with you and are probably really good ideas to make people come more together. A simple idea is like you talk about penitentiaries. You know there are a lot of unemployed people in our jail systems today, and where are they to go when there are really no jobs out there to begin with? I think we have to look at there are a lot of jobs out there, but then there are not a lot of stable jobs.

We need to assure that—myself, I am 30 years old. Like I do not know how long I am going to live. I have a four-year-old daughter. I do not want to be away from my daughter for a long period of time. She needs me as much as I need her. She is going to go to preschool. Her life is going to be changing. My life will be changing. These are the common things a normal person who thinks about the future focuses on. My kid will be in Grade 1 soon, and I will have more time on my hands. This age six, with the provincial government, it is like, you are not actually allowing mothers to be mothers. We are so concerned about how to get off the system that we do not get time to actually nourish our own families with love and understanding and happiness.

Welfare just brings a lot of despair and discomfort and anger and frustration and a lot of families are starting to feel that because the court systems on domestic violence, I have been involved with the court systems for a couple years now. The only reasons that I can look at, because I am smart individual and I know how to make things program properly, was the fact that I was in a desperate situation. I was looking for relationships to go on forward with my life, and I ended up finding a lot of people having alcoholic problems and drug abuse.

If you put the city and the provincial government together, I think this is just going to allow more domestic violence in these houses, under these roofs, where children alone, children have to see a lot as it is, and today—

Mr. Chairperson: Your time is now up. Thank you very much for your presentation.

Is it the will of the committee to keep sitting to hear presenters?

Ms. Foucart: No questions?

Mr. Chairperson: There is no time for questions. Thank you.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, we are prepared to continue sitting to hear presenters.

Committee Substitution

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I wonder if I might have leave to make a substitution?

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave from the committee for a substitution? [agreed]

Mr. Tweed: By leave, I move, seconded by the member for St. Vital (Mrs. Render), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Law Amendments be amended as follows: Laurendeau from St. Norbert for the Honourable Downey, Arthur-Virden, with the understanding that the same substitution will moved in the House.

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: The next presenter is Marlene Vieno. Is Marlene Vieno here now? Kathy Sinclair. Kathy Sinclair. Kathy Sinclair, having now been called twice and not responding, is dropped off the list.

For the information of the committee, we have a late registration, a Mr. Charlie Housley, who says he is going to make a real short comment. He will then follow Ms. Vieno.

You may start, Ms. Vieno.

Ms. Marlene Vieno (Manitoba Network for Mental Health): Good afternoon, Chairperson and members of the Legislature. My name is Marlene Vieno, and I am here to present a brief of concerns and views shared by the members of the Manitoba Network for Mental Health Incorporation. We are a self-help, nonprofit organization which was founded, created and is operated today by

recovering mental health consumers here in Winnipeg, Manitoba. We are entering our fourth year of operation.

* (1230)

We are very concerned about the changes in Bill 36. In fact, this bill consists of so many important parts that we mental health consumers must keep in order for one's self well-being, we do not know where to begin. Here in Winnipeg, Manitoba, persons with mental illnesses who are on welfare are enduring these five major issues: inadequate health care services, substandard housing, education and employment difficulties, child and youth care, and also single adult poverty.

Inadequate health care services: An individual's attitude plays a key role in the person's well-being or state of health. It alone depends upon a list of items that are not being recognized by this government and those people working in various departments with low-income mental health consumers. Now, if you move on, you will see consumers of mental health are not having their needs met or fulfilled. Those two papers give you a basic outline of mental health and what needs that we consumers are very much concerned about within the health care, the medicare in Bill 36.

For many of us mental health consumers, unless our basic needs are managed adequately, we do not and cannot feel healthy or stable. We are concerned about health issues, income and bills to pay, a strict diet we cannot afford to follow and will become ill physically due to either the overwhelming stress and/or eating a poor diet.

More often than not, consumers become feeling so low about themselves that they devalue themselves and lose their self-care that they once held so strongly. Some may lose their eating habits. Others may begin unhealthy habits like drinking alcoholic beverages, taking illegal drugs, trying out the effect of substance abuse and even overdosing on their own medication, yet others may become either self-abusive or abusive to their partners, spouses and even children.

Two recent local stories illustrate such behavioural problems possibly caused from emotional or mental stress, not having an adequate income to support the family and an occupation to earn an income to be less

dependent on the government. Where are the resources for persons suffering from such stress to find free counselling services where they will be heard and suggestions may be given but not demanded to proceed with certain orders? In other words, a more supportive service is needed.

Lack of understanding on behalf of our present social services system neglects the real needs of a mental health consumer on welfare. This issue is stigma in the first degree. Such an attitude about a consumer's work skills, literacy and/or capability to live an independent life style sometimes results in the client receiving prejudicial treatment because of an incorrect understanding by the system.

Labelling is a large part of this problem. That is, the person is labelled a mental case, a psychotic; the illness is seen, but not the person. Poor communication is also a large cause to our health care services. Mental health consumers know because we wear the shoes. We have to find solutions to deal with crises alone when we are looking forward to seeing our psychiatrist, counsellor or therapist, even community worker, but somehow our appointment has been changed without the consumer being informed. When having their medication changed—here again, many mental health consumers are having their medication changed to either a different drug or change in dosage without adequate medical supervision. That is, their medication changes are made, but without the guidance or supervision of a professionally trained nurse to guard the person's well-being.

It is cutbacks such as these that are causing our health care costs to rise, not to drop. Figure it out, which is really less costly; admitting a consumer to hospital for medication change, or having that same consumer return home only to be returned to the hospital's emergency wards hours to days later, but by ambulance, requiring additional medical in-hospital services and ambulatory expenses too? Reminder: I have heard of cases where the consumer was made to pay for the ambulance by the system, removing \$50 a month for up to six months. Now, is that right? I disagree.

This government has plans of changing our present health care system. Where will we be? Persons like myself at present—I have my own apartment—but am I going to be one that is going to end up out on the street

with no place to call home? This is a concern to us and we are not receiving an adequate income to meet today's cost of living. You have heard this over and over and over. Myself, for example, I am a recovering mental health consumer and I stand very proud of it. I want all of you to know, especially on my right and at the far end of the table, simply because of the stigmatic attitude that overlays this society, this community.

