



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
(Hansard)**

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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Seventh Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	St. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
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DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
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PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
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SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
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SMITH, Scott	Brandon West	N.D.P.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 3, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYERS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Manitoba Century Summit

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I have a statement for the House, Mr. Speaker.

This past March our Government hosted the Manitoba Century Summit here in Winnipeg. The summit was a 24-hour gathering of more than 100 economic leaders from across the province, leaders representing a variety of perspectives, both large and small business, labour, government, rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba and our urban centres. The last time such a meeting was held was in 1996. Since then there have been enormous changes in the Manitoba and global economy, and there is a great need for new strategies to confront these changes and support economic development in our province.

The summit was an opportunity for key players in the economy to sit down together and help give shape to a common economic vision, a vision for a better province and brighter future, a vision that we could all support and buy into. Strategic partnerships were discussed with respect to three topic workforce development areas: expanding workforce development, expanding investment and the new economy.

I am happy to say that the summit was successful on several levels. One major reason for the summit's success was the quality of the people who provided leadership and direction. The summit co-chairs were Rob Hilliard, President of the Manitoba Federation of Labour and Irene Merie, President of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce. Harvey Sexter, Dean of Law at the University of Manitoba, was outstanding as a moderator of the proceedings.

There was also a lively panel made up of Gail Asper, Elaine Cowan, David Friesen, Chuck Loewen, and Paul Moist.

In order to work towards the points of consensus, summit participants divided into groups and worked together to generate a set of strategic ideas for each of the three economic issues. This consensus-building exercise produced some interesting and exciting results. On the issue of workplace development, participants highlighted the approaches such as making our training and educational programs more responsive to labour market needs; expanding the number of options available for training and retraining and improve the accessibility and affordability of these programs; develop a specific focus for aboriginal training; and increasing Manitoba's share of international and interprovincial migration.

\* (13:35)

On expanding investments, some participants had such ideas as enhancing the environment in which new and established businesses can grow and thrive; developing targeted incentives, competitive taxes, better regulations and a positive stable climate; exploring the use of Manitoba pension plans as a source of capital; and promoting Manitoba as an attractive investment location.

On the subject of the new economy, we heard ideas such as extending the technological communications infrastructure throughout the province, fostering niches or key clusters in the new economy while in tandem increasing the number and required types of high-knowledge workers in the labour force. Finally, that research and development is integral to making a name for ourselves in the new economy, and we need to invest and expand our R&D in order to do so.

A complete report of the summit findings have been prepared. I will table one here today and one is available for all members here in the

Chamber. The ideas identified at the summit are exciting. They provide us with a framework for developing initiatives to improve on our economic position. Planning has already begun on the required strategic enhancements. The upcoming budget is a first step in this process. We intend to continue dialoguing with Manitobans on these strategies as well as keeping all Manitobans informed on our progress.

Feedback from the summit participants has been very enthusiastic. These positive sentiments reflect how deep the spirit of co-operation runs in Manitoba. We should never forget this because this is one of our greatest strengths. It will make us stronger as we compete in a global marketplace. It will help us to share the benefits and opportunities of future growth and to ensure that growth is sustainable.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of those who participated in the Manitoba Century Summit. Your spirit of co-operation and your ideas will serve us well as we confront the challenges of the global economy.

**Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I thank the First Minister for that statement, although I am somewhat surprised that it comes here a month and a half after the conference was held and ten days into the session here. You would think that if it were important to the Government something might have been said about it on the day that we began, but I am afraid—*[interjection]*

Well, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) says we did not have one. We had many during the course of our time in government. He says that labour was not included. Labour refused to participate in it. They had their own political agenda, and that shows just the kind of commitment that they make to the economy. It is only a commitment to their own political agenda, and that is one of the difficulties we have.

I note, from the rhetoric that is in the statement that the Premier made, no idea that has not been discussed publicly before in this province. There was not anything new that he said in this statement that had not already been

discussed and had not already been covered in many cases.

I note, for instance, exploring the use of Manitoba pension plans as a source of capital. When we were in government, we went directly to the major union groups in this province and asked for that very thing to be done and they refused to put any pension money into venture capital funds, that despite the fact that we were responsible for setting up the Crocus fund in co-operation with the union movement, the labour movement in this province.

\* (13:40)

So I think that the summit was more about politics, more about window dressing than it was about any real attempt to attract investment or to improve the economy in this province. We know that talk is not what is going to be required. We know we are going to need to have a competitive economy, an economy that is competitive for instance in tax rates, something that the Premier just yesterday got up and said he would have absolutely no part of, no part of cutting taxes. So the fact of the matter is that all of the things that are going to be necessary to create investment, to make this province welcome businesses, investment and job creation in this province are things that he fundamentally, philosophically is opposed to. That, I think, of course, is the tragedy of it all, that they are so narrow in their focus that they will not consider ideas that have a chance of working and making this province attractive to investment, attractive to business and attractive to job creation because of their ideological straitjacket that they are in.

Mr. Speaker, we will be interested in seeing whether or not, in terms of feedback, we get anything more out of this Government than rhetoric.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Can I ask for leave to speak on the Minister's statement?

**Mr. Speaker:** Does the Honourable Member have leave? *[Agreed]*

**Mr. Gerrard:** I welcome the statement of the Premier (Mr. Doer), and the Premier's interest in developing the new economy in Manitoba, but I

would put on the table that the critical question is this: As we look forward to the budget of next week, can the new Government really deliver in the budget a vision and effective plan to make a difference in developing the new economy?

### **Flooding—Agricultural Assistance**

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement as a result of what is reported to have taken place in the Commons Agriculture Committee yesterday in Ottawa. Members from both sides of the House repeatedly requested Ottawa for assistance for flooded-out farms in the southwest and other parts of the province. The assistance we have requested is that farmers flooded out in 1999 be treated in a similar fashion to those flooded out in 1997 in the Red River Valley. As all members know, the farmers flooded out in 1999 suffered more than those in 1997 in terms of agricultural production. In 1999, over 1 million acres went unseeded, whereas virtually all land was seeded in 1997.

Yesterday, the Minister of National Defence appeared before the Agriculture Committee, and the Member of Parliament Mr. Borotsik said we do require another \$30 million to \$40 million. If there was a 50-50, would you? Mr. Eggleton replied: The answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, we have had some indications from Ottawa over the past couple of weeks that the door was open to further negotiations. It would appear that as of yesterday that door was slammed shut on our farmers who suffered disastrous flooding in 1999. If the federal government is closing the door on both 90-10 and 50-50 cost-sharing, they are effectively closing the door on negotiations for providing assistance for the 1999 flood in southwestern Manitoba.

\* (13:45)

Given the serious consequences of this unwillingness to negotiate, it is more urgent than ever that Manitoba present a unified voice in urging the federal government to accept their fair share of disaster assistance. Both this Government and the previous Government took the same approach to compensating the 1999

conditions in southwest Manitoba, that these producers should be treated the same as farmers affected by the flood in the Red River Valley in 1997.

I ask today that all members of this House join me in urging the federal government to recognize the serious consequences of the 1999 flood and begin discussions to provide disaster financial assistance to southwest Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, just as disappointing as Mr. Eggleton's comments is the fact that he delivered them in Ottawa without meeting with the Province of Manitoba on this very serious issue. We worked very closely with the Liberal members of Parliament—and I might add, with members of Parliament from all parties from this province, but this spirit of co-operation has not been shown by Mr. Eggleton, who made this announcement without agreeing to meet with this Government despite our six requests for a meeting. And this is the Minister responsible for emergency measures.

During the 1997 Red River flood, the generosity shown by Manitobans and for Manitobans will never be forgotten.

Again, a part of our province faces a crisis, and Mr. Eggleton's comments are unacceptable. Given our position, the farmers in southwestern Manitoba should be treated the same as farmers who were flooded by the Red River in 1997. We will attempt to confirm with Ottawa whether the comment attributed to Mr. Eggleton is indeed Ottawa's final position on the 1999 flood.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a copy of a letter that we have sent to the Honourable Ron Duhamel, whom we have met with on a number of occasions, once again urging the federal government to come to the table and discuss the need for assistance for southwest Manitoba, whether it be under DFAA or a JERI-type program which would involve 50-50 funding.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the ministerial statement from the Minister of Highways and Government Services and emergency preparedness on this issue. Certainly, as it has dealt with the issue of the flooding in southwest Manitoba, we, too,

were appalled in regard to the statements made in the House of Commons yesterday by the Minister of Defence, the Minister of Emergency Preparedness Canada, Mr. Eggleton, that there would be no more financing available on any kind of a basis—I think were some of his terms—to be used for the flood in southwest Manitoba.

He did, however, say there was room in the kinds of statements that he made—he recognized the need for changes in the emergency preparedness mechanisms that dealt with this process in regard to subsequent resolutions that were dealt with, similar to when the JERI program was used here in southern Manitoba in 1997.

So I would still not give up in relation to the whole issue of receiving funding in from the federal government on this issue. Also, I would believe strongly, as we spoke out strongly yesterday in this House, and continue today to deal with the issue on a 50-50 basis, it is very, very clear that the federal government feels that they have met under DFAA to do what they could in regard to culverts, washouts, fence lines and repairs on a municipal level, and they have done that as DFAA requires them to do, but lost farm inputs under the definition clearly do not fall under the DFAA legislation, so, therefore, will have to be dealt with in a subsequent resolution. I would urge this House to wholeheartedly come together to put forth that position, and I would in fact urge this Government to immediately table a resolution that would look at 50-50 funding on getting to the table and bringing the federal government back to the table on that issue.

Certainly, you know, Mr. Borotsik from Brandon-Souris is quite right. There is another over \$40 million needed in that region. Those farmers, as I said yesterday, indicated that the \$85 million to \$90 million that they are still short is still required in that area, and that they still really are in great need of those funds.

The Minister also may not have heard, in his announcement here just of a few moments ago, that there were other comments made, as I said, in regard to getting the changes to the package together out of Hansard from Ottawa yesterday in regard to tying it all together and putting it in.

But, having said that, Mr. Speaker, the situation is worse in southwest Manitoba than it perhaps was in the '97 flood from a land preparedness position, not to mention anything about the lost infrastructure that the devastation that the people in the Red River Valley saw in regard to the lost buildings and the loss of their capital assets.

\* (13:50)

But the loss of land maintenance was of great concern to all of them at that time. While the farmers may be re-establishing their crop in southwest Manitoba for the year 2000, there is a great shortfall of dollars available to meet the input costs, all of the input costs. Certainly the majority of the input costs that are out there today, going in the ground, are going to be done on credit, much more so than they have ever been done in the past. I think that is why we need to come together, if this House can, in an all-party mechanism.

That is why amendments to the original resolution were put together yesterday to deal with the fact that if there is a real concerted effort here and a real concern on behalf of the Government to meet the \$30 million to \$40 million that is required for these farmers, perhaps they could come to the table with their dollars to bluff the government, if you will, of Ottawa, or to force the federal government into the same kinds of acceptance of a package that this Government did, the PC Government did last summer when they put the money on the table and then sent the bill to Ottawa to have them pay their share.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member has exceeded the time that the Minister used for his ministerial statement. I would ask the Honourable Member to please wrap it up.

**Mr. Maguire:** Just to wrap up then, I would just challenge the Government in the House today to come up with a 50-50 funding formula so that they can put the money on the table and do it prior to the budget. The need is great, the need is today. We know that the federal government needs to be coerced kicking and screaming into this whole process, but the farmers in the country and the communities are the ones that

are suffering today. So we really need that assistance right now.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, may I have leave?

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

**Mr. Gerrard:** I welcome the Minister's statement. I, too, am disappointed that Mr. Eggleton has not been able to find the ability to broaden the DFAA process or criteria to be able to include more. I would urge the Minister responsible for emergency measures (Mr. Ashton) in Manitoba to take the opportunity of the invitation to change the rules for the future so that in fact when such a disaster occurs, it can be addressed more appropriately.

Nevertheless, having said that, I interpret Minister Eggleton's remarks to refer to the DFAA program and the fact that the options under the DFAA program in the defined criteria are closed in terms of expanding it, but not to indicate that there is not an opportunity for funding under the JERI program.

Indeed, in the discussions that I have had with the Honourable Ron Duhamel, he has indicated that there remains a window open for funding under the JERI program with a clear request from the provincial Government, and we welcome the letter that you have tabled. Clearly, in view of the fact that there was an additional \$100 million federal and provincial provided earlier this year—there was an opportunity to target it but it was not used—that the case has got to be made forcefully with members of this Legislature, with members of Parliament, with the Prime Minister.

I will certainly be a participant in making that case, along with others here, to try and get, with as much speed as we possibly can, the JERI program which in fact would treat those in southwestern Manitoba equivalent to people in the Red River Valley in '97. I would urge the Government to focus in on this option and to spearhead an effort to try and carry it through to success.

\* (13:55)

## TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I am pleased to table the following annual reports: The Discriminatory Business Practices Act for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2000; Annual Reports Concerning Complaints About Judicial Conduct 1999, and the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Annual Review, 1998 which has been previously distributed.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 22—The Court of Queen's Bench Surrogate Practice Amendment Act

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that leave be given to introduce Bill 22, The Court of Queen's Bench Surrogate Practice Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pratique relative aux successions devant la Cour du Banc de la Reine), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Mackintosh:** This bill repeals the provision that requires court offices to accept wills for safekeeping. It also corrects a cross-referencing error.

*Motion agreed to.*

### Bill 23—The Jury Amendment Act

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Sport (Mr. Chomiak), that leave be given to introduce Bill 23, The Jury Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurés, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Mackintosh:** This bill allows a jury summons to be sent by ordinary mail instead of registered mail.

*Motion agreed to.*

**Bill 24—The Personal Property Security  
Amendment and Various Acts  
Amendment Act**

**Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 24, The Personal Property Security Amendment and Various Acts Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sûretés relatives aux biens personnels et d'autres dispositions législatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

***Motion presented.***

**Mr. Lemieux:** This bill makes a number of minor housekeeping amendments. Nevertheless, more important to the new Personal Property Security Act, which was passed in 1993, the new act will be proclaimed later this year when the new Personal Property computer system is ready for implementation. The minor housekeeping amendments in the bill include things like "word" and "section" reference corrections.

***Motion agreed to.***

**Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us today, from the Springs Christian Academy, 30 Grades 9, 11 and 12 students under the direction of Mr. Brad Dowler. This school is located in the Honourable Minister of Finance's (Mr. Selinger) constituency.

Also we have seated in the public gallery, from Fort Richmond Collegiate, 14 Grade 11 History students under the direction of Mrs. Valerie Shupak. This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

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

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

**Flooding  
Agricultural Disaster Assistance**

**Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition):** My question is for the First

Minister. As was indicated in the statement of the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) just a few minutes ago, yesterday, under intensive questioning at the House of Commons agriculture committee by Rick Borotsik, the Brandon-Souris MP, the Minister responsible for disaster assistance federally, Mr. Eggleton, slammed the door on additional support for the farmers in southwestern Manitoba who were unable to seed over a million acres of cropland last year, an unprecedented disaster. In fact, both the statement and news reports indicate, when he was asked whether the federal cabinet would be open to a 50-50 cost-sharing program with the Province to provide for further aid, Eggleton gave a flat out no.

What does the First Minister now plan to do to address this absolutely outrageous and unacceptable situation?

\* (14:00)

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

We, again, were extremely disappointed and angry to see the answer to Mr. Borotsik's questions in the House of Commons, although, for the purpose of clarity, it reflected the response we had been getting from that minister for the last couple of weeks.

It is ironic because we had received an answer to the June '99 request from the former Minister, tabled to the House of Commons, requesting disaster assistance under the federal disaster assistance program, a question we had posed to the Government last year.

We know that Manitoba put that request in in June of '99. Finally, on February 16, 2000, we received confirmation that we are in fact eligible.

I was meeting with the lead Minister, Mr. Axworthy, that day and was told verbally that this letter was coming to our Minister and was told as well that, and I heard on the media, this would mean that finally and appropriately southwest Manitoba would be treated in a similar way to the region in the Red River Valley in '97 or to the people of Québec and Ontario in the ice storm of a few years ago.



We think, just because the flooding was less dramatic in southwest Manitoba, and we would agree with the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Filmon) in his statement, that very many people were affected negatively, a lot of farmers were affected negatively. The input costs are real. Fertilizer costs, for example, that were washed away last year, should be made up by a program.

We understand that we will be meeting tomorrow with the federal minister on a housing proposal, and we will be raising it there. We have to resolve it here in Manitoba. We have four different people in the federal Liberal caucus saying four different things, and we have to resolve it. If we cannot resolve it between the two ministers, I believe we have to resolve it with the Prime Minister or attempt to resolve it again with the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Filmon:** Mr. Speaker, last June 29, after meeting with the Disaster Recovery Coalition in Brandon, I committed, on behalf of our Government, to give to the farmers of southwest Manitoba, who had been unable to plant their crops, a \$50-an-acre payment for unseeded acreage in that area, which resulted in \$70 million being paid out by our Government in August of last year to those farmers.

At that time, the farmers in that area, the Keystone Agricultural Producers, the local community leadership and many Chambers and many others agreed that, at a very minimum, there should also be a payment attached to that for the input costs that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has just referred to. The fact was that there were fertilizer and chemicals that had been put on the land that were washed away in the flood and, in addition to that, there were chemicals necessary to be sprayed on during the summer to ensure that they could plant a crop this year. That cost has been estimated, I might say, by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) at, I believe, \$43 million that should be recovered from Ottawa.

I might say that that is similar, as the First Minister has indicated, to that which was done in the Red River Valley on a 50-50 cost-shared program under JERI.

