



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. XLVIII No. 40A - 10 a.m., Thursday, April 30, 1998

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
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DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
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DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
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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.
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MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
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PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
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SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
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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.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 30, 1998

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 24—Provincial Land Use Policies

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that

“WHEREAS the Government of Manitoba has enacted Provincial Land Use policies; and

“WHEREAS there is evidence that the Provincial Government has not implemented these policies; and

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government has adopted the Round Table on Environment and Economy's “Principles and Guidelines for Sustainable Development”; and

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government has not approved and implemented a comprehensive and long-term capital region strategy or plan as requested in Plan Winnipeg, 1993; and

“WHEREAS subdivisions are consuming farmland, especially around Winnipeg, threatening the operation of remaining farms; and

“WHEREAS the aquifer to the north of the City of Winnipeg is at critical capacity to support current development and there is no potable water to the west and south of Winnipeg; and

“WHEREAS peri-urban development depends on provincial, and sometimes federal, subsidies for a broad

range of infrastructure, giving the Province substantial control over new development; and

“WHEREAS peri-urban development attracts more affluent urban residents, thereby eroding the assessment base of existing urban centres; and

“WHEREAS this increases the burden of commuter traffic on their infrastructure and services.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Provincial Government to conform to Provincial Land Use Policy Regulations and the Principles and Guidelines for Sustainable Development to safeguard Manitoba's environmental and economic future for generations to come; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Provincial Government to prepare, approve and implement a comprehensive and long-term capital strategy as requested in Plan Winnipeg; and

“BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the Provincial Government to consider requiring planners, lawyers and the Municipal Board to specifically and openly record the compliance of draft development plans, development plan amendments and subdivision applications with the Provincial Land Use Policy Regulation.”

Motion presented.

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, this is the third time that this resolution has been on the Order Paper, and I believe only the first time it has been debated because of the draw order. I am very pleased today to present this resolution and urge the provincial government to support the resolution in its entirety.

If the provincial government members support this resolution, all they will be doing is agreeing to what they have already said they will do. All we are asking is that they abide by the Provincial Land Use policies

that they put in place first in 1980, a Tory government and then amended in 1994, another Tory government.

Madam Speaker, these Provincial Land Use policies, if followed, would ensure a healthy, vital and vibrant province of Manitoba in its entirety. It would ensure that sustainable development would have a chance to actually come to fruition in this province. It would ensure or go a long way towards ensuring that urban sprawl and urban decay would not continue as they are in the city of Winnipeg, that problems that other urban centres throughout the province of Manitoba are experiencing with their exurban developments would not be exacerbated and that, as I have said, the entire province would become more sustainable and provide a higher quality of life for all of its residents. It is a simple proposition. It is one that should be endorsed completely and unanimously by this House because it is only asking the government to do what they have said they were going to do anyway.

Unfortunately, and not to prejudge what the government members will say, but I am assuming that they will not be able or will not choose to support this resolution. I hope that I am wrong, to the government House leader, but I somehow do not think I am.

Madam Speaker, why do you have land use policies that are Provincial Land Use policies? What is the reason for having these things in the first place? Well, I would like to quote very briefly a statement from Peter Diamond who was a former deputy minister of Manitoba Urban Affairs and a former city councillor in the city of Winnipeg, who has a great deal of experience in land use planning, urban issues and sustainable development. He said, in the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg's September 1990 newsletter *Specifics* and I quote: The land use plan is the physical manifestation of a number of social and economic decisions. It redistributes wealth, provides opportunities for some, denies access to others and dictates what can be built, a very succinct statement about what Provincial Land Use policies are all about.

If the government followed its Provincial Land Use policies, it would, in fact, redistribute wealth. It would, in fact, provide opportunities for some and deny access to others and would, in fact, dictate what can be built. To be fair, the government's decision in many cases to

not follow the Provincial Land Use policies does have implications for who is protected, who has access to land, who is denied access to land, what wealth is redistributed. I would suggest, Madam Speaker, that in the context of the last 10 years of this government, we have seen unfortunately very little wealth redistribution, and that wealth redistribution as it relates to land use policies has not been towards assisting the older inner neighbourhoods of the city of Winnipeg, has not been to help the other urban centres that are seeing major problems on their peripheries, but frankly, has been used to increase the wealth, redistribute the wealth upwards. Wealthy land developers, wealthy residents, wealthy businesses have profited by the lack of compliance with the Provincial Land Use policies over the term of this government. This is not what Provincial Land Use policies were designed to do.

Many members, particularly of government, I believe, probably do not understand or know what some of the Provincial Land Use policies say. I think I am going to read into the record a few paragraphs from the Provincial Land Use policies that were amended in 1994 by this very government, so that this government can see what it is not doing, what policies it is not following, and I quote: When considering a proposed development, full cost-accounting techniques should be used so that anticipated direct and indirect benefits are compared with all relevant and measurable direct and indirect financial, economic, social and environmental costs over both short and long terms.

It is simple, straightforward, declarative sentences. What has happened, in effect, though, is this has not happened. To give only one example, Madam Speaker, we have been asking—the government has been saying it is going to happen, it is going to happen, and now saying it is probably not going to happen—for a suburban cost study, a growth management study that would, in fact, tell the people of Manitoba exactly what the direct/indirect costs are for development, both development within the city limits, in the city of Winnipeg or city of Steinbach or in Dauphin or Brandon and outside those city limits. So we are not just talking about sprawl outside the Perimeter Highway; we are talking about sprawl within. We are talking about suburban developments that have costs associated with them; they have economic costs, if nothing else, associated with them.

* (1010)

Developers are supposed to pay for things such as water and sewer hookup and the basic roads that they put into the development, and I am sure that they do, but we do not know specifically because we do not have that cost study. The developers and, by extension, the people who buy the housing in those developments are not required to pay for additional schools that are required, additional hospitals—although heaven knows those will not be happening—all of those—community centres—should they ever be built again in the city of Winnipeg. Those costs, which are costs borne by all the citizens of the community, are costs that should be attributed to the cost of the development.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am not suggesting at this point—and I want to make this point very clear to the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau)—I am not suggesting that every single one of those indirect or direct costs should be or must be attached to the charge or the specific charges made to developers and, by extension, the residents of those developments because we do not know what they are. Before you can make a policy decision on cost distribution, you need to know what those costs are.

But, Madam Speaker, it is well known that the community as a whole pays major costs, both direct and indirect, for expansion outside the urban centre. Provincial Land Use policies take a cognizance of that effect, and they talk about the need to start from the centre of an urban community.

One other policy that is in the Provincial Land Use policy says: The new development should not result in unexpected or unreasonable costs to the public. Prior to approval, developers may—and I parenthetically would change this to shall—be required to show anticipated direct and indirect public expenditures which may—and I would change that to shall—result from the proposed development and future potential phases of the development. Developers may—I would change it to shall—also be required—maybe this one I would not change. Developers may also be required to pay for some or all of these anticipated costs.

We do not know what those costs are. We give the developers practically free reign to develop anywhere

in the province they want to, certainly more free reign than would happen if these policies were followed, and then we say: you pay for the basic stuff at the beginning, but we are not going to take a long-term view of what the costs are to the community as a whole or to the province as a whole. This is unacceptable.

The Provincial Land Use policy is also saying that we should have, and I quote: the efficient, orderly and compact development of Manitoba's urban centres.

This is not what is happening in the city of Winnipeg today. What is happening in the city of Winnipeg is that policies followed by this government and Provincial Land Use policies not followed by this government are having an impact on the city of Winnipeg in several areas. Older sections of the city are decaying. West Broadway, the west end of the city, Weston, Brooklands, the entire north end, even older communities such as Elmwood, Crescentwood, Fort Rouge area, all of the areas around the inner city, the core, are disintegrating to one extent or another.

Part of that, a good portion of that is that the province has chosen over the last 10 years to not follow its own Provincial Land Use policies. The Municipal Board has given time after time after time approval to developments outside the city of Winnipeg and outside other urban regions that fly in the face of the Provincial Land Use policies that take prime agricultural land away from our land base, that put large-lot residential developments in areas where there is no potable water, where the water supply is limited, where we do not know the environmental degradation that could happen, but we know that it will where this government has encouraged urban sprawl, not tried to discourage it.