At the same time, it took me seven and a half years to fight you people. Mrs. Mitchelson, you did have a role in this, being Minister for Family Services. It was a seven-and-a-half year struggle for myself, as an individual, a mental health consumer, to battle with your government to receive a measly \$32 more for a special diet that I even yet cannot follow. Simply because, for example, tuna is one of my favourite seafoods. I am on the lowest sodium diet there is possible. To purchase one tin, the average is close to \$4. It averages from \$3.69 to \$3.84. Those are prices I have seen for that product. Now, out of \$32, where am I going to come up with that? One can of tuna would do me what, one meal? Think about it. At the same time, how many other mental health consumers and at low income for individual persons in the city and province are out there hungry? But like it has been said, and I will say it again because it is the truth, these people are fearful. They are intimidated because they are afraid that if they come forward and say something or even give me any kind of support as a community advocate, then somehow their name is going to be heard, their face is going to be recognized, and whatever services they are receiving, they will be stripped of that. It has happened. I know from personal experience.

Several years ago, when I first began my road to recovery and I got back on my feet and really got it started on my community advocacy, you people—it was your government, Mrs. Mitchelson, that tried twice to strip me of my monthly bus pass simply because, with your stigmatic attitude, as a mental health consumer, I am bonkers up here, I should be enrolled in a day program. I was not enrolled in a day program; I was well on my way to recovery by that time, and yet that was a way to stop me from keeping my commitments, helping out in my community.

I am one of thousands and there were several other people here last night, I was really proud to say, one person in specific and that person is Jim Finlay. That

man has been doing your people's work, specifically those of you on my right, and what recognition has he received? Very little, if any. Yet that man for more than 20 years now has been doing your work for you, what you should be doing for the people, for those of us who have voted you in. Where are our rights? That is our question. What are we? We may have a mental illness; we may have to take medication, but we are yet human beings. I will tell you what one friend told me. We have all entered this world, the wicked world, the same way as you people have and we will leave it the same way. We entered it through birth, and we will leave it through death. Remember that. We need to be recognized.

Mr. Chairperson: You have three minutes left in your presentation, Ms. Vieno.

* (1240)

Ms. Vieno: Too often, the additional drugs are given to help a consumer who is under the weather. Drugs will not solve the problem. A better listening ear and more time allowed to consumers to express their problems with their doctor, their social worker or therapist will be more helpful than unnecessary additional drugs. Sure, the person may sleep, but the problem will not disappear. The problem will only worsen and the individual, together with her or his spouse or family and friends, share unnecessary emotional, mental and physical stress. Such negligence only adds to our health care expenses. It does not decrease the cost. Like I say, other major concerns are primarily on this sheet of paper here.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you for your presentation.

Mr. Martindale: Thank you, Ms. Vieno, for your presentation, and I appreciate your honesty in talking about things like the stigma that you have personally experienced. I think there is a remedy for that and its inclusion, and so it is good to see that your brief on behalf of consumers was included on Bill 36. I know that, for example, the Canadian Mental Health Association has a policy of inclusion and they include consumers on the board of directors and on all their committees, and I think we in society need to do that everywhere possible.

You mentioned the problem of people either not getting the prescription drugs that they need or improper

prescriptions and the result being that people go to hospital. Now this certainly costs the government more money, but one of the problems is that it is not an additional cost to the Department of Family Services, because after they have been in the hospital a certain length of time the social assistance is greatly reduced and the total cost of a hospital stay itself would show up in the Department of Health, not in Family Services.

However, as the government constantly reminds us, there is only one taxpayer, and so those who pay taxes in Manitoba are paying for that individual whether they are on social assistance or in the hospital or both.

How do you think, Ms. Vieno, we can change the problem or rectify the problem of improper prescriptions? I presume that the individuals that you referred to are on social assistance and they have health benefits, so therefore they are not paying for the drugs, but their doctor can probably only prescribe them from a certain list, and if something is not on the list or it is more expensive, the doctor does not have that option.

How would you recommend that we change it in order to save money on very expensive hospitalization?

Ms. Vieno: My suggestion would be that we have more psychiatrists and psychotherapy counselling services available. It is simple math. Which would be less costly and which would be beneficial to this province economically, by having these people pay into their community, serve into their community, or reduce it, and what happens? Everybody ends up in a rut with the exception of the rich. The wealthy are on top of the world, but for how long? Only time will tell.

The lack of psychiatric services today and the cutdown in psychiatric beds and the lack of therapeutic counselling services and the inadequate training that welfare workers and community counsellors receive, including this new program, proctoring—I was asked to at least take the training because I have the skills for it. I refused. I could not even give it thought because personally, myself, I cannot see three people desperately in need of help, one a doctor, another a therapist or a counsellor and then somebody else just maybe in food, I have to select, choose which one of those three needs my help more. That is inequality. That is injustice. By hiring instead of cutting back on these doctors would help to reduce our

health care costs dramatically, because doctors then can spend more time with one patient and get a more clear understanding of the patient's real problem and then make a more accurate decision on what their needs are, whether a change in medication or an alternative suggestion.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for a very passionate submission in telling a story from front-lines experience, individually and as an advocate. Thank you for your presentation.

Ms. Vieno: Members of the Network, we are very much concerned. There are several of us now who have had the opportunity to get peer counselling training, but that is just peer helping. We do not have the skills of a university social worker, although our training apparently was at university level, yet the fact remains that we are only a small number. We are just a minority.

Mr. Chairperson: We not only have your presentation orally but we have the advantage of your written brief and we are grateful for that. Thank you very much.

Ms. Vieno: I really appreciate, and please, I demand those on my right especially, please read it over word for word. If you have any questions, phone me. Thank you.

Mr. Chairperson: I know your number is on it, so thank you very, very much.

Charlie Housley.

Mr. Charlie Housley (Private Citizen): I appreciate, greatly, the opportunity to have a moment to speak to you. I would like to first express my appreciation and my respect for you people who have taken your time here today, the respect that you have shown the people that have come before you this morning, and the interest that you have taken in their presentations and their problems.

I am a U.S. citizen. I have been on welfare for a number of years. I have been homeless in Boston, Salt Lake City, Minot, North Dakota and Los Angeles. I have been through all the different programs that you can imagine, college education, all the et cetera, but I have worked on what the problem is, and the problem primarily right now—I think it was this gentleman here asked about why the nature—I am a Christian also. He asked about what is going on in a Christian community

where you seem to have a lack of compassion within the Christian community and are pushing for welfare reform when welfare is actually the best run, the most efficient, the most worked over, the most thought over, and has the most dedicated people working in the welfare system.