Now, my question to the First Minister is: Has his Government budgeted its share of this

amount, \$21.5 million, for a JERI-type program such as was done in the Red River Valley in 1997?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, part of the money for input costs, just a small part of it, has already been processed, \$3.9 million for forage restoration and \$3.2 million in hay shortfall. In the Department of Agriculture, through AIDA, through income support, through disaster assistance, the program announced in June by the former Premier and programs announced subsequently by us, there has been well over a hundred million dollars in extra expenditure, almost double that in extra expenditure in the Department of Agriculture in disaster assistance. Except for the 60-40 support of funding on the income side for all producers for the \$10 or so per acre, we have got not a cent from the federal government for the 1999 flood situation.

So I will offer, Mr. Speaker, that I think it is important that we speak with the federal government the same way as the members opposite have spoken in the past and the way we spoke together as a community in 1997. There are some programs that the former Premier would know that it is essential that we keep the 90-10 formula for Manitoba. We do not want to see Manitoba treated in a second-down position from Ontario, Québec and the ice storm. There are programs that are eligible for a 90-10 program, and our 10 percent is there and ready to be supported by the 90 percent that we are entitled to from the federal government.

There are other programs that are eligible for a 50-50 JERI program, and our support is also committed to those programs. We should sit down, though, and make sure that we are not throwing away Manitoba's right, our taxpayer's right for a 90-10 program. We should not throw that away, so we should be singing from the same hymn book as we did with members opposite when we were in Opposition, 90-10 for Manitoba farmers for many of the costs and 50-50 on the JERI program like the Red River Valley.

**Mr. Filmon:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say that members opposite, when they were on this side of the House, wanted us to participate to the fullest extent in gaining support for the people

who were affected by the disaster in 1997 and again last year. Nobody is suggesting to the First Minister that the formulas be changed. In his preamble he referred to money that has been paid out for hay and for forage and so on, and that is not what we are talking about. We are talking about the input costs that were washed away in the flood last year, the chemicals that had been applied, the fertilizer that had been applied, that in similar circumstances in the Red River Valley, 50-50 payments were made on that behalf.

What I am asking the First Minister today is: Will he demonstrate his absolute and unequivocal commitment to the farmers of southwestern Manitoba by taking the \$21.5 million that his Minister says is required for these program areas and pay them out to the farmers in southwestern Manitoba, as we did last year in our June 29 commitment. We said we are committed; we are going to pay out the money, and we are going to embarrass the federal government into paying its 50 percent. And they did, Mr. Speaker, and they did. I want to know whether or not this First Minister is prepared to do that, whether he is prepared to do that to show unequivocally to the farmers and to the government in Ottawa that his Government is committed, that it is not just out there dangling a carrot and sending a fishing line into the water.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, I recall being in the auditorium or in the arena in Melita when the previous Minister of Agriculture said the farmers need \$50 an acre, \$60 an acre, \$70 an acre, \$80 an acre. I also remember that the unilateral payment of the provincial government has not embarrassed the federal government to come forward with any support at all. When we negotiated an income support program of \$60 million from the federal government and \$40 million from the provincial government, we did it by fighting, disagreeing, working in an all-party way, a tribute to members opposite, and coming together in a resolution with the federal government where we could jointly announce a program. When we see ourselves putting out money unilaterally, it has not resulted in one cent for disaster assistance for the areas of southwestern Manitoba. So we do not have a

Brink's truck. We did negotiate successfully the 60-40 income support program, and we are going to continue to do that. Let us remember today in this Chamber, we are dealing with a federal government that said no, no, no, and we have to unite, unite, unite against the federal government on behalf of the farmers in southwestern Manitoba.

### **Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance**

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to, as well, raise a few questions to the Government today in regard to this issue, perhaps to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) or to the Premier. I heard him say earlier that he would be there and have part of his money available in those 50-50 programs, in the JERI, and if there is 21.5 there, Mr. Premier, I would thank you for it for those farmers in southwest Manitoba, but we would like to see it on the table.

Another thing, the Minister responsible for Emergency Preparedness said in Ottawa yesterday that there was an agreement, and interesting that the Premier would raise the \$100 million, because the Minister responsible for Emergency Preparedness in Ottawa said that there was an agreement that part of those funds could be directed by the federal government to Manitoba, that the federal government did direct to Manitoba that the \$100-million transportation adjustment fund could be targeted to southwestern Manitoba.

Will the Minister of Agriculture explain to flooded producers and this House, as I raised yesterday, where this money went and why nothing was targeted to this region?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, I find it interesting the Member opposite would be the surrogate representative for the federal government when they can clearly identify four different positions on disaster assistance alone. Perhaps the Member opposite would understand that the only consistency in this argument across both sides of the aisle, if you will, has been the position of the provincial Government in dealing with the federal government.

The income support program that we were able to negotiate—

### Point of Order

**Mr. Maguire:** A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to raise to the Premier's attention that he and his Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), when we were on the all-party delegation in Ottawa last fall seeking \$300 million, indicated to me that there would be funds, if we had to stick together to get the \$300 million, so that some of those funds could then be targeted into southwestern Manitoba. We have not targeted anything. We got a hundred, we got a third of that, and there has been nothing targeted. So I just raise that.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Doer:** Well, Mr. Speaker, with the greatest respect for the farmer from St. Norbert—and I take that back. I apologize. This is a serious subject.

The income support program—there was an income crisis last year and there was a disaster crisis last year. There were two issues, and we attempted to resolve or get progress on both files, as the members opposite tried to do. We were successful in a \$100-million income program that was called a transportation transition policy. It was not called by the federal government in any one of the Prime Minister's statements or any one of our statements as anything towards disaster assistance in southwest Manitoba. In fact, we made it explicitly clear, and I made it clear standing at the unimike with the Prime Minister that this was only dealing with income programs and not dealing with the matter of disaster assistance. I said that in front of the Prime Minister, and I say that in front of the members opposite here today.

**Mr. Maguire:** Mr. Speaker, will the Government, then, clearly state for the record, and especially for the benefit of these flood victims, what monies their Government has alone actually paid out to these producers in order to help them plant this spring's crop?

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Highways and Government Services):** I think it is important to note

that essentially, in terms of disaster assistance, the only coverage that has been in place which has any cost-sharing from the feds directly is the \$16 million. We have not received a cent, but we received about \$10.5 million under DFA for lost buildings. The Province itself, as the First Minister (Mr. Doer) pointed to, has already put in \$71 million, including \$7 million which we identified, in fact the Premier identified earlier as clearly items that should be eligible, if not under DFAA, under a JERI-type program.

I think the difficulty members opposite have, and I do not know what part of "no" they do not understand from the federal government, is the problem here is not the provincial Government. It is the federal government in Ottawa, which has said no to 90-10 and no to 50-50. We need to get them to the table. The only way to do it is to have all three parties in this House speaking out and putting pressure on the federal government.

**Mr. Maguire:** Will the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, given the concern that the Government has indicated from both the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the emergency preparedness minister today, if this is such an emergency issue for this Government, given that she personally has not been west of Brandon to visit this flooded area, will they continue to point out what they have done?

We did not get an answer from the last question in regard to what they have done alone. Would she come out to Arthur-Virden and meet the constituents and tell them why they have not targeted any money to that region?

**Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct the record for the Member.

I want to indicate to him that I visited southwestern Manitoba during the time when the flood was on. I have met with producers from that area. I have met with producers. As the Minister, I have met with those producers.

I would be very happy to come out to that part of the province to meet with producers whenever they set up a meeting. I would also like to tell the Member that it would be very

encouraging and send a very good signal to the people of southwestern Manitoba if they would agree to pass the resolution that we brought forward in this House and show their support for producers that we do want the federal government to recognize that this is a very serious problem and that they have to come to the table with their dollars.

We have been at the table. The federal government is not doing it.

### **Income Tax Reductions**

**Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park):** During the introduction of tax reductions in the Saskatchewan budget, Finance Minister Cline said: "This province needs more people with higher incomes that will bring their wealth here, that will invest their wealth here and will hire people here."

Now the Province of Ontario is providing across-the-board tax reductions, coupled with increased health and education spending.

Mr. Speaker, now that the NDP deficit scare has been dispelled, is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) or the Premier (Mr. Doer) prepared to assure Manitobans they will receive significant personal income tax cuts in next Wednesday's budget?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** The deficit scare was indeed real. The overspending that occurred by the previous Government has now been documented in the third-quarter report as real overspending, a report that the former Minister of Finance appears to put a lot of creditability in. So that has been verified in the third-quarter report.

With respect to tax cuts and tax relief, we were elected on a balanced platform. The five priorities that we were elected on will be the ones that we honour in our upcoming budget, and the details of that will unfold very shortly.

**Mr. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, I continue to be confused by this Minister because, if he does read his own third-quarter report, he will acknowledge there is over a \$4-million surplus

projected this year. If he had listened to Treasury Board officials during the transition after the election, he would have been provided with exactly the same information.

So I ask this Minister of Finance: Will he commit today to ensure that the looming tax differential that Manitoba faces will be addressed in both a progressive and a planned manner?

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Selinger:** The third-quarter report did indeed confirm the overspending. It indeed did confirm that we got extra transfer payments, over half of which was on a one-time basis from Ottawa this year through equalization. We can appreciate the fact that that has generated a \$4-million surplus. I was very happy to report that as soon as it became clear to us.

With respect to tax reductions, as I have said, we were elected on a balanced approach. The property tax credit was one that we said we would follow through on. We also said that we would follow through on those tax reductions announced in the budget we voted for last spring, and that was a \$40-million personal income tax reduction that was implemented January 1 along with a \$6-million small-business tax reduction, and indeed those have flowed forward.

**Mr. Stefanson:** I am glad that the Government is following through on the personal income tax reduction that we brought in in our budget and the corporate tax reduction for small business that we brought in in our budget, even though they introduced an amendment opposing that reduction.

But I ask: What specific tax reductions, and I repeat, tax reductions, is the Minister prepared to implement to ensure that our young and our skilled and our mobile workforce remain right here in Manitoba? Does he even have a plan to address the pending brain drain?

**Mr. Selinger:** I find it passing strange that the Member opposite is quite happy to take credit for all tax reductions and completely deny any responsibility for any overexpenditures that have

occurred. I also find it passing strange that the Member for Kirkfield Park would indicate that the tax system that we have in front of us right now is one that is problematic, because it is their tax system; they designed it. They looked after it for the last 11 years.

So I say to the Member opposite, when we unveil our budget on Tuesday, we will be true to the commitments we made in the election, and we will give the details of the balanced approach we will take to managing the Manitoba community.

### **Income Tax Reductions**

**Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield):** The Premier (Mr. Doer) referred to those individuals asking for tax cuts as right-wing birds flying in ever-decreasing circles around tax cuts, tax cuts, tax cuts. His comrades on the left in the Communist Party of Canada, during the May Day parade, were also calling for tax cuts. Does the Premier simply dismiss his comrades as left-wing birds flying around in ever-decreasing circles around tax cuts, tax cuts, tax cuts?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** One does not know where to start with that flurry of chirping coming from the Member opposite. I am sure the participants in the May Day parade will be very happy to hear the Member opposite celebrating their suggestions to the people of Manitoba.

The point we are trying to make is Manitoba believes in a balanced approach to soar into the future. We do not believe that a one-winged approach will allow our beautiful province to soar the way it can. We believe in education and training and hope for our young people. We believe in stewarding our environment and protecting our water. We believe in protecting our communities from floods and devastation. On the other hand, we believe in an affordable government, and we will deliver that.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, will the Premier commit to no tax for families earning less than \$40,000, as demanded by his comrades in the Communist Party of Canada?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member for Springfield, with his last supplementary question.

**Mr. Schuler:** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, as asked in *The Winnipeg Sun*: "On the other hand there is another bird the Premier might want to pay some attention to. This is the dodo bird. And it is extinct." Will this be the Government's new policy of tax relief?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, there are some people that believe that a province should be run on only a single-issue priority. We are not that group of men and women on this side. The Member opposite was talking about different articles and different perspectives. We campaigned, and this is a very old-fashioned idea to members opposite, but you know what we did? We made five commitments in the election campaign, and you know what we are going to do? We are going to deliver on those commitments after the campaign.

I know for members opposite who sold the phone company weeks after the election campaign, I know for members opposite that fired 1000 nurses two months after the election campaign, this may be a novel idea, but a promise made by members on this side will be a promise kept.

### **Health Care System Bed Openings**

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Thank you—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member for River East has the floor.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of those very promises that the Premier made during the election campaign, one of those five promises, five commitments, was to indeed immediately open 100 new hospital beds in the province of Manitoba. On November 22, the Minister of Health again announced that promise, only he increased it to 138 permanent new beds.

I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Given that those beds were to be opened by the end of April and April has come and gone, have they all opened?

\* (14:30)

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for that question. It allows me to talk about some of the initiatives that we announced. Tied hand in hand, in the context of the opening of the beds, was our commitment to deal with hallway medicine in this province. I think that the reports generally, in terms of hallway medicine, have been positive. We saw the CIHI announcement last week that announced that Manitoba had done something right compared to all of the jurisdictions in the country. An independent national body made an assessment. We are very proud of that.

Have we solved all the problems? No. After seven months in office, we will hold our record up of seven months in office against the Member's 11 years any time, any place, anywhere.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Obviously, I will take that as a no, and that is a promise made and a promise that has not been kept.

Mr. Speaker, given that we know that 12 permanent beds that were in place, when we were in Government, at St. Boniface hospital have been closed, how many other permanent beds have been closed?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that members opposite would never ever speak about beds during the 11 years. In the seven years that I was opposition critic, they avoided it like the plague, and for good reason, because over 1400 acute-care beds were closed during their tenure. We recently put through another Treasury Board submission that funded fully 34 beds that, in the members' last year in office, they had indicated would be opened but they were not fully funded, and we had to fund them in our budget because they were not fully funded. So I will not take any advice from the Member opposite with respect to beds.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Speaker, a simple question for the Minister of Health is: We heard the Premier (Mr. Doer) say, in a previous answer, a promise made is a promise kept. Has he kept his promise to open 138 new hospital beds, yes or no?

**Mr. Chomiak:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to indicate to members opposite, firstly, that generally I think the members opposite ought to wait to see the bed numbers come out in the yearly fashion, as they do, before they make that point.

Secondly, we did indicate that we had difficulty opening all of the beds that we required because of a lack of nurses as a result of the Tory nursing shortage, because of the layoff of the thousand nurses, which is one of the reasons why we have launched an aggressive five-point strategy to try to deal with the nursing shortage in this province.

I wish members opposite would support that policy, but the fact is that nursing and other support staff—it is not just nursing. It is a shortage in nurses aides. It is a shortage in radiation therapists. It is a shortage in X-ray technicians. It was built up under 11 years of neglect under the Tory Government, and we are taking steps to remedy that situation.

### **Education System Financing**

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier.

I was very pleased by the Premier's enthusiasm for building the new economy in Manitoba earlier on. Given the importance of universities, centres of knowledge, to the development of the knowledge-based economy, and given the fact that, sadly, in the last 10 years, under the former Tory Government, the funding for universities fell from 1992-93 when it was \$225 million a year to last year when the budget showed \$222 million, given the tragic decisions made by the previous Government, will the Premier commit to improving the situation in the new budget?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** My point of order can wait till the Member is finished his question.

**Mr. Speaker:** I will recognize the Honourable Member, with his point of order.

**Mr. Laurendeau:** I was just thinking back to when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) was up to his feet and he said that the budget was coming down next Tuesday. Could he clarify? Has he changed the date for the budget?

**Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance):** The budget will be May 10.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Gerrard:** My supplementary is to the Minister of Finance. Given the importance of being able to budget over a number of years, will the Minister of Finance commit to providing a multiyear framework for the funding of universities?

**Mr. Selinger:** We will bring down a budget May 10, and it will reveal itself then.

### Post-Secondary Education Tuition Fee Policy

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** I ask the second supplementary to the Minister of Finance. Given the Government's commitment to a 10% fee reduction, tuition fee reduction, will you provide that on an ongoing basis over more than one year rather than just a single-year commitment?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, this is a commitment that I made in the election campaign, and we made it for a very specific reason. When I was going to high schools just the last couple of years, it was very, very concerning to me—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Doer:** Well, some of us believe listening to youth and answering questions from youth is not a bad idea. In fact we had a round table last week in Brandon with some of the student union presidents from across Manitoba, and they felt, for the first time in years, it was the first time ever that their voices were listened to by a new government. I think that is something we want to carry on.

One of the concerns we had, and the Member opposite will know that there is no national vision in Canada on post-secondary education. Since the '95 budget—[interjection] Well, some of us believe that a national government should use the power and resources of a national budget to allow for our young people to have post-secondary education coast to coast to coast, and we believe that that should be implemented in a co-operative way with the provincial governments. Regrettably, the money for post-secondary education was cut out in '95, because it is kind of this let the provinces go where they will approach of the federal government. But we are very concerned about our young people that say to us in high schools now that they are very worried that, if they study hard and get good marks, they cannot afford to go to university and, therefore, the hope to go to university is based on the income level of their families rather than their academic opportunities and their dreams. We are committed to making post-secondary, universities, community colleges and programs for young people more affordable, and stay tuned for our budget.

### Physician Resources Pediatric Neurologist

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** On December 8, 1999, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Health on behalf of Mrs. East and her 9-year-old daughter who was losing the services of the only pediatric neurologist in the province of Manitoba because that pediatric neurologist was moving out of province. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health today, this is four months later, whether he has had the ability to attract a permanent pediatric neurologist to our province, given that there is a need for at least two.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I can indicate that the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) had been raising that issue for some time when we were in Opposition. I will provide the Member with a response. I will take that question as notice.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Can the Minister of Health explain to me the discrepancy in the letter that he wrote back in response to my letter, which was some four months later, why he is indicating that his staff made several attempts to contact Mrs. East without success when discussions with Mrs. East indicate that no one ever tried to contact her? She has three young children. She has an answering machine, and she never received any calls from the Department of Health.

\* (14:40)

**Mr. Chomiak:** I will take that question as notice and provide the information to the Member opposite.

#### Pediatric Nephrologist

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I received a letter from a worried mother whose 3-year-old daughter had to wait six months to get an appointment to see a pediatric nephrologist. Manitoba is supposed to have four pediatric nephrologists but has only two. Can the Minister reassure this mom that funding for these two empty positions will be committed to in the upcoming budget?