This government should know, if it reads the newspapers, certainly about the cities in the United States, that the costs of urban sprawl are enormous; the social and economic costs of urban sprawl are enormous. You need to go only to the city of Detroit to see that happen; go to the city of Chicago. Any large urban centre or medium-sized urban centre in the United States that has not taken cognizance of the concerns of urban sprawl has lived to pay the penalty, and Winnipeg, being the centre for 65 or 67 percent of the population in the province of Manitoba, is even more important.

We have a huge responsibility here. We also have to ensure that our community and our province remain healthy. We have the plans in place in regulation to ensure that, to go a long way towards ensuring that. This government, through its ignoring the Provincial Land Use policies in large measure over the last 10 years, has chosen to help destroy urban life.

Just one brief final comment before I conclude my remarks, and that is, in 1985 rural municipalities around the city of Winnipeg had 508 residential housing starts. That same year, 1985, there were 2,701 housing starts in the city of Winnipeg. In 1997 in the rural municipalities there was a reduction of 70 housing starts, down to 430, but Winnipeg's housing starts went from 2,700 in 1985 to 892 in 1997. The rural municipalities went from 15.7 percent of the housing starts to 31.39 percent, and Winnipeg went from 83 percent of housing starts to 65 percent of housing starts in the Capital Region. That is urban sprawl.

The impact of those statistics—

An Honourable Member: Are you saying we should not develop the rural areas now, Becky?

Ms. Barrett: Madam Speaker, I am not saying we should not develop in the rural areas. I am saying development in the city and in the province as a whole should follow the Provincial Land Use policies. They have not and we have seen a distortion in the quality of life for the people in the Capital Region, for the people in the city of Winnipeg and, by extension, for the people in the province of Manitoba as a whole.

I urge the government to support this resolution.

Hon. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): Madam Speaker, I am delighted to put a few comments on the record on this issue. In doing so, I am also wanting to put on the record some of the comments that the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) would be making at this time. He is, as you know, meeting with a large number of Manitobans at the successful Rural Forum in Brandon, where he is hosting those very exciting developmental days that impact particularly on rural Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I am going to acknowledge that the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) was

gracious enough to acknowledge that the planning did commence, in fact, with a Tory government back in 1980, and I was a member of that original Provincial Land Use Committee that she referred to. We affectionately refer to it as the PLUC committee. This PLUC committee meets on average every other month to deal with the issues with respect to land use, and it was my privilege to have been on that committee from its very start.

Where she is going to be disappointed in this response, but should not be, of all people who should not be, it should not be honourable members opposite, who in the title of their political persona, their party, pull out the words “democrat”, “democracy.” They call themselves democrats, and throughout the provincial land use planning that my government, past and present, supports is the absolute confidence and reliance on local governments in making the decisions. Local people, through their councils, will make their decisions. They will not always make the right decisions, I am sure. They will sometimes make questionable decisions, but the way the legislation is set out, it certainly empowers local governments to do that, and that is extremely important.

* (1020)

I am delighted to make that point on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Rural Development and municipal development, because as Minister of Agriculture, for instance, I am often accused, particularly in some specific agricultural endeavours such as pork production, for instance, to try to foist my views, the views of the Department of Agriculture, who happen to be supportive of pork production in the province of Manitoba, on reluctant municipalities. The planning process that is in place clearly sets out that it is the local first government that is there that will decide what the nature of the municipality will be, what kind of economic development will take place within the confines of their municipality and, Madam Speaker, that is how it should be.

So when the honourable member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) rather eloquently in her introduction of this matter says that we shall ensure this to happen, that we will ensure that to happen, that we will ensure this not to happen, that we will ensure all these things to

happen, I do not claim that we can do that. I happen to know within the bosom of my soul that it is right and proper that Manitobans continually elect Tory governments to office. Sometimes they do not, and, in my point of view, that is, of course, a terrible mistake and a tragedy, but people will do these things from time to time. Municipalities will from time to time do certain things that, in the eyes of some, are not always what they should be.

So, Madam Speaker, let us be very clear that the resolutions that deal with Provincial Land Use policies of my government, particularly as they relate to residential growth in municipalities surrounding the city of Winnipeg, have a great deal of this reliance in their own hands.

The members ask and call the government to do three things: No. 1, to conform to Provincial Land Use policy regulations and the principles and guidelines for sustainable development; No. 2, they put in place long-term land use strategy for the Capital Region; and No. 3, they seek compliance by planners, lawyers and municipal boards of draft development plans, development plan amendments and subdivision applications within the Provincial Land Use policy regulations.

I would like to begin this response on behalf of my colleague the minister responsible to this resolution by emphasizing that the province continues to work with all parties with respect to these concerns. We have done this by putting into place Provincial Land Use policies to help assist with a decision-making process. In fact, the province, as has already been acknowledged, first adopted Provincial Land Use policies as regulation under The Planning Act in 1980. The policies were revised in September 1994 to make them more current and to bring them in line with the principles and guidelines of sustainable development. However, it must be remembered that the policies are general in nature and only serve as a guide where municipalities have not adopted development plans.

Madam Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear that where a municipality has implemented its own development plans, that development plan will set the tone for local development. All subsequent development and subdivision applications are reviewed

under the local development plan. The success of this planning program and the proliferation of planning districts means that today the vast majority of development applications are now reviewed under local plans, not Provincial Land Use policies. The committee that I am a member of, the Provincial Land Use Committee, deals with very, very few of the developmental plans that are in constant progress throughout the province of Manitoba. These are dealt with at the local level. But, by and large, you know, and I repeat, by and large, the decision making occurs at the local level where it belongs. Of course, what this also does, it takes into consideration the local issues and priorities of municipalities.

If a municipality does not want pork production in their boundaries, they will not have pork production in their boundaries, just that simple. If a municipality does not want a particular type of industry, they will not have it. I know for instance, and it was my privilege, I do not represent it now, my colleague the member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) now represents that fine community of Stonewall. But Stonewall, which is a thriving community just 20 minutes north of the city of Winnipeg, quite frankly, does not want and is very specific the kind of industry development it wants within its community and has turned down on a number of occasions applications for kinds of industries that in their minds were not welcome in that community, and that is as it should be, Madam Speaker.

I may quarrel with it, individual citizens may quarrel with it, but their leverage, if you like, on that situation is to take more seriously whom they elect at two local governments, to take more seriously and support more seriously their local councils, their reeves, their mayors, their councils in order to get the kind of policies that are suitable to that region. I believe that as a result of this approach, municipalities will use common sense and discretion in making their planning decisions and will also factor in the provincial land use plan into their local development plans.

In addition, the province's Interdepartmental Planning Board also plays a role in reviewing plans in terms of provincial interests. The board brings together senior level management from all provincial departments and agencies which have a significant interest in the sustainable development of land and resources. It also

provides an interdepartmental consultation and co-ordination forum for reviewing and making recommendations regarding government legislation, policy, projects and programs. In both The Planning Act and The City of Winnipeg Act, the planning process is designed to be an open one. There is a requirement that public notice of application be given and that a public hearing be held.

Additionally, there is provision for an appeal. However, and I come to this important stipulation again, the responsibility for decision making ultimately rests with the elected representatives who are accountable to their local constituents. In making their decisions, elected officials will factor in public opinion, technical and professional assessments, financial impacts and whatever other considerations may have a bearing on how they proceed.

Madam Speaker, this resolution also suggests that the provincial government has not implemented a long-term Capital Region Strategy. I would like to emphasize that the Capital Region Strategy was adopted by the province and announced in a news release on May 10, 1996, some two years ago. Since then, we have been proceeding with the implementation of that strategy. As with planning issues, I want to point out that it is not our intention to dictate to municipal officials within the Capital Region how to move forward within implementation of that strategy.

We developed the Capital Region Strategy in a spirit of co-operation. It is our intent to continue to work with all parties. For example, we have established a task force of nominated members of the Capital Region Committee to address issues related to implementation of the strategy. The Capital Region Committee is composed of the mayors of the City of Winnipeg, the towns of Selkirk and Stonewall, and the reeves of 13 rural municipalities surrounding the city. In addition, the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach) and my honourable colleagues the Urban Affairs Minister, Jack Reimer, and Environment minister are also members of that committee. So, as you can see, along with the City of Winnipeg, all regions and communities that may be affected by land use practices are represented and have a say in the process.

