



HANSARD

Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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.
CIOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HIICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISEN, 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.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 12, 2001

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jonathan Dowdall, Michael Dowdall, Sandy Campbell and others praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of S. Kongmanivanh, S. Bhullar, Stephen Bragomir and others praying that the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I beg to present the petition of E. Mulcahy, T. Mulcahy, J. Terris and others praying that the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I ask leave to present on behalf of the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave to present on behalf of the honourable Member for Springfield? *[Agreed]*

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Laura Kurdydyk, K. Kurdydyk-Vezey, Gord Prysizney and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba

Hydro (Mr. Selinger) consider alternative routes for the additional 230 kV and 500 kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), I have reviewed the petition and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest un-separated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), I have reviewed the petition and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

Madam Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest unseparated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

* (13:35)

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), I have reviewed the petition. It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

Madam Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest unseparated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, if you petition on behalf of the honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), you will need leave.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Yes, please.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden have leave? [*Agreed*]

I have reviewed the petition. It complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul has the highest concentration of high voltage power lines in a residential area in Manitoba; and

THAT the R.M. of East St. Paul is the only jurisdiction in Manitoba that has both a 500kV and a 230kV line directly behind residences; and

THAT numerous studies have linked cancer, in particular childhood leukemia, to the proximity of power lines.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro consider alter-native routes

for the additional 230kV and 500kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL
COMMITTEES**

Standing Committee on Law Amendments

Second Report

Mr. Doug Martindale (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the second report of the Committee on Law Amendments.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Law Amendments presents the following as its second report:

Mr. Speaker: Dispense. I heard a no. Is it dispense? Dispense.

Meetings:

Your committee met on Monday, June 11, 2001, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building.

Matters Under Consideration:

Bill 9—The Vital Statistics Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et modifications corrélatives

Bill 12—The Real Property Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels

Bill 13—The Social Services Appeal Board and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi sur la Commission d'appel des services sociaux et modifications corrélatives

Bill 14—The Consumer Protection Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur

Bill 15—The Mortgage Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les hypothèques

Bill 29—The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation

Bill 30—The Securities Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières

Membership Resignations/Elections:

At the Monday, June 11, 2001, meeting, your committee elected:

Mr. Nevakshonoff as Vice-Chairperson.

Substitutions received prior to commencement of meeting:

Hon. Mr. Smith (Brandon West) for Hon. Mr. Ashton;

Mr. Nevakshonoff for Hon. Ms. Friesen;

Mr. Dewar for Mr. Jennissen;

Hon. Mr. Sale for Hon. Mr. Mackintosh;

Mr. Rondeau for Hon. Mr. Robinson;

Mr. Maloway for Mr. Schellenberg;

Mr. Cummings for Mr. Praznik;

Mr. Penner (Steinbach) for Mr. Murray;

Mr. Tweed for Mrs. Dacquay.

Substitutions received during meeting, by leave:

Mr. Reimer for Mr. Tweed.

Public Presentations:

The following individuals made presentations on Bill 9—The Vital Statistics Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et modifications corrélatives:

Kathy Stokes, Manitoba Genealogical Society

The following individuals made presentations on Bill No. 13—The Social Services Appeal Board and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi sur la Commission d'appel des services sociaux et modifications corrélatives:

Harold Dyck, Social Planning Council of Winnipeg

Marlene Vieno, Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

The following individuals made presentations on Bill 15—The Mortgage Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les hypothèques:

John McGoey, Canadian Home Income Program

Gerri Hewitt, Manitoba Society of Seniors

Bills Considered and Reported:

Bill 9—The Vital Statistics Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi modifiant la

Loi sur les statistiques de l'état civil et modifications corrélatives

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Bill 12—*The Real Property Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les biens réels*

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Bill 13—*The Social Services Appeal Board and Consequential Amendments Act/Loi sur la Commission d'appel des services sociaux et modifications corrélatives*

Your committee agreed to report this bill, with the following amendments:

THAT subsection 13(2) be amended by adding "or, if subsection 19(2) applies, must be able to communicate with each other and the appeal board simultaneously" at the end.

THAT section 14 be amended by striking out everything after "communicate with" and substituting "the appeal board at any time on the appellant's behalf and may be present with the appellant at the hearing."

THAT subsection 16(1) be amended by striking out the second sentence and substituting "The hearing must not be commenced more than 30 days after the board receives the notice of appeal, unless the board at the request of the appellant, grants an extension."

THAT subsection 16(2) be amended by striking out "At least six days before the hearing," and substituting "Unless the parties agree to a shorter period of notice, at least six days before the hearing".

THAT subsection 22(2) be amended by adding "stating the reasons for the request," after "reconsideration".

Bill 14—*The Consumer Protection Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection du consommateur*

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Bill 15—*The Mortgage Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les hypothèques*

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Bill 29—*The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur la location à usage d'habitation*

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Bill 30—*Securities Amendment Act/Loi modifiant la Loi sur les valeurs mobilières*

Your committee agreed to report this bill, without amendment.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr. Rondeau), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 201—The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I move, seconded by the Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that leave be given to introduce Bill 201, The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act (2) (Loi no 2 modifiant la Loi sur les circonscriptions électorales), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Helwer: Mr. Speaker, this is just to amend The Electoral Divisions Act, and it is to change the name of the constituency of Gimli from Gimli to Gimli-St. Andrews. I have a petition from the residents of St. Andrews plus letters of support from the communities involved, the municipalities. They all seem to agree that the name should be changed from Gimli to Gimli-St. Andrews.

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 public gallery where we have with us today, from the Children's Day Program through New Directions, 13 students under the direction of Ms. Selvi Varathappan. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Point Douglas (Mr. Hickes).

Also in the public gallery we have, from the University of Winnipeg English as a Second Language program, 10 adults under the direction of Ms. Shannon MacFarlane. This school is in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen).

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

* (13:40)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, section 26(1) of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act is clear. It states, and I quote: No change in rates shall be made and no rates for services shall be introduced without the approval of the Public Utilities Board.

While Manitoba Public Insurance is abiding by the law with its applications to the PUB, to reduce its premiums overall by 1.5 percent, the Premier has created a loophole in his Bill 27 so Manitoba Hydro can bypass the law by avoiding bringing its own rate reduction before the PUB. The Premier has created different policies for different Crown corporations. A rate reduction is a rate reduction. If MPI must appear before the PUB for approval to reduce its rates, why does not Manitoba Hydro?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the member opposite is opposed to having rate equalization across Manitoba. I think it is very disappointing that the mighty Conservative Party that was involved

over the years in establishing equitable services for people in rural and northern Manitoba from time to time has turned their back, first of all in rural and northern Manitoba with the unlawful sale of the Manitoba Telephone System, in our view—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: —and secondly, the rate equalization proposal was a promise made in the election campaign. In fact, I even believe the former Minister of Energy was musing in a positive way during an MKO debate that I was at in 1999, August to be precise. The rural electrification, for example, was a policy made and led in this Legislature. The rates have not been lowered. The rates will not be lowered unless this Legislature, the most democratic body in the province, passes the bill. I challenge the member opposite to vote for rate equalization to lower the rates in rural Manitoba and in northern Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, in case the Premier is not aware, the Manitoba Society of Seniors, the Consumers' Association, they also want lower rates, and they are calling for the PUB. The circumstances surrounding Hydro have changed considerably since its last rate review. For the first time in years, rates are changing and there are billions of dollars of proposed Hydro projects on the Government's agenda. The question is very simple. Can the Premier—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the question is very simple and very clear. Can the Premier explain why there is a role for the Public Utilities Board when it comes to MPI rates, but not when it comes to Manitoba Hydro rates? What is he afraid of?