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I would appreciate if the Member opposite would forward that specific information to me, and I will do follow-up.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Time for Oral Questions has expired.

#### Speaker's Ruling

**Mr. Speaker:** I have a ruling for the House.

During Oral Questions on April 26, 2000, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the Honourable Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau) regarding words spoken by the Honourable Minister of Education

(Mr. Caldwell) while replying to a question. The Official Opposition House Leader indicated that he heard the words "deliberately misleading" used and requested that the words be withdrawn. The Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) also spoke to the point of order, and indicated that the Honourable Minister of Education was paraphrasing or citing comments from the *Selkirk Journal*. I took the matter under advisement in order to peruse Hansard.

I thank the Honourable House Leaders for their contributions to the point of order.

I have reviewed Hansard, and on page 608, the Honourable Minister of Education is quoted as saying "The *Selkirk Journal* has indicated that the province may deserve an apology for what they characterized as deliberately misleading statements."

Previous Manitoba Speakers have ruled that language is parliamentary if it is not directed towards specific members. Mr. Speaker Rocan ruled on June 4, 1991, that as the words in question were not addressed to specific members, they were therefore not unparliamentary. Similar rulings were made by Madam Speaker Dacquay on April 3, 1996, April 12, 1996, October 28, 1996, April 30, 1999, and May 4, 1999.

In reviewing the entire paragraph containing the remarks complained of, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) does not make explicit reference to a particular member. As the words in question were not directed explicitly towards a particular member, it is difficult for the Speaker to rule that there is a point of order.

However, I wish to address one of the points made during the raising of the point of order, namely, that the Minister was not using unparliamentary language because he was quoting from another source. I must advise the House that previous Manitoba Speakers have ruled that it is out of order to use unparliamentary language even when the words in question are originating from another source.

On April 7, 1999, Madam Speaker Dacquay ruled that it was out of order to call another member a liar while attributing the words spoken



to a constituent. Similarly, Speaker Rocan ruled on October 5, 1989, that quoting the words of another person which were unparliamentary is out of order. In a statement on June 30, 1978, Speaker Graham quoted from the parliamentary authority, Erskine May, which reads "A Member is not allowed to use unparliamentary words by the device of putting them in someone else's mouth." This quotation is also contained in the current edition of Erskine May.

I would therefore request that the Honourable Minister select his words carefully, especially when quoting from another source. Thank you.

**Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your remarks on this particular issue. Certainly, I did find the article in the *Selkirk Journal* very illuminating on this particular matter, but I take your advice seriously. Thank you.

## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

### Victoria Hospital Volunteer Guild

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry):** Mr. Speaker, it was my pleasure yesterday to attend the Victoria Hospital Volunteer Guild's dessert and bridge fundraiser for the oncology unit at the Victoria General Hospital. The guild is currently aiding the Victoria Hospital's oncology department fundraiser. They are fundraising money for the development and construction of a new facility for the hospital's oncology unit.

To date, the volunteer guild has raised over \$200,000 for this very important project. The Victoria Hospital volunteer guild has a long history of fundraising and volunteer support in Winnipeg. The guild originated in 1954 at the old Victoria Hospital. When the hospital moved to its present location in 1971, the volunteer guild moved with it. The guild has worked tirelessly to help raise funds for the hospital through the gift shop and fundraising events like yesterday's dessert and bridge sale and to help provide support services for the patients of Victoria Hospital and their families.

I commend Mr. Joe Prime, President of the Volunteer Guild, and all of the volunteers who

make up the guild on their fundraising efforts and their service to the Victoria Hospital. I wish all of them the best in their future endeavours. Through their good work, they have made and will continue to make a significant difference in the care and service patients receive at Victoria General Hospital.

### Sisler's Most Wanted Jazz Dance

**Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows):** Mr. Speaker, many of us were fortunate enough to catch an excellent feature on CBC's, *The Magazine*, Monday night. Showcased was a talented group of jazz dancers from Sisler High School in my constituency. The dance group, *Sisler's Most Wanted*, has garnered much attention over the past year for its innovative approach to dealing with students at risk of dropping out of school.

The jazz class started four years ago with 10 young men who shared one thing, a lack of interest in school. There are now 160 students enrolled in dance class and 22 in jazz dance, which is a tribute to the head of the performing arts department, Mr. Spencer Duncanson.

In an interview on *The Magazine*, instructor Sophia Costantini explained how the class succeeded in giving these students a sense of self-worth, which translated into improved school performance and participation. The class motivates students to reach their potential and strive for excellence, something that easily transfers to the classroom.

Today, the program's popularity has led to the creation of pilot programs in both Elmwood High School and Daniel McIntyre Collegiate. *Sisler's Most Wanted* will perform at the Walker Theatre at the end of the month, and I wish them all the best in this endeavour. It is heartening to hear of these types of programs that are making a real difference in students' lives.

\* (14:50)

### Michif Language Courses

**Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to an important project that is underway at Lake Metigoshe in the southwestern corner of the province. Thanks

to David Chartrand, who had made a proposal to Heritage Canada, now there are a number of students who are learning the Michif language which is a hybrid of French and Cree spoken by Manitoba's Metis founders.

This is the first time that these languages have been taught in Manitoba. Norm Fleury has been teaching two dozen students, ages 7 to 69, a language that has been spoken in Manitoba for countless years. Only now though is Michif being studied and recorded. Approximately 200 Manitobans over the age of 50 speak Michif, along with hundreds more in Saskatchewan, Montana and North Dakota.

In 1998, a Danish linguistic professor pointed out that this language was in danger of extinction, so I am pleased to see that the people are taking an interest in its preservation. The Manitoba Métis Federation is considering offering a course on Michif in Winnipeg and several other regions are also examining this. It is encouraging to see so many people interested in preserving this unique language that it has such an important role to play in Manitoba's history.

L'autre Michif qui était dans cette Assemblée, c'était mon grand ami Neil Gaudry. Je l'ai bien connu. Il a travaillé fort pour son monde. Il a donné tout son temps pour son monde et son pays.

*[Translation]*

The other Michif who was in this Assembly was my great friend Neil Gaudry. I knew him well. He worked hard for his people. He gave all his time for his people and for his country.

*[English]*

Manitobans are extremely proud of their culture and heritage and the renewed interest in Michif language is certainly a testament to that.

I would like to, at this time, thank my Uncle Rudolph Dupas for helping me to better understand my heritage as a Michif. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

### **CN Rail Traffic—Transcona**

**Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on an issue that is affecting Transcona that is resulting in a dangerous situation involving the railway.

Transcona, as we all know, was founded on the railway. Because of the railway it sprang up adjacent to the Transcona Yards and the mainline running from the east to Winnipeg. Now the rail line that has helped create and design Transcona is resulting in a threat.

The community is mostly north of the CN mainline, with only three entrances along the entire nine to ten kilometres from Lagimodiere Boulevard to the Perimeter Highway. Only Bournais Avenue and Plessis Road in Radisson and Redonda in the constituency of Transcona to the east, which is only a few hundred metres from the Perimeter Highway, allow access from the south.

The problem I want to draw attention to is that the trains that have now privatized CN run more than a hundred cars long, more than 10 000 feet, and can block the traffic from these three entrances from Highway 15 or Dugald Road for often well more than five minutes. For as much as 45 minutes, the road access in and out of Transcona can be blocked. Regulation allows for only five minutes for trains to block the thoroughfare. This is an inconvenience for residents but is also a danger because of the convergence with the removal of the ambulance from the Day Street station in central Transcona. The ambulance is now at Nairn and Watt and must travel via Dugald Road, cross the tracks of the CN mainline via one of these three streets to get to Transcona.

You may know that the access from Nairn and Regent is prohibitive because of the large volume of traffic. The only other route is down Grassie Boulevard, down Plessis and across the CP mainline. This situation, Mr. Speaker, is going to result in fatalities eventually. As recently as April 20, when I was driving home to my home west of Plessis, a train crossing arm came down, the lights were flashing, and I could hear the sirens wailing behind me from Highway 15. The ambulance stopped behind me. I got out

of my truck, and when the ambulance drivers turned off the lights inside—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member's time has expired.

**Ms. Cerilli:** Mr. Speaker, I would ask for leave to—

**Mr. Speaker:** Is there leave to allow the Member to continue? *[Agreed]*

**Ms. Cerilli:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues. The paramedics told me they were lucky this time. Their call had been downgraded from emergency to non-urgent transport, but they said that this happens all the time, but they were lucky. I had the time to get out, talk to the paramedics and to take some photographs of the ambulance waiting for the train. This is an issue that is going to require co-operation from all levels of government. I am pleased to see that the Minister of Transportation has committed to come out and view the situation. I look forward to seeing the matter resolved. Thank you.

#### Post-Secondary Education

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I choose to talk on this member's statement about the role of post-secondary education and the importance to the future of Manitoba. Clearly, in a knowledge-based economy, as centres of knowledge and centres of economic growth, there can be little that is more important to this province than post-secondary education and community colleges and universities.

It was a tragedy over the last 10 years that funding for universities has been cut instead of increased, that it is cut at a time when in fact the revenues for the province have gone up very significantly from some \$4.7 billion in 1992 to \$6.3 billion in the last fiscal year, '99-2000. Over this period, when there was a 35% increase in revenues, the fall-off in support for post-secondary education and the development of a knowledge-based economy was one of the astounding and tragic mistakes of the former government.

It is to be hoped that the budget which comes down next year will start to address some

of the serious needs in post-secondary education. I will mention in particular one area which is front and centre. That is the area of libraries. In this world, where we have Internet access and so on, we still need books. We need access to knowledge, and so it is fundamental as we plan for the future that there is a focus on libraries and making sure that they are well supported to provide access to information in the variety of means that is now possible.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on the Government motion introduced by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), standing in the name of the Member for Arthur-Virden.

#### GOVERNMENT MOTION

##### Federal Reparation for 1999 Farmland Flooding

**Mr. Speaker:** To resume debate on the proposed motion brought forward by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food and the amendment, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, with three minutes remaining.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to continue this and use the short time that I have left to emphatically point out why we need to move ahead with not only the resolution that has been put forward by the Government but also the amendments that our side has placed in pinpointing a plan and a course of action that would lead to providing support for that distressed area of Manitoba, the southwest region, because of the excessive flooding last year.

Yesterday, I was closing by saying that why would we be onside with a government who we believe has not negotiated a 50-50 deal in good faith at this particular time with the federal government? is where I was going to continue. Then we found today that even the hundred million dollars that the federal government in the hundred-million-dollar transportation adjustment

package that has been placed in the hands of Manitoba farmers, as we have indicated, as I have indicated to this House, it was needed for low-income purposes. It was pointed out by the Premier (Mr. Doer) that that plan was for low-income purposes, but he did not take a portion of those funds and distribute them or target them into the southwest corner of the province, as the federal government was under the belief could have been done as part of that program. Perhaps that is today why we are not able to get any more federal money from the federal government in regard to this program. They believe that it perhaps is being dealt with.

Our side will definitely be onside if the Premier of this province and his Government would bring the \$21.5 million that was pointed out in Question Period today as half of the Government's limited \$43-million basis for lost inputs in the southwest region of Manitoba would be put on the table. We will go hand in hand with them to Ottawa to try and get Ottawa's \$21.5-million share of that program.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, in spite of Mr. Eggleton's comments to the opposite in the House in Ottawa yesterday that there is no more support, you have to clearly look at the fact that he said there was no support under DFAA, because they truly believe, as have the Government and ourselves agreed, that DFAA did not include lost farm inputs. We need to make sure that there is a subsequent agreement reached to bring those funds into that subsequent agreement and put it in place like there was under the JERI program in Manitoba in 1997 and subsequent other funds in other disasters that have taken place.

Maybe now the Government understands why we are just as tired of their rhetoric and platitudes as the western Manitoba farmers are and why we have asked the Government to accept our amendments as a plan of action and commitment to these farmers in this district and the communities. That is why, apart from, as the Minister's resolution states, we should be all working to get fertilizer and land restoration as eligible costs under DFAA and for the fact that we need to move forward to get funds that have been provided in other disasters that we need to have recognition that the 50-50 cost-shared

program with the federal government and the provincial government to put—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, I, as well, am very pleased to have the opportunity to stand and speak in this House on an extremely important issue, as many members before me have stated, certainly in southwestern Manitoba and throughout other parts of Manitoba. I speak to the proposed amendment to the resolution that was put forward by the Minister of Agriculture and speak in opposition to the amendments.

I would like to thank the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk) for presenting this extremely important resolution, as originally put forth to the Legislature and for continuing to put this issue as a top priority within her department for producers here in Manitoba.

\* (15:00)

Producers continue to recognize, certainly from my contacts and people out in the southwestern part of the province, the value, the efforts and the commitment by the Agriculture minister. As the previous Member had mentioned in this House, working with other members of the Minister's family and the honourable way that they had presented themselves, I too have heard very often that the Minister presents the same way throughout the community.

The interesting point, from the member opposite from Arthur-Virden, that the federal MP from the Brandon-Souris area had brought up today in Ottawa, was his question: Would the federal government support any more initiatives for farming in southwestern Manitoba? The answer was pretty clear; it was no. But what is surprising to me is the amendments as put forth by Opposition that the 50-50 split should be considered.

It is unfortunate, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, that the members opposite have not recognized over and over and over again that

both the Minister of Highways and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) as well as the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) have, in fact, looked at the 50-50 plan previously. The government continues to say no at a federal level, and it seems that members opposite cannot understand that it has already been brought forth. Their resolution, in fact, a lot of it has already been conducted. The original resolution as presented by the Minister is for a unified front for a continued push for agriculture, and to negotiate for a fair, equitable settlement as we have seen in other disasters throughout Manitoba, Ontario and Québec for a 90-10 split that has been paid out in other disasters to other parts of this country.

Now, I am not sure what the members opposite do not understand about a 90-10 split, or a 50-50 split, but I might want to explain that 90-10 represents \$9 to \$1; and a 50-50 split is a \$1 to \$1. For them to consider wanting to go after that direction, without going after the direction that the rest of the country has got, in a fair and equitable settlement for people who have found themselves in dire straits in a disaster I am not sure I understand or follow their logic, which might explain, Mr. Speaker, why we were so terribly overspent by September of this year, from the previous Government, with that type of philosophy.

However, the Premier (Mr. Doer) has led a delegation to Ottawa. And I was happy to see all parties involved in that. It sent a straight message to Ottawa at the time that we were very much in favour of action here in the province of Manitoba for our farmers.

I know the Member opposite from Arthur-Virden was part of that delegation, as were many business people, many producers and elected civic officials from throughout the southwestern part of this province. The Premier led that delegation to Ottawa, and the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) opposite might have been upset that there was not a communist member that he would have liked to have seen go with that delegation. However, the Premier would probably consider that in the future.

The obvious compiled and constructive information that they put together from that

group of individuals was factual, it was well informed, and it was well presented. In fact, the delegation had identified the loss to farmers; they had identified the tragic loss of fertilizers and chemical application that they had applied to their fields and had called on Ottawa to consider that the same way they had considered maple trees in Québec.

It was quite obvious in some of the statements recently that they have not considered Manitoba farmers, crops, fields, livelihoods and the social impact of this disaster here in Manitoba to the same degree that they have considered the loss of maple trees in the severe ice storm of 1997.

Mr. Speaker, they called on Ottawa for an effective long-term safety net program to identify the critical importance and to develop programs as expediently as possible so they may be reactionary with the assistance and with the backing of the Province of Manitoba here to react to a disaster on a short-term basis here in Manitoba in '99. Obviously the frustration from the farmers, because of the inaction of the federal government on this issue, is becoming more and more evident.

The Honourable Minister of Highways and Government Services, the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), is also responsible for The Emergency Measures Act, and since being elected September 21 of 1999, he has continually pressed the federal government and his federal counterparts for an agreement and for programs modelled after the Jobs and Economic Restoration Initiative, the JERI program, and the Business Restart program, as well, that was considered during the Red River flood in 1997.

There is extensive documentation and extensive correspondence that went back and forth between the Minister on that issue. Art Eggleton, as well, the federal Minister responsible for Emergency Preparedness Canada, has continued to decline inclusion of such input costs as weed control, loss of applied fertilizers or forage restoration and pasture hay restoration under the DFFA Act. I think it is extremely unfortunate, and I think this House should pay considerable attention to the comments that he made yesterday as a member

of Parliament in Ottawa stating that there is absolutely no dollars left for any program.

It is unfortunate. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has expressed today his frustration with the ministers not getting their act together. They jump around in their numbers; they jump around in their dollars. They point fingers from department to department to department with none of them taking any action. I agree and state on the record that I agree with the Premier here today that the Prime Minister certainly should become involved when he has a number of ministers who cannot make a decision as to which department should be responsible within the federal government for these issues.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food at the federal level offered absolutely no support in addition to the AIDA program. Vanclief has acknowledged these items were beyond the responsibility of the Agriculture department and made a statement that it should be addressed through another department. It should then be addressed within the context of the agreement within the Canada and Manitoba plan. No wonder the Premier and myself and my colleagues and I would suspect members opposite and certainly the producers of Manitoba are becoming ever-increasingly more frustrated with the level of decision making at the federal level regarding this disaster.

The Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton), as I have mentioned, contacted Mr. Duhamel in November of '99, December of '99. December 20, again our Agriculture minister (Ms. Wowchuk) as well as the Minister of Highways met to discuss with Mr. Harvard the JERI program on the forage restoration and the DFFA plan. Unfortunately, correspondence back and forth from those ministers has been tardy, to say the least, and in February our Member also met regarding the DFFA plan under section 25 with Mr. Eggleton.