* (1030)

Madam Speaker, it never was or will be our intention to force decisions on our elected municipal officials. I suppose that really is the difference between us and the members of the official opposition. It is their intention to enforce their decisions on lower levels of government or other levels of government. That is not the decision of this government. We have found it just not workable. We have striven to work co-operatively with local government, in fact, with all Manitobans on all matters. Our dealings regarding the Capital Region Strategy have been no different. We want to ensure that the outcomes are determined by all parties in order to bring the most benefit to the greatest number of people.

At Rural Development, we have always maintained a position that we are there to help facilitate, but that it is ultimately up to the Manitobans to decide how to proceed. For example, the opposition members have raised concerns that periphery development around Winnipeg is having a series of negative impacts. In particular, the following issues have been raised: that the province is subsidizing and somehow controlling new development outside of Winnipeg; that, with affluent urban dwellers leaving the city, the assessment base of Winnipeg is being eroded; and that commuter traffic is increasing the burden of infrastructure and other services.

Madam Speaker, I want to make one point abundantly clear: we cannot tell these people where or where not to live. They will make that choice. Further to the suggestion being made that people are fleeing Winnipeg, let me share with you the following stats that have been prepared by Urban Affairs. Urban Affairs has been monitoring housing starts based on the information as received from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in nearby municipalities. The information reveals that there has been no significant change in the actual number of housing starts in the Capital Region since 1995. For example, there were 681 housing starts in Winnipeg in 1996, compared with 684 in 1995. By comparison there were some 415 housing starts in the Capital Region, which includes the towns of Selkirk and Stonewall, compared to 423. I mean, virtually the same. So where is the crisis situation that is being cried about by members of the opposition?

Without question, over the last decade, total housing starts have increased in rural municipalities and housing starts have decreased in the urban centre of Winnipeg, but these stats reflect the fact that Manitoba families are placing more emphasis on where they live and how much it is costing them for their housing. Lifestyles are also becoming increasingly important to families. Again, I want to emphasize, it is not up to us to tell Manitobans where or where they cannot live. They will make that decision themselves.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I believe that we are doing all that we can in relation to conforming to Provincial Land Use policies, particularly with regard to the implementation in the Capital Region. Mechanisms are in place through the Capital Region Committee to ensure land use activities are in keeping with provincial guidelines and the Capital Region Strategy. We will continue to work co-operatively with all parties to ensure adherence to the guidelines. However, again, it is our intent to help people make their own choices, not to force lifestyle decisions on Manitobans residing in the Capital Region or for that matter living anywhere in our province.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that I can speak on this particular resolution. I know time is somewhat of the essence. The member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) also wants to be able to speak, so I appreciate him allowing me the opportunity to speak just ahead of him.

It was interesting in listening to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) as he talked about the provincial government's role. I know that there were other critics of other times, of other eras, if you like, who would often refer to the current minister as the freedom fighter from the past type thing, as being the dean of the Chamber. No doubt he has a lot yet to continue to contribute to the Chamber in terms of debate. You can see that in many ways the opinions have not changed from the minister.

I would suggest to the minister, Madam Speaker, that, in fact, there is a need for the province to play—and this is a word that often escapes this government—a “leadership” role in the development of the Capital Region. The minister made reference to the Capital Region, and I have had opportunity to talk about the

Capital Region, and I have been less than impressed with the Capital Region in a couple of examples. The biggest one that comes to mind right offhand was with respect to the landfill site. The city of Winnipeg did not need to have three landfill sites, and, ultimately, what happened because of a little bit of a dispute that was happening with tipping fees in the city of Winnipeg in one of the larger corporations in the city, we now have a landfill site that is being built, constructed, out in the Rosser municipality in the member's area. It could be a very beautiful facility, but the real question is does the Capital Region need another landfill site. To the member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau), no, there was none, and this is a private landfill site.

But, Madam Speaker, the arguments that were being presented was that for the city and the Capital Region for its population base, there was no justification to have three landfill sites. Now we are going to see one of the landfill sites, the other landfill site being closed down, but you are still going to have the other one out in south Winnipeg. One has to ask the question what role did the Capital Region have, the Capital Region board that the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) has all this confidence in, as he articulated as to the membership of that particular board. I have not been convinced as of today that the Capital Region board is, in fact, looking at the broader picture of the overall development of the Capital Region.

You know, I enjoy the rural life and, in fact, I even have, I believe, a couple of farms in my constituency, so I like to think of myself as being at least somewhat rural, very limited but somewhat rural. Who knows, with boundary distribution, maybe it will even change to be more of a rural-urban type of riding.

But having said that, Madam Speaker, there are a lot of people who live in Winnipeg who see the benefits of living in the rural areas. It was interesting, I had discussions when we had the one commission going around the province, and a chap came up to me and said that in Winnipeg, in rural areas, we have what we call these rurbanites. The rurbanites are individuals who actually reside in rural Manitoba but they enjoy many of the activities that are offered in the city of Winnipeg. They want to experience both lives. They are not too sure, so they go into some of these satellite communities. But where do we see the satellite

communities popping up? You know, you get a few acres here chopped up and you get a few acres here chopped up for this urban sprawl or satellite communities. What is the actual cost of these satellite communities being developed?

The member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) brought up some excellent points when you talk about the revitalization of some of the areas of Winnipeg. There is a very serious problem with respect to revitalization or the lack of revitalization, and how is this government's lack of leadership on the Capital Region having an impact on that issue? I would suggest to you that it is actually quite profound, and it is because the Minister of Agriculture's (Mr. Enns) thoughts are prevailing, that is, to stay away from it and to let the municipalities have complete control.

* (1040)

I do not necessarily buy into that. I recognize the importance of their having autonomy and being able to have control in terms of what it is that they are doing, but that does not necessarily allow us, Madam Speaker, to throw away our responsibilities of the broader picture, because the way in which the Capital Region, much like the rural area goes, the Capital Region is absolutely vital to the province of Manitoba. We have to put more effort and more concentration into the overall development of the Capital Region.

If you fly over the city of Winnipeg or around the city of Winnipeg, you get a very clear picture of the types of satellite communities, the types of urban sprawl that the member for Wellington makes reference to that all of us are very much aware of. What I find is that there are always individuals who are prepared to, whether it is talk off the record or have their personal opinions, but do not necessarily want to share it with the public as a whole per se directly because there is a little bit of a conflict. Maybe they are a sitting councillor or a sitting reeve, and they recognize that there is a problem in terms of the competition and the planning and the way things are, in fact, being developed.

I see individuals who talk about the potential, and that is what it really is, the potential of a Capital Region board of sorts that would actually have the ability and the impact to make a significant, positive contribution.

I do not want to belittle everything that the Capital Region board has done. There is no doubt that they have done things of some benefit but, Madam Speaker, I would suggest to you that they could be doing a lot more. The government of Manitoba needs to ensure that that Capital Region board is, in fact, empowered to ensure that the Capital Region as a whole is going to be better developed so that we do not see issues such as the landfill dump that was built out in Rosser. If there was justification and if there was need for it and it could be justified, then fine, but at the time, and I remember sitting in the Estimates with the Minister of Environment, and he was not able to convince me of it. It is nothing against the corporation per se, but I was never really convinced that we needed that particular landfill site. I saw the benefits for some, but I did not see the overall benefits for the community. I was never really convinced of that.

Madam Speaker, when we look at the future, we see things such as Winnport, and the government of the day and members of the opposition will talk very positively about Winnport. It has excellent opportunities there. It is an area that will have a very dramatic impact, a direct impact on the constituents I represent because of where the airport is located. It will have an impact on the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett), the members for St. James (Ms. Mihychuk), Kirkfield Park (Mr. Stefanson), and Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine), because of the location of the airport. It will have a very strong impact on some of those rural municipalities like, again, the Municipality of Rosser which emphasizes the importance of people working together to have that overall development.

Madam Speaker, I want to talk very briefly with respect to the revitalization issue. It is not just urban core areas that need that revitalization. You can go into wonderful character locations throughout Winnipeg where there is a need for revitalization. I look at some parts of older St. Vital, areas in the riding that I represent of Shaughnessy Park and the Mynarski and Northwood area, these are communities in which it is important that there is some form of revitalization that is ongoing and to what degree is the government playing a role in assisting that revitalization. That does cause a great deal of concern.

The other day I brought up inside the Chamber the need for government to come up with programs that

would address that particular issue, because I do not believe it is just an urban, city of Winnipeg, core area. There are older communities, even in Minnedosa where they could use revitalization programs, Transcona, all sorts of different areas throughout the province, and we do not necessarily see that and would like to see more programs that allow for that sort of facilitation of improvement in those areas.