* (13:45)

Mr. Doer: I note that the member opposite is not raising a fuss about us cancelling another PUB application because the members opposite, when they bought Centra Gas, did not tell the public they had cut a secret deal on income taxes to be paid for by a public corporation.

When we came into office, Mr. Speaker, we cancelled the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: We cancelled that application to the PUB, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and responsible for the corporation. We cancelled the provision of requiring a public corporation to pay the income taxes. There was already enough burden with the commodity prices going up for people in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, certainly here they talk about "a secret deal." One, it was proposed in the election campaign; two, it was in the Speech from the Throne before this Legislature, read by the Lieutenant-Governor last November; three, it is in legislation before the Legislature. We believe that a promise made in an election campaign, acted out through a mandate in the Legislature, is completely and totally democratic. They can choose to vote against it, if they are opposed to it.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier would do well to understand that Manitoba Hydro belongs to Manitobans, not to him.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, rather than abide by the law and follow the proper process, the Premier has chosen to change the legislation to avoid any public scrutiny. Last week, when questioned about why the Premier has created a loophole to prevent Manitoba Hydro from having to go before the PUB, the Premier said, and I quote: We will follow the law.

Clearly, if the Premier is not ensuring his rate reduction goes before the PUB, he is not

following the law. Will the Premier confirm today that Manitoba Hydro—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Will the Premier confirm today that Manitoba Hydro was going to abide by the laws and proper process and appear before the PUB for approval to establish uniform rates but was prevented from doing so because of the Doer government's interference?

Mr. Doer: Here we have a tale of two Crowns. First of all, Manitoba Hydro is owned by the people of Manitoba because we won the last election campaign. The members opposite served the interests of the brokers in this community, and that is why they got rich while Manitobans paid more for their rates when the Telephone System was sold. Here we have a promise not to sell the Telephone System in the '95 election broken by legislation passed by the former government in this Legislature without going to the PUB; no mandate.

* (13:50)

Here we have a promise made by this party to the people of Manitoba. We made a promise that if we were elected that people in rural and family farms, people in northern communities would have the advantage—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We made the promise in the campaign. We had it in the Speech from the Throne; we had it in legislation before this Legislature. A promise made is going to be a promise kept, a very simple principle of democracy.

I find it passing strange and it is an interesting debate because rural electrification took place because of the leadership of previous governments in this Legislature. They took a stand, they delivered on a stand. I recall former Premier Lyon and former Premier Blakeney fighting for the rights in this Legislature to make

decisions if unelected judges made decisions that were contrary to the interests of the people.

The Leader of the Opposition can vote against this legislation or he can vote for this legislation, but this kind of wimpy little: we do not like the process. Mr. Speaker, let them stand either for the family farm or against it.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, Manitobans expect and deserve a fair and open process, enabling them to have input through the Public Utilities Board on proposed rate changes.

My question is for the Minister responsible for Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I am asking him if he can confirm that on February 21, 2001, before the Throne Speech, Manitoba Hydro did in fact apply to the Public Utilities Board to change rates.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I would like to thank the member opposite for the question, but I would like to mention that the Throne Speech was in November and full confidence that proper procedure has been followed completely and democratic principles are being followed in this process.

Mr. Tweed: I am prepared to table the letter from Manitoba Hydro to the Public Utilities Board asking for rate application changes. I am prepared to table three copies.

Mr. Speaker, can the Minister responsible for Consumer and Corporate Affairs confirm that two weeks later, after we had raised the issue publicly, the Doer government withdrew Hydro's application from the Public Utilities Board?

* (13:55)

Mr. Smith: As members opposite would like to pat their backs in having some part in that process, certainly Manitoba Hydro makes its decisions on their rate changes whether they apply or whether they do not. Manitoba Hydro in

fact decided they would withdraw it, and that is true.

Mr. Tweed: I am prepared to table a letter from Manitoba Hydro withdrawing their application, stating that the Government of Manitoba intends to pass legislation in order to implement, instead of going through the process.

Mr. Speaker, my last question to the minister responsible for consumer protection: I am asking him can he advise when the Premier and Cabinet colleagues ordered Hydro officials to withdraw their rate application and avoid public scrutiny?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I have already mentioned two cases, and one case specifically where a specific decision and memorandum entered into an agreement by the former cabinet, I guess that would be cabinet interference, was entered into with Manitoba Hydro, I guess that would be a Crown corporation, to raise the taxes and raise the rates of gas to deal with the so-called public ownership of the gas company that would be treated as a private company for purposes of income tax.

We made a promise in the election campaign. Now there are two issues that have been raised. One is the rate equalization. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) raised another issue, and that is the issue of possible proposals for future dams. Future dams should go to the PUB—

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

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne's*: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

This question was put directly to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Smith). The First Minister is using his leaders' latitude, which is not applicable unless it is leader-to-leader. We have challenged that ruling a number of times in this House.

He is hiding from the truth. That is nowhere near what the question was. Is it this First Minister who demanded that Hydro retract?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the point of order, in our view, is absurd. The question was asked and an answer is being given in a full, full way by the Premier. It is the prerogative of the Government of course to answer the question as it sees fit and what minister should answer as it sees fit. That rule is being followed. There is a full answer for Manitobans.

It is not good enough that they want to just have Manitobans hear the questions. Manitobans are entitled to have a full answer as well.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, Manitoba practice has been to allow leaders' latitude, and I will continue allowing that until I am given directions that are jointly agreed upon by both House leaders.

Mr. Laurendeau: I challenge your ruling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The ruling of the Chair has been challenged.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in support of sustaining the ruling, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Mr. Laurendeau: On division.

Mr. Speaker: On division.

* * *

Mr. Doer: We will follow all regulatory requirements, as I mentioned to the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), on any proposed future capital investment that is appropriate, as we have indicated before.

Secondly, this was a promise made in the election campaign. It was in the Speech from the Throne. It is in legislation here, and there are full public hearings at second reading. I would ask members to join us in voting for lower rates for rural and northern Manitoba, Mr. Speaker.

Manitoba Hydro Public Utilities Board Review

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): The immediate issue is about process, and groups such as the Industrial Power Users Group, the seniors society of Manitoba, the Consumers' Association of Manitoba, have all joined together in asking that this Premier take this initiative to the Public Utilities Board. They have heard the slick rhetoric from the Premier, and they understand what he is doing. They have seen this corporation spend money on highways. They have seen this corporation spend money on conversions and on proposed capital expansion. They want Manitoba Hydro's business to go to the Public Utilities Board, and I would ask the Premier if he would direct them to go there.

* (14:00)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) and I had this conversation at length in the deliberations for the Estimates of the Executive Council. At that time I indicated that there were a number of issues we were dealing with in Hydro, the first of which is to complete the Northern States Power sale, the Xcel power sale that was initiated by the Limestone Dam, Mr. Speaker, and that negotiations were underway.