On February 15, again, our Minister of Highways and Mr. Eggleton had a meeting in Ottawa. Again, our Agriculture minister continually pounds on this. March 22, the Minister of Agriculture again in Ottawa pressed both Ag minister, Lyle Vanclief, and Secretary of State for Rural Development, Andy Mitchell,

to accept the responsibility of the federal government in this disaster. What they do not understand about the Minister's continually asking to be treated like the rest of Canada here in Manitoba is beyond anyone, I am sure, that could answer that question here in the House.

\* (15:10)

Farm incomes are decreasing continually, we will all agree, in Manitoba. The commodity prices here in Manitoba are continuing to be depressed. Farm families are under extreme pressure and continue to compete against American and European subsidies that put them behind the eight ball to start with. There was the loss of the freight rate, the Crow rate subsidy, and the federal government mentioning to farmers, over the quick loss of the Crow rate, how they should continue to diversify, and the farmers, although diversification has happened in many farms, the diversification caused capital output costs. A couple of bad years in agriculture are no different than a couple of bad years in business. It can quickly turn around, and carrying that heavy debt load and the federal government's lack of funding for the farmers have been an onerous problem for the farmers to try to compete in their markets. It has put them secondary to their American counterparts on what they are receiving for their product, and carrying the heavier debt load on trying to diversify and get into other areas has been extremely detrimental to them.

Mr. Speaker, the substantial costs incurring in the large operations of expansion into the livestock industry for farmers have presented many, many other problems, as well, throughout Manitoba. There is the cost to get back in when the forage prices and the grain prices are at such a record low. There are output costs of getting into diversification into the livestock industry and the lack of markets, as well, on that. In some cases, the overproduction and competitiveness in the market also present a problem.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

Fewer people in rural communities, certainly in southwestern Manitoba, are working on simply the farm. The social impacts of this, Mr.

Deputy Speaker, are very, very apparent to many members from smaller communities throughout Manitoba. I certainly see it in southwestern Manitoba, where you have got two people on a farm, spouses, one works off the farm, one works on the farm, and still the ends are not being met for the farm. Soon you have two people working off the farm. You have the families caught in-between. You have 24 hours in a day, but many of these families never seem to have enough hours by working two jobs plus the more than full-time hours they work in their farming operations, and the social cost to the families is extensive.

Regarding the cost for many of these people and many of the communities, when smaller communities are vying for job opportunities and industry and jobs where people have to move off the farm to make their farms viable and try to make a living and sustain their farms, they find that the jobs within the community are being depleted. The people that are unable, some of the young people within these communities that are unable, to pick employment or pick up jobs are unable to stay in their communities, because the people on the farms are being forced to work both on their farm and in the workforce in the smaller communities in Manitoba. In Brandon, we see it as well.

The social impact of the decrease in size in those communities, because many of the younger people are losing opportunities, because they are competing with people that are being forced off the farm, is extremely detrimental and short-sighted.

The federal government needs to address the reality of the situation and the social impact this is having throughout the communities, not only on the loss of the farms, but on the loss of the young people who in these communities are going to larger centres continually to look for employment because the employment is being taken by people that for years have worked on the farm and been able to sustain a livelihood just simply on their farming operations. Not only that, they have been able to supply for many years extra farm opportunities for farm labour hands that is just about non-existent now in Manitoba.

The federal government needs to come to the table co-operatively with our Government and provide a disaster assistance same to the Red River Valley. It is interesting to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the consideration given to the Saguenay River flood in 1996, the consideration given to Red River Valley in 1997 and the consideration given to the ice storm in Québec is not being the same here on the flooded farmland and the devastation that was seen in 1999 and recognized as a national disaster.

The members opposite would like us to go with that \$1 to \$1 split when the rest of the country has, in fact, got a \$9 to \$1 split, and I find that unfortunate and extremely short-sighted. The resolution that was put forward with the 50-50, \$1 to \$1 split, which had been presently brought into consideration by both our Ag Minister (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) is unfortunate and shortsighted and, again, possibly a reason why this province was so terribly overspent by September of this year when we assumed government.

The interesting point, as well, is that Manitoba producers, and I have heard this over and over again as a catch phrase and statement by many people, they are not asking for a handout. They are simply asking the governments and the federal government to treat them in the same manner as all other Canadians have been treated in a disaster.

I would hope the members opposite would support the original resolution and show a united front, as opposed to dragging their feet on this and looking for other solutions and throwing their hands in the air like the sky is falling. We need to send a clear message to Ottawa regarding this issue. It was with considerable attention that the all-party delegation went to Ottawa and fought for the farmers on this issue. I do not believe that we need to show the united—and I say that because the other members like to hear "united"—front quite often. You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is interesting that we should show a united front on this issue and continue to press the federal government.

I can understand the frustration of the farmers. I spoke with many producers during the farm rally that was held here April 12 in front of the Legislature. The frustrations, I believe, are real on a humanistic standpoint. Each one of the people who were here, mostly farmers and producers from southwestern Manitoba, was extremely frustrated and would like to see a resolution as this Government would like to see a resolution. The continuing efforts from our Highways Minister and our Minister of Agriculture are well recognized and certainly well appreciated. But the frustration, I believe and I heard quite clearly, was in the federal government not coming to the table, like they have for the rest of Canadians, and to be treated in a second-class manner here in our country that we call our nation is totally unacceptable.

\* (15:20)

I guess my disappointment was from the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner). The article in the *Brandon Sun* recently expressed it best in saying it was unfortunate that the Member for Emerson used this rally at the Manitoba Legislature to blast the provincial government for not putting more cash forward. They used terms to describe his actions, such as "cheap politics," "unfortunate partisan rhetoric," and they finished off in the article by saying "his position smacks of hypocrisy and the last thing this province needs at the moment" is that type of action. I will note that many people I spoke with from Brandon West have voiced their agreement to this statement, to this article by the *Brandon Sun*. It is interesting, the Member opposite is identifying that he, as well, read that article and it appears that he is frustrated with his Member for Emerson as well. I do not blame him. The people in Brandon are extremely frustrated with this type of, as the *Brandon Sun* quoted, unfortunate "partisan rhetoric." [interjection]

It is interesting to note that the members across all seem to be identifying that they were frustrated by those actions from the Member for Emerson as well. So it goes without saying, I think, we need to continue with that united front.

I noted his statements regarding our Premier (Mr. Doer), as well, at that April 12 rally in front

of the Legislature implying that our Premier has not taken quick action regarding this crisis. I will tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly take great offence to this implication and challenge this statement as quite simply being false. It is interesting to me how statements made by members opposite regarding this Government would have paid out the \$50 per acre. As the Member for Emerson stated, he would have run to the table and paid out that \$50 over and above the original \$50 that this Province has, in fact, paid out—that this Government in opposition fully agreed and supported. It is quite strange that this was never done, however, by the Member from Emerson, when, in fact, he was in government up until September of 1999 and that he, in fact, had the entire year, so to speak, as far as agricultural producers are concerned throughout the entire year, right to harvest time to do that. It is interesting to note how he is pointing a finger now after his government did nothing in that regard up until the fall of 1999.

However, I guess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does not surprise me that this quick-draw, short-sighted thinking may explain again the horrible mismanagement of the hundreds of millions of dollars of overexpenditures by the previous government again by September of 1999.

Our ministers of Agriculture and Highways have continually pressed the federal government to assume the responsibility of this disaster in a fair, equitable manner, and to provide the traditional 90-10, \$9 to \$1 split that they have produced for the rest of Canada. The funding of disasters traditionally has gone that way. It has been done, as I mentioned before, in the three previous disasters: '96, '97 and '98, and, however, not in 1999.

Our ministers continue to press on this issue, and they continue to hold the entire province of Manitoba in their consideration on this issue. For that I am extremely grateful of the hard work and the leadership and dedication and responsibility regarding these ministers have shown and the due diligence that, in fact, they have shown to the producers and the agricultural producers to the families and to the communities in Manitoba. I will tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that message is coming back over and over again in southwest Manitoba and not with the



unfortunate display of non-unified commitment by this Government and Opposition that was displayed on April 12.

For each million dollars of the disaster assistance I might add that Manitoba would be responsible, and I will put it to the members opposite in another way they may be able to understand. I may allow them to get their calculator out and just look at 10 percent of \$1 million. As I give them a minute to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will also represent by saying the difference between a 50-50 split on a million dollars. I will allow them to get their calculators, as well, to figure that out.

The unfortunate part is that, for every \$1 million, the Province would pay out \$100,000 on our share for the disaster assistance that the rest of Canada saw in their disasters. The unfortunate part is the push that the amendment to this resolution would like to do with Manitoba funds is the \$500,000 equal with \$500,000 when the rest of Canada, in fact, did not have to do that.

Now, I am not sure how many members opposite have master's degrees in economics. However, I can tell you that for Manitobans it does not seem like something that anyone should agree to with our national government for any reason. The Ag critic opposite would blindly like to jump into this and leap into this without a plan—as I have seen him do on previous issues—and blindly turn to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, the fund that was increased when the members opposite sold our Crown corporation, our Manitoba Telephone System.

When they sold our Manitoba Telephone System, the underpriced, undervalued giving away of that corporation certainly only allowed such limited funds into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. Unfortunately, their careless spending over the last couple of years and decreasing that Fiscal Stabilization Fund and depleting it in such a horrible way leaves not many options. In fact, it is irresponsible to operate a government for the better of the people and for all people in Manitoba concerned in such a lacklustre and shotgun approach to the Fiscal Stabilization Fund.

It, quite frankly, surprised me the suggestion that we dig into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, not even knowing what those numbers might be, and, in fact, whether there is enough money left in that Fiscal Stabilization Fund from the small amount of undervalued dollars that they sold MTS for to dig into it in a way that he would like. However, I can tell you the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is certainly at the table and certainly open to 50-50 funding.

It is interesting with this amendment to the resolution that they would suggest that it is something new. I guess that is what shocks me, that they have not recognized that the Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) have already considered, certainly on the REDI program, numbers of this instance. It is nothing new. It is an amendment that was not well thought out. It is an amendment, again, that basically drags the Opposition's feet on this issue, and it is unfortunate for producers here in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is interesting, the federal government has thrown numbers around to the point of very, very much confusing Manitobans and Canadians from the different departments that I had mentioned before, where they throw out a number of possibility of \$60 million, they throw out the possibility of \$40 million, they throw out the possibility of matching funding to \$37 million and all the dollars around, yet they cannot quite understand which department might come to the table and do that. There is no reason that we should not accept that our producers and our farmers are frustrated with that type of rhetoric. In fact, the numbers that have come from the province are quite clear.

The Department of Agriculture and Food expended \$70 million, \$50-an-acre payment, that this Government in opposition certainly agreed to and wanted to see for the producers here in Manitoba. The additional southwest \$37.5 million for the basic 1999 AIDA program and the approximately \$20 million, as well, as enhancements for the AIDA program, and finally from the Province \$40 million that was recently announced in the Canada-Manitoba Adjustment Program, with the federal government supposedly to support with \$100 million to

the grain and oilseed producers bring the total to almost \$170 million, and that is coming to the table. It is coming to the table in a strong way. It is coming to the table with serious financial commitment to the producers and farmers here in Manitoba. It showed the dedication of the Agriculture minister of dealing with this issue. It has showed the dedication of the Minister of Highways and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) coming to the table. The dollars are substantial, \$170 million.

\* (15:30)

The federal government, on the other hand, has been less forthwith with their commitment. In fact, it was extremely disappointing to hear the comments in the House that the federal government appears not to be coming to the table with any more dollars whatsoever. I am glad that was put to the House in Ottawa. We seem to be getting the message, but we have that message over and over and over again with them saying no, no, no to our proposals and our efforts to assist the producers here in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister had put forth the resolution which is extremely good. It definitely reflects the commitment by this government. I had hoped and I do hope members opposite, when the time comes, support this resolution fully and in force send a strong message. Might I say, for the benefit of members opposite, a united front to send this message to the federal government in a strong way that will show that Manitobans are being listened to, that Manitobans have a strong government that is representing their needs and listening to those people and putting our views forward to the federal government, that we in Manitoba and the producers in Manitoba and the farmers in Manitoba and their families here in Manitoba need the same consideration that the rest of Canada has got during a disaster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the members opposite I am sure could not agree with such a forthwith straightforward resolution in a way that they know identifies Manitoba's needs, that identifies that we have listened to Manitobans, as well as listened to members opposite in this House identifying their want to send a unified message

to Ottawa that our farmers in Manitoba and the impacts of this disaster in Manitoba are substantial, and we need to be compensated in a way that is fair.

The continued work that the producers do and the continued work that the farmers in the southwest do, I note many of them on the fields in the last few weeks preparing for a crop, even in the adversity that they have faced and the substantial input costs that they have to replace, they are finding in many cases a way to do it. I know that many of the local communities, the business communities, the citizens within communities both in small and large urban centres throughout the province of Manitoba, are coming to bat in any way they can because of the need for financing and the need for bridge-financing that these farmers are presently under.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the focused planned direction that this government had originally stated in the resolution by our Agriculture minister sends that message directly to Ottawa. We do not need to hear any more statements in the House in Ottawa that just simply say no, without at least coming to the bargaining table and speaking to our representatives, and our government officials, and our ministers, and our business community, and our producers, and telling them what is going on 1400 miles away from our national government centre.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, just in closing, I would like to mention and reiterate that the basic issue here is not the inaction of this provincial government. The inaction has been from, in some cases, members opposite not coming to the table in a united front on this issue; some members opposite splitting this issue that is so important to our producers and to our farmers in southwestern Manitoba; some members opposite treating this issue, in my opinion, in light regard.

This is not an issue of light regard to the producers in Manitoba. This is an issue that is extremely important to our producers in southwestern Manitoba. I can certainly speak for Brandon West. Members that treat this issue lightly, from members opposite, would be extremely unfortunate. To continue that would be certainly a travesty.

The clear tools are in place, and we will continue as a commitment to Manitobans, I can certainly say, with the same vigour and effort that our ministers have displayed over and over again on this issue. We will continue to work with the producers and the communities and business. The original resolution, as put forth by the Minister, is a clear tool to continue that. It presents a focussed, planned direction for government action. Not, I might add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, by some members opposite, to throw numbers out and make statements that they would have guaranteed certain dollars without really knowing what those costs are. That, I have been told by many members of the community, is a shotgun approach. In fact, it could probably be termed as short-sighted and narrow-minded, and probably not well thought out. I know that would be a travesty.

Just in closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know my time is short. This is an issue that I would certainly like to speak on continually, but I know there are many members in this side that would like to continue speaking on this important issue to the producers. We will certainly be dedicated to continuing a planned, fair route, keeping Manitobans in mind, and not a shotgun approach on throwing numbers out to producers in a wishy-washy way.

I thank you for the time, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank the attention of the House, and members opposite, for paying the due diligence and attention, by sitting on the end of their seat, on this important issue—that I know they will probably put more effort and emphasis in being an extremely important issue to our members in the southwest. So thank you very much.

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain):** I, too, have some words that I would like to put on the record in regard to the resolution put forward by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and also by the amendment that was proposed.

I find it a little ironic that we sit here—I have read the speeches that have been put forward on this, and both sides of the House are talking about its being a non-political issue. Yet the rhetoric that I read is purely political and is not dealing with any substance or anything relevant to the real issue of what is happening in the

province and particularly in the southwest part of the province in regard to agriculture.

I do not think that there is any member in this House on any side or of any political stripe who would not agree that the issue is a very serious one. I think we have determined that, and I think we have probably even convinced the federal government of the seriousness of the issue. I think what the bottom line boils down to is what are they prepared to do, what are we prepared to do, and how do we move forward?

\* (15:40)

I think such resolutions that have been brought forward by the Minister of Agriculture are a little bit divisive in the sense that we put forward a resolution seeking unanimous support, and yet there has been no discussion between the two sides. There has been nothing determined or accepted on either side, and yet it has tried to be presented I think initially to tear the House apart as opposed to draw it together and solidify it in its position and its argument against the federal government in Ottawa.

I think that any resolution that is brought forward that will unite us on this issue will be a good resolution and that we should all look for that as opposed to presenting the resolutions that we have seen in the sense that I think tend to divide us more than unite us.

The real issue that I want to just touch on—and I will be brief. I think there are many people who want to speak, and I think it is important that they do, but members on this side who have an interest in agriculture—and I would suggest that would be all of them, but some of us have more of a special interest. We are either involved directly in the business of farming or in the business of providing services to the farm and to the farm economy. I do not think that anyone can stand up and say that we do not care or that I do not care personally. I recognize the value to our community and to myself personally and to our businesses, that it is an issue that has to get resolved.

But I think what is being missed here is the fact that we have had this great discussion. People have put forward their points of view and

their understandings of the issues and who paid what and who did what and who is responsible for what. I agree. I think that the federal government is shirking some of its responsibilities when it comes time to offer resolution and to help solve the problem, but I guess I am of the school that when I found out that I could not make things work by convincing, harassing or enticing the other group to see my point of view, that there was a time and that it became a time of action.

I can remember in the summer of last year, June, when we made the decision to move forward without the federal support, and the discussion around the table was: Are we caving into the feds? Are they going to just take advantage of us? Are they going to never give us money again in another program? But, when we finally sat down and discussed what the real issue was, which is the seriousness of the situation and what we as a government, as elected officials of the people of the province of Manitoba are elected to do, it is to represent the people and take care of the people within our province in their biggest time of need.

I think that whole argument is being missed in this debate. I am not sure if it is being missed deliberately or if it is being missed because everybody is trying to score the political points that they think they have to, to show out to the public and present press releases so that everybody can see that we are standing in there and we are fighting for the issues. I just do not think that that is working, and I think that what we have to do is look at alternative ways of resolving this issue and taking care of the people of the province of Manitoba.

I think that the resolution as it is brought forward, there is nothing wrong with the resolution, but what the amendment does is offer a suggestion of direction that we can go should this not work. If we cannot as a province continually convince the federal government that they have a responsibility, then I think it falls back on us, as MLAs in this province, as legislators, to accept our responsibility. I think we have all seen, we have all agreed, and now what we must do is decide to act. I think that it is unfortunate that the debates melt down to he

said, she said, they did, we did, and we forget the issue.