The welfare system in the United States—and here is the best-run system you have. The problem is economic, and so you have to deal with it in an economic way. Referring to the Christian situation, it is centralization of power and wealth. This is taking place even within the Christian community. You have a lot of centralization of power and wealth, and these people—I do not think it is out of meanspiritedness, but it is out of naivete that they have decided that the problem is welfare. The problem is not the system; the system is working very well. The problem is economic.

* (1250)

That is another thing when I look at Canada. The primary thing, like the other young lady mentioned, is infrastructure to begin with; that is where you can make the biggest change. In Canada you are a long way ahead of the United States in that you have put a great deal of effort into public transportation. You cannot get people off welfare or you cannot have a thriving economy if you do not have public transportation, so you are a long way ahead on that one.

There are the political forces that have taken advantage of the frustrations between those that collect welfare and those that do not that are right on the border. Those that are on the border, of course, have a great deal of frustration and jealousy. They are out there hustling along in three jobs and everything and trying to keep going. They see the neighbour down the street or the person on the bus collecting welfare, and they wonder why because "my circumstance is just as dire or just as much in need."

There are political forces that are meanspirited, both in the United States and here, that have taken advantage of that frustration of those people for political gain. You also have the frustration of the people who are on welfare; like this lady expressed, how difficult it is for people who are on welfare and how frustrated they become with the system. They start to complain about the system, and then those who are downright greedy and

meanspirited take advantage of that frustration. And instead of reforming or just understanding it, because usually it is just the fact that they are frustrated, the system is actually functioning quite well for them considering the complications and the difficulty of the system, so they start to complain. Those that are meanspirited run to you people and say, hey, you have got a real bummer of a welfare system here that you need to scrap, get rid of, overhaul.

Actually, like I mentioned, the welfare system in both this nation and in the United States, and especially in Canada, is you are most efficient, you are most humane. It provides the most humanitarian aspects of your society. You cannot diminish one person's humanity in this society without diminishing your own. Now, if you are going to put people on the street, you are going to smell the urine, you are going to have to put up with the fees, or you can do like the United States is doing, you can build more prisons. The United States is not building prisons; they are building concentration camps, concentration camps for those who have, for any number of different reasons, become excluded from the economy.

They are building prisons for poor people—I mean concentration camps. They are not building prisons. There are not that many criminals in the United States. There are not that many criminals in Canada. Well, I better let you people go to lunch.

Mr. Martindale: Yes, I have a question, but first I would like to correct the record. Although you did not identify me by name I think when you were pointing you were referring to me and my questions about the Christian presenters, and I was certainly not criticizing the presenters or any Christians for lack of compassion. I am also a Christian. I am a United Church minister. These people are my colleagues. I have worked with them in the community for the last 15 years, and I think that the individuals who presented today have a great deal of compassion.

What they were saying is that food banks are not a solution to the problem of poverty and what we need is adequate benefits for people and jobs and that people want to work, so I think they were trying to speak the truth to power. I think they would also say that, yes, Christians in our province, in our country, are accumulating wealth and power, as you correctly pointed

out, and I think they would give the same message to people in their own community about sharing the wealth and resources of society that they gave to this government.

Mr. Housley: I think you misinterpreted my statement. What I was really referring to is the schism that is in society today, both in the United States and Canada, also exists within the Christian community. So, yes, you do have that part of the Christian community that is very much in the front lines as far as providing services and providing the right compassion and the right humanitarian attitude, but you do have a part in the United States that goes under the name of Conservative, calls themselves Christian, and are pushing for some very rough changes in the welfare system that are going to result in a great number of people being very severely hurt by the changes. They blame the welfare system for the crime, for this, for that, and they never point out that until you change the economy, you are not going to change the—well, you cannot change the economy by changing the welfare system.

Mr. Martindale: How do you think we can change the economy? Do you think that the fundamental problem is—

Mr. Housley: It gets complex. It gets very complex, but it is a matter of centralization of power and wealth. You get people who have too much power, too much centralization of opportunity and wealth, and then they start taking a very naive view, and it is not an easy problem. I have decided the main thing with the United States is No. 1, you have to have a good public transportation system; second, you have to have a good telephone communication system. In Boston you can make a call for 25 cents. Anywhere in Boston you can make a serious effort to get a job in Boston. You get into Los Angeles and every time you pick up that pay phone or you want to make a call to check on a job, you are talking \$1.25, \$2.50 American, and if you want to go some place on the transportation system in Los Angeles, you better have four or five bucks in your pocket before you start to get on, American.

Mr. Martindale: First of all, I appreciate your clarification of what you said earlier, and I agree with your analysis about people running to government and demanding that the welfare system be overhauled or

scrapped, and I think that is what this government is responding to in this bill. Certainly I hear it. I represent a lot of poor people in the Legislature, but certainly when I go door to door in Burrows constituency, almost everybody—well, I should not say almost everybody, but, frequently, people who are working, but even low incomes, modest incomes, talk to me about the welfare system even when it is not an election issue. It does not matter whether I am knocking on doors during an election or between elections, I frequently get an earful about the welfare system.

I think what has happened both with the right wing in the United States and increasingly in Canada, especially in places like Alberta and Ontario and now Manitoba, we have seen society, including the middle class, turn on the poor and attack the poor, which is what this government is responding to in this bill.

Now, how do you think we can change that, so that society's attitudes are more accepting and understanding and benevolent towards the poor?

Mr. Housley: Well, I think that I am going to have to start getting off my tail end and start getting up and start doing this more often. I used to do this on a regular basis, but I got frustrated, and I got put into the category on welfare that is relatively opulent, and I got lazy. But it is going to have to be a grassroots effort and especially in the Christian community where I have started to stand up to make comments and to start pointing out the hard meanspiritedness of the realities of what they are advocating politically, in the church, and until somebody does that and points out to these people—most people who are there are not meanspirited; they are naive.

It is mostly a problem of naivete, and then it is a problem of frustration that the people who are about to fall into poverty feel. Their automatic reaction is, I ain't going to become that way, and I ain't going to be one of them. Then they start on that, and then someday they are like me. They end up that way.

I was working a good job. I had another job, and the guy next door to me started collecting welfare. I went a year and a half, and I literally hated that guy. I mean, he would be sitting there, you know, and he wanted to be friends a little bit. I did not want nothing to do with the bum.

But, anyway, about a year later, he died. I did not, and after I got into that circumstance, I can see where it can sap your life and where it can sap your will to live, and it can take your health when you do not have proper diet, when you cannot control your own environment. It takes your health from you, and so he died. I did not, but I had a great deal of hatred for that guy, and I well remember it.