Secondly, we would follow all regulatory requirements. This bill before the Legislature does not change any hoops that Hydro must go through in terms of future capital investment for capital dam projections where this bill only deals with a part of our election commitments to lower the rates in rural and northern Manitoba, using, by the way, the surpluses generated from hydro-

electric sales made under the Limestone initiative in the mid-'80s.

The former premier promised to invest 25 percent in economic development in northern Manitoba if they were re-elected in 1999. His promise was made in September '99. Promises made, Mr. Speaker, should be promises kept in this Legislature.

Mr. Gilleshammer: The issue is the Premier (Mr. Doer) is attempting to override a very open process, a process that Manitoba groups are asking to present to. Why will the Premier not allow this open process to take place, allow those particular groups who have stated an interest in coming before the Public Utilities Board to have that opportunity?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): The change we are making to have uniform rates in Manitoba is a fundamental policy change. It is not a simple rate adjustment, either upward or down. It is a universal rate for all Manitobans, something that this Government certainly supports, something that led the way to rural electrification, and it is a leadership initiative taken by this Government. The ultimate authority, the ultimate law-making body in this province is the Legislature, and we will be accountable for what we do.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Does the Premier not see that he has something to learn from the 1980s wherein the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) was a newcomer to Cabinet, and he and Howard Pawley and Vic Schroeder set the rates for MPI? That is why they were turfed out of government in 1988. Now they are setting the same precedent. Why will the Premier not back off this issue and take it to the Public Utilities Board?

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I believe the member had already put his question, the initial question where a preamble was allowed. This is a supplementary question. Could you please remind the member that no preamble is available on a supplementary question?

Mr. Gilleshammer: On the same point of order, my question was: Can the Premier not learn

from his previous experience here when he and Vic Schroeder and Howard Pawley set the rates for a Crown corporation and were turfed out of office because the public would not stand for that—

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I would like to at this time remind all honourable members that *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble. The question has been put. I will allow the member a very brief time to put the question.

* * *

Mr. Gilleshammer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier, if he will not learn from his previous history in this House that Manitobans will not stand for rates for Crown corporations being set at the Cabinet table. They want an open process.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, all governments do some things right and all governments do some things wrong. Members opposite would understand that I am sure. Hopefully, they will not make the same mistake or never get a chance to make the same mistake as they did with selling the Manitoba Telephone System after they promised to keep it as a public corporation.

We feel, Mr. Speaker, that a promise made in an election campaign, fully debated in the campaign, our promise in the campaign did not say: We will lower the rates in rural Manitoba and in northern Manitoba subject to what the PUB says. Our promise said: If we are elected, we will have one rate for the farmer in rural Manitoba and for the residents of northern Manitoba. We will use the surplus to treat all Manitobans equally. That is what we promised.

Winnipeg Casinos Advertising Campaign

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I will go on to a question for the Minister responsible for Lotteries. It would be easy to go after the Premier here, but I will go after the Minister responsible for Lotteries. Yesterday the Minister responsible for Lotteries advised this House and

the media that there was a new policy in place regarding advertising for Manitoba Lotteries and the gambling casinos.

I would like to ask the minister: Will she now table in the House the policy on this advertising, plus the amount of money that has been spent on advertising to people to lure them into the gambling casinos of Winnipeg?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): I thank the member for the question. I will forward to the member opposite the Lotteries policy on advertising. Unfortunately, I do not have a copy in the House to table, but I will forward it to his office as soon as that is possible.

In regard, Mr. Speaker, to this whole question about money spent on luring people into casinos, as I said yesterday, we have not spent one red cent to lure people into casinos. Furthermore, this whole question of advertising, you know, I like the member opposite very well and I have great respect for him, but I wish he would stop playing like a virgin when it comes to advertising. This Government has been around the advertising Lotteries block several times, and they know it.

Mr. Reimer: I must remind this minister that they are in government now, and they are making the decisions. Their decision is to spend, spend, spend, and they are doing a good job of it. They are looking at any place that they can get revenue. Gambling for them is now the addiction that they are involved with.

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

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I wonder if you could ask the honourable member if he could come up with a question.

Mr. Speaker: The point of order raised was if the honourable member could come up with a question. So I would like to ask the honourable member to please put his question.

* * *

Mr. Reimer: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will ask the minister then: Did she not advise the House the other day that of course we do not advertise Lotteries within the province of Manitoba? Why has this directive been changed now so that the advertising is within Winnipeg? It is going after young children. It is going after people to come to the casinos.

An Honourable Member: It says "Winnipeg casinos" right in the ad.

Mr. Reimer: It says "Winnipeg casinos." Get your fill of the fun at the Winnipeg casinos. What has changed to make this Government go after the young people of this province to get them into gambling?

Ms. McGifford: On June 21, 2000, in Estimates I told the member opposite that we do not advertise Lotteries within the province of Manitoba. Perhaps the concept of time has completely passed over the head of members opposite. This was a year ago. Today is June 12.

* (14:10)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, in 1917 women did not vote. In 1918 they do. Things change.

The member I think included several questions in his single question, but one of the things that he did mention was luring children into the casinos. I think the member should be aware that children, of course, are not allowed in casinos, so I certainly do not understand his comment.

Mr. Reimer: I can only refer to the ads that are playing on the TV: They have little dinosaurs and fishies and the train. I will ask the minister then. Yesterday the minister mentioned that to be competitive they are going on this road of advertising. I will ask her whether she has talked to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the Premier. To be competitive, she has also tried to encourage a tax relief for the people of

Manitoba. Instead of being competitive with gambling, be competitive with taxes.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): We have lowered the income tax in 18 months, more than they did for 11 years. We have lowered the corporate income taxes for the first time since the Second World War. We have put in place the property tax credit promises that we promised in the election campaign, property tax credits that are worth more. In the inner city of Winnipeg they are worth about 9 percent a year on property tax reductions versus some other areas that have more means to pay taxes. You could go on and on, but we will put our record of 18 months against their dismal record of 11 years anytime. At the same time we are rebuilding health and education, rebuilding a hope for our young people and rebuilding this province from every neighbourhood.

Winnipeg Casinos Advertising Campaign

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): From time to time we get the opportunity to quote back to the Premier what he said when he was in opposition. He does not like that very much, but today we get the opportunity once again. Back in 1994, the Leader of the Official Opposition, now the Premier (Mr. Doer), stated that Manitobans would, and I quote: Prefer to have lottery money going directly to patients and patient care and nurses in our health care system rather than having them go to ads.

Now the Doer government is spending \$100,000 per month on advertising two restaurants and untold millions of dollars advertising casinos in Manitoba.

I would like to ask the Premier or the Minister of Lotteries, depending on who wants to answer, what they have to say to Manitobans as to how much money they are spending of lottery money on advertising on television, radio, newspaper and billboards. How much money are we spending on advertising and luring Manitobans into our casinos?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, we found, regrettably,

through an audit report, the Provincial Auditor's report that was tabled in this Legislature identified major, major capital overruns that were not budgeted by the previous provincial government in terms of a capital repayment plan, and if we had that \$70 million or \$80 million of cost overruns it would be wonderfully placed in health care and education.