I do want to make one comment. I think it is relevant to the discussion that was made yesterday by the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) in his closing comments. He says, if we turn around now and say to the federal government that we give up and from now on we have full responsibility for disasters, the real disaster will be to the people of Manitoba, because we will not be able to help people in need in the future. I agree with that statement.

But the bottom line is that people in southwestern Manitoba in the production of agricultural goods that we export, that you as a government are going to and probably have already recognized is growing and is continuing to grow, need help today from a government that will take the responsibility. The fights that have to go on after the fact will go on after the fact. We will support the government of the day in their fight with the federal government for their share, but the fact of the matter is that the producers today are suffering. I think we have to, as legislators, make a decision that we are going to work together to try and resolve that. No matter what the argument is, if we try and constantly shuffle the blame to someone else for not carrying their load, I think we are failing the people that need it today and I think that we have to act as responsible people and take those steps.

I often think that, when I have toured the farmland around southwestern Manitoba and where I live in Killarney, as you move west it continually progresses to get worse. Having visited friends out there recently, we took a drive around, and I am still astonished at the amount of land that will not go into production this year. Just the cost of maintaining that land in a state that will hopefully produce the next year is very expensive and very costly. I think that those are the issues that we need to address as best we can.

Everybody refers to the Red River flood and the help of the farmer in the seeding, in the fertilizer. I think if that was a 50-50 program, then I would say to this government, put your money on the table, send it out to those people, and we will stand with you when we have to,

and I am not talking the full amount, I am saying your 50% cost, and then let us go together as a group and say to the federal government and draw the national attention that we have to, that this government has stood up and made a decision, as we did.

I think you will find that the accolades will come high and hard from southwest Manitoba, because when I travel around there, the one comment I hear more and more and more is the fact that we stepped up to the plate. I think that you as a government would do well—not for me to give you good advice, because I do not necessarily see that as my job, but I see it as something that helps people. That is what I am elected for and that is what I think you are elected for. I got elected to represent the people in my area who are desperately in need of assistance from a government. No matter which government we want to say is responsible, we are the people that are elected by the people of Manitoba. I think we have to stand up and take the lead role in this.

One of the gentlemen that I met touring the area and talking about the situation and the concern, something that he says to me, he says: Merv, you guys spend all your time talking. You have got to start acting and you have got to start encouraging this Government to act.

Again, I can only think of the positive comments I felt as a member of government going around the province after we made our announcement, the fact that we were willing to recognize the problem and take the responsibility. I think that this government has to do the same. The gentleman passed on to me—and I think it is something we have all heard, but I think it bears repeating. He said the words that we speak: will not pay the bills and will not put food on the table. It will not enable us to send our children to further their education at the great cost that it now is. He said, if need be, only the province has to stand and act alone if it has to. He said, he would support me supporting the government of the day in doing something like that. Because, he says, it is the right thing to do. It is not a political game. It is about people's lives. It is about their homes. It is about their families.

We heard the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) as a critic for the Department of Agriculture talking about crisis lines, talking about the hurt and the despair that goes on in these types of situations. I can tell you it is there. It is not something that we fan the flames and the media attach onto it for one day, and we get another headline and then we can go back and say to our friends, well, we discussed it again and it was an important issue of the day. It is an important issue, I think, that has been going on for a year.

\* (15:50)

I encourage this Government to act responsibly. If they need the support or the help of this side of the House, I am sure that we can find a way that we can offer something to the residents of that part of the province that have suffered without any of us having to feel embarrassed that we have compromised our political positions in order to help people that so desperately need it.

With that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all I will say is that when we debate motions and we debate bills in this House and resolution—and the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) stated it so well. You know, the people in southwest Manitoba no longer want to hear the fancy words "that we urge the federal government" or that we do this or do that. They want to see action from a government that in their claims in Question Period, and across the House, on a day-to-day basis talk about the people of Manitoba have spoken. Well, if they have, I would ask them and encourage them to represent those people in the needs and in the time of need that we have right now.

I think that we have to get by the words and we really have to start acting. We have to take responsibilities for the areas that we control and the abilities in the areas that we can help people. I respectfully ask that the resolutions—as I said, I do not like the first one because it is not specific, and it does not give me an opportunity to make a decision. All it is asking is for support of something that, in the terms out in the west, is loosey-goosey. It is not specific, and it does not deal with the issue that is out there.

I will support the amendment on the basis that it gives us something concrete to deal with. It is an issue that, if we pass it, this can happen in a matter of days. The people that are in need and have the situations that they are dealing with in rural Manitoba, southwest particularly, can get on with their lives, get on with what they do best, producing food for the world and have a future to look forward to living in Manitoba. Thank you.

**Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake):** Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today as a member of a rural constituency, the Interlake, which is also a constituency that has agriculture as its principal economic base. I rise to speak to the resolution today in support of attempting to garner further financial support from the Government for the farmers in southwestern Manitoba.

I would like to also accentuate the fact that it is not just farmers in southwestern Manitoba that experienced hardship as a result of the inclement weather last year. I might quote from the resolution itself when we say BE IT RESOLVED that "the flooding which occurred throughout the province, specifically in the southwest." I would like to make the point that farmers in the Interlake experienced considerable hardship as well. The excessive rainfall, the flooding, the loss of input, the hardship and the pain and the sorrow were not limited strictly to southwestern Manitoba, that farmers in general across the province experienced hardship as well. On behalf of my constituents I would like to get that on record.

For a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to dwell on the nature of disaster. It takes many forms. As a rule, disasters are quite sudden and quite visible. I think back to the time when the Challenger space shuttle exploded, for example. This was an immediate, highly visible, cataclysmic environment with fatal consequences. I think it is unfortunate that we live in a world today that is so focussed on the media. Television, for instance, where it is almost to the point where a disaster has to be photogenic or have a good sound bite before it gets the audience and the attention of the people who can have an input into it. Something like a tornado, for instance, or a hurricane, you can see

the presses just waiting with bated breath as the hurricane approaches land, and that seems to focus our attention on things. Dramatic fires, for instance. The forest fires that we experience in my riding and across the province tend to focus the media's attention. Massive floods, for example, as we did experience in the Red River Valley and in other areas of the world. I can think of the flood in Bangladesh, for instance, where over 100 000 people perished. The mudslides in Honduras for instance. I think the capital Tegucigalpa is a name that is known around the world now as a consequence of that.

Disasters also have a man-made component. Look to the NATO wars that were fought in the Gulf several years ago and also the one that occurred in Kosovo in the Yugoslav state. These are disasters that are made for television. I recall all the televised explosions, cameras tracking bombs down to the target, and the pompous American generals with their pointers making all these points. This was a disaster made for television.

I guess the point that I am trying to make here is that disasters can have another form. It can be something that is relatively bland like a slow rainfall over a number of days, something progressive that loses the attention of the media, something that is insidious that occurs over a period of weeks and months, that over a period of time the media lose interest in it. It seems that unless you have media focus on it that it does not warrant political attention, as, it seems, is the case with the federal government in regard to this disaster that has occurred in southwestern as well the rest of Manitoba.

I think back to biblical days. I think it is interesting to note that the original disaster that the people of the world faced was created by excessive rainfall. We had rain for 40 days and 40 nights, and the whole world was flooded as a result of it.

While it may not have reached that level in Manitoba in 1999, still it was a disaster. It is a disaster any time that seeding is curtailed and farmers do not get onto the land. You are looking at the potential for disruption of the food production chain in the world, and, anyway, the point that I am trying to make is that we cannot

focus on whether or not it is photogenic or telegenic. We have to bear with it and realize that this disaster occurred, and the federal government's attention has to remain focussed on it. That is what this Legislature and this Government is attempting to do.

In reference to the federal government, I would just like to make the obvious point that it seems that their attention is much better focussed when a disaster occurs in the eastern as opposed to western Canada. Indeed there is a double standard at work here, where if it is an area that has a high concentration of Liberal seats, for example, that this suddenly gets the attention of the federal government in a hurry.

\* (16:00)

I noticed that when we had the flooding situation in the Saguenay region, or the ice storms in Ontario, that the federal government was very quick to act and recognize the fact that this was indeed a disaster. The capital of all Canadians was focussed on that disaster, rightfully so, but the bitter reality of the situation is that, quite frankly, the Province of Manitoba does not measure up as far as the federal government is concerned. After all, there is only a dozen or so seats at risk here and not too many of them go to the Liberal Party, and therefore they do not consider Manitoba a high priority as is quite evidently the case here.

I think we experienced this when the Red River flood occurred. You know, at least at that time the Prime Minister deemed it necessary to come down to Manitoba and view the situation. He was here for a few brief hours. He did get his photo opportunity. He came, he tossed one sandbag, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then got back on his airplane, flew back to Ottawa and called the federal election. Regardless of the fact that we were faced with chaos in Manitoba, he proceeded to do so. The people of Manitoba specifically requested of him that he postpone this election. Their requests were quite blissfully ignored, and we proceeded with the election.

The height of disrespect, I think, shown to the people of Manitoba at that time and their current reticence to come across with disaster assistance that we are so rightfully entitled to at

this point in time, just illustrates to me that that is still currently the attitude in eastern Canada. Most unfortunate, I think.

I would like to move on to the provincial Legislature here and the repeated calls from the Opposition for us to give in to this reality that the federal government is not going to acknowledge their responsibilities, and therefore we in Manitoba should overlook the fact that we are entitled to \$9 out of \$10, that the feds are responsible for 90 percent of disaster assistance, that we are just supposed to just overlook that now, and we are to bear the full brunt of paying for the reconstruction of the farming community in southwestern Manitoba.

Now, I think it is unfortunate that they would ask us to do so. I think it has become painfully obvious to all of us here in the Legislature that, before, they were willing to cooperate with us, but it is to the point now where they are going to politicize this issue, that they are going to score points against us, so to speak, and that their support for what is right, the legitimate disaster assistance from the federal government, is no longer an issue with them. They were stressing that we should pursue a 50-50 program similar to the JERI program. While we are willing to do so and are still at the table—we are at the table, not the federal government—we are willing to go forward with that, as well, obviously, but first and foremost we insist that we get what is our due, that the Government acknowledge the fact that this is a disaster and that they come across with the funding that we deserve.

Now, they have acknowledged this. The Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements, the DFAA program acknowledges this. Section 25 of that document specifies that loss of applied fertilizer and land restoration is part of the program, but they seem to have backtracked on that. The federal minister in charge of disaster assistance, Art Eggleton, as it says in the paper here yesterday: slammed the door on additional disaster funding or any other assistance for Manitoba farmers still suffering from last year's heavy rains.

I think that says it all, that the feds have unequivocally written us off as far as that goes.

Now, most unfortunate, but we will continue to pursue them on this because, as I said, it is our right to do so.

Now, getting back to the attempts by the Opposition to politicize the issue here in this Legislature, I would just like to speak briefly on their suggestions that we step into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and essentially rename it Manitoba's new disaster fund, I guess, and deplete this fund, which is not its objective. The Fiscal Stabilization Fund was set up to build a pool of capital so that when this province goes into an economic downturn, which is inevitable—that is the nature of economics in a democracy—we will have to have this fund available when the time comes.

That fund was \$540 million, give or take, and I think we have to take note that the previous administration basically attempted to use this as a slush fund and a pre-election fund prior to the election on the 21st of September, that even though the economy was doing well, it was growing, they stepped in and they essentially depleted this fund to the point where it is now one-third of what it was when it was constituted originally.

This I think is the height of irresponsibility, and I think, in fact, is contrary to the law. So for them to focus on our Government now and insist that we further deplete this fund at this point in time does not make sound sense if we are going to use this fund for what it is supposed to be used. Sooner or later, as I said, we are going to go into a downturn where we are going to be faced with difficult economic times, and we should have the full complement in this fund when that occurs.

Now, this fund was essentially the money that came from the sale of MTS. I think that we are starting to get to the bottom of it when we look at what they did. They privatized a Crown corporation that was making money, that the people of Manitoba had invested in, and just prior to the sale of the Crown corporation, I might add, invested close to \$600 million to build this system up so that it was functioning at 100 percent. They then proceeded to sell the fund for \$700 million, which was a bargain basement price, I might add, and at the time

when the telecommunications industry was on the verge of an explosion, thanks to the Internet. This would have been a company that would have continued to make money and probably an increasing amount of money if it had remained in the hands of Manitoba.

\* (16:10)

My point is that this is all part of the Conservative agenda, not only in Manitoba here but globally. It is essentially a right-wing push towards privatization, towards globalization. Divestment of Crown assets is part of their mandate. They quite frankly deliberately sold MTS after they had promised that they would not do so and then proceeded to squander the fund to the point where we do have a third of it left, but if they had their way we would spend the rest of it. When we got into an economic downturn the result would be that we would have to privatize something else in order to maintain the balanced budget legislation, which is precisely what would have been on their agenda had they remained in power here. The fund would have been squandered quite soon, I think, and what all Manitobans knew was going to happen would have occurred. The next big utility, Manitoba Hydro, would have gone on the block and would have been sold as well. So this is what the Conservative agenda is. This is why they are pushing so strongly for us to dip into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund at this point in time.

You can take their privatization agenda, you can apply it to the health care model, for example. The cuts that they have been making to the system over the past 10 years were completely unacceptable. Their attempts to privatize home care, for instance, was a prime example of how they were going to do away with the health care system. All these things together should be taken into consideration, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are faced with a disaster situation here in Manitoba unequivocally. Over 1.1 million acres of land was not seeded in 1999, unquestionably a disaster. The point is that this Legislature, this government is going to take a stand with the federal government that we are going to insist that we get what we are entitled to, what is ours by right.



We are not going to compromise on that. We continue to negotiate with them. We remain at the table and await their return to the table here.

The situation in Manitoba was quite comparable to the situation in the Saguenay and the ice storms in Ontario. We will not accept second-class status here in western Canada or in Manitoba just because we do not have the voting strength that they do in eastern Canada.

Yesterday the Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard) went on at length about the 50-50 JERI program and so on and so forth. I think that was probably timed, given the response that the federal minister, Mr. Eggleton, came out today with their position. I think Mr. Gerrard wanted to make sure that he had had his say in the Legislature before that happened.

I was quite disappointed in the Liberal Party Leader's words in that he would not endorse our position here that \$9 out of \$10 for disaster situation remained the federal government's responsibility. Quite frankly, I find it disappointing and somewhat ironic that the Leader of the Liberal Party did not learn the lesson that he learned in the last federal election when he was rejected by the people of the Interlake because he refused to represent their interests in the federal Parliament.

The people of the Interlake were adamant in their opposition to Bill C-68, the gun control bill, and Mr. Gerrard failed to represent them there. Quite frankly, I think that in regard to this issue, the flooding situation in Manitoba in '99, he has once again reneged on his responsibility to the people of Manitoba. So I would just like to get that on record as well.

I would like to take this back to my riding. We are focussing on southwestern Manitoba, but I continue to make the point that the situation in the Interlake was equally severe, that many farmers there could not get on to the land. While it was raining in the southwest, it was raining in the Interlake. Quite frankly, the situation is the same.

But when I am speaking of the Interlake and the general crisis in agriculture, I would like to make the point that farmers in the Interlake are

experiencing considerable hardship not only in 1999 but to this very day, largely because of the reticence on the part of the previous administration to pay any attention whatsoever to this constituency.

I will give you a prime example. Yesterday the Minister of Transportation (Mr. Ashton) introduced a bill, The Provincial Railways Amendment Act, which was scorned upon, quite frankly, by members of the Opposition. One of them, in particular, laughingly suggested that the Government of Manitoba was getting into the railway business, which I thought was quite ironic, because maybe we should get into the railway business, because all the railways are disappearing out of the Interlake.

Over the past 10 years, two of the three major lines have been lost by the people of the Interlake, and the third remaining line that runs up to the community of Arborg, the CP line, is slated for removal, which will leave the Interlake constituency with zero as far as rail lines go.

So I quite frankly do not find this amusing. I do not think this is a laughing matter and take exception to the fact that the Province, the Government of Manitoba, should just ignore this. If you want to take it outside of the Interlake for a moment here, you can look at the Bayline that ran up to the Hudson Bay that was put on the table by CN and subsequently sold to an American company, OmniTRAX, most unfortunate in the sense that this may have been a good opportunity for the Province to get into the railway business in the sense that that has essentially cut the people of Churchill off completely. They are now completely dependent on an American company; they are at their whim, at their beck and call for supply to this remote community, which reflects how the previous administration tended to ignore constituencies such as the Interlake or the North in general, I might add.

Now, some hundred million dollars or so has gone into this. Seventy million dollars went into the southwest to try and alleviate the pressures felt by the farmers there. The previous administration takes great pride in that money spent. They are now looking to us, and they are saying: What are you going to do? But I would

like to make the point that that was not Conservative money that was given to the agriculture industry; that was money that came from the people of Manitoba. Regardless of who is in office here, the \$70 million came from the people of Manitoba. To suggest that it was their money that they gave, that now it is up to us to match it, I think, is another prime example of how the Opposition is attempting to politicize this issue and to deflect proper attention being paid to the issue.

\* (16:20)

Seventy million dollars, that is a sizeable amount of money now. In comparison to money that does get spent in my riding, for instance, I might just in passing make the point that the entire budget in dealing with drainage concerns, the upgrade of the system in the Interlake constituency, is a mere \$400,000, Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$400,000 to do all the drainage work in the Interlake. The Gimli constituency, as well, is included in that, as well as the Lakeside constituency. So it is a grossly underfunded program, I think, and I can give you numerous examples.

If you want to talk about flooding, for example, you can look at the situation in the RM of Armstrong. There is a body of water there called Dennis Lake, which has essentially no natural outlet. Provincial road ditching has channelled even more water into this body of water, and it is to the point now where it is on the verge of overflowing, quite frankly. The heavy rainfalls in 1999 certainly did not alleviate that pressure. There are farmers there, dozens of farmers that live around the borders of this lake who have lost pasture, who have lost hay land, and they are in dire straits as well. The flooding in 1999 is as much a concern to these people as it is to those in the southwest of Manitoba.