Mr. Chairperson: Thank you very much for your participation, Mr. Housley.

* (1300)

Mr. Housley: Thank you for the opportunity.

Mr. Chairperson: I will now canvass the audience one last time to see if there are any other persons in attendance wishing to speak to the bill that is before the committee. There being none, did the committee wish to proceed with clause-by-clause consideration of the bill?

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Chairperson, informally at the table, someone raised a concern about whether the government House leader said the committee would sit from nine to twelve or whether there is any restriction. I wonder if you could consult the Clerk and clarify that for us.

Mr. Chairperson: The committee earlier—I think when maybe you were not here; I thought you were—expressed a will that we would keep sitting to hear the presenters, and the consent of the committee, I am advised, does vary the hours, so the hours have been varied. No time limit has been set. What is your wish, Mr. Martindale?

Mr. Martindale: Well, I would recommend that we adjourn now and come back on Tuesday or Wednesday or whenever we can get the committee scheduled in the House to come back, for several reasons.

One is that we have got one northern and one rural member here. The member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) has about a five-hour drive home; the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) probably has about a four-hour drive home. And we certainly will not finish by three o'clock this afternoon.

We have had approximately 40 presenters. People are very upset about this draconian legislation. We are not

going to let it slip by in five minutes with no comment. We are going to have numerous questions of the minister, and we will certainly be here for a long time. So we recommend that we adjourn now and come back at the earliest time possible next week.

Mr. Chairperson: Just a clarification. I am advised that we can bury the three o'clock deadline as well. I am also reminded that we had proceeded this morning with the intention of starting at nine o'clock, and there never was any specific removal of the obligation to bury the time limits. But we will hear from the committee, and then we will have a decision made.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the comments of the member opposite, but I am prepared to sit till three o'clock if the committee so wishes. I would move that if that is necessary, I think, in order to get the process moving. That would be my recommendation.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I would ask the Clerk to clarify. I believe that you cannot sit past three o'clock without leave. I do not think it is a question of a motion passed through by majority, but a question of getting the rules—

Mr. Chairperson: That is correct. I am advised that it would require a unanimous consent.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Chairperson, I think it is very clear to all members that we treat this legislation as one that is a serious assault on human dignity. We will not allow the legislation to go clause by clause past the adjournment hour of three o'clock. So we are going to come back next week one way or the other, because we have far more questions than the minister will be able to answer in that period of time. So why do we not be reasonable about this, set an adjournment hour that allows us and staff to do what we need to do to get ready for the end of the work week, which includes a lot of phone calls? In fact, in my case, it includes a welfare recipient whose power is going to be shut off if we do not get some money into Winnipeg Hydro. So I have that particular thing weighing on my conscience at this particular point.

I understand the wish to continue, but I can simply tell the committee we will not pass this bill today. We are going to come back next week. So let us be reasonable about it, have a break for lunch that is half an hour so

that we can get some food in our bellies and do what we can do, but if we are committed to three o'clock, fine. I think it would make much more sense to do what the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) suggests, which is to adjourn now, assimilate the many good presentations we have had and come back to clause by clause next week.

Mr. Tweed: Again, as I stated earlier, Mr. Chairman, I am certainly in agreement with Mr. Sale and the comment that I would like to see us proceed with the termination time of three o'clock as previously set.

Mr. Chairperson: Any other views to be expressed on the issue? The Honourable Minister, did you have any—

Ms. McGifford: I wanted to answer what my colleagues from Burrows and from Crescentwood had to say. I want to add that I think it is extremely important for us as legislators to be more reflective and meditative about these things than has been our wont, and while I appreciate the desire to be efficient, I think it is important for us to remember that efficiency is a management technique and not an ethical principle. It would seem to me that in the interests of all of Manitoba, this is legislation that is very serious, that is changing the face of Manitoba. It would not be amiss to take the weekend for us all to digest the presentations we have been hearing. We were here till very late last night. I do not believe that any of our brains are working as they might if we were rested, and, again, I advocate the importance of reflection and meditation in our making decisions of this importance. Thank you.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Chairperson, I would say that as much as I am committed to this process, wanting to see that the right thing is done, I would definitely have to be going. It is six hours, not five hours, that I have to drive.

Mr. Chairperson: Can I suggest that a recess—do you want to recess till 1:30 or 1:45 and that will give us a chance to get a bite to eat? Then we will come back on a full stomach and reasoned, agreeable, thoughtful. Is it the agreement of the committee then to recess until 1:45?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

The committee recessed at 1:07 p.m.

After Recess

The committee resumed at 1:47 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: Recess being over, we will call the meeting to order again. There had been agreement earlier this morning that Bonnie Caldwell would bring in a written brief to accompany her presentation. The brief has been received and is now distributed to the committee. I just wanted to confirm that now all presentations are complete. Is that correct?

Some Honourable Members: Correct.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Chairman, I move, that the committee recommends to the government House leader (Mr. Ernst) that another meeting of the Law Amendments committee be scheduled for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 36.

Mr. Chairperson: Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will rise until rescheduled. Agreed? [agreed]

COMMITTEE ROSE AT: 1:49 p.m.

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION PRESENTED
BUT NOT READ**

To: Chair, Standing Committee, Law Amendments Bill 36, The Social Allowances Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

I would like to give you a picture of what it is like to live on welfare and how I got there.

I graduated from high school in 1967, when a high school diploma meant something. I had the foresight to go to Tec Voc and get a career as a secretary, because I knew I could not afford to go to university. I became a legal secretary. When I realized I could not work my way up into any better job in law offices, I moved into other businesses. I went to work as a secretary in an insurance company, for example, hoping I could work up into

administration and management. There were jobs available that I applied for and was qualified for but did not get. They had two prejudices: one, against women in management, and, the other, that they expected to hire insurance sales people for most of these jobs. I talked to many salesmen about an assistant manager's job. The problem was obvious. None of the salesmen wanted the job. If they were any good at sales, their earning potential was easily two, three, four times higher or more than the salary they could make in this job. They all thought I was a perfect candidate for the job. I did not want to go into sales, and I was already doing most of the work. To add insult to injury, when I asked my boss who was going to train the new assistant manager, he had the nerve to say, you are. I even offered to go to school at night to get my CLU, but I did not get the job.

