

Manitoba's new family plan

Manitoba is considering a new family law, and although all parties in the Manitoba legislature appear to be in favour of most of the proposed changes, the business world is distinctly uneasy.

The bill is mainly concerned with marital property, its fundamental philosophy being based on the premise that all property acquired during married life belongs to both partners. Thus the bill will provide for a shared division of all domestic and commercial assets should the marriage break down, with each party being responsible for one-half of all liabilities. However, a judge will be able to vary this ratio, where in his view an equal sharing would cause "unconscionable hardship". Maintenance will no longer be determined by fault. Instead, it will depend on need.

The bill makes a distinction between family assets and commercial assets, but even so business and legal experts are alarmed that the bill will lead to endless and expensive litigation.

The Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce has argued that the bill will discourage people from doing business in Manitoba,

and that every financial institution holding loans to businesses in Manitoba would have to review those loans. Most of the debtors' businesses would be able to guarantee only 50 per cent of the assets on which the loans were made, since the other half of those assets "are potentially lost". Moreover, business partners, associates and creditors, who have nothing to do with a marriage breakdown, may be heavily penalized by the bill's provisions.

All assets other than homestead are commercial assets, including family salaries. This, some critics say, contradicts the principle that a wife who stays at home is entitled to an allowance. Because salaries are considered a commercial asset, a spouse will have to keep track of the partner's earnings throughout the married life. Other problems may arise out of pensions and insurance plans.

There is, however, a solution. Persons married before the new law comes into effect can opt out of the legislation unilaterally within six months after the bill's announcement; thereafter both parties to the marriage may choose to ignore the provisions by mutual consent. However, each partner must first prove that before taking this important step he or she has received independent legal advice.

Pollution levels decreasing

Winnipeg Mayor Steve Juba, has had attractive cans manufactured containing samples of air! "Winnipeg, mid-Canada's convention city, is noted for the world's cleanest air, why settle for just a sample... come and enjoy all you can breathe," reads the inscription on the cover of the can.

Twelve of the cans were dispatched to mayor David Crombie of Toronto, who, however, may have his own views about the advantages of Winnipeg over Toronto where unpolluted air is concerned. Although there are no factories which pollute the air in Winnipeg, and winds in the area are great "sweepers", unfortunately, the wind not only sweeps away pollutants, it can also bring some in.

During last year's drought, when peat and brush burned all around Winnipeg and dust from dry soil swirled in the air, pollution there was extremely high. But even in normal times Toronto's pollution in residential areas exceeds that of Winnipeg by only a few points. The last available statistics show that in 1974 Toronto had a count of 23 (out of a maximum of 38) of suspended particulates in its commercial district, whereas Winnipeg had a count of 21. However, in its commercial district Toronto had a count of two (out of a maximum 11) of sulphur dioxide, where Winnipeg had none.

In its residential districts Toronto had a count four of sulphur dioxide, which is fairly high. Winnipeg had none, but it had a count of 12 of suspended particulates compared to one in Halifax and five in Edmonton.

Pollution levels across Canada are decreasing, especially in carbon monoxide. On a regional basis, the Prairie provinces show the lowest level of pollution in all of Canada. The highest level is found in the large cities of Ontario and Quebec. Montreal is one of the most polluted cities, but it is only slightly better in Quebec City and Hamilton; Windsor's industrial area showed a count of 31 suspended particulates out of a maximum of 38, with Sydney, Nova Scotia reaching that maximum.

Sudbury, Ontario continues to have a high sulphur dioxide pollution in its residential districts. Edmonton tops all other cities for clean air, followed by Regina, Saskatoon in Saskatchewan, Calgary, and Victoria, British Columbia.

British hovercraft for Canadian Coastguard Service



This 12-ton SR.N6 hovercraft from the British Hovercraft Corporation in southern England undergoes final trials before going into service with the Canadian Coastguard Service in Vancouver.

The Coastguard which has been operating the smaller SR.N5 hovercraft in a search-and-rescue role since 1968, has completed over 1,400 rescue missions.

Over 50 SR.N6 craft are currently in use in civil, military and para-military use throughout the world.