Look at the numbers: for example, it might cost in the neighbourhood of \$350,000 to alleviate this situation. Now, for 10 years these people have been waiting for this diversion, and we are looking at it today. But in comparison to \$70 million that was spent last year, my people in the Interlake still feel that they are being neglected.

In the RM of Fisher, for example, another good example, the town itself is in danger of being inundated. The next good rainfall that we experience could flood the town, so we need capital. Some of this disaster money possibly could go towards putting a system in place where that would not occur.

Other examples, and they are too numerous to go into comprehensively, but the Davis Point road in the RM of Grahamdale, in the area west of St. Martin there, people are experiencing flooding there and have done so for decades now. It might cost \$15,000 to rectify that problem, but no disaster funding went to those people. The Partridge Creek drain flowing into Pineimuta Lake, farmers are looking to expand into the hinterland to the north, and they cannot do so because the money never came across to clean out this drain, which is necessary before further municipal drainage can go into place.

You can look at flooding, for instance, in the First Nations communities, which seems to be the norm. I have eight First Nations communities in the Interlake constituency. It just seems a fact of life that most Indian reserves are located in flood plains downstream of developed agriculture. That is certainly the case in the RM of Fisher, with concerns on the part of the people of Peguis and Fisher River, who face flooding on a daily or on an annual basis practically. It costs the province millions of dollars every year whenever a flood there occurs. So, you know, that should be taken into consideration. The First Nations communities of Fairford, Lake St. Martin and Little Saskatchewan are inundated yearly when the control structure on Lake Manitoba opens and Lake St. Martin is flooded to compensate or to cater towards basically operators in the south.

So when I hear flooding and all that and money going out towards this, I just want to make sure that the attention of the government continues to focus on all of Manitoba, not specifically on one area, the southwest of this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know what the issue is here. It is quite simply that the federal government has to take responsibility for the country as a whole. That is what we are asking

for. We are not going to leave the table. We remain at the table and will do so. We will not compromise the situation. We will not jeopardize the financial integrity of this province by accepting second-class status in the eyes of the federal government. That would be irresponsible to do so and it would set an irreversible precedent, quite frankly, and we, despite the hardship, are not going to do that.

The government has been involved in this from the very beginning. The first thing that the new government did when we came into this Chamber was we drafted an all-party resolution which the Opposition agreed to and sent to Ottawa to highlight this situation. Our Premier and our Ag Minister have been to Ottawa to raise this and, quite frankly, it has fallen on deaf ears, which is most unfortunate.

So, in closing, I would just like to reiterate the fact that we will stand firm in this Assembly. We will not give in to the inattention of the federal government. We will continue to lobby them, and on that front, I would add my support to this resolution and hope that all members of the House would do the same. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The matter at the forum is the amendment to the main motion.

**Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to address the matter before the House. It is an issue that is on the minds of many Manitobans, not just in the southwest part of our province, but indeed throughout the province. I would say that even here in the city of Winnipeg there are those families and those people who are concerned about the inability of the two levels of government to accommodate any assistance in the disaster that occurred in 1999 in the southwest part of our province. Yes, there were other pockets in the province that this situation occurred, and it needs to be addressed.

Last week, we just celebrated a major event in our province. That was the eighth Rural Forum in Manitoba, where people from communities throughout rural Manitoba, and, I might say, as well as urban Manitoba came together to celebrate the success stories of their

year's activities in business and in community life. I guess there was a lot of optimism at the forum that indeed rural Manitoba is a very healthy place, a place that is attractive for people to live in, to raise their families, to work in and to do business in.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the disaster that was faced by many people in southwestern Manitoba in 1999 is a situation that people will live with, but indeed it makes life very difficult and painful for those people that are affected. It reaches beyond the farm. It reaches into every small community in the western part of our province because, as goes agriculture in many communities, so goes the community.

\* (16:30)

This spring I have been able to get around to some of the areas that I represent. I have to tell you that I am a little disheartened by the number of farm auction sales that are taking place across my part of the world. Indeed, it is a bit disheartening to see many young families who have just given up and are selling their farm, they are selling their equipment and are looking for a different way of life. It saddens me, because it means that perhaps, in some instances, a generation is completing its way of life on the farm. They are not going to come back again. Their farms are simply being taken up by larger operations. In some instances, I would say that some of that land will not be put into crop this year.

We have arrived at a very sad state in the area of agriculture in Manitoba. Indeed, I agree with the provincial government when they say that this is a responsibility that must be borne primarily by the federal government. I agree with the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) when she says that it is the federal government's responsibility to take the lead in this matter.

I recall when the present Minister of Agriculture was then the critic of Agriculture and sat in this very chair, the many remarks that she made about my colleague the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) when he was Minister of Agriculture about his inaction when it came to supporting agriculture. Yes, some of those

remarks are political, but, nevertheless, how quickly the worm turns. Today we have that same critic sitting as Minister of Agriculture, and I simply ask her to read some of the Hansard comments that she put on record when she was the critic for Agriculture and perhaps to take some of her own advice from those remarks that she made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to say that the people of southwestern Manitoba are living under tremendous stress today. Families are living under some pain, and there is, I guess, a very unsettled feeling about them going out into their fields right now to plant their crops, having lost a full year, and perhaps more, of production and not really knowing whether or not there is going to be any support for them and for their ability to be able to pay for the inputs that they have to assume in putting in a crop.

It causes a lot of stress, not only for the person who is the head of that operation, but indeed it causes stress for the entire family, and, yes, it causes stress on the young children in that family as well. I think that our responsibility here is to ensure that we live up to our obligations as a Government, that we live up to our obligations as elected representatives for the people who put us here and have expected us to resolve some of those very important difficulties and challenges that are faced by these people. And, yes, if Ottawa is not going to act on this situation, I believe very strongly that the present Government has to take a chapter out of the book of the former administration when we indeed did commit that money to agriculture in southwestern Manitoba, because just imagine where those same producers would be today had we not taken that, yes, bold step and committed that \$50 an acre to them to allow them to maintain their land so that the crop could be planted this spring. Yet some of that land was not maintained, could not be maintained because of the excessive moisture conditions.

You know, the media have not really taken a very hard look at the impact of this disaster in southwestern Manitoba. When we had the Red River flood, it was easy and very graphic to see the disaster in this part of the world, but as the water receded farmers were able to put in their crops. Yes, there was destruction to farm

buildings, to houses, to property, but in the end those farmers were able to reap a crop that was as good as any crop that they had reaped before.

Contrast that with southwestern Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where in 1998 when the rains began the farmers took off a very poor crop, and some did not take their crop off. Then the rains continued in 1999 and a crop could not be put into the ground. The ground lay fallow, growing in weeds, and then having the expense of spraying chemicals onto that land to reduce the weeds that were growing on that land. Then there was a winter where there was no income, where families had to survive on perhaps their savings that they had put away for years. Then, this spring, they are faced with the event of putting in a crop, still under some wet conditions, still under conditions perhaps that are somewhat stressful, and there is no support from either level of government.

Why are these farmers treated so differently in southwestern Manitoba than the producers in the Red River Valley or the people who were faced with devastation in Québec or in other parts of Canada? These are Canadians. They are certainly worthy of the same treatment that other Canadians are.

So, therefore, today, I speak to this resolution, but I think the resolution falls short of a plan. That is why, as Opposition, our critic of Agriculture has put forward an amendment to this resolution, an amendment that lays out a plan, that gives some hope to those people in southwestern Manitoba, that indeed if we cannot convince, if together as the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba we cannot join the Government of Manitoba and convince the federal government to support these people in southwestern Manitoba, that as a provincial government, this Government will do its part to ensure the support is there for the producers and the citizens of this province and for the communities of this province.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the amendment to the resolution is one that the Government should find acceptable, because it is not calling on them to do anything extraordinary. It is calling on them to do their part as a government for the people of this province. I do

not believe that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) can really look at this resolution and the amendment to it and reject it, because I believe that as a responsible minister of the Crown, who is responsible for the agriculture sector of this province, she should be able to convince her colleagues, convince her cabinet that, indeed, this is a resolution and an amendment to the resolution which calls for our Government to do its part, and that is all we are asking for.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have had considerable discussion about this issue over the last number of days, and indeed over the last number of months. The people in southwestern Manitoba who are affected by this situation do not want to hear any more rhetoric. They are tired of listening to the words of politicians, and there is no action. They have heard enough. It is time now to act, because in some instances it is already late.

\* (16:40)

I say to you and to the House here, I think it is imperative that this Government act as quickly as possible even if it means doing what we did last year, in June, when we put forward \$50 an acre knowing that the federal government had not yet committed to their share of that contribution, but our concern was for the people in that part of the world. Our concern was for the producers. Our concern was to ensure that the land was maintained and livelihoods were preserved.

I think that is an obligation this Government has as well. Yes, it is unfortunate that the Minister of Agriculture has not been in southwestern Manitoba since her appointment to Cabinet, but I am hopeful that—*[interjection]* I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not intending to enter into a dialogue with the Minister of Agriculture, but I think she said in Question Period today that she had been out there last year, but she has not been there since she was appointed as Minister of Agriculture, and that is my point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I call on her to join the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) to

visit into the area which is affected by this disaster. Not to wait for an invitation, because her job is to ensure that she becomes aware and is familiar with the people who are having the difficulties in that part of the world, and she needs to be there. She has the opportunity to do that as a minister of the Crown. Yes, I will be happy to join her as well, because during my tenure as Minister of Rural Development I did travel through that area. I have been in that area this year, and I know that even up in my constituency that is a situation that is very, very difficult. Yes, the Minister, I have to give her credit for being in my part of the world, in my constituency, but I am talking about the area that is southwest of Brandon, in the area where there is indeed tremendous difficulty being faced today.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support the amendment that was made by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), and indeed I call on the House to look at this resolution and the amendment very carefully. Yes, if we have to massage it further to get agreement in the House, that this resolution passes so that we can send a signal to Ottawa that indeed represents the views of Manitobans, then let us do it. That is our obligation. I think we did that before Christmas. I remember a resolution before the House at Christmastime or before Christmas, where we could not see how this resolution would pass. But, as we went back and forth across this Chamber, we were able to arrive at a resolution that was an all-party resolution that was sent to Ottawa with the support of everybody in this House, and I think it was, in large measure, successful because it showed that we stood side by side for the people of this province. I think that is what has to happen here.

If the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has some difficulty with the amendment, then we call on her to suggest perhaps how this can be reworked, reshaped, so that it is more acceptable. Let us put politics aside for a moment, and let us really look at what we have to do to ensure that the people of our province are treated with respect, are treated with the right to the kinds of programs and services that government is responsible for, and indeed that we do represent them in the best possible way.

I have lived in rural Manitoba all my life. Yes, for part of my life I live in an urban setting, and I think I have done that for the last 30 years. For part of my life I live in the rural part of Manitoba, which I love dearly, and it hurts. In the western part of this province where we are removed from the centre, if you like, of the province in terms of the capital city where the population is somewhat sparser than it is in other parts of the province, it is difficult to understand. It is difficult for families to understand why they are treated differently than people are in other parts of our province and in other parts of Canada. They stand in bewilderment at the fact that the Prime Minister, and his Minister who is responsible for disaster situations, can stand up and shut the door in their face on programs.

We do not want this Government to do the same. We want this Government to do what is right. We want them to stand up for the people of Manitoba, regardless of where they are. So I stand here today not simply as a member of the Opposition who is here to criticize the Government but rather a member of the Legislative Assembly who is interested in the welfare of the people who I represent and the people of this province.

If we cannot agree on the amendment to the resolution and the resolution, then let us find a way to put a resolution forward that indeed we can all accept and we can all send forward as a message to Ottawa to live up to its obligation. But let us also remember that we as legislators here in Manitoba have an obligation to the people who we represent, to the people of this province, and we must show that clearly and without any question.

So the time for talk I think has passed. It is time to act, and I call on the House to join together and to ensure that the resolution that we send forward is one that we can all support and endorse, one that really reflects the wishes and the needs of rural Manitoba, especially southwestern Manitoba. Thank you.

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish I was rising to speak in favour of the motion put forward, but the rules state that I have to rise and speak on the amendment that was put forward by the

Opposition. I want to make it absolutely clear that I will not support an amendment that undermines a good Manitoba position. I want to say that I will not support an amendment politically motivated, an amendment that is simply going to weaken the position of the Manitoba coalition, that has been so wisely put together to go down to Ottawa to put forward the case of the very farmers that the Opposition now claims to be speaking on behalf of.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to do anything to weaken our position with Ottawa. The Opposition is asking me to do that, and I will not do that. The amendment is not the sort of indication that we want to give to Ottawa. The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), who spoke previously, was talking about a signal that we are going to send to Ottawa. You really want to send a signal of a divided province to Ottawa? Is that what the Opposition is looking for? Do we want to stand together like the rhetoric that they have used? Do they want to stand shoulder-to-shoulder on behalf of farmers in this province or do you really want to play politics and undermine the position of the coalition in this province that has been fighting on behalf of some of your very own constituents?

You have to think about this. Before you start doing politically motivated actions you have to understand that there is a consequence for that. You have to take responsibility for the things that you bring forward to this House, and this amendment is irresponsible, this amendment that is politically motivated, this amendment that has been spoken on and not justified by the speakers across the way, the amendment that spawned the absolutely disgusting personal attacks that I heard on our Minister the other day by the critic of the Opposition. If we were truly motivated to doing the best things for our farmers in this House, we would not allow those kinds of personal attacks to occur in this House.

I understand that the critic across the way was pretty careful with the way he termed his attack on our Minister. I think it was very careful. I think it was very deliberate. To stand in this House and compare our Minister to her brothers, who served in this House before, two people whom I have a great deal of respect for, one my former school principal, a fine and

upstanding dignified person, all the things that the critic talked about, that is true, but to imply that our Minister did not have those same qualities was something that I think is shameful. That is the style this Opposition is bringing to this so-called all-party coalition that they say they are part of.

\* (16:50)

I want to know where they stand, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Are they going to stand with us and the farmers? Are they going to stand with us against a federal government who does not seem to care? I want to know. I have heard shoulder to shoulder so many times from across that isle that I do not believe they mean a word of it. This is a very important issue. This is an ultimately important question for people in the southwest part of this province and for people in other parts of the province as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is of ultimate importance for some of my constituents. The RMs of Gilbert Plains and Grandview last year passed emergency resolutions. They approached me and I approached the government of the time, and I want to give some credit to the government of the time for meeting with those two groups in my constituency. I want to congratulate the Government, as I did at the time, for the movement they took in helping to relieve some of the stress with a financial payout that they did do.

I remember there were times in this House, I remember myself and the Leader of our party, the Leader of the Official Opposition, the Agriculture critic at the time, the Member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk), I remember we stood in the House. We did not wave our arms and jump up and down and think: How can we gain politically by this? We had been out to the southwest part of the province, and we had met the people who were up to their ears in water, it seemed. They did not have the big, fancy dramatic pictures that you see in some other floods, but they were in real crisis, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The minister of the day, the current Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), listened. The current Member for Lakeside met with my constituents

from Gilbert Plains and Grandview. I congratulated him for that at the time, and I said he did the right thing. I suppose there were some partisan people in our party who may not have liked that. But I knew it was the right thing to do, and I gave the minister of the day the credit for doing that.

We brought to the House one concern after another during this flood in the southwest part of Manitoba. Day after day we did that. Day after day, when the 1997 flood was occurring in the Red River, we brought forward concerns. We could have jumped up and down and yelled and screamed; we could have gone to the media. We could have done our best to inflame an already tough situation.

But, you know what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that would not have helped the people who were up to their eyeballs in water. That would not have helped out one bit. So we decided not to do it. The Member for Portage can turn this into a laughing matter, if he likes. But the fact of the matter is, in 1997, our Opposition acted in a very responsible manner and worked together with the Government of the time to approach and put pressure on the federal government. I do not think anyone will get an argument from most members across the way. That was a time of crisis, and we worked together. We succeeded, and we helped a lot of people, which is what we are here for. We did the same approach in the 1999 flood in the southwest part of Manitoba.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

What do we see now? We see a new government with the same kind of a commitment that I believe the former government had in times like this. We see a new minister who, despite the attempted rumour-mongering that has gone on across the way earlier today, despite that, has gone to the area and has talked to people—farmers, businesspeople—and has met with them. I have been with her. I know she has done it. The current Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and I met with a group of businesspeople in Melita, and we talked about a JERI program. We have been there. We have talked to people. So why the Opposition today is playing those political games at a time like this, I cannot explain.

**An Honourable Member:** Because they have no issue to go on, Stan.

**Mr. Struthers:** The Minister for Agriculture suggested that maybe they do not have an issue to go on.

You know, I think, as long as the Minister of Agriculture continues to do the good job that she is doing, there will not be those issues for them to play politics with.

But, Mr. Speaker, from what I have seen so far, I think the members of the Opposition will definitely try their best to undermine the position that Manitoba has taken.

I am very careful—you know, it is not just our Government's position. This is a coalition that has been put together. This is a group of people coming together at a time when we need to put pressure on the federal government.

I do not understand why the members of the Opposition are trying to undermine that. I do not understand why members across the way are trying to let the federal government off the hook on this matter. I do not understand why the members opposite can say, on one hand, that, oh, they want fairness, to be treated fairly in Canada, as Canadian citizens, as fairly as they were treated in Québec in the ice storm, as fairly as they were treated in the floods in eastern Canada. Then, on the other hand, they suggest that the federal government should not be coming to the table with 90-10 split of the costs. What do you want? Which side of this fence is the Opposition on? Do you want the federal government to come through with a 90-10 split as they should, or should we now let them off the hook and have them treat us differently than other parts of this country?