And so I worked my way through the hotel and restaurant business, and was the first female bartender independently hired in the city of Winnipeg, at the Winnipeg Inn, now the Westin. I was a cocktail waitress, a good waitress, and earning \$50 and \$100 a night in tips 20 years ago. I managed restaurants. I went into the casino business, learned several games, was a pit boss and even trained the best roulette dealers the Winnipeg casinos had 15 years ago. I have done a number of other jobs. Each time I thought I was becoming a more valuable employee—more experienced, smarter and earning a better income.

Then the 1980s arrived. In Calgary, when employers looked at my resume, they said, wow, hire this woman. She is smart; she is capable; she has great ideas; she can do anything. She can think on her feet; she can solve problems. She is ambitious, and she will be a valuable employee.

Now, in the 1990s that same resume is interpreted in Winnipeg that I am irresponsible, unreliable, and a lot of people who are doing the hiring are afraid I will take their jobs. Trying to support myself and taking any job I can get to survive—part-time, temporary, underemployment—on my resume is interpreted as unreliable and irresponsible and a person who cannot keep a job.

In the 1980s I went into social services and daycare. I took a daycare course at RRCC and a counselling skills program at the University of Manitoba. I bought a starter home for \$45,000 but began to realize I could not survive

on the low wages and instability of social services jobs. Being a person who believes in solving problems and obviously not afraid of learning new jobs, I got my Class I licence, and my main occupation for the last five years has been a highway truck driver.

Three times in the last eight years, my UIC benefits have run out and I have been forced onto welfare, luckily for short periods of time. But why? I have 140-plus IQ and graduated with the highest average in my graduating class. Am I stupid? I have Grade 12 and some college and university. Am I uneducated? I have worked in umpteen businesses up to management positions, very successfully. Am I lacking in experience? When I did not see enough opportunities in one business, I moved to another. Am I lacking in ambition? When all the women's work I could do was only paying me \$25,000 a year and was not paying the bills, I learned to drive a truck. Am I lazy or lacking in problem-solving skills? I had a car accident when I was a child and was so afraid of cars that I did not get a licence to drive a car until I was 32 years old. Yet, in 1991, I got a Class I licence to drive a truck. Am I a wimp? I also learned to drive a school bus this year. I would like to take a driving instructor's course offered through RRCC and the Vehicle Licencing department. It would only take a few days, but I need \$1,000. I do not have it, and the government will not help me pay for it, not even through a loan.

Am I lazy? Do I not want to work? If I cannot get work and am on welfare, what about people with more problems and less opportunities than me? What about single mothers on welfare with no adequate daycare, where minimum wage jobs, if they could get them, would not make it worthwhile to work? If you wanted to help them get off welfare, you could enforce maintenance orders from the noncustodial parent to help them get money that is due them for living expenses and stop taxing these payments. This is not wages for work. This is simply earnings of one parent being shared by two for living expenses.

So why am I on welfare? Right now, because the trucking business is no place for a woman. It is an outrage—misogynist in the extreme and dangerous for everyone, including innocent people driving on the roads. I was not a happy camper to find that the No. 1 cause of my death—dying of a heart attack at 80 or 90—has now been replaced by dying any day in a truck accident.

Worse yet, I will live the rest of my life the victim of a rape or violent assault by a male co-driver, which is a very real threat. I have filed sexual harassment cases against five former employers or potential employers in the last five years. As a result I have been blacklisted in the trucking industry.

The human rights legislation in this country is a joke. I thought I would be protected. Instead I have jeopardized my whole life, career, safety and well-being, and nobody in power cares. They are protecting the employers. Trucking is also a dangerous business for all drivers, because most employers I have worked for do not want to spend the money to fix their trucks thereby putting trucks on the road that are unsafe. The president of one of my former employers said right to my face—when I raised this issue with him—I cannot afford to fix my trucks; every dollar spent on truck repairs comes right out of my profits.

Did you know that the Liberal government has disbanded the National Safety Code office which regulates trucking? The federal government never enforced the code anyway. It was up to each individual province to enforce it, if and when and how they want to, or not. What is the point of having laws that are not enforced? I have a hard time feeling sorry for this president—with his home in Tuxedo, two vacation homes, seven cars, his kids in university, et cetera.

So why do drivers tolerate this? Because they need jobs and are afraid to complain. They are not willing to take the risk I took in complaining. Yet, knowing the dangers, the extreme dangers of trucking, I must go back to work as a truck driver, if I can, in order to survive. Truck driver training programs are advertised at welfare offices. How can this government encourage people on welfare to apply for these dangerous jobs? Is it because you think welfare recipients are disposable people?

In a full page of articles in the Winnipeg Free Press in December 1994 on the trucking industry, the companies interviewed said they thought the industry had jobs for 500 drivers. Why, in this economic climate, would people not be taking jobs which could pay in the range of \$30,000 to \$45,000 a year? Because the business is so abusive, and the different levels of government are allowing this and condoning this by not enforcing labour laws and safety regulations, et cetera. You are protecting

employers and allowing them to abuse and harass employees using the excuse that these employers are providing jobs. What kind of jobs? If labour laws were enforced, there would still be jobs, good jobs, decent jobs, and our employment environment would be much more stable, healthy and profitable. It may mean, at first, cuts in salaries of management in order that the lowest paid workers could earn a decent living, and government does not want to do this. Do they? Is this indicative of a government attitude that the quality of our work and workplace is unimportant especially for the poorer classes?

In the meantime, all levels of government are collaborating on this new transportation hub at the Winnipeg International Airport, which will bring in more business for Winnipeg. This is great, but with all this excitement over new jobs, are you really assessing all the problems and solving them before we end up with a white elephant? It is said there will be hundreds of jobs created, several hundred for truck drivers. When the trucking industry is short 500 drivers now because people do not want them, where do they think they are going to get hundreds more truck drivers?

I think presenters in the last two days have made it abundantly clear that because people are desperate for jobs, they are suffering all kinds of danger and abuse to keep working. We must look to the government to protect us from abusive employers. Instead, is the government delivering us up to these very abusive employers they should be protecting us from?

What other problems have I had in looking for work? I cannot get a job in the restaurant business for several reasons. I have applied for jobs as a waitress and been interviewed by some kid in his 20s. The look on his face clearly said, who needs my mother working for me? I cannot get a job as a manager even with my experience in the business, including as a restaurant manager, because they will hire some kid with no experience but who has a diploma from RRCC in restaurant management. Most of these people have not eaten in a decent restaurant, let alone managed one at this age. I believe everyone has to start somewhere, and young people also have a right to a job, but they should not expect to start at the top and take jobs away from experienced workers. Our city, our province and perhaps the country in general, are too quick to equate education with experience and do not

place enough emphasis on the importance of a combination of education and experience, and so I cannot get a job that will support me.