We also had a situation where assets were developed, like expansion of the many assets in the two casinos' positions. If you want to read back Hansards, we opposed the fact that you expanded the suburban casinos without relocating the Fort Garry Hotel to a downtown location. You could also find that in Hansard, Mr. Speaker.

Having said that, with the combination of the cost overruns and other communities like Thief River Falls attracting Manitobans to their communities with the situation, we want those casinos to pay for themselves and deal with the cost overruns.

Mr. Derkach: Can the Premier tell Manitobans why he is allowing lottery money to be used for restaurants that are privately run, when in fact in 1994 he said, and I quote: Manitobans would prefer to have lottery money going directly to patients, to patient care and nurses in our health care system rather than to ads? Can the Premier explain?

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act): Mr. Speaker, as I told members of the House yesterday, Lotteries are in a highly competitive environment. For example, we have to compete with casinos like Seven Clans, mentioned by the Premier, which I believe do target children in their advertising, unlike us. For example, I believe there is one advertisement showing children having great fun on waterslides.

We do not allow children in our casinos. Let me repeat that. The main reason the Premier has pointed out the cost on the overruns that we have to pay back, there is a highly competitive market: 41 casinos within eight hours of driving of Winnipeg. Mr. Speaker, the reasons become obvious when you consider the competition. One

of the interesting things here is that members opposite are always talking about the NDP having a lack of business acumen, and here we are—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Advanced Education, who is responsible for the youth in our province, concede that spending \$100,000 a month in advertising two restaurants in the city of Winnipeg is a wrong-headed approach and redirect this money to patient care, to health care and to diagnostic equipment which is needed in our province?

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, just before the member asked his just previous question, I was pointing out that we are frequently criticized for a lack of business acumen. One of the things—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In order to preserve the competitiveness of Manitoba Lotteries—and Manitoba Lotteries returns over \$200 million to the province—it appears to be necessary at this point, at this juncture in time, to spend some money on advertising. So in order to keep Lotteries competitive, to keep that money returning to the province, it requires a small outlay right now.

I think the answer to the member's question is that it is a wrong-headed question.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (14:20)

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. *Beauchesne's* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and not provoke debate.

It is the \$3 million and \$4 million on advertising that this Government has wasted that should be in our hospitals. That is what we want to know. Where is that \$3 million or \$4 million?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Well, regretfully, Mr. Speaker, that, I suggest, is a regrettable abuse of the rules.

A point of order was being used in order to advance an argument, and this was just a dispute on the facts. There is no point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Smoking Ban Legislation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, an effort is underway to bring Winnipeg in line with other major cities in North America and to ban smoking in public places. This would create a very inequitable situation inside and outside the Perimeter for bars and restaurants. The responsible approach of the Premier (Mr. Doer) is reduce or ban smoking in public places throughout Manitoba.

I ask the Premier: When will he bring in legislation to ban smoking throughout Manitoba in public places?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the use of tobacco has been identified as a significant health detriment and a determinant of bad health, obviously. In fact, amongst women, I understand it is one of the leading lung cancers, one of the leading causes of death. So the use and utilization of tobacco is a major problem.

There have been many initiatives taken across the country with respect to approaches to tobacco substance abuse and to prevention of tobacco. There are a wide variety of options that are available to various governments over a wide range of areas.

In particular, I note for a fact that the member was a member of the federal Cabinet that decreased the costs of cigarettes in Québec, which is one of the main determinants of

increased tobacco use amongst young people. The cost of cigarettes has increased over the past two budgets, and I will continue during the supplementary.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary: Why has the Minister of Health completely failed to bring in any significant anti-smoking efforts, and why is the Minister of Health among the worst performing, the lowest spenders in anti-smoking efforts of any province in Canada?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the Province of Manitoba has had a very active Public Health branch that has been looking at not only the epidemiological studies with respect to smoking but has conducted a series of public hearings across the province with respect to tobacco use and tobacco cessation and related matters.

As the member noted, the City of Winnipeg, I believe, is presently in the process of determining whether or not a municipal ban with respect to smoking will take place. Saskatchewan has recently announced that they are going to be removing tobacco from pharmacies, I believe, and moving it out of the sight of young people, as Alberta is following suit with that, which I think is a very excellent recommendation.

There is a variety and a whole gamut of recommendations that have been presented to the provincial government.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Labour. I ask the minister when she will work with the Manitoba Federation of Labour to improve workplace health and act to enforce existing laws which ban carcinogenic chemicals like benzpyrene, present in cigarette smoke, from the workplace and improve workplace health in Manitoba.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and I are working very hard on a number of strategies to deal with this particular issue and expect to have a strategy and a range of strategic options available for us by the end of the year.

It would have helped—yet, again, to reinforce what the Minister of Health has said—if the federal government, which the Member for River Heights was a part of, had not reduced the price of cigarettes.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Manitoba Hydro

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, section 26(1) of The Crown Corporations Public Review and Accountability Act states, and I quote: "No change in rate shall be made and no new rates for services shall be introduced without the approval of the Public Utilities Board."

Typical of the Doer government, when they cannot follow legislation, they simply change it. When they need to deny the citizens of Manitoba and groups such as the Manitoba Society of Seniors and the Consumers' Association of Canada the opportunity to question Manitoba Hydro through an open and public hearing before the PUB, they bring forward gag laws.

When it comes to protecting consumers, Manitobans are supposed to have an advocate, a champion if you will. The Government has a minister responsible for consumers, this being the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith). Where was the minister when his Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister responsible for Hydro (Mr. Selinger) realized that Hydro had applied to the PUB for a review of their rate application and that such scrutiny was unacceptable? Where was the minister of consumer protection when these same colleagues ordered Hydro to withdraw their rate application two weeks later? Did the member charged with protecting consumers stand up to his colleagues and say, no, there is a process, there is legislation to protect consumers, there is legislation for which I am responsible? Did the member tell his colleagues that Centra Gas and MPI have to go to the PUB to have their rates changed and so must Hydro? The minister's support of the loophole provision of Bill 27 shows Manitobans that, like a willow in the wind, the minister bent before the bluster of his colleagues.

Philippine Heritage Week

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, Philippine Heritage Week began this year on June 10, but today is the actual day when

independence was proclaimed across the land some 103 years ago.

With over 40 000 members, Filipinos represent the largest ethnocultural group in Manitoba, according to the census of 1998. The first Filipino immigrants were welcomed in Manitoba and settled in Winnipeg in 1959. Today, you will find Filipinos engaged in all levels of economic activities from entrepreneurs to aircraft parts manufacturing workers, in hospitals, service and health care sectors, in politics, in high-tech industries, corporate offices and in higher institutions of learning.

This year there is yet more reason to celebrate as the federal and provincial governments have announced funding for a new Philippine-Canadian Cultural Centre. The new multiuse facility will be located at the southeast corner of Keewatin and Burrows in Winnipeg. As a venue for two Folklorama pavilions, the new centre will have a positive impact on local tourism.