I say to the members of the Opposition that Manitoba is as much a partner in the Canadian family as any other province, and we deserve to be treated as such. We deserve to be treated with the same level of fairness as other parts of this country, and I for one am not going to let the Opposition pull this coalition apart. I am going to do what I can to ensure that the federal government comes through with its share, its responsibility, for disaster assistance.

Just think a minute how important this issue is in rural Manitoba. When I say the word "infrastructure"—this is one of those association games, I guess—what comes into your minds? You think highways, you think railways, you think bridges, you think culverts, you may think airports—[interjection]—kindergarten classes. I am very impressed with the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) for coming up with kindergarten classes and recognizing the important infrastructure called education in this province. From kindergarten right through to universities and colleges, it is an important part of our infrastructure.

The Member for Lakeside is thinking a little bit out of the box because maybe that is not quite what popped into people's minds because there was some laughing around the Legislature. The Member for Lakeside, I think, has developed some skills by which to deal with the laughter that takes place in this House over the course of about 34 years. I believe, so I think he can handle that.

We have missed the most important part of rural Manitoba's infrastructure. It has been there longer than any kindergarten. It has been there longer than any railroad or the bridges, or, if you are from Selkirk, you might put forward ports as infrastructure.

Soil. Soil is the most important part of our infrastructure. Without soil we are not having an economy in rural Manitoba. Soil is the most important part of our rural economy. Do we not believe it is important that when our soil is in danger we take steps to protect it? We can prevent the loss of soil, and we can do everything we can; but, when we have situations where our soil is endangered, then we have to, we must, we are obligated as elected representatives, to help those people whose very livelihood depends on soil because without it we are lost.

When people's livelihoods—and I just do not mean that small percentage of farmers in this province who depend on soil for their livelihood—because agriculture is, after all, the largest industry in our province and so many jobs are dependent on agriculture, why would we not consider soil as part of the infrastructure?



\* (17:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member will have 25 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., it is time for private members' hour.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

#### Res. 5—REDI Program Success

**Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte):** I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that

WHEREAS the well-being of economic life in rural Manitoba can be directly attributed to creative and healthy local business; and

WHEREAS the Progressive Conservative Government initiated programs like Rural Economic Development Initiative (REDI) and Grow Bonds in order to contribute to the strength and diversity of Manitoba's rural economy and help rural communities and entrepreneurs seize opportunities for continued economic growth; and

WHEREAS REDI has helped to fund more than 300 rural communities and entrepreneurs generate a total leveraged investment of approximately \$106 million while creating or maintaining 2700 full-time jobs; and

WHEREAS Manitoba Grow Bonds have leveraged more than \$28 million in capital investment in rural Manitoba, enabling the start-up or expansion of rural business, creating employment opportunities for approximately 700 people.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Government of Manitoba to consider continuing the programs initiated by the previous government that ensure the continued economic growth and diversification of rural Manitoba.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak to this resolution and to speak to the commitment of the previous government in diversifying and ensuring that the economy of rural Manitoba reached new heights during their tenure as government.

I can only go back to the 1999 provincial election campaign, when the NDP promised Manitobans to keep doing what the former Premier and the former government got right. There is no doubt anywhere in this House that certainly one of the great strengths of the previous government was the development and implementation of the Rural Economic Development Initiative, known as REDI.

In fact, REDI was part of the previous Premier, the Member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon), and the previous government's overall vision for Manitoba's economy.

There is no doubt that the development of business and the encouragement of entrepreneurship in rural Manitoba is one of the keys to the economic success that the province of Manitoba has enjoyed over the course of the last 11 and a half years.

I must say that it was a lot of effort that was necessary to get these programs going. To turn around the thinking of people in rural Manitoba from an attitude of, well, maybe there is no hope in rural Manitoba, maybe we should look to other parts of the province. We should move to the cities or we should move to other parts of the country where there is hope for economic development. Because back in the '80s, as we all know, Mr. Speaker, it was devastating, in some cases, out in rural Manitoba in terms of the number of people that were forced to look elsewhere for employment.

But I am proud to say that through the efforts of the Filmon Government, that was indeed turned around. In fact, there became a can-do attitude in rural Manitoba, where people knew and understood that if they had a good idea, if they had the willingness to put in the effort, that there, in fact, was support available to them in their endeavours, and they had an opportunity to remain in rural Manitoba to invest not only their capital but their sweat equity in

businesses with the support of the provincial government, and they had a hope of realizing success and realizing an opportunity in rural Manitoba.

I would certainly hope that the current Government will look back upon that record and recognize very quickly that it is something absolutely critical to the citizens of rural Manitoba.

REDI, as we know, really was comprised of a number of programs which were put in place to help various levels of business either expand or start up or, in fact, to provide the infrastructure that was going to be needed to make these businesses viable and to afford them the opportunity to be successful.

As I mentioned, with the help of REDI, rural communities and entrepreneurs have generated a total investment of approximately \$106 million in the province of Manitoba. In rural Manitoba, there have been over 2700 full-time jobs created in rural Manitoba through the hard work and the efforts of entrepreneurs and businesspeople throughout all of Manitoba, who had the desire to see their businesses grow. One only has to look at our provincial neighbour in Saskatchewan. I am reading from an article that was published in January in the *Saskatoon Star Phoenix* which quotes a report entitled *Cities 2000, Canada's urban landscape*. What they found out in Saskatchewan is that the rural population in the last 10 years has shrunk by over 25 percent. That is 25 percent of their rural population has had to move out of rural Saskatchewan, because there was not hope and there was not opportunity and there was not jobs for them.

That is obvious because the NDP Government in Saskatchewan did not have the vision that the Government of Manitoba had to help entrepreneurs. The same statistic in the province of Manitoba indicates that there has been less than a 1% decline in rural population in Manitoba over the last 10 years. It is important that the members opposite understand the significant change and significant opportunity that has arisen in rural Manitoba for these individuals as a result of the REDI programs. It is something of which every member on this side of the House is extremely

proud. When I mentioned that the previous government promised to keep doing what the former government got right, it did not take them long to break that commitment, similar to a number of other commitments which they have broken since. But the first thing they did, of course, was to combine the Department of Urban Affairs and the Department of Rural Development under the guise of saving money.

Well, anybody who has looked at the facts understands that that is not the case at all, that, in fact, there are no savings there. We will see next month. We will see in the budget that, in fact, there will be more funds expended on staff and on bureaucrats than there was under the previous government. Really, the most important thing that needs to be understood by this new government is that it is an entirely different thing. I appreciate the fact that not many of them have had a background in business, so it may be a little hard for them to grasp this point. I would hope that they would take the advice of a Manitoban who has been involved in a business that started in the late '60s in Winnipeg with two or three people and, over the course of time, grew to employ over 1000 people. So I offer this advice freely, and I hope they will listen to it.

It is a very different process to undertake the establishment and growth of a business in rural Manitoba than it is to develop a business in an urban centre like Winnipeg. It is an entirely different train of thought, it takes different skills, and most of all it takes a different level of assistance. It is unfortunate that in combining the two governmental departments into one, this government has lost its emphasis on rural development. I think that is going to be very disappointing to the people of Manitoba, particularly those in rural Manitoba.

I appreciate that the Minister—it is unfortunate that she is not here. Hopefully, she will have the opportunity to read this advice and take heed of it. Anybody who has had any training in business understands that if you are going to be successful—

\* (17:10)

#### Point of Order

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Deputy Government House Leader):** On a point of order as Deputy

Government House Leader, I realize the Member is a new member and may not realize that it is inappropriate to reference the presence or absence of individual members, which he did, I am sure, inadvertently. I was wondering if you could remind him of our rules and call him to order on that.

**Mr. Loewen:** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the advice from the Honourable Member for Thompson, and he is correct, it was inadvertent. As new members, we are learning every day, and so I do apologize for referring to the Member.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. That should settle the matter, but I would just like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members that it is not proper to comment on the presence or absence of other honourable members. I thank you for apologizing.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, with business training people understand that you need a focus if you are going to be successful in any particular area. It is unfortunate that in this misguided effort and this ruse to save money within these departments, which I am absolutely sure will not prove to be true, this government has lost its focus on rural development and is, in fact, focussing the efforts of the new Department of Intergovernmental Affairs on to the City of Winnipeg and losing sight of what is going to be needed to help those citizens of this province who are working hard in rural Manitoba to be successful.

I only have to look back at the announcements that this government has made in terms of funding since they came into office. I have been keeping track of them and I have been taking note of what they have been doing in the area of rural development in terms of funding as well as their funding to urban centres such as the city of Winnipeg. One only has to look at the figures that indicate that total spending in Winnipeg is over \$14 million. The total expenditures are less than \$16 million. So of a total of \$15.7 million, a little less than \$1.7 million has been focussed in rural Manitoba, and over \$14 million has been targeted towards the

city of Winnipeg. Now, if that does not indicate a lack of focus, a lack of keeping your eye on the ball in terms of development in rural Manitoba, I do not know what does.

It is obvious from these figures. While we are not seeing the result right away over time, again we will see that rural development will end up in the same situation as Saskatchewan, where 25 percent of their rural population has been forced to look for opportunities in other parts of the province. In fact, when one looks closer behind the numbers, even when one looks at the \$1.6 million that has been targeted towards rural Manitoba, a good deal of it is not even going to focus directly on helping entrepreneurs grow and establish their business. In fact, what we see is one of the largest grants, a hundred thousand dollars going to the University of Brandon to study economic development.

Well, I would suggest to the members opposite and to the government of the day that if they want to truly study how to improve rural economic development, all they have to do is look at the record of the previous government in the last 11 and a half years, and the answer is obvious.

You do not study it, you put some effort into it and you get to work doing it. It would be similar in the case of the agricultural crisis in southwestern Manitoba. Do it. Stop the negotiations. Just get on and do it.

Mr. Speaker, I also take note in the Premier's ministerial statement today, he mentioned the Manitoba Century Summit. While indeed I think that was more of an effort in terms of politics than actual economic development, I do take note that when one looks at the second question that is addressed there in terms of what we can do to expand investment success to realize our future economic success, when one takes the integration of all the ideas that were brought forward by all of the people from labour, from government, from industry that were involved in that summit, one only has to look at the REDI program to understand that that is exactly what has been going on in this province for the last 11 and a half years.

It is simple. I would challenge the government to look through this and come up with one area that could not be addressed and further addressed in continuing to encourage and to promote the REDI programs that are already in existence.

So, once again, my message is this is not a matter of holding summits to find new and wonderful ideas. It is a matter of implementation. It is a matter of implementing the programs that are already out there by keeping an eye on the ball, by focussing in on what needs to be done and ensuring that action is taken.

I would also suggest that the Government in power—and there is nothing wrong with this. It happens all the time in business, and it is part of my training. Sometimes you make a decision, and it is the wrong decision. I would suggest that combining the departments of Urban Affairs and Rural Development was a wrong decision, a wrong-headed decision, and I would suggest to this Government that the best thing they could do in terms of rural development would be to stand up, admit they had made a mistake, get their eye on the ball, and focus their attention on rural development, because we will see the damage that this will cause to this province in the years to come as the economy in rural Manitoba slows down.

Those people who choose to live in rural Manitoba or come to a university or college for their education with a hope of returning to rural Manitoba will soon learn that, without programs such as REDI and some of the other funding programs that allow entrepreneurs to start up new business, that opportunity will not be there, and we will end up in a situation like our neighbours to the west where over 25 percent of the rural population is lost. I think even this Government has enough sense to realize that, for Manitoba to be successful in the new economy, we need to be successful in already existing industries, in the already existing economy, because you do not just look to something new. You look to build on your strengths. Certainly, when we look at rural Manitoba and the REDI programs, the rural diversification that has taken place in terms of after-processing facilities, after production, has made a tremendous difference all throughout rural Manitoba.

**An Honourable Member:** And added a lot of value.

**Mr. Loewen:** It has added a lot of value, as the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) reminds us, to the lives and to the people of rural Manitoba.

I would just like to point to a couple of specific examples. Mr. Brad Isbister, who is the owner of the Rod Shop in MacGregor, faced the enviable problem of having more work than his one-man shop could handle. So, with help from the REA program, he was able to expand his operation, and Mr. Isbister says today, and I quote—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member's time has expired.

\* (17:20)

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** I welcome the opportunity this afternoon to speak on this resolution brought forward by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

Before I begin, though, we are talking about rural Manitoba and we are talking about investment in rural Manitoba. I just want to pay tribute to the firefighters and the emergency personnel who, yesterday, in the city of Selkirk, had to deal with an incredible challenge as they fought a fire that consumed a \$6-million seniors housing complex on the Selkirk waterfront.

Mr. Speaker, the Fire Chief, Danny Thorsteinson, realized that the community—they had the assistance of firefighters from St. Andrews and St. Clements, but he realized that, even with all that equipment and all that expert personnel, it was still insufficient to handle the potential damage that this fire could cause, and he had the vision to call in the service of water bombers to help stop the spread of that fire in that community.

As part of rural economic development when individuals have invested, in this case, \$6 million, I know there are many individuals in my community and my constituency who had sold their homes or are living with their families and waiting to move into this complex. I know all

members will join with me as our thoughts go out to them as they deal with this tragedy and will pay tribute to the firefighters who were very successful in at least containing any further damage.

The Member opposite talked about Saskatchewan and the reduction of the rural population, but regrettably that is happening here in this province as well. I do commend the previous Government in terms of programs such as REDI and Grow Bonds, but one only has to look at the redistribution, the political redistribution that was done last year of our boundaries, constituency boundaries, and you can see that our boundaries have gotten larger. The case is very similar. The members opposite would agree with this, that their boundaries have gotten larger, regrettably because the population of rural Manitoba is decreasing. So it is not just in Saskatchewan. Regrettably, it is happening here in Manitoba as well.

He talked about the amalgamation of the Departments of Urban Affairs and Rural Development. I can assure the Member opposite—and it is a commitment made by the Minister and a commitment made by the colleagues on this side of the House—that development in rural Manitoba will be very important, and it is very important to the Government and to the Minister. He just has to wait and see, because I know there are many, many exciting projects that this Government is looking at in rural Manitoba, and he just has to wait and see as they come into play.

Our Government firmly believes that a strong rural economy is important to all of Manitoba, and as an individual who lives in the Capital Region, lives outside of the city of Winnipeg, I understand that. I know that within my constituency, there is a successful printing operation called Sterling Press. A number of years ago, they applied for and received a Grow Bond, which was very successful. The bond was sold out. In fact, since then they have expanded. So there is cause for celebration in terms of what individuals are prepared to do in terms of investing in their community.

Rural Economic Development, the REDI program has helped businesses expand. I just

give you an example of the Canada Safeway in Selkirk which recently benefited from an \$85,000 contribution from the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) to help them with being hooked up to the sewer and water resources in the community. But you know, we believe very strongly in rural Manitoba—and the Member was talking about infrastructure. I just want to remind the Member that infrastructure is roads and infrastructure is sewers, but infrastructure is also technology, and remind the Member opposite about his Government's policy when it came to the Manitoba Telephone System.

We all remember when the members opposite campaigned in 1995 on not selling and not privatizing MTS. As soon as they were elected, they broke their promise to Manitobans.

**An Honourable Member:** We lost a valuable economic tool for Manitoba.

**Mr. Dewar:** MTS was used, Mr. Speaker, as a valuable economic tool in this province. It was the Howard Pawley administration that started the process where they invested \$600 million into rural Manitoba, where they expanded community calling zones. They brought in individual line services.

There are only two provinces, I believe, in Canada that had individual line services to the rural areas, one was in Saskatchewan and here in Manitoba, and that was because it was the public will. There was a government in place that required this Crown corporation to provide that service to rural Manitobans. Of course, the members opposite rammed that legislation through this House. I was very pleased to be part of the opposition of that at that time.

Mr. Speaker, in my community of Selkirk there were literally hundreds of jobs, MTS jobs in Selkirk, and by the end of this month there will be virtually none. There will be virtually no MTS jobs in Selkirk. Now, is that a commitment to rural Manitoba made by this telephone company? I argue, no. It is not only in Selkirk. It is areas all across the province, in Steinbach, in Brandon, all throughout this province where individuals have been laid off because of the privatization of MTS.

The Minister of Consumer Affairs (Mr. Lemieux) mentioned in the House yesterday that now MTS is asking for a \$3 increase. Well, who will that impact upon? That will impact the most upon rural and northern Manitobans. It is going to affect seniors. I did not hear the members opposite join with us in fighting this increase, but that is going to hurt rural business and that is going to hurt rural Manitobans. So he can talk about economic development, but regrettably their actions in the past have not reflected that.

Rural Manitobans, like all Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, have had to deal with some significant challenges, and our Government here, we have been extremely busy working on behalf of those engaged in agriculture production. We all know, and we had a debate and the debate continues in this Chamber regarding the pressures that the farmers are facing here in this province, in particular in the southwestern portion of this province. We know that they have had to deal with natural disasters, a loss of support from the federal government and a global marketplace. So rural Manitobans are feeling the emotional and economic impacts of these challenges.

I do want to commend this Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk). As soon as they were appointed to office they went to Ottawa to plead the case, and in an all-party way, I might add, members opposite joined with us at that time.

We all have to ensure a bright future for rural Manitoba, especially our young people to stay and work in their own communities. As I mentioned earlier, it is becoming a challenge. I had the chance—I know some of my colleagues were there last week—to attend the Rural Forum in Brandon, and the headline from the *Brandon Sun*: Premier impresses students—the students mentioned it was one of the first opportunities they ever had to actually come and to speak with the Premier of this province in that kind of a forum. I commend him for doing that.

The students took the initiatives and they developed an on-line access to the Premier. So students across this province can use the Internet, can use technology to have a conversation with the Premier. This is something that they said they had not had under the

previous administration, but the Rural Forum in Brandon was a success and it highlights our Government's commitment to rural Manitoba.