We are seeing tax benefit programs now for people that want to build new homes, and that can be a positive thing. It is always encouraging to see some new houses being built. It is interesting the government of the day is trying to say how wonderful home building is going in the province of Manitoba or home starts—[interjection] The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) says right. I remember when I was first elected, there were years where there were thousands of houses being built in any given year. In fact, in '85, there were 2,700, 3,300 and so on; in '86, there were 3,300; in '87, there were 2,800. We have shrunk dramatically since those years. Well, you cannot necessarily have it both ways, per se.

The housing starts issue in itself does not necessarily reflect positively towards the government, because I would not be overly proud by saying here the housing starts are taking a shift from the city of Winnipeg into some of those rural or satellite communities. On the surface one would say, well, look, it is a different life style and so forth for some people who want to go into rural Manitoba, but if you look at the real impact on the city of Winnipeg and its infrastructure, what is actually happening is that it is contributing to more problems within the city of Winnipeg.

So all municipalities, including the city of Winnipeg, want to see those housing starts. What needs to happen is that there has to be more of a plan for the Capital Region and that is why, as I say—and I would, in essence, attempt to conclude my remarks—by putting that emphasis that if we are going to be able to prosper as a Capital Region, we have to have a Capital Region board that is empowered to be able to do the types of things that is going to see prosperity for all regions of the capital area.

While we do that and we talk positively about the housing starts and wanting to see more housing starts,

that we do not be negligent towards those areas not only within the Capital Region but also in rural Manitoba, throughout, where there is that need for revitalization. Government does have a very strong role to play in both, the Capital Region in ensuring that there is a structure that is put into place that allows for good development and prosperity and, more directly, to ensure there is programming that is out there to ensure there is revitalization that is going on in the many different communities because it is badly needed, in some areas more than others.

By investing, Madam Speaker, in programs of that nature, not only are you creating jobs, but you are securing a better housing stock and in the long term, that is what it is all about, providing good quality housing for all Manitobans.

With that, I thank you for the opportunity to speak, Madam Speaker.

* (1050)

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): I, too, wanted to put some words on the record in regard to the resolution that has been brought forward. It is interesting as I sat, and, first of all, read the resolution that the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) puts forward, but then listening to her comments, as so often is the case, the comments really do not surround what the meaning of the resolution is about.

I sit in here day after day and listen to the members from the opposition complain to government about how we are opening up the boundaries in Manitoba for open competition, freedom of movement amongst communities, growth of areas where there is need and necessity, and yet I listened to the member for Wellington talk about what I would say is putting up walls. In her comments, not only would she put up walls in Manitoba to separate Manitoba and Saskatchewan and Manitoba and Ontario, but she would build even bigger walls in the province to separate city from rural, different parts of communities separated from each other just to satisfy the purposes of what I would consider the government control that they might put forward had they had the opportunity to form government.

It is certainly frustrating when I sit and listen to all the comments being made about growth in other areas of Manitoba and how people are prospering in certain segments of the society and the communities in Manitoba, and I listen to an opposition that condemns that. They want to stop that progress. They want to stop that growth. They want to stop that development. How do they want to do it? They want to implement a plan like this where the province, not the people of the province or the people who are living in those communities, but the province sets up regulations that determine how the people live within that region.

Now, to me that makes absolutely no sense at all. I do not believe that a provincial government's position is to do that. I think the position of the provincial government is to put policies in place, so that people who live within those communities and those regions and those areas can sit down and in a common-sense approach develop plans for development for their communities and for the areas that they live in without the heavy hand of government that the members opposite would so like to see when they make decisions in the province.

It certainly frustrates me to no end every day when I come in here and I listen to the constant verbiage that comes from across the floor, talking about how government should control everything. I say that is wrong. I say that this resolution, in its words—there are a lot of things in the statement made by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) that I can agree with, but I cannot agree with how she would enforce it and how she would implement it.

I look at the RESOLVED statements that she makes: that the provincial government to conform Provincial Land Use policy, to conform the principles and guidelines. That is not for us to make those decisions. That is for the people in the communities who live there to develop their own policies of development within the guidelines that we suggest that are out there but not that we are going to go out there and impose, restrict the development because it satisfies the government.

It certainly frustrates me to no end. In fact, as I drive into Winnipeg from rural Manitoba every week to come into this place to work, I can see under an NDP government that wall getting higher and higher and

higher. Pretty soon we will not have to worry about the perimeter vision. We will have to worry about the aerial vision of rural Manitoba, so that it would satisfy the members opposite in some of the policies and statements that they make.

In her second resolve, she talks about the provincial government preparing, approving and implementing a comprehensive, long-term—whatever happened to the consultation with the people who live within the region? Does it have to always come from the government down to the people within the regions? I do not think so.

As I read the policies that are in place and that have been implemented by this government, the fact is that we are open and willing to listen to what people have to say and let them develop their own plans, as opposed to imposing our thinking, which I can actually acknowledge that, in the past during NDP governments, that is the way it did work. It was a top-down strategy where the so-called knowing members of government would impose their will on the rest of Manitobans. I think that would be a big mistake on behalf of the province of Manitoba.

The people in Manitoba know and understand what has to be done. They live in the communities. The leaders of our communities are the ones who will develop the best development plans for these capital regions and the areas in rural Manitoba where we all live, work and grow. In our communities, we have a planning district. They sit down on a regular basis and work on development. We have many new developments coming to our area; and, because of this planning district, they have been able to develop it in a reasonable fashion and in a direct relationship to the environment, to the people who are surrounding. They do it through consultation. They do not do it by dictating to the population that this is the way it will be, and it will be that way because it is in writing and brought forward by one of the members opposite.

Certainly, in her comments she talked about—to me, it was protection of this, protection of that. Let us take every individual issue and build a policy around it to protect that group. Well, that does not work in today's society. We have to, I think, expand our horizons and our thinking and our ability to co-operate with all

communities in the province of Manitoba. I think the lines that used to be drawn between city and rural are getting less. In fact, I think that we have an opportunity, with discussion and planning and development between the partners involved, as opposed to trying to set up the so-called walls that will divide them, that we can move a lot further ahead a lot quicker and a lot better when we have agreement amongst everybody involved.

I was reading through the notes on the resolution, and it was adopted in the province in '96, and it is proceeding with the implementation of the Capital Region plan. It is under provincial leadership, but it has a strong commitment and participation with all the members involved. I think that the minute we start taking that away from people that it will fail.

The other thing that she suggested in her comments was the fact that it is not an open process, and I know from experience, as I have been working with some of the plans that are happening in rural Manitoba, that it is far from that. When you develop a plan in your community and someone comes in and wants to make a presentation for growth or for development, everything, at least to my knowledge in the communities that I represent, has become a public matter. I think that is the way it has to be.

People have a right to comment and to participate, with the same idea that if you do have a planning district in place, there are specific areas where development of certain types will take place, and that has to be considered in the final decision making, too. But never have I ever had anybody come up and tell me that the process is not open and free for all to participate in. I think that the comments made by the member for Wellington (Ms. Barrett) would suggest that she would like to see that into a closed, small group of people, probably people whom she would be able to influence and control to make the decisions and do the bidding for the government. I would fear that this would ever happen. I presume it probably would under an NDP government, but I trust that that will not happen for a long period of time.

I think, Madam Speaker, I will end those remarks. I know the member for St. Norbert has a brief comment

he would like to put on the record. So I will leave it at that. Thank you.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Well, Madam Speaker, I think I am going to have more time next time this motion comes forward to have some more debate. I notice I have not got a lot of time today. I would like to thank the member for bringing this type of motion forward. It gives us an opportunity to put the facts on the record instead of a lot of this misrepresentation that the NDP keep bringing across day after day after day. Today we had the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) joining them, and that really made me happy, because it showed the leadership over there has gone down the drain.

If we had more time today, I would like to discuss the issues on the PLUC committee, the issues on the Capital Region, the issues on where we are going in the future. But if these members actually took a moment to think about it, a lot of our communities or our ridings would not be there today if it were not for this so-called urban sprawl. But I do not hear them knocking East St. Paul, which was done under urban sprawl of the NDP. I do not hear them talking about the major expenses that were needed to capital projects in this province because of urban sprawl by the NDP. We would not have had to build the Peguis Bridge if it were not for urban sprawl by the NDP, if we lived by their criteria. So who are they to challenge a government that is doing the proper work today? Next time, Madam Speaker.