As a member of the Filipino community, I invite members to enjoy with us one or all of the events in celebration of the rich cultural heritage of Manitoba's Philippine community. As part of the Philippine Heritage Week, I have already attended the flag-raising ceremony at City Hall and the heritage tree planting at Fort Whyte Centre, and I look forward to attending the Manitoba Association of Filipino Teachers' Children's Cultural Show at Machray School on Thursday, 6 p.m., and the Philippine-Canadian Independence Dinner and Dance at Canad Inn at Polo Park on Friday at 6 p.m. Thank you.

* (14:30)

Irvin Goodon International Wildlife Museum

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I am pleased to stand before the House today, Mr. Speaker, to announce the launch of a new business and tourist attraction in the town of Boissevain. The Irvin Goodon International Wildlife Museum is expected to be operational by June 15 this year.

This is an excellent example of the diversification and new initiatives many rural areas

are embarking upon in attempts to round out their primary industry-based economies. The town of Boissevain, which has recently invited one and all to its 30th and final Turtle Derby event, will most certainly benefit from this unique tourist attraction.

The museum will be located just east of the Tommy the Turtle statue and will house different stuffed animals, beginning, but not ending, with Mr. Goodon's own personal collection. Irvin Goodon, an avid hunter and sportsman of many years, boasts an impressive collection, including bears, a moose, wolves, red stags and a musk ox. Furthermore, Mr. Goodon plans for a unique sales space in keeping with the theme of the project. He anticipates that animal hides, log home furniture and wild meat will be available for sale.

The museum will be a main attraction for tour buses stopping in the community. I would like to congratulate the Goodons and all others involved in making this museum become a reality for sharing their outstanding collection with the public and in taking the initiative to promote tourism in their community of Boissevain.

Mr. George Elliott

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): I rise today to draw attention to Mr. George Elliott, this year's recipient of the Manitoba Person of the Year Award. This award was given in recognition of George's outstanding contribution to transportation in Canada. When I first met George I was unfamiliar with aviation history; however, George's passion and enthusiasm was highly contagious, and I quickly found that it is impossible to spend time with him and not become fascinated through his incredible experience and knowledge about aviation history in Canada.

For 35 years George served in a variety of management positions with the Government of Canada. During his extensive career he worked throughout Canada in such places as the Canadian Arctic, Halifax, Yellowknife and Winnipeg. In addition to his management activities, George was also involved in many educational and developmental activities. For

example, he helped develop training materials for Transport Canada and for major aviation universities and colleges in Canada and the U.S.

In 1989 George was appointed to the position of executive director of the Western Canada Aviation Museum. Under George's guidance, the museum has received national and international recognition and is recognized as Canada's second-largest aviation museum. As his extensive career in transport would indicate, this is not the first award that George has received. For example, in 1983 George was awarded a medal for outstanding service from the aviation department at the University of North Dakota. In 1996 he received the Southport Aerospace Spirit of Southport Award, and in 1997 he was awarded the International North-west Aviation Council Role of Honour Award.

I would like to thank George for his contribution to the preservation of our aviation history and congratulate him on his most recent achievement. While the Western Canada Aviation Museum is certainly full of countless treasures of aviation history, none are quite as valuable as Mr. George Elliott.

Ms. Lynn Marks

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize an outstanding woman, a dedicated nurse from the constituency of Portage la Prairie. Ms. Lynn Marks graduated as a licensed practical nurse from Red River College in 1979 and has worked at the Portage District General Hospital since September of that year. Since that time Ms. Marks has made innumerable contributions toward improvements to her profession both within the facility and across the province.

In addition to her contributions on behalf of her patients to assure that they receive the most affectionate and compassionate care, Ms. Marks has worked hard to promote a positive image of LPNs to fellow colleagues and to the general public. A firm believer in continuing education, Ms. Marks consistently met and exceeded expectations fulfilling her responsibilities with care and expertise.

In addition to her professional responsibilities Ms. Marks is an active member of the community, volunteering for the soup kitchen, the Mitten Tree at Portage District General Hospital and the Salvation Army. She is married to Wayne and has three children, Cody, Leah and Shelby.

Mr. Speaker, on June 4, 2001, the Manitoba Association of Licensed Practical Nurses recognized Lynn Marks with the Excellence in Practice award. This certificate of excellence is awarded to a licensed practical nurse for outstanding work and achievement in their field. Lynn Marks is clearly a tremendous representative of licensed practical nurses across the province. On behalf of the residents of Portage la Prairie, I would like to congratulate her on her tremendous accomplishments and contributions to our community.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings of bills in the following order: Bills 10, 41, 17, 24, 26, 11 and 21.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 10—The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on second readings, Bill 10, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des collectivités et des quartiers et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik).

Is it the will of the House to leave it standing in the name of the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet?

An Honourable Member: He is coming.

Mr. Speaker: He is coming to speak? Okay.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): I understand we are going to pass this bill through to committee today. There are, of course, some concerns that we have with this legislation, but, certainly, Mr. Speaker, not with the intent of the minister's legislation, which is, of course, to make communities safer. In fact, I do recall that during our term in office there were discussions and efforts made about a similar type of legislation that would enhance the power of communities to ensure that a variety of activities that are illegal did not, in fact, take place and ruin neighbourhoods.

The concerns, of course, when one is proceeding with legislation, have to do with the rights of property owners, the rights of privacy, rights under the Charter, et cetera, and those are very legitimate concerns.

So I am looking forward to this going to committee, Mr. Speaker, where the minister will have the opportunity to explain to us and meet some of those concerns that we have with respect to those rights of individuals and, at the same time, hearing from the public on this bill, where I suspect there will be a fair bit of support from those who are activists in their communities in trying to improve the lot of their neighbourhoods.

So, generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, I, as a member, certainly support the general thrust, always the thrust of communities being able to take action to improve the life and health of their communities, but there are some concerns that we have that we intend to raise or I intend to raise with the Attorney General in committee. I will look for his explanation in the discussions we have at that time.

So I as the Member for Lac du Bonnet and PC Justice critic have no further comments on this bill.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before the House is Bill 10, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods and Consequential Amendments Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

An Honourable Member: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 41—An Act to Comply with the Supreme Court of Canada Decision in *M. v. H.*

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on Bill 41, An Act to Comply with the Supreme Court of Canada Decision in *M. v. H.* (Loi visant l'observation de la décision de la Cour suprême du Canada dans l'arrêt *M. c. H.*), standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau).

Is there leave to leave it standing in the name of the honourable Member for St. Norbert?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

* (14:40)

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I rise to add a few comments to this piece of legislation which I understand there may be a general view to move it through to committee, where the public will be able to add their comments and views to this particular piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, when I was asked by the media about this particular bill, I said at that time it is something I stand by very clearly, that in a free and democratic society our Supreme Court has a role to interpret our statutes, our laws, within the parameters of the Canadian Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

From time to time, they will offer commentary on our laws, whether or not there is compliance with the fundamental law of the land. Where in their view, as our highest judicial body, they view that there is not compliance, they will either strike down legislation or have legislatures or Parliament so amend those laws in order to comply with the basic laws of our country, our Constitution and of course, our Charter of Rights, which is part of that Constitution.