Interviewers have also told me they do not pay as much money as I am used to getting and are afraid I would quit as soon as I got a job for more money. I wish they would tell me where this elusive well-paying job is, so I could apply for it right now. Besides, most of the jobs are part time, and I must be available for all shifts which means I cannot get a second job. With one part-time job, who would support me?

These same themes run throughout my employment and job search. As a school bus driver, I got up at 4 a.m. and got home about 7 p.m. I worked part time but spent most of my day at my employers for about \$50 a day. I may not be working the whole time, but the job was taking up 12 hours of my day. That amounts to \$4 an hour approximately. Some school bus drivers are mothers who have husbands supporting them and only want part-time work. Some are retirees who are working for something to do. Others are trying to get experience in bus driving in order to get a better paying job with companies such as Greyhound, Beaver Bus Lines, et cetera, but they, too, have spouses supporting them while they are working part time at low wages. I do not have that dubious privilege. I am single.

I have applied at the Crystal Casino. In spite of the fact that I have trained some of your dealers, I have to spend several weeks, unpaid, training to be a dealer. Then I have to be available for all shifts and have to start part time. It may take me a year or more to get a full-time job. Who is supporting me all this time? When I do get a full-time job, I will be earning under \$10 an hour. You may think \$5.40 is a livable wage. I do not.

A girlfriend of mine, married with three children, once told me, I would have left my husband because we are not getting along. Not getting along? Their life is a hell of screaming and yelling and stress. But, she says, what would I do? How would I survive with three children on my salary? I would lose everything—our house, car, security, and before long my husband would remarry, and I would never get money regularly from him. It would be a fight all the time, and I would still be dependent on him. When I see all the trouble and stress you are having surviving alone, and finding decent men to date, I realize

I would be no better off. At least my husband has a steady job and he does not beat me.

What a criteria for marriage—he has a steady job and at least he does not beat me. Some women, a lot of women do not have that luxury. Women are painfully aware that a society sees marriage as one solution to our problem of survival. How many times have I been told to get married, find a man, just for this reason. Is this what I have to stoop to, simply selling myself to survive? This is nothing more than legalized prostitution, and we wonder why there is so much domestic violence. At least my home is still a haven of peace and rest for me. Why would I want to disrupt that simply to eat and not lose my house? Do I not have a choice of what man I would enjoy spending the rest of my life with?

I have been asked to speak to young women at Tec Voc about the advantages of getting a good secretarial training. How can I, in all honesty, encourage them to do any job which I know will not pay them enough money to live decently? That includes most women's work, like office work, hotel and restaurant work, daycare, et cetera. I have been asked to speak to women about going into nontraditional occupations. Yes, I believe women can be just as capable at men's work; girls can be just as good at science and math. How can I encourage them to take up nontraditional occupations that may pay them a decent wage and that they may be good at, without warning them of the very real dangers of sexual harassment, discrimination, abuse, even violence and rape, that await them if they choose these jobs? They may be capable of this kind of work; that does not mean employers and society in general is going to let them do this work without a fight—whoops. I spelled “men” as “mean”. A Freudian slip, I guess.

Do you know some of the jobs I have had in the past year in order to keep working? I answered an ad for Mr. Bones Pizza. The ad said I could earn \$100 a night as a delivery person. We were classified as self-employed. By no definition are we self-employed. The restaurant was open from 4 p.m. to 4 a.m. We were given a schedule; we had to stay there at the restaurant for our whole shift, not getting paid when we did not have a delivery. I usually worked 12 hours a day, earning no more than \$70 a night, and out of that I had to pay my car expenses. The gas alone was usually \$15 to \$25 a night. That amounts to about \$2 to \$4 per hour. When we were

not delivering pizza, our employer would make us do other work but did not pay us. At the end of the night, we were paid a contract rate to stay and clean up, usually \$5 or \$7.50, so that they did not have to pay their cooks who were hourly employees. My last night, I worked a 12-hour shift. At 6:30 a.m., after working for two and a half hours for \$7.50, while I was washing the floors for the third time because the manager was in a bad mood and wanted someone to abuse, I got fed up and left. I was fired. Because they did not have to pay us for being there, they did not care how many people they hired—often having 10 people to do what half that many people could do, thus cutting our income.

I filed a complaint with the Manitoba Labour Board. The investigator eventually called me and said, if I was classified as employed, my employer would owe me, I think it was \$490 at minimum wage, and they were offering me \$250 to cancel my complaint. I refused. I told her I wanted her to make a decision as to whether I was self-employed or an employee. She said she could not do that. She said she did not want to influence my decision, but if I did not accept this offer, she would have to send my complaint to the board, that it would take a long time for a decision, and there was no guarantee I would win my case. I told her I would be glad to go before a board and force them to make a decision on whether we were employees and to enforce that decision on the company to stop these abusive practices. The next day the investigator phoned and said, Ms. Caldwell, I have a cheque in my hand for you for \$516.35 from Mr. Bones Pizza in full settlement of your claim. By the way, I recalculated your claim and discovered you were also entitled to holiday pay for one statutory holiday you worked.

What were these people so afraid of? By accepting this settlement, my complaint was cancelled; it was as if it had never been made. There was no admission of wrongdoing on the part of the employer, and the Labour Board did not make a determination as to our status as employees; therefore, the decision is not binding on the employer and they can continue to operate as before and exploit their employees. There are many companies operating like this and the government knows this and condones it. Not only restaurant delivery places, but couriers, for example. I talked to a man working as a courier, self-employed. After his UIC ran out and to keep from getting depressed, he took up being a courier. He

works more than 40 hours a week and last year after his expenses such as his car, he earned under \$2,000 for the year. There are hundreds, perhaps thousands of jobs like these in this city. These employers prey on desperate people like immigrants who may not speak English and fear they cannot get any other work, people whose only other choice may be welfare, and people who need a second job, particularly a second job that pays cash or under the table in order to survive because they cannot live on one full-time job. At the same time, these employees may not declare their earnings and pay income tax, but the government is forcing people into this in order to survive.