* (1100)

Madam Speaker: The hour being 11 a.m., as previously agreed, the House will now move to consideration of a new item under Private Members' Business, and when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau) will have 14 minutes remaining.

Res. 25—Learning Technologies

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the honourable member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer), that

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government has recognized the critical need for students to develop skills in technology; and

“WHEREAS the Provincial Government has recognized technology as a foundation skill, and the tremendous benefits for students in their development of technology skills and the application of technology in the delivery of education; and

“WHEREAS the significant actions taken by this government to promote and support the use of learning technologies have included the Technology Learning Resources grant, support for teacher professional development, the creation of the MERLIN special operating agency and the Council on Learning Technologies, the Canada/Manitoba Infrastructure projects, support of the computers for schools and libraries program and many other actions.

“THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba support the Provincial Government in its continuing initiatives to enhance access and availability of communications and information technologies to the benefit of students and all Manitobans.”

Motion presented.

Mr. Dyck: Madam Speaker, at the outset of this resolution, first of all I would like to ask all members here to support this resolution. I think it is an excellent resolution but, on the other hand, I would also like to put on the record a thank-you to our teachers and our administrators who are working diligently within our schools in the province and who are preparing and equipping our students for the world, for the year 2000, for what lies ahead for them. These are the future leaders in our province, in Canada, and the world, and certainly our teachers, our administrators, and our boards are doing an excellent job in preparing them for the world ahead, for the jobs that they will be involved in.

I believe it is important that we recognize the skills that our teachers have, that they bring to the classroom. Certainly it is not easy. It is a difficult job. I was in the classroom a number of years ago, and I do not think things have changed an awful lot. I think that the challenges are still there today, and yet, though, I know that certainly the vast majority of our staff are committed. They are committed to wanting to help students, to prepare them, so they dedicate themselves

to this task everyday, and, again, I want to thank them for the work that they are doing.

The schools that I represent that are in the Pembina constituency are the Pembina Valley School Division, Western School Division and Garden Valley School Division. All three of these divisions are working very hard at trying to give their students the very best education possible. Certainly, from day to day, as they experience new challenges, they take these exactly that way, as challenges, and they try to do their very best in order to work with their students.

Madam Speaker, computers and information technologies are transforming nearly every aspect of our lives. They are changing the way we work and play, impacting on our productivity, and they are creating completely new ways of doing things. The major sectors of our economy have begun to rely heavily on information technologies, such as computers and telecommunications to do their work.

Statistics Canada estimates that almost 50 percent of jobs currently require the use of computers, and this number is steadily rising. The Conference Board of Canada has identified the ability to use technology effectively as a critical employability skill. The ability to use information technologies is important to entrepreneurial growth throughout Manitoba. Many opportunities exist for new business starts and self-employment in the growing, evolving information technology sector. As well, the use of computers, networks, desktop publishing, Internet advertising and other new tools provided by technology can help almost any business, large or small, to become more effective and efficient and to explore new markets and partnerships.

Just talking about the area of technology and the way this is expanding within the communities, within businesses, it just reminds me of how it is expanding in agriculture. It is now something that is almost taken for granted, but as fellows are working out on their tractors, there is a little compartment for their desk or their laptop computers, and they are in communication with what is taking place in the world. They know almost on an instantaneous basis what is happening to markets.

So, Madam Speaker, things are changing and they are changing at a very, very rapid pace. This new reliance on technology which can change regularly has created the need for persons who are adaptive, can think critically and analytically and can function in an environment where learning will be an ongoing activity.

In addition to these characteristics, the citizens of today and tomorrow must also be able to use technology to assist them in constructing meaning from large volumes of information to solve problems and to communicate both locally and globally. It is important, too, that our citizens understand and manage the implications of the growing use of information technologies throughout our society. They need the skills to sort and evaluate the enormous amount of content available to them electronically and to recognize both the potential and limitations inherent in its use.

Madam Speaker, because of this new environment, it is critical that our youth have the opportunity during their education to become fluent in the literacy of our age, information technology literacy. One thing I found interesting was, it is three years ago, actually it would be four years ago, when I was on the school board, I had letters from two of our staff, and actually these were middle-aged people, but the letters were speaking very much against the use of technology and computers within schools. They, themselves, I think in my discussion with them later on, felt threatened by this technology, so it took some time to encourage them and to convince them that, you know, you cannot build a wall around things the way they are.

We have to look to see what is coming up in the new area of technology, the advancements that are out there. So it took some time in order to encourage them that this was something we needed to deal with, that we needed to deal with in our schools and to encourage our students to become a part of that.

To prepare students for their roles in life, Education and Training has identified technology as one of four foundation skill areas to be integrated in all curriculum. This is under the New Directions: A Blueprint for Action. The vision of technology as a foundation skill is, and I quote: All students will be enabled by technology to solve problems, improve their personal

performance and gain the critical and abstract thinking skills necessary to become lifelong learners and contributing members of their communities, end of quote.

Achieving this vision, Madam Speaker, is critical in the development of Manitobans who are technologically illiterate and who can contribute to the Manitoba economy. Over the past four years, a number of significant department initiatives have been implemented to support information technology integration in schools. The MERLIN special operating agency has been established to provide a central co-ordinating source of technical expertise and support services for schools to use in planning and implementing their information technologies initiatives. Through its consultative services, brokering and price negotiation on behalf of the sector, MERLIN has helped to decrease the cost of integrating technology into education and increase the quality and connectedness of these systems.

* (1110)

Madam Speaker, the advisory Manitoba council on learning technology provides the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh) with advice on the integration of information technologies into education. The council includes representation from all regions of the province from the post-secondary sector and from both the kindergarten to the S-4 and Training and Continuing Education areas of the Department of Education and Training.

Its cross-sector mandate helps to promote partnerships and resource sharing in the development of both human and technical networks to support learning technologies in Manitoba. Two Canada-Manitoba infrastructure works projects had focused on developing a distance education delivery system for all levels of learning in Manitoba. Interactive television systems are being established to allow course sharing between high schools, divisionally or regionally. A digital network to link the clusters is under development, as well as an associated project is enabling all of Manitoba's colleges and universities to increase their ability to deliver programming through Distance Education. Video conferencing, Internet delivery and multimedia production capabilities are all being

established in our post-secondary sector through this initiative.

Madam Speaker, I am aware that in the Midland School Division, they, in fact, do use this technology. I believe the home base, which is in Carman, is the one who is, in fact, doing the instruction, and Miami which is a distance away is a recipient of that. My understanding as of late is that this is working well, and they are very encouraged by that.

Madam Speaker, the department has significantly increased its support to the Computers for Schools and Libraries program this year. This program hosted by the Manitoba telephone pioneers uses volunteer and student work experience time to refurbish donated used computers, upgrade them where feasible and provide them to Manitoba schools and libraries. In this school year, with department support, the program is targeting the delivery of 2,000 computers to schools with a quarter of these upgraded to levels which will support advanced applications. As well, approximately 75 students will have the opportunity to gain relevant skills in computer refurbishing and upgrading through work initiatives with this program.

Madam Speaker, I would just like to refer to a news release that was put out in September but it dealt specifically with this, and I was able to be a part of this release. It says that Computers for Schools is an innovative program supported through funding from the private sector and the governments of Canada and Manitoba. It started in 1993 and was significantly expanded last year. The program delivered 1,234 computers to Manitoba schools and libraries in 1996 and '97, as well as 399 printers and several hundred peripherals and accessory items. The program also provides equipment such as plotters, tape drives, software, disks, network cards, cables, additional parts and instructional video tapes.

Now, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of the people who are studying at Red River Community College, and this was a part of their training where they themselves were involved in refurbishing the computer equipment and used this as a part of their education, so that later on they could go into the workforce and derive a living from working with computers and, in fact, repairing them.

Additionally, as a part of the funding announcement for public schools for the 1998-99 school year, a grant of \$1.8 million will be provided for technology in the classroom. Funding can be used for a variety of technologies, including computer hardware and software, school building rewiring and cabling to facilitate computer and computer network installation, Internet linkages and curriculum-based technology requirements. Now, these initiatives have and will continue to provide important support to the integration of technology into education and training. However, as information technologies continue to advance and educational applications to develop, ongoing planning and implementation efforts are needed. This must happen at the department, at the school division and at school levels as all levels carry out their roles and responsibilities in the development of this new and exciting area of learning.