It is my understanding from the comments of the Minister of Justice, that this piece of legislation is to comply with the Supreme Court

decision in the case referenced and to give us full compliance with the direction of the Supreme Court. So, consequently, I think it is incumbent upon governments, as this Government is doing, to ensure that their statutes are not held *ultra vires* the Constitution and so invalid. So that this Province is not in a position when it is that the statutes that have been referenced in this act are declared invalid by the court because they do not comply with our Constitution and our fundamental law, it is incumbent upon governments to come forward with the necessary enactments to ensure that they are in compliance with our Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

So we look forward to public presentations on this legislation. I am sure there may be questions of the minister during the committee period with respect to ensuring that there is compliance and with some details of the statutes that some members might have. As I said publicly to the media, my view as the Member for Lac du Bonnet, it is incumbent on legislatures to ensure that in a free and democratic society we comply with our Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

I would just say this, Mr. Speaker, as well. There have been some in public comment who have challenged that particular notion. I understand that the Supreme Court also made a ruling recently in a case involving Trinity Western University in British Columbia. In that particular case the British Columbia Teachers' Federation was required to register graduates of that particular institution.

Whether one agrees with the decisions of the Supreme Court from time to time, sometimes we agree with them, sometimes we do not. I, as someone who is a lawyer by trade, have gone through law school. There are many Supreme Court decisions from time to time that if I had the wisdom to be appointed to the Supreme Court I might rule differently, but what underlies our society is that we respect the decisions of our Supreme Court whether we agree with them or we do not. We as legislators are put in an even more interesting position, because the courts say to us that if the laws that we make as legislators do not comply with the Constitution, with the

Charter of Rights then they are struck down. They are not operative.

So the choices which the Attorney General faces, whether he agrees or disagrees with whatever decisions the Supreme Court makes in interpreting the laws of our land by judging them against our fundamental law our Constitution, our Charter of Rights, the choice that attorneys general have is whether or not they will allow a law to fail and be struck down and be made inoperative or to make it comply, because of course no law always complies. It applies to everyone equally, it does not apply.

So for this Legislature the choice for us is a very simple one. Do we allow the statutes that are referenced in this bill to be struck down and inoperative and apply to no one in our province, or do we remedy them so that they are applicable and meet the test defined by the Supreme Court. Personally, as a legislator and as the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, I say very clearly that I believe we have an obligation to ensure that our acts are remedied, that the defects are remedied and that we comply with the interpretations of our Constitution as given to us by the Supreme Court of Canada.

I look forward to this matter going to committee and questions that members may have on any side of the House as to the specifics that will be placed to the Attorney General. I am sure members of the public will come forward with questions. There are questions now as to whether or not this fully complies with the Supreme Court ruling or does not. I am sure that this Attorney General will have to answer those questions at committee and certainly be able to offer his opinion, the opinion of his legal experts, as to whether or not this fully complies. I know that question has been posed by the media, and we certainly will be looking to his answers to those questions.

Again, I say, Mr. Speaker, as the MLA for Lac du Bonnet, my very strong personal belief is that we have an obligation to ensure that we comply with the Supreme Court of Canada's rulings as legislators. Those are my remarks on this particular matter; others, of course, are free to add to them.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 41, An Act to Comply with the Supreme Court of Canada Decision in *M. v. H.*

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 17—The Student Aid Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on Bill 17, The Student Aid Act (Loi sur l'aide aux étudiants), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Russell.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, this is the only legislation on the post-secondary side that is going to impact on students and student aid. When I first received the information on this piece of legislation, I thought that the Government was really moving forward with some innovative approaches to student loans and student bursaries. However, what we realized at the end of the day, this legislation does nothing but to enshrine, if you like, student loans into legislation, whereby they were in the regulations prior to the minister bringing them into the House. So it does not change in any meaningful way what we do with regard to student aid and student bursaries in our province.

What concerns me more about student loans, student bursaries, within the province of Manitoba is the approach that is being taken by both levels of government, I might say, federal and provincial, with regard to the administration of student loans for students in Manitoba. It not only has me worried; it has a lot of students worried as well.

The government of the day has decided to take the whole matter of administration into the administration of the department or add an arm of the department that will administer student

loans. To me, it seems as though we, once again, are moving away from using the entities in our province who have the expertise and who have the personnel in place to be able to administer these loans at, of course, a cost, and we are now bringing it in-house.

I do not think that the department, I do not think the minister has done her homework with regard to ensuring that there is not a different approach that can be used within the province that could better administer student loans than simply bringing it in-house. I think, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be watching this process very carefully because in the spirit of wanting to do what is right for students, effective and efficient administration of student loans, and ensuring that we can collect those student loans after they have been made, is something that we have to be very conscious about on behalf of taxpayers. More importantly, to assure that there is integrity in the program, we have to implement a process of collection that to me seems one that could be done from outside of government, rather than having all of that done within government.

Now I know the minister, in the Estimates process, said that she was limited in terms of where she could seek firms or banks or credit unions who would be willing to do the administration. The banks have indicated that they do not want to do the administration any longer. The minister said that some element of the student loans and bursaries program has been agreed to by the credit unions to be administered, but the bulk of it is going to be done in-house.

Of course, I think there are other agencies out there who have not been approached, who could have presented an ROI for a proposal, if you like, an ROP for that matter, for delivering the program and probably could have done it as effectively and efficiently as it can be done in-house.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, I know we are going to be spending significant dollars on salaries now, because the minister indicated to us that she is going to be hiring an additional 24 people into the department to administer this program. Once

again, we are beginning to grow the civil service, something that our Government was very conscious about, something that we tried to prevent in the spirit of trying to manage it more efficiently and effectively. I think we succeeded to a large extent, but today we seem to be going back to the old days, the days of Howard Pawley, when the civil service was just ballooning, and indeed the costs to the taxpayer were increasing exponentially.

So, Mr. Speaker, although this particular piece of legislation does nothing in terms of effectively changing how we address the issue of the shortages of funding for students, this bill simply brings a regulation into legislation. So there is no real element of controversy here, I do not believe. I think that we, and Manitobans, can live with this piece of legislation, and indeed we are prepared to see it passed on into the committee stage at this point in time.

I will be seeking out with the minister the possibility of having perhaps an explanation and perhaps a spreadsheet presented to me so that I could better understand some of the finer details of the bill. At this time, we are prepared to pass this bill into the committee stage, where the public can have some input into their views as to this legislation. Thank you.

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): In the past few weeks, I have had the opportunity of representing our Government at the University of Manitoba's 122nd convocation and at the Collège universitaire de Saint-Boniface's convocation.

On both these occasions, they reinforced my belief in the importance of helping our post-secondary students and the importance of their future in the province. If there is one thing that I heard at both these convocations, it is the agreement with this bill in terms of helping students and bringing it in-house. So I want to assure the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) that that was feedback from both convocation situations in discussing with people.

Of course, the second item I heard a lot on was the grant of monies to repair the Engineering building on the campus of the University of Manitoba. So, in terms of the bill, I am very pleased to speak in support of it today,

The Student Aid Act. I am very happy that our Government has made it clear that students pursuing and successfully completing a post-secondary education are critical to our economic and social development in Manitoba.

It is our belief that an educated and skilled workforce means a strong economic future for the province. To ensure that Manitoba students are able to access and afford a high quality post-secondary education, our Government has presented this bill, an indication that this Government is taking issues of post-secondary education very seriously.