You know, the member opposite was criticizing the Government here regarding the amalgamation of the two departments. Well, I have spoken, and maybe the members opposite have not, but I have spoken with the officials of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and they support this. They support the amalgamation. They said, well, we are joined and it would make sense that the departments be joined as well. So maybe the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) should attend some of these association meetings, get out there and speak with some of the members, and he will see that, in fact, the Government has taken the right action with this amalgamation, very positive comments from provincial leaders.

\* (17:30)

I want to congratulate communities on their community round tables, and that is a tribute to their hard work and their determination and congratulate them for the energy and the confidence they have to adapt to change and focus on challenges for the most part which are beyond their control.

We have taken steps on this side, Mr. Speaker, to ensure the diversification of the rural economy. I will give you one example. The Food Development Centre, which I believe is in Portage, now operates as a part of the Manitoba Agriculture and Food. It is designed that way to promote and encourage value-added diversification. We have had to deal with the effects of livestock expansion in Manitoba. Recently, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) have announced a livestock stewardships initiative which is aimed at protecting the environment while ensuring the future of our province's livestock industry.

Clearly, Mr. Speaker, those of us who live in rural Manitoba understand the value of maintaining our rural environment. It is this Government that is committed to maintaining

that, focussing on that, as well as providing economic growth in terms of the expanding livestock industry. We focus here a lot on the hog production. We know that hog production will be expanding here in the province and has expanded over the last number of years and will continue to expand. It is not only, of course, hogs; it is also cattle and poultry. It is important that we ensure that action is taken, that this is done, that it is promoted in a sustainable manner, and our government is committed to doing that.

Mr. Speaker, as well, the strategy is to provide producers with an opportunity to continue to diversify while in an industry that is responsible and sustainable. As well, on land use planning, the government has announced that it will be assisting municipalities that currently do not have plans to adopt a plan. This will go a long way to helping municipalities plan, and it also helps producers. When they approach a municipality, they will know about the by-laws in that particular area in terms of expansion. We also will be providing financial assistance in the form of cost-share grants to communities to update their existing by-laws to meet the challenges that they will feel when they diversify and grow.

Mr. Speaker, our Government will continue to support the energy that we see in rural and urban communities. They mentioned the rural forum. Again, it was a great success, and I really enjoyed being out there and enjoyed participating in that. One of the changes this year in terms of the rural forum, it was expanded to include all regions of the province, including northern Manitoba. You will notice when you go through the forum that northern Manitoba was an area that was neglected before. This time it was a very prominent part of the rural forum.

Mr. Speaker, we have to develop a workable long-term strategy for our province, and we need to ensure that all of our communities, whether it is rural, urban or northern Manitoba, have a healthy future. We collectively view ourselves as one community.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member's time has expired.

**Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for Fort

Whyte (Mr. Loewen) for bringing this resolution to the floor. Certainly, it highlights and shows the importance that activity in rural Manitoba has to the people of rural Manitoba, not only to the people in rural Manitoba but to all people of Manitoba. The urban areas flourish as the rural areas do well. I believe it is very important that we continue to foster these programs that we have here.

Listening to the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), I heard him laud and certainly endorse the programs that were out there. I want to thank him for doing that. I did not, however, hear him say that they were going to continue to support these programs, and that is my concern. I think that is exactly what this resolution is talking about. We are encouraging the government to continue to fund and support the REDI program, to continue to fund and support the Grow Bonds program. That is important to rural Manitoba.

I was just handed a little sheet of paper here. I think the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) indicated that they were financially supporting rural Manitoba. The little graph that I was given here was simply that the NDP Governmental Affairs' spending announcement November 1999 to May of 2000 is 10 percent rural and 90 percent urban. I think that is exactly what this resolution is: 90-10. Maybe they have taken this from some other area, but that is exactly the concern that we have on this side of the House regarding this resolution, that, in fact, the government of the day will say: Yes, we continue to support the initiatives that have been started in rural Manitoba.

I, at this time, would also like to thank the Honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) who, when he was the Minister for Rural Development, in fact started the Grow Bond programs. They have worked well over the many years.

Just to highlight a few of the Grow Bonds programs that have taken place within my constituency, I would like to name, first of all, Winkler Meats, which a number of years ago got involved in this program and are continuing to do well. They are exporting a product across Canada and into the United States. So we are

very pleased with the progress that they have made.

Another one is Keystone Grain. In fact, it is just over the last few years that they received a Grow Bonds program. They are also international exporters of product. They are dealing mainly with sunflowers, but this again is a product that takes away from the grains and oilseeds sector. It helps in the diversification program and certainly assists the producers in the area of being able to contribute to the coffers of the Province of Manitoba.

Another company—and they were very innovative in their approach—the Tire Recycling Corporation, is also located in Winkler, a company, which, through the entrepreneurship of Mr. Dave Dyck, started the processing of used tires. Again, these are international exporters of product. They are creating jobs for the local communities and are doing a great job in helping the local communities to expand and to keep some of the young people back home.

I just want to read a quotation here from David Friesen. This is highlighted in the Manitoba Century Summit book, which was handed out today. But he says: "It is very important to me that we build a province where my children's children can also prosper. Manitoba is a community that has been built on enterprise, the energy of immigrants, and the sweat of our pioneering forefathers." We are encouraging this Government to continue to foster these kinds of programs so that our children can stay within the community and can be contributors to the community.

I think that when I look back in the last 10 years, we have seen a dramatic shift of where our children have been able to remain in communities, have been able to pick up jobs in the communities, and even for those living in the urban part of our province, in the capital city. I do not think that you want all of the people from the rural areas to move to the city. There are a lot of people here, and that is great, but certainly you want to keep the people within the rural area as well. As they continue to prosper, they can continue to contribute to the province as a whole.

The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) made the comment that AMM was tremendously supportive of all of this. I think he was stretching that a little bit because that is not a discussion that I have had. So I would challenge him on that. They are very concerned. In fact, we have met with them. They are very concerned about the abolition of this portfolio of the rural development. That is a real concern to them. So I think I would encourage them to give the comments as they really receive them and put those on the record as well.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of things that I could say about the Grow Bonds program, about the REDI program, as to how they have assisted us in the Pembina constituency and have certainly helped us to continue to grow and expand. I think that all Manitobans want to see this take place.

We see the devastation of what has taken place in the southwestern part of the province. As you have a diversified economy it somehow eliminates at least a part of the hurt. So we want to continue to allow rural Manitoba to expand, to diversify, and the programs that have been highlighted here by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) are certainly the ones that will contribute to that.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would urge the government of the day to continue to support rural Manitoba, continue to support the REDI programs and the Grow Bond programs, as they have been highlighted here. Thank you very much.

\* (17:40)

**Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and speak to the resolution brought forward by the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen). I congratulate him for doing so, because I think he has put his finger on a very important issue that our Government is absolutely committed to continuing. Let there be no doubt. We support, this Government does support, and we are committed to support the successes in rural Manitoba. There have been many successes in rural Manitoba.



I want to though deal with a couple of things right off the hop. One of the statements that the Member for Fort Whyte put forth in his comments regarding this resolution was that our side of the House somehow is not qualified to speak on issues dealing with the business community, whether it be rural or urban settings. Nothing could be further from the truth. The very statement that the Member for Fort Whyte put forth in this House, that we do not have people on this side who have run businesses, No. 1, is absolutely untrue, and, No. 2, portrays an attitude that I have noted not just from the Member for Fort Whyte but from the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon), that they somehow have a monopoly on business acumen not only in this House but around the province.

Well, these are the same wise businesspeople who sold our Manitoba Telephone System for half of what it was worth. I know they do not like hearing this sort of thing, but they need to be held responsible for this. They sold the Manitoba Telephone System for half of what it was worth. Mr. Speaker, \$45 million went to brokers to sell this company that Manitobans owned. They put half of the money they brought in through the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and then used that Fiscal Stabilization Fund to portray a balanced budget in this province. Relatives of the members opposite ended up with millions of dollars in stock options. There is real business acumen.

When poor, old Ross Nugent stood up and said that this would cause rate shock with the rates here in this province, they said: Oh, no, trust us. We are wise businessmen. We have business acumen. We are qualified to speak on this. It ain't going to happen. Well, it is happening this week again. Rates have gone up and up and up. Business acumen, my foot.

What about SmartHealth? Now, here is real—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie):** This is private members' hour and specific to the order of the day, being a discussion on a resolution, which is very specific. I do not know

how stock options have gotten into this or SmartHealth.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is your responsibility as the Speaker of the House to effectively organize debate within this Assembly, and I would like you to call the member to order. Thank you.

**Mr. Ashton:** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Member for Portage did not hear the comments of the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) because the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) was basically responding to comments that that member made, really an echo of a hundred years ago when only certain people could serve in this Legislature or vote, the kind of arrogance that we saw, and he was the one that got up and condemned members on this side and assumed that only that side could talk in terms of business. It was part of his speech, and our Member was doing a very good job of pointing out the fact that they not only have no divine right to rule in this province. They were pretty incompetent, quite frankly, and they have no business lecturing us on business methods.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all members that when speaking to a resolution or a bill, you speak to the principle of the bill or resolution. I would just like to remind all honourable members.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Struthers:** Of course, to help out the members across the way, Rural Economic Development Initiative deals with business, deals with Grow Bonds, deals with business in rural Manitoba, and what I am saying is that we do not need to take any lectures from people who say they have some kind of business acumen and then show up in this Legislature and show exactly the opposite.

Mr. Speaker, \$33 million they lost of Manitoba taxpayers' dollars on SmartHealth. Frozen food, millions more. The cost overruns. They say we are going to renovate the casinos in Winnipeg. We are going to do Regent Avenue; we are going to do McPhillips Street Station. It

is going to cost us \$55 million. What is the final price tag of these business-savvy people across the way? It is \$112 million. It is my firm belief that there are a lot of people in rural Manitoba who could sit in this Legislature on that side of the House in the Opposition and they have business acumen. What I would suggest is that they should get somebody on that side of the House who does have some business acumen, so they can make these statements in the House.

It is my firm belief that the business-savvy folks across the way in this House could not run a 25-cent cup lemonade stand without a million-dollar feasibility study, without a million dollars in stock options to their friends and relatives and without a \$300,000 forgivable loan. So we do not need them to tell us that we do not have business acumen to make these kinds of decisions in this House.

\* (17:50)

What kind of a business-savvy person would cut infrastructure in Manitoba, something very necessary for rural business? It takes more than just a few grants here and there to have a strong, flourishing business community in rural Manitoba. It takes more than news releases from the former government announcing REDI grants and Grow Bond issues and the rest of it. Those are fine, and we support that. We say that is good, but where is the planning in this? I know the word "planning" makes the skin crawl on members across the way because it has certain socialist connotations that gives them nightmares and fits in their sleep, but, Mr. Speaker, when is the other side of this House going to understand that cuts to highways, cuts to rail lines, letting bridges go to rack and ruin, letting northern airports fall into ruin, ignoring the needs of Churchill, when are they going to understand that that is the kind of infrastructure that they needed to show support for, which they did not, in order to make a strong rural economy.

We spend a lot of time in rural Manitoba putting together the products that feed the rest of the world. It is not going to do us a whole lot of good sitting in rural Manitoba, the wheat sitting in bins in the Dauphin-Roblin constituency. We have to get it out in order for our way of living and our lifestyles to continue. If we want to keep

the quality of life, we need an infrastructure there that works for us. The previous Government failed on that score.

Why did not the Government previously understand that another important part of our infrastructure is our education system? Our rural Manitoba communities depend on young people going and getting the skills and training that they need to come back to our communities, to pass that on to the next generation. We do not need them moving off to Alberta. We do not need them moving off to anywhere else. We need to have in place such things as distance education, apprenticeship programs. That is what rural Manitoba needs. That is where the former Government failed.

We can talk about the money they have handed out in REDI programs. I will give you a success story: Westman Plastics in Dauphin, a recipient a number of years ago, about five years ago, of a Grow Bond. It worked well in our area, and it put people to work. That is good. At the time, I congratulated the Government for that. I said it was the right thing to do. It takes more than a Grow Bond issue to make that company successful. It takes more than a Grow Bond issue or a REDI grant to help a community, to help a community raise its young, to help a community take care of the elderly.

The future of business in rural Manitoba is going to be based on ideas, plain and simple. It is ideas. I know that in the invisible hand of Adam Smith kind of philosophy that the members across have, you put forth the philosophy that you leave it to the marketplace, that you just let the businesses flourish. Well, Adam Smith was not correct on this. It is an old, tired philosophy that I would advise members across to just forget about. We have to work together. There is no invisible hand out there that is working to uplift business in rural Manitoba.

What rural Manitobans have been so good at for so long is thinking of the things that they can build businesses upon, the ideas themselves. In the future, it is not going to be a case in rural Manitoba where you have to have a storefront and pay expensive rent and expensive overhead. You are not going to need that storefront on Main Street. Maybe in some, depending on the

product you are dealing with, maybe depending on your business, it might be to your advantage, but I would like to inform a lot of people that we in rural Manitoba have access to the Internet. We have telephones, despite the best efforts of the Government in the last four or five years. We do have telephones. We do have automobiles.

We are part of the 21st century, and we have, in rural Manitoba, many citizens who are prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century with a government who understands the term "co-operation," who understands that sometimes it does take the help of a government, not the invisible hand of Adam Smith anymore, but the commitment of a government who wants to see rural Manitoba flourish and the business community in rural Manitoba, small businesses who employ people, we want to see that flourish in all of our rural areas.

That is what it is going to take. It is going to take planning on the part of rural municipalities and town councils. It is going to mean that some of these rural municipalities and town councils are going to have to get together in planning districts, get together and talk about what the needs are and the services that they want in their areas. Instead of all breaking off into different directions and all competing against each other, as Adam Smith and the former Tory Government would prefer, those entities now will be working together to get what is best for their region, for their district. This is something that has gone on in rural Manitoba for quite a while.

You do not need to go too much farther than many of the elderly people that live in rural Manitoba and talk to them about how it was when we opened parts of Manitoba. There is a long-standing tradition of people helping people. When you needed something done, you had neighbours that were there to help you, not a neighbour there to compete with you and drive you off the farm. There were times in this province when people actually believed that through co-operation, we could build a community.

Those are the times that I would like to see us go back to. I realize we will not go back to the

times when there was a homestead on every quarter section in rural Manitoba, but at least we can get back to those times when people understood the importance of community, who understood that a stronger community helped families build stronger families. That is the motivation behind amalgamating departments. That is the motivation behind supporting programs such as what is mentioned in this resolution. It is not to save money, although it may. It is not to pump any of us up in here. It is to help those people out there who are trying to keep our community strong.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those words, I would like to commend the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) for bringing this resolution forward. I appreciate the time to put my comments on the records. Thank you.

**Mr. Faurschou:** Mr. Speaker, I know the hour has almost elapsed, but with two short points here, I would like to bring the attention of all honourable members opposite that actions speak louder than words. If you are representing a constituency outside of Winnipeg, this would indeed be a wake-up call. Ten percent of Intergovernmental Affairs allocations have gone outside the Perimeter; 90 percent inside.

We talked about a plan. As the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) had stated, we need a plan. In fact, most of these monies going to the City of Winnipeg are unconditional, without a plan. I now yield the floor so that the vote can take place on this most important resolution.

**Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West):** Mr. Speaker, I stand before the House very happy to speak on this issue. As my colleague from Dauphin-Roblin has mentioned, it is very good initiatives to keep REDI programs out there alive, well and working, and working in a way that, in fact, reflect some of the community and community-driven efforts that we have. It is the ability of a government to listen and to consult and to work with people.

In fact, at the Economic Summit, we heard it full well. As the Member from across mentions, he is happy that we had the Economic Summit

and the openness, and I agree with him. That is my point. In fact, when you get everybody to the table and you have people working in one direction and in a community-type atmosphere where you have, as members mentioned, unions and you have business and you have the reflection of people from the community and stakeholders in that community that are worried about the economic development within our

province in a sustainable way, and as has been mentioned by other speakers—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member will have 14 minutes remaining.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning (Thursday).

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, May 3, 2000

## CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>			
<b>Ministerial Statements</b>		Health Care System Mitchelson; Chomiak	799
Manitoba Century Summit		Education System Gerrard; Doer; Selinger	800
Doer	789		
Filmon	790	Post-Secondary Education Gerrard; Doer	801
Gerrard	790		
Flooding—Agricultural Assistance		Physician Resources Mitchelson; Chomiak	801
Ashton	791	Driedger; Chomiak	802
Maguire	791		
Gerrard	793	<b>Speaker's Ruling</b> Hickes	802
<b>Tabling of Reports</b>		<b>Members' Statements</b>	
Discriminatory Business Practices Act for fiscal year ending March 31, 2000; Annual Reports Concerning Complaints About Judicial Conduct 1999; Office of the Chief Medical Examiner Annual Review, 1998 Mackintosh	793	Victoria Hospital Volunteer Guild J. Smith	803
<b>Introduction of Bills</b>		Sisler's Most Wanted Jazz Dance Martindale	803
Bill 22—The Court of Queen's Bench Surrogate Practice Amendment Act Mackintosh	793	Michif Language Courses Rocan	803
Bill 23—The Jury Amendment Act Mackintosh	793	CN Rail Traffic—Transcona Cerilli	804
Bill 24—The Personal Property Security Amendment and Various Acts Amendment Act Lemieux	794	Post-Secondary Education Gerrard	805
<b>Oral Questions</b>		<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
Flooding		<b>Government Motion</b>	
Filmon; Doer	794	Federal Reparation for 1999 Farmland Flooding	805
Maguire; Doer; Ashton; Wowchuk	796	Maguire	806
Income Tax		S. Smith	813
Stefanson; Selinger	798	Tweed	816
Schuler; Doer	799	Nevakshonoff	821
		Derkach	821
		Struthers	824

## **Private Members' Business**

### **Proposed Resolutions**

#### Res. 5—REDI Program Success

Loewen	827
Dewar	830
Dyck	833
Struthers	834
Faurschou	837
S. Smith	837