Partnering with the education and training sector and with private industry, other public sectors and communities must continue to be an important strategy in the ongoing integration of information technologies and education. Such partnerships are currently important parts of the distance education infrastructure works projects, the Computers for Schools and Libraries initiative and the western consortia initiatives to collaboratively identify and develop technological resources to support curriculum across western Canada.

Computers and information technologies are transforming nearly every aspect of our lives. Manitobans must have the skills to adapt and succeed in this changing world. While the integration of technology into education does present significant challenges and must be carefully managed, it is a necessary investment in our individual and collective future success. I would therefore ask and I would encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly to join me in supporting this resolution.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, it was with rapt attention that I listened to the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), and he certainly made some very, very good points, very worthwhile and informative points, but we could also characterize it as

being—the resolution itself is a bit of a general motherhood statement.

I guess the thing that I am looking for—and the member alluded to it, the member for Pembina, towards the end, and I wished he would have gone into some more detail—was that there is also a negative aspect to technology, and that is an aspect, of course, if we are pushing it as the resolution is being pushed, that we would like to downplay, but it is there and it has to be dealt with. I do not want to feed on that general hysteria on the other side that we are always negative and naysayers on this side. I do not believe that is true, Madam Speaker, but to elaborate the role of the opposition one more time, it is our job to be critical, and I think members over there will agree that we are doing a fine job of being critical.

This resolution basically pats the government on the back for being dragged along in a trend which some would argue is inevitable anyway, certainly in the Western World, and the member does talk about a number of actions that this government has taken, such as Technology Learning Resources grant, the creation of MERLIN, special operating agencies, and so on and so on. Certainly, all of us recognize the importance of developing skills in technology, not just for students, but for all citizens. I do not think I have to repeat to the members opposite that that is a little more difficult if you are a little bit older, because some of the older people, the senior citizens specifically, have some great difficulty with the speed of technological change and the usage of computers in general.

The member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) pointed out that technology has become for us the foundation skill. It has tremendous potential for education, and students are becoming more and more adept at using computers and using the Internet. Therefore, it is no surprise to anyone to say that the three Rs really have expanded to become four areas: reading, writing, arithmetic and computer skills. But, again, before we jump on that bandwagon, I believe it behooves us to look at the negatives as well, the other side of information technology, and to do this apart from merely saying that it is expensive.

It certainly is expensive. Only yesterday we learned that to change the computer system in this Legislature

the starting cost is, I believe, \$15 million. I am sure the final cost will be much, much higher. The updating of computers and technologies for the year 2000 is costing us millions and millions of dollars. Updating computers every few years is a very costly procedure. I think we all know that.

But, even beyond all of that, I think we have to ask ourselves the question about technology itself, what it does to society. Does it move us in more humane and progressive and democratic directions, or does it not do that? Is it really a toy or is it absolutely an essential for doing business and for communicating? I suppose there is a little bit of both because, certainly in my own family, I can point to my youngest son who spends an inordinate amount of time behind a computer, and I am sure that all of it is not productive. Sometimes I accuse him of being a mushroom. He sits in the dark and just looks at that machine. I know he is very adept at it, but sometimes I wonder what the spin-offs are, the negative spin-offs in terms of health and so on.

* (1120)

So we have to ask ourselves larger questions about technology and technology in school, and many of the answers are still out there. We do not have all of the answers. Very often, when you are trapped into this system, you do not see boundaries. You do not have any sense of depth, of dimension. There was a great French scholar called Jacques Ellul who talked about the propaganda environment. One of the obvious things about the propaganda environment is that the people in it do not really see it as propaganda. They think it is natural. So sometimes you are trapped in an environment and things look logical and appear to be the direction to be going, but nobody has asked the hard questions. You know, technology for what? What is the purpose? Who controls it? What is the end game? Does it liberate, or does it bring us to a lower status in terms of knowledge, in terms of democracy, in terms of freedom and so on? Those are larger questions we also have to ask.

In fact, it might be instructive I think, Madam Speaker, to compare this information age, this technological age, the computer age that has certainly—I hate to use the word—invaded the classroom. Compare it to what happened, say, 50 years ago when television

was hailed as being the great liberator, as being the great communicator, and the great channel that would link us all together, but many would argue that it has not made us happier citizens, that it has not made us more productive citizens. In fact, it may very well have isolated us. Certainly older people will say the art of conversation, the art of visiting people and carrying on a humane and courteous dialogue among people is no longer there in general. People visit and they watch television. This is a strong negative. I am not even talking about the violence and the pornography that has also been a spin-off of television.

So it has not been all good. In fact, when we talk about television, if we compare this computer technology and try and put it in some kind of perspective and compare it to television, we can see some distinct negatives, at least with television. It took us 50 years to find this out, and it may take us another 20 or 30 to discover the serious negatives about the computer age as well.

But I do know the great liberator, television, has now become for many the boob tube, with many channels of entertainment but also channels of violence and channels of pornography. We do not know the full impact it has on children, but many of us believe they cannot be very positive impacts often. Now, having said that, there is also the educational side. Television could become a great educator and has in many ways become a great educator, but it is not always used that way. There is always the two sides to it.

Now, when people did study television a number of years ago, one of the things they did discover, of course, was the narcotizing dysfunction of television, the fact that it renders us almost senseless or devoid of sense. We only concentrate on the tube, and it is pretty hard to carry on a kind of meaningful relationship with people around us when we are in that state. So that is a very serious negative aspect to television, and I am sure some of those major negative aspects will also come out of the computer technology.

The other thing, Madam Speaker, is, and the fear is there and always has been, that when something has a potential to liberate like obviously television did, it also has the potential to enslave. It also has the potential to be used by some for purposes that are not of, I guess,

the highest or the noblest for mankind, that it becomes merely a moneymaking system. Unfortunately, television, largely in the United States and elsewhere in the Western World in general, became basically an extension of marketing mechanisms. In fact, the entire program basically was created to capture audiences that were then bought and sold, because you are trying to sell something. So the program was not important, what was important was the fact people were watching it and that the ads would run in that program so you could sell cars or television sets or shoes or whatever. The purpose was not to liberate or to educate or to make better citizens or more democratic citizens, you know, more productive citizens. The purpose was to sell. There is nothing wrong with that if it is in limited quantities, but if that becomes the sole purpose, and some would argue that it has become the sole purpose or at least 99 percent of the case, the purpose in the United States and in the Western World.

So those are dangerous trends. We see those trends also in the information age, in the computer age. We see that trend in banking, for example. Banks were the first to seize on information technology. I remember in 1986 when I was at the Expo games in Vancouver, Madam Speaker, it was the first time I had seen automated tellers, but they are all over the place. Banks were very quick to seize on the potential for making money with modern, updated information technologies.

The irony is, of course, this should make life easier for people, and in many ways it does, but often it does not. I will use one example, just one example, and that is Lynn Lake, which is a community that I represent in northern Manitoba. The technology is there for banking in Lynn Lake, but when the bank pulled out, they did not leave that technology behind. The bank claimed that modern technology forced them to centralize and leave a lot of little communities, not just Lynn Lake, but many other communities, I am sure, in the lurch.

So technology does not always improve things, does not always seep down to the grassroots. Sometimes if it is controlled and directed by large corporations, they will use the technology purely for making more money, and they do not look at whether they give good service to citizens. Certainly that is what happened in Lynn Lake. Certainly that irony has been pointed out, not

just by me, Madam Speaker. It was pointed out in a Globe and Mail article not too long ago how ironic it is that in this particular age, this computer age, that instead of making things easier, banks have made things more difficult for some people, certainly for small communities who lose their banking services.

As well, when we want to talk about the larger picture, we do not appear to have the gurus or the wise people from the past who can look at this in a critical sense. What we need is a Stephen Hawking of the computer age, and I do not think we have him yet. We used to have a Marshall McLuhan in this country, Marshall McLuhan, the person that would take a look at media and analyze media and the impact of media on people, not just hot media and cold media, but specifically to look at, let us say, print technology and point out, because many of us were not aware of this, but point out to us that how western humanity has developed its linear thinking partially because of print technology, something totally different from the earlier ages in our history.