This bill is very important to constituents in Riel, especially to young people who are continuing their studies after graduating from Dakota Collegiate, Glenlawn Collegiate and Collège Jeanne-Sauvé. These students in Riel, their parents and teachers value higher education and the world open to post-secondary students studying in the various disciplines.

In the past 18 months since our Government has taken office, we have begun to address many of the serious deficiencies that were left by the previous government. Over the course of the 1990s, students in Manitoba who attended post-secondary institutions were all too often burdened with crushing student debt due to the sharp increases in tuition. I must say, as I attended the two convocations and watched the young people receive their diplomas, I had this in mind as to how many of them in the '90s had accumulated this student debt.

At Manitoba universities, annual fee increases of 10 percent or more per year in the '90s were common. In fact, over the course of the previous government's administration, tuition increased by 100 percent and more at universities and colleges in Manitoba. The effect of the previous government's allowing increase after increase in tuition was predictable and very unfortunate, a period of reduced enrolments in universities and colleges in Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: How did we compare to other universities?

Ms. Asper: Here is your answer. In fact, in 1999, the participation rate among Manitoba's

young people aged 18 to 24 in post-secondary education was the lowest in Canada.

As an educator with some 35 years of experience in Manitoba including teaching since 1974 at the graduate level at the University of Manitoba and the Collège, I was appalled at the lack of resources for post-secondary education and the burden that was placed on our students and the staff at Manitoba's universities and colleges.

In my opinion, post-secondary education is one of the pillars of our society. Our maturity as a democracy and our strength as a province is reflected in how we treat our universities and our colleges and our students.

Our Government has fulfilled our election commitment to reduce tuition by 10 percent for all post-secondary students. In Budget 2001, presented by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), it was announced that tuition will be frozen at these reduced levels. This policy on tuition, coupled with our action on the Manitoba Bursary Program, has generated sufficient interest in further study for Manitoba's young people.

Last year, we saw significant increases in enrolment in our universities and colleges. For this coming year, we know that the demand for placement in post-secondary institutions will be even greater. This is a very positive development and a source of great pride for members of our Government.

Opportunities abound for educated young people in the new economy which requires high levels of education. Through this bill, The Student Aid Act, our Government is building a solid foundation for our young people to develop the skills they need for success in the future. Building a strong, highly educated workforce in Manitoba through commitments today to our students will result in new opportunities and bright prospects in our province. This is particularly true for those people who come from low incomes and traditionally marginalized groups in our society. Education for them has always been a means to realize dreams and to aspire to new heights.

By making investments in education, by making education affordable and accessible, we

are providing a chance for all Manitobans to learn new skills and to benefit from new opportunities through these initiatives we are taking as a provincial government, a government committed to meeting the challenge of restoring dignity in our learning environments.

The Student Aid Act addresses issues of affordability and access to higher education in this province. It is designed to achieve a number of very important objectives. This act would establish the Manitoba Student Aid Program, including the Manitoba Bursary Program, Manitoba student loans and other awards.

This act would promote the key principles of accessibility and affordability of post-secondary education for Manitoba students. This act would also entrench the new Manitoba Bursary Program, the first since 1992, into legislation, thus protecting it for years to come. The Manitoba Bursary Program, therefore, is a very important one for students. Introduced in 2000 by this Government, the Bursary Program is providing \$6 million a year in financial assistance to students attending post-secondary institutions in the province.

This program is providing significant relief to Manitoba students by cutting maximum student debt loads for students to \$6,000 per year when combined with the Millennium Scholarship Fund. The two programs together assisted 5500 students in Manitoba last year.

Our Government is also moving ahead on the issue of tuition at our universities and colleges. As I mentioned already, tuition increases of \$10,000 or more a year were common under the previous government. We have taken a different direction, one that is fair to students and addresses the issues of affordability. We are ensuring that opportunities for post-secondary education are available for all Manitobans. I would urge all members in this House to support Bill 17, The Student Aid Act.

* (15:00)

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 17, The Student Aid Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 24—The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate of Bill 24, The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur la réglementation des alcools et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurischou).

Is it the will of the House to leave it standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? There is agreement to leave it standing in the name of the Member for Portage la Prairie? Stand in the name. Is there any speaker?

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you might canvass the House to go back to Bill 24.

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to revert back to Bill 24?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate of Bill 24, The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie.

Is there will of the House to keep the bill standing in the name of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Speaker, we are prepared at this time to allow this bill to go to committee to hear from the public.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 24, The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Bill 26—The Winnipeg Commodity Exchange Restructuring Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on Bill 26, The Winnipeg Commodity Exchange Restructuring Act (Loi sur la réorganisation de la Bourse des marchandises de Winnipeg), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: It has been denied.

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, Bill 26, The Winnipeg Commodity Exchange Restructuring Act has taken on significant meaning for different people and different meanings for different people. It is time probably to study the responses from the various members of our community, both the business community and the traders. It is a significant bill because if we lose the Commodity Exchange there could be as many as 700, 900 jobs involved that are related. Although the Commodity Exchange only employs 44 people itself, there are many spin-off businesses that are involved. In fact, there is a large number of

members that have indicated an interest in the way this bill is carried out and structured.

The recent voting that took place with members on demutualization indicated an 83% approval of the voters, and since I have had opportunity to question some of the people who voted I have discovered that it was 83 percent of the votes, not necessarily 83 percent of the voters. In fact, one gentleman said he had voted 13 times because he had more than one seat on the Exchange, or control of more than one company. So some of the people, who are probably what we call the small players, have a concern that they get an opportunity to address the possible consequences of this bill. I guess one of the questions would be: Is Manitoba going to lose employees because of enacting the bill, or would they lose employees if they do not enact the bill? This does not seem to be clear at this point. There definitely are people wishing to take both sides of that argument.

We also noted that there was some misrepresentation being circulated that indicated that they needed a two-thirds majority to demutualize. In fact, they need a 95% majority. These misrepresentations and the confusion with the release of their general manager and confusion at the board level indicate that the committee stage of this bill is very important and needs to be taken as serious business by all members of this House.

We heard that there was an independent analysis done of how the exchange operates. All they did was really list the names of the exchanges that had demutualized. They did not list the names of the exchanges that had not demutualized. Neither did they explain the problems with the exchanges that had demutualized. I understand from a communication I read today that many of the demutualized operations are having serious problems, and this has not come forward in the representations that have been made to date.

So I think there is a lot of reason to analyze Bill 26 very closely when it goes to committee. We need to give ample opportunity for people having an interest in the Commodity Exchange to reveal their concerns. We really want to save the jobs in Manitoba. We do not want to lose the

Commodity Exchange. We do not have a clear understanding of the result on employment by demutualization, which usually leads to electronic trading. We need to study this thing further and allow for the interested parties to put on the table their concerns for this Bill 26.

What really surprised me was the support that the majority party in the House here gave to the bill when the bill changes the Commodity Exchange from not-for-profit, Mr. Speaker, to a for-profit business. I mean, "profit" is a dirty word among many people in their ideology. But here is a bill that has been put forward by the government of the day in Manitoba saying that they want to change the not-for-profit Commodity Exchange to a for-profit Commodity Exchange.