We have a totally unworkable employment situation in Manitoba. Most adults are working. Either both parents in a family are working, because they have to work or because they chose to work. No adult should be working a 40-hour per week job and not be able to earn enough to live and raise a family. It cannot be done on \$5.40 per hour minimum wage. So minimum wage earners are taking on two jobs, thereby taking away a job from another adult who needs it. I believe \$12 an hour, or \$25,000 per year, is the minimum wage any adult can live on and raise a family. That may sound like an impossible jump. It means cutting down on the inflated wages of management and less disparity of wages between jobs. But now we have adults working under the table at second, or even primary jobs, and not paying taxes because they cannot survive otherwise. Imagine the taxes the government would collect from a decent living wage, all of which was being declared.

Child labour is becoming increasingly common. This summer a friend asked me about a job I had delivering ad mail for Canada Post. He wanted to find his two oldest children a job he could teach them and supervise them from home. Those children are nine and a half and eight years old. Both parents are working; dad is also looking for a second job. Over and over in the middle classes, I am hearing parents tell me they no longer give their children allowance. They have to work for their money and not just spending money for extras. Their children as young as eight and nine are working, not just to learn responsibility but to earn money for necessities such as clothes and school supplies. And no longer are children just babysitting and shovelling snow for their money, they are taking away jobs that adults need in order to support their families. Employers are benefiting by

underpaying these children and/or receiving subsidies from the government for this child labour.

Children should only have two things on their minds until they graduate from high school—being children and getting an education. With most parents working, now is the time children could be helping out at home—learning skills they will need as adults, learning how to look after themselves and sharing some responsibility at home, where both parents are working all day and could use the help. This does not mean I believe in slave labour in the home either. I mean children being taught age-appropriate chores and helping the parents, not doing it all.

The government should also be enhancing the education system, not cutting its funding, so that we do not turn out more generations of children who are not prepared for the working world. This means making children work at school so that they do not graduate from high school barely functionally literate. This means more tests, essays and homework. I would advocate raising the high school leaving age to 18, increasing the school day to 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., with curricular activities, study time, time for homework, and extra tutoring for students having difficulty with certain subjects. It would allow parents more flexibility in dropping children off and picking them up to work around their own work schedules. Job skills and work experience should be a part of the school curriculum, but this does not mean the private sector gets child slave labour either. Let the students work at volunteer jobs and community service, et cetera.

Raise the minimum wage and strictly enforce the labour laws in order to end abuses in the workplace. If people were paid a decent minimum wage and benefits, trained properly, worked full time where there was actual full-time work available, that does not mean two or three full-time jobs masquerading as four or six part-time jobs, had more job security and forced employers to use good business management techniques and not gouge their employees to make more profits and higher incomes for themselves, we would be working only one job each, would be paying income tax which would increase government money for education, health and social programs.

I stood on a dock one day looking at all the truck drivers unloading trailers for nothing. In order to get this

particular customer's business, trucking companies which received these contracts would offer to unload the trailers for the customer rather than the customer having to pay their own dock workers. As a result, the trucking companies did not pay us to unload. At this particular warehouse there were about 20 docks, open 24 hours per day, I think seven days a week with at least one driver at each dock and a steady stream of trucks unloading all day. You figure it out: 20 docks x 1 driver x 20 hours per day x 350 days per year x \$10 per hour = \$1.4 million. At 33 percent income tax, that is \$0.5 million in unpaid taxes in a year, and that was at one dock. How much money in unpaid wages or underpaid wages do you estimate in the city of Winnipeg alone and unpaid taxes?

People do have a will to survive. Living on welfare is an exercise simply in survival and takes a lot of effort. There is no incentive to give up welfare considering most people are on welfare for a good reason to start with. There will always be some people who abuse any system, but most of the people abusing the system on welfare are people who get on welfare for a good reason and then find that abusing the system is the only way to survive.

I certainly would be working if I could, and will be again. In the meantime, how am I to survive? I have a starter home worth \$45,000. Not living outrageously, I would say. My mortgage is not much more than rent would be, but I have some additional expenses, such as taxes and insurance. I get \$280 a month to pay for all my utilities, food and insurance, as well as my taxes and phone and disability insurance, which welfare will not pay. I cannot make ends meet, even if I do not eat. How does welfare expect us to live like this? How can I look for a job with no phone?

I also think it would make sense to at least give welfare recipients a bus pass to help them apply for work. My disability insurance is also a sensible thing to have, and it would be a total waste losing it. I have had it for 20 years at 1975 rates. I will never get this insurance for those rates again. Surely, disability insurance is a worthwhile thing for me to keep and would keep me off government assistance if I ever had an accident. Actually, for \$1,000 a month, I would be better off jumping in front of a car and collecting my insurance. When I have actually tried to be a responsible person, you behave irresponsibly and try to take all security away from me.

Welfare also warned me they will only pay my mortgage for 4 months, until December 1996, and then I will have to dispose of my house. What possible purpose can be served by my losing my house?—which is exactly what will happen. It is so old, it is basically unsaleable. I will simply have to abandon it. And what will I do with my belongings? My household will not fit into an apartment, and I will not be able to afford storage. How would I hold a yard sale in December? And what would I get for my possessions at yard sale prices? Why should I lose everything I have spent 46 years building up because of a few months of unemployment? And how long will it take me to pack up a household? I will be working at it for months—months that could be more productive looking for work. Would it not make more sense to help me? Take a look at my actual expenses, and if you want to consider the extras, like my mortgage, taxes, et cetera, a loan, by all means put a lien on my house, and let me pay it back at some later date. That is fair, but do not destroy my whole life, so that I will never recover.

I cannot believe that you will not let us make over \$95 a month, when that \$95 will not even bring us up to minimum wage based on a 40-hour week. Therefore, there is no incentive to earn more than \$95 a month until a welfare recipient can get a permanent, full-time job for enough money to take them totally off welfare. But that is not the way our employment climate is now. Most employers want us to start part time at minimum wage and slowly get more hours and a higher wage. If welfare would continue to pay us until we worked our way up to a secure position, and we were actually able to get back on our feet, there would be less likelihood of our ending up back on welfare in a short time. Getting back on our feet means paying for some of the extras we had to put on hold while we were on welfare. Being on welfare puts us further and further behind and takes a while to catch up.

I also do not understand why UIC and welfare penalize us for working at volunteer jobs. Has anyone heard of networking? In social services especially, volunteering is a normal, legitimate means of networking and finding a job. It also keeps from losing hope and getting depressed.