Similarly, I am sure that the information and the computer age will have all kinds of effects, and some of them will be very positive, but some will be very negative, and those effects we have not yet discerned. The picture is not yet clear enough.

I do not want to be only critical. I do know the positives of computer technology. In the North, for example, I want to point out the First Year Distance Education Program, which is a very fine program. It allows the three universities of Manitoba to interact with students in remote communities, in my case, Flin Flon. I think that is a very positive direction.

As well, I was directly involved as a teacher with a system called the Columbia Lab which was basically a reading system, also a maths system but basically a reading system. The purpose of Columbia was to help students improve their reading, and we soon discovered that this system had tremendous potential. Students could improve their reading grade level by two or three grade levels within a year.

But if an ordinary teacher, like myself, were to become involved with the student as well, added that extra dimension, would sit down with the student,

interview the student, give that human touch and find out just where the problems in reading were, then that student reading score would dramatically leap to seven or eight or nine grades improvement in a year. I guess it proves one more time computers will not replace teachers. It also proved dramatically, even a minimal teacher involvement with the computer system, in this case, Columbia Lab, has great benefits. Certainly it worked very well for our school and continues to work very well, our school being Frontier Collegiate Institute in Cranberry Portage.

Therefore we need to be clear about technology, that it has two sides, and the member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) really did not mention that second side, that more negative side. I did mention that it will become more and more expensive because as the ever-escalating pace of the computer age increases, then computers will have to be upgraded.

Another concern I have is unequal access. Poor homes, poor schools, poor school divisions will not be able to do as much for their students with the information technology because of limited budgets, as richer schools, as parents who are more affluent, can do for their students. I think that we need to realize that information technology in the classroom is a tool and has to be used as a tool, has to be integrated. It is not a separate subject, that teacher assistance is critical, that the human element cannot be missing, that we cannot just look at costs but costs are certainly a factor.

* (1130)

I am really concerned here that business intrude into the classroom and thereby affect the independence and the critical thinking of teachers. I could read part of an article by Maude Barlow, and I will just make one quote. She states in one of her presentations, "All over the world impoverished schools are turning to corporations to supply them with the technology and curriculum they can no longer afford to buy." And she mentions specifically Burger King academies, fully accredited quasi-private high schools that are now operating in 14 United States cities.

At a high school in Boulder, Colorado, McDonald's supplies not only the food but also the curriculum. Students study McDonald's inventory, payroll and

ordering procedure in maths, McDonald's menu plans in home economics, and its marketing practices in business class. McDonald's also sponsors a school program on nutrition in which it claims the Big Mac represents all four food groups, the vegetable component being the exposed lettuce leaf. Madam Speaker, that is not the direction I think we ought to be going. We do not need big business to come to the rescue of education, but technology is important, teachers are important, and although I see much value in this resolution, regrettably, I cannot support it. It is just too vague and one-sided.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Madam Speaker, it is a real pleasure to rise and say a few words on this important resolution put forward by the member for Pembina. When we talk about the importance of learning technologies in education, it certainly has clearly been increasing steadily over the past several years as it has increased in importance in everyday life and in the workplace.

For education, there are, I believe, two very important goals to the integration of information technologies in schools. One is, as has been noted, the provision of our students with the technology literacy that is so important to success in the job market and also in entrepreneurial endeavours and in the community as a whole.

The other important goal is that of increasing the equity of access to learning opportunities throughout Manitoba. We are all aware that Manitoba has a rather unusual demographic situation in that half of our population is in one city, and the other half is distributed in the smaller communities throughout the province, and our economic development strategies need to include all of these communities and support their healthy, sustainable growth. Repeatedly, access to education and training and a well-trained workforce has been identified as a fundamental requirement for economic development.

We are also aware of the growing importance of the ongoing training and retraining in today's environment. The prediction that the average worker will have to retrain completely four or five times in his or her

working life has often been cited. As well, it is clear from Statistics Canada information that the educational level requirements of jobs is generally increasing. That upgrading of education is going to continue as a real need for many Manitobans.

The member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck) mentioned that today for 50 percent of the jobs, you need information technology. You have to be computer literate. I believe it is actually higher than that. I do not think 50 percent is even a fair figure. I believe it is higher. For our businesses and industries, it is also a very important factor for success to have a workforce with the skills and the training and the competency needed for the competition in today's global market. Given the changes and evolution of that market, it is also important that ongoing workplace training be available.

In addition, Madam Speaker, the ongoing problem we have in rural Manitoba is the rural depopulation when we get away from Winnipeg a bit. The shrinking student populations in some schools that are further away from Winnipeg has led to a new need to consider alternative forms of delivery and support for educational opportunities. It is important to evaluate all the possibilities that information technologies may provide to ensure that we can provide a quality education with adequate course options to a small number of students in a manner which does not place undue burden upon the taxpayer.

The amazing advantages in information technologies provide us with new opportunities for such greater access to formal and informal education, learning resources and the information sources that allow for self-directed learning. In effect of the community-based ways, it is therefore important that we develop these opportunities and take them into our communities. I just want to give you an example of some of these.

Actually in Gimli, the Interlake area, the Evergreen School Division was one of the leaders in distance education. Back in 1989, I believe it was, the Minister of Education of the day, the Honourable Len Derkach and I were there to officially open this Distance Education program whereby they could provide that out of Gimli to Arbog and Riverton and the schools in the Evergreen School Division, Winnipeg Beach, communities like that.

This was one of the first pilot projects for distance education, and that is almost 10 years ago now. It is nine years ago. Although some of that equipment is already obsolete, it is still being used and still very much in tune with what we are doing today. So the Evergreen School Division should be commended for their foresight and to look ahead at things of this nature and to plan and provide this kind of thing just for our students in the Interlake.

The other thing that Evergreen has done, Evergreen School Division, just last year they opened a new technology centre at the industrial park there whereby they take in students and train them in computer knowledge for the business sector. This is on a fee-for-service basis that they are doing this and it is working very well. They have a waiting list of students. These are mainly adults from businesses in the community who come into this learning centre to learn the computers, all the new technology things that are needed in business, whether you work for a car dealer or a farm equipment manufacturer or whatever. This kind of education is so important today, it is so needed, and this is just one example of what some of the school divisions are doing.

In the Interlake School Division in Stonewall, just last fall the Premier (Mr. Filmon), the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and I opened the learning centre in Stonewall. I believe they have some 25 or 26 spots where they bring in students from the community, some who maybe are unemployed who want to upgrade their skills to prepare them better for the workplace and they can meet the criteria for the jobs that are available.

This is just another example of how they have grown in Stonewall. They just cannot keep up with the demand. They have a waiting list of people who want to get into this thing. So besides the day classes, they have initiated evening classes to make this program available to more and more people. These are mostly adults that are coming into this program or taking these courses in this learning centre. It is just tremendous to see how these people are so enthusiastic about the technology and what it can do.

* (1140)

I just wanted to give you an example of how important computer technology is in the agricultural

sector. Today a lot of the equipment comes equipped with the GPS technology, where they can get all kinds of information for mapping, yield monitoring and different things to help agriculture. Also some of the agriculture supply dealers have computer systems whereby they can punch in the section number of your farm and it will come up on a screen and the map will be there.

You can give the dealer your map of what crops you have seeded. He can map out the number of acres in the field that you have so that if you do get custom application done such as spraying for weeds or for whatever, they have the records of your fields. He can print out a map, give the operator a map of how many acres are in that field, what is to be done, thereby reducing the possibility of an error. Because of the cost of some of these new chemicals and fertilizers and one thing or another, it is important to be able to do a good job and get them done properly and to apply these properly. That is just another example of how technology has changed in agriculture.

Just the other night, as a matter of fact, I was talking to a farmer who just bought himself a new tractor and also a new air seeder. The new air seeder has a computer on it whereby you regulate your rate for different crops and different things. Also, the tractor has a computer system. What happened was these two were not compatible and he could not get them to work. It was a brand-new John Deere tractor and a new Flexicoil air seeder with new computers on, but you would think that these companies would get together and work together with technology to come up with a system that is compatible. It took two days between the John Deere and the Flexicoil people to sort out the problems in this.

That is just an example of computer technology and agriculture today. The farmers today have to be much more equipped not only to work and to operate this equipment but to know what to do, and so agriculture today is becoming so exact in one thing and another; precision, you might say, precision farming whereby we have to keep up with the times and be able to understand these. You cannot just hire a person from the street to put on this equipment. He has to be trained in the technology and in the equipment and everything, it is so important.