I remember learning something about Buddhism from a TV show. In India, a young boy was explaining to another boy: Think of something you want more than

anything else in the world. How will it make you feel not to get it? This is the root of human suffering—to want things one cannot have.

It is sad to realize that the surest way to survive for a long period of time on welfare is to stop wanting, to give up one's hopes and dreams and to be content on welfare. The ones who cannot do that and are looking for work and trying to make a better life for themselves may be the ones who suffer the most stress. When I was suddenly cut off UIC without warning in July, I spent the whole summer really sick with the flu on and off. I developed stress ulcers and two different infections in my ears and an eye infection, all brought on by stress. For my own health, I would be better off not wanting to work, not caring if I lost my house, et cetera. It is the best defence mechanism I could have. This is what happens to a lot of people on welfare. They give up hope and give up caring.

Help people on welfare. Do not hurt them more. If there are not enough jobs for people who can still compete in the job market, how do you expect welfare recipients to get jobs that do not exist? We could apply for hundreds of jobs. That does not mean someone is going to hire us. Unfortunately, it is usually the same people who keep getting rejected over and over, who are uneducated, unqualified and unsuitable in other ways, often not very legitimate reasons—age, sex, marital status, overqualified, underqualified, et cetera—who fall through the cracks and end up on welfare. These people already have a history before they end up on welfare and give up hope.

I agree people should be expected to do something to improve their living conditions while they are on welfare, but welfare will not let them. If you truly want to get people off welfare, you must deal with welfare recipients as individuals, find out what their particular circumstances and problems and needs are. If that means setting up every community centre and church basement as a welfare assessment and training centre, let us do it. Make everyone get up every morning, if they can, send their school-age children off to school and bring their preschoolers to the nearest centre in their community. The disabled, et cetera, can be visited at home. Assess the family's needs. If they need more education or job training, give it to them. Life skills, parenting skills, job skills, et cetera, should all be part of the program. Set up

daycares on the premises with some professional child care workers, where the parents can take turns working there and learning parenting skills, where they can leave their children to look for work, et cetera.

Let them volunteer at work of their choice and help place them in job training programs that do not amount to slave labour or forced labour. They should not be working to meet some quota but should actually be doing some on-the-job training in an occupation of their choice, which will actually lead to a job. They should be receiving minimum wage from the employer, not the government, and the government should be monitoring their work and the training provided by the employer to see that it is actually meeting their needs and the employer's needs. There should also be some criteria established that the employer has to meet as well.

This has to be a co-operative effort between government, business, industry and labour. I think the difference between what I am proposing—and what a lot of people want—and what is proposed by workfare is a difference in attitude.

I worked in a couple of government programs which fell short of these criteria. I was hired this summer under Section 25 of the UIC act. It was supposed to give me an opportunity to work and the employer a chance to see my work before hiring me. Why? Why should these employers not have to hire workers in the same hiring process as anyone else? It was just a scam for the government to buy votes with our tax dollars while employers got free labour. The idea was for the company to hire me full time. Funny thing was they got one person after another, after another, and no one was ever suitable for the job. The employer kept getting free labour, and UIC kept paying one UIC recipient after another. For what? One of the worst problems was the employer was actually sabotaging all our work and finding fault with each . . .

In my truck driver training program, it started out with the right idea: I chose to learn to drive a truck and was interviewed and hired or sponsored by the employer, but in spite of the signed agreement between all parties, it meant nothing. The employer was supposed to be monitoring our initial training with the Manitoba Trucking Association which never happened. Then when we went to our trucking company for the third month, our

on-the-job training, the government and the MTA did not monitor our progress, so it just turned into one month of free labour for the company while UIC paid us. The company was not responsible or accountable to anyone for what they did with us for the month. If the government is going to pay us in return for on-the-job training, they should hold the company accountable for what we do and what we learn. They should establish some expectations of the company for this month of free labour. That is the difference between workplace and real on-the-job training, choices by the employee and employer and responsibility and accountability by all parties to each other.

Does this government understand the meaning of these two words: responsibility, accountability? It means having some criteria or expectations for each party to meet and someone to answer to or the deal is off.

In most cases, the employers should be paying employees themselves for the work performed if the company is getting some benefit from their work. In the case of truck driving, where a lot of training is necessary and the amount of work the employer receives from the trainee is negligible in comparison to the time and money spent by the company for a trainer, I can understand the government continuing to pay us UIC.

So the solutions I propose are: (1) Provide better public school education to keep more children from becoming welfare recipients. (2) Stop child labour and give jobs back to adults. (3) Raise the minimum wage to a decent living wage, so people only need to work one job each.

(4) Enforce labour laws on employers, i.e., no scam jobs like self-employment and contract labour whose purpose is to circumvent minimum wage laws and other labour legislation; employers to pay for all work; no free labour from employees; no government funding to the private sector for jobs where employers are receiving benefit; turn several part-time jobs back into full-time jobs. This will increase salaries and increase the amount of taxes paid and decrease the necessity for work paid under the table.

(5) Assess welfare recipients on an individual basis and provide for all legitimate needs, including telephone, bus passes, health needs, education, training, daycare, on-a-loan basis, if necessary, for things like mortgage payments. (6) Enforce maintenance and support orders on noncustodial parents. (7) Enforce human rights legislation for all workers to eliminate all abuses by employers.

Let me tell you how I first learned about democracy. I am the only girl in a family of three brothers. My older brother is four years older and the other two are three and four and a half years younger. When we first got a TV, there were fights all the time over which channel to watch, even when we only had two channels. Inevitably, I would want to watch one channel, while the three boys would choose the other, even when once we changed the channel, they usually walked away and did not watch TV anyway.

This was obviously just a power game for them. They very rarely watched TV at any time, even when they had forced me to change the channel. One day, my older brother who had been learning about democracy in school suggested we choose the channel democratically. Let us vote, he said. Of course, I chose one channel and my two younger brothers sided with my older brother for the other channel. My older brother walked away, very smug. Every time my brother said, let us vote, I already knew the outcome, so I simply got up and walked away. It did not take me too long to figure out I would always be powerless in this situation and that this was no way to live. The solution for me was to appeal to a higher power to protect my interests and mediate a fair solution, so I went to my mother—my parents were divorced.

Does democracy simply mean he who has the power wins? Does your power in the democratic process not carry with it the responsibility of a social conscience? Are you simply going to act like my three brothers, abusing their power, or will you take a mediator's role to protect the interests of the weaker people in our society from the abuse of the more powerful?

Ms. J. Bonnie Caldwell