So that is just one example of how technology and the learning technologies in education are so important to everyone, whether they be in the city of Winnipeg or in rural areas. When we talk about how important education is throughout Manitoba, in my constituency, as an example, since the time I was first elected in 1988 we have had new schools or additions built in Teulon, in Stonewall. Now we are on about the third addition to the schools. The high school now needs new rooms, because they need new computer labs and new technology centres, so the students when they come out of high school today are much more adaptable to some of the technology and the importance of how these are adapted in the workplace.

Just recently I received a letter from a Gimli resident who is the president of the parent council there and outlined the importance of—in the Gimli Middle Years School, as an example, and to bring the school up to proper standards they needed more room for a computer room, more room to bring in some of the new technology that is required, and they want to start that now, get these students learning on these computers so much earlier, and that is just an example. The parents, the teacher advisory council and the parents are so interested that they want to encourage the development in this type of education.

This government has certainly shown its commitment to community, sustainable development and the importance of education and training as an investment in the communities, whether it be through the Distance Education, the Canada-Manitoba Infrastructure Works Program. These initiatives allow the sharing of educational opportunities between high schools regionally and connection of these schools to high-speed communication networks for access to many more learning opportunities, as well as the post-secondary initiative provides advanced technology infrastructure for all of Manitoba, Manitoba's seven colleges and universities which allows them to increase both the quality and the quantity of their distance education offering throughout Manitoba.

So, for these reasons and the efforts of this government to support the development of community-based learning, opportunities are important steps towards a stronger, better Manitoba, and these efforts must be sustained and supported by all members of this

House, so that we can continue to help all of our communities to grow, to prosper and strengthen throughout the opportunities offered to education and advancing technologies.

Therefore, I would ask all members to support this resolution, and thank you, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Broadway): Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that our society has advanced from the preindustrial age where every man is as skillful in producing complete goods by himself, where there are crafts and guilds and skilled persons in the so-called industrial age, where the means of production centralize in a thing we call factory, and where the skilled workers no longer enjoy the autonomy and freedom that he enjoyed before, but he has to sell his labour to some employer.

Now we have passed to the post-industrial society which many scholars call the informational society dominated by the computer. So we have seen the emergence of robotics and other labour saving devices in the productive capacity of our society. At the same time that they advanced productivity, we also have witnessed the suffering of human beings who had to be laid off because of this advance in technology.

Education is a type of public goods that normally is undertaken by the government in charge in a particular community or society, because education is one product by which anybody who acquire does not necessarily deprive the other of this product. It can be shared in a nonserious some kind of sharing of education and training.

Along with this educational advancement is the application of computer technologies in the learning and teaching process. We have seen teleconferencing technologies where you can have a meeting, even if you are distant away from each other, by the use of this communication technology. We have Internets where you can access information through the information highway, through the different websites all across the world without ever travelling to those other areas too distant away from the person who is seeking information.

Let it be known that by the use of technology, we have also invented a management information system. For example, in the tourism industry among people who arrange travels, they can compute and arrange the schedules of flights among different airlines in a very easy way through the use of computer. Also in our registration of motor vehicles, you could see that when you apply for renewal of your licence to drive a car, all they need to do is push a button on the computer, and they will display all the information that you have behind you. The same thing in our justice system, perhaps some day there will be some cards that will contain all the information about every person so that we no longer can enjoy the secrecy and personal information that we want to keep for ourselves.

* (1150)

We have also witnessed the computerized banking system and its effect in the working of banks. It used to be in the olden days, when you go to a counter, you talked to a real person—you opened your account; she talked to you. It is human interaction which advanced commonality in our society. Nowadays, you have to deal with machines, and the machine talks back to you—well you read what the machine is saying, but it is no longer human.

Some day, this kind of nonhuman interaction will lead to real alienation of people who do not know one another, who have no concern for each other. In fact, this has already happened in our urbanized, highly organized society. You live in the same apartment block; you do not know the person behind you, the next apartment behind you. They are suspicious of you, and there is no more concern for each other. You can see that in highly centralized and highly urbanized cities like, let us say, New York or Chicago, there will be a mugging or a crime being committed right in the front of your door, and nobody helps anybody anymore. These are some of the disadvantages of a highly technical, computerized kind of society.

Now, this government is advancing this technology because it wants to promote this rapidness and acceleration of learning and teaching in our educational system. It helps, because in terms of distance education, for example, by the use of computer you can develop a system whereby you can teach people who

are far away from the central campus of the university, for example. I can see the future now that someday all the students need not come to the campus to learn and to sit in a classroom. They can have their computers in their own home.

In the day where every household will have a computer, maybe students will no longer have any need to go to a single campus of any university. Athabasca, for example, has been delivering programs through the computer system. You use technologies like software, like other software where students and a professor can interact and they can give instructions and they can give tests and they can send in their answers via this computerized system. There are advantages. Everything is fast. Everything is accelerated to such an extent you no longer can control the situation of your existence.

However, in the granting, in the advancement, we have to also be aware of the risk and danger, as I have indicated. There is no uniformity now in the technology learning in our public school system. Inequities exist between the rich school division that can afford to buy an up-to-date computer system, hardware, and the poor school division that cannot afford such an expensive proposition. Therefore, there is already inequality there among students who are enrolled in the poor school division, as against students who are enrolled in the richer communities and rich school divisions.

Within the same school division, it might be that there are schools that are poor in certain areas of the community and certain schools that are rich in other areas of the same community in the same school division, and there is no equality of opportunity or equality of access to different pupils who are enrolled in these different kinds of affluence in the community.

The rural areas, for example, because of fewer students enrolled in the school or division—whatever level we are talking about—can only raise so much money, and they can only afford so much to buy this latest computer technology. If the formula of the Department of Education is based on the number of students enrolled in a particular division or a particular school, you could see the disadvantage now of rural areas and rural divisions. They have fewer students and therefore fewer grants. More acute is this inequality if

you go to the North where there are not only fewer schools but fewer students as well. How can we justify the equality of access and equality of opportunity in this new kind of learning technology in our school system?

Even assuming the same students enrolled in the same community, let us say a rich community like Tuxedo or Fort Garry, even there, there are some poor families. There are students who are of the families who are rich in the area. They can buy their own personal computer; they can buy whatever they need. There are the same families in the same rich division; they are so poor they cannot afford to buy their own computer. At what, then, is the opportunity there open between the poor students from a poor family and the rich student from the rich family? Obviously not. There is this advantage in the fact of belonging to a more affluent family. You cannot blame the student for being born poor; he has no choice where he will be born.

It might be that there are some corporate entities, corporations that are civic minded, that they donate their equipment to some school divisions, particularly if they are acquiring new, up-to-date, more sophisticated kinds of hardware. They will get rid of their old, outdated computers, but instead of just dumping them anywhere, they donate this to some school system that might use these computers for these learning technologies. Therefore, there is this problem of compatibility. The old computers can no longer accept the modern, more sophisticated software because of limited capacity, limited memory. They are no longer as useful as the new technologies, unless the new technologies and new computers are provided centrally by the government, and provided equally to all divisions, school divisions and all schools in our community. Only then can we say there is equality of opportunity and equality of access for all students in our community.

So you could see that there are many problems. It is not that the computer is a bane or is a boon in our society. It depends on your perspective. If you look at the advantages they bring, there are certain advantages they bring, but there are also certain dysfunctional effects that computers bring in our community, in our society. They alienate people. We lose our sense of belongingness to each other. The sense of communal spirit is diminished until it disappears, and we become strangers and alien to one another. This is not good for any kind of society.

Highly computerized environments, although they promote productivity, also lead to massive layoffs and massive unemployment. Witness the many people who worked before as bank employees and tellers in the banking community who had to lose their jobs because of the advent of computerized banking. Witness the many kinds of jobs that we lost because of the robotics and artificial intelligence in our factory system in the production of goods and services. All of these are disadvantages, but at the same time we have to be able to harness the advantages and be able to solve the problems brought about by this highly computerized society in which we live.

The ratio of computers in Manitoba is one computer to every 80 students, although the recommended rate is one computer for every—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Broadway (Mr. Santos) will have two minutes remaining.

The hour being 12 noon, I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that the House will reconvene at 1:30 p.m. this afternoon.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, April 30, 1998

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