It seems to me when profit is wrong and profit is sinful and profit is evil and profit is dirty and we have to make sure there are not-for-profit hospitals and not-for-profit anything, except that they want the taxes, of course, the not-for-profit present state of the Commodity Exchange, it never came into question that, wow, these guys are going to make money now because our Government is proposing that they pass a bill that allows them to go from a not-for-profit to a for-profit business.

So I think that this might be good business, as I hear from some members. We do want to collect income tax. We need money to run our health care and education systems. The problems that have arisen in demutualization should be understood. Certainly I think all members of this House carry a concern for a minority interest. So often the little guy gets run over, he gets steam-rolled. We should hear all parties before we carry this bill through. In fact, there have been suggestions to me from the business community that the bill should be delayed for further study. If in fact that was necessary, I would hope that we could come to that conclusion and save the bill for the next sitting.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make sure that the dissenters would get heard and ample opportunity in committee to understand what the causes and effects of this bill could be, both by studying what has happened in other jurisdictions through demutualization and how

this vote for demutualization came about to be misrepresented. In fact, we do not know how many members actually voted, because some members have a multiple vote. So I would like to see both sides clearly heard and understood.

We understand that the president and CEO, Mr. Bennett Corn has been released and not rehired, so presently, there is probably a stand-in CEO. That is probably creating some confusion because temporarily we do not have a leading light in that position. It was also stated by one of the traders at Mr. Corn's

departure, he said: I would say that the majority of the trade completely disagreed with the direction he was going.

* (15:10)

So we have to understand that Mr. Corn was trying to take the Commodity Exchange to market on a fast track to an electronic platform, and there was considerable concern that this is not well understood.

So, Mr. Speaker, in summarizing my comments, I would like to say that the biggest concern I have is that we understand the consequences of this bill before we glibly pass it into existence and then possibly have considerable regrets that it did not have enough study, that probably it should have been amended and probably that we end up losing employees in Manitoba unnecessarily, whether it is through demutualization or whether it is leaving it as a not-for-profit enterprise.

The Commodity Exchange has been around for 113 years. It must have been pretty good to last that long, so just to blow it away seems a bit hasty, and my concern is that the people who feel that there are alternatives would be heard and that the bill would not be rushed through committee and third reading.

So that is the extent of my remarks. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, it is not very often that we have an opportunity in this House to rise and speak on bills that are ill prepared, but I do believe today we do.

Sometimes the information that flows to government has to be studied in a very close fashion before preparing legislation, and I do not think the Government did their due diligence on this bill. I do not think they took the time that was necessary to draft legislation that takes the opportunity to discuss what the business community and the Commodity Exchange exactly are doing.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people out there who seem to have concerns with this bill, and I am hoping that the minister will take the time to maybe consider pulling back this bill. We are not at this time prepared to see it go to committee, because we do believe that it should have further discussion with the business community.

Mr. Speaker, it is happening all over the place. I mean, within the floodproofing program within my community, on the one hand I have the Government saying that they can apply for some funds in another area, yet there are no funds there. The City of Winnipeg says, no, there is no money for them to build their dikes. So it is going to be interesting for the people in my constituency who are being left out in the cold. If we have another flood like '97, these people will get flooded and we will have to look at putting up sandbags all over again, and we will be looking at a lot of destruction within my community.

Mr. Speaker, it is all about planning, and when you are putting together a plan, you have to see that this plan works, and right now the plan that we have for flood-proofing is not working. I only hope that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) will do something over the next week or two because the construction season is coming very quickly to an end, and we will not have an opportunity to put the flood-proofing that is necessary in place.

Mr. Speaker, we have sort of a Catch-22 within my area because we have some people who are still waiting for some funds from the '97 flood, because the Minister of Conservation's Department is blocking the funding from flowing through the EMO because the people are not constructing the dikes. It is all about planning, and that is something that was not

done with this bill, and that was planning. I do believe it is being rushed through. I wish they could put as big a rush on the flood-proofing program for my area, so that these people could get the money that is owing to them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the minister takes the time to reconsider and possibly withdraw this bill. With some of the extra financial supports that we will have because we do not have to deal with this bill, maybe we can take care of those people in St. Norbert that are having this difficulty today. I think the Member for Seine River just may want to put a few words on the bill, but I notice she is still occupied.

So, Mr. Speaker, I only hope that the minister will revisit this issue and possibly consider withdrawing this bill. I think we should probably hold it back from committee for a little while so that he has an opportunity to revisit the matter. I am hoping that the ministers and members on that side will, and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) specifically, I guess, because here is the Minister of Finance who is looking at putting a pile of money into a little footbridge over to St. Boniface. We would rather see just \$1 million or \$2 million of that go into some diking in our constituency to protect the homes in the future. I think we need this diking program long before we need a little footbridge from The Forks over to St. Boniface. I am sure the Member for St. Boniface supports that diking program because I know Scotia Street needs some of those funds. It is not only my area; it is all areas along the river. It is all about planning. I only hope the minister reconsiders and withdraws this bill.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 11—The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate, Bill 11, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route et modifications corrélatives), standing in

the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Is there agreement to leave it standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: There is agreement to leave it standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa, and also standing in the name of the honourable Member for Pembina, who has 34 minutes remaining.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I am going to conclude my remarks, just to clarify a few things here. First of all, I had an opportunity the other day to put a few comments on the record regarding the whole area of the graduated drivers' licensing. In my discussion, as I indicated, going from school to school in our community, the biggest area of concern that was out there was one of safety. I know the committee that went across the province, when they were looking at it and in fact listening to discussion that was out there, that in fact is the information that they received back as well, one of safety. How do we get the greatest amount of safety onto our public roads, onto the private roads within the rural areas? What is the best way of accomplishing that?

Certainly my discussion with the students, as I went to the high schools, their position was one of an enhanced driver education program. I certainly agree with that. That has been my position all along. I know I indicated it briefly last time that the enhanced driver education program would be the way to go. I believe that, from my experience in having been involved with it, it allows and it gives the young person or a novice driver in this case—and I know that we are talking about novice drivers here, not only the young people, but it gives them the opportunity to experience road conditions in different forms. Again, coming from the rural area, I know gravel roads can be very hazardous. If you have not had the experience of driving on a road that has loose gravel on it, it can be very much similar to driving on a road that has ice on it. So these are experiences that students and novice drivers, in fact, should have, that they

should be able to deal with as they prepare for receiving their full-fledged driver's licence.

Just to relate an incident on that, my daughter, when she received her driver's licence, again, she received it in December. So, as she took the car and went to her different activities, it was during the first three months that she landed up in the ditch three times. I know she would not like me saying this, but this was reality. Again, that was due to the road conditions that were out there. It was icy, but at the end of the day, had she learned something? Absolutely, she had. I think that this is a part of the training process that needs to take place, whether, in fact, that process would take place through the way we have set up the graduated system.

* (15:20)

Again, I want to compliment the committee. I believe it is the minister involved with this. From where they come back from the hearings that they had and the way they had extended it through three years, they modified it, I congratulate them for doing that. Certainly I believe that this is something that the committee was listening to. They listened to the public, which is good. I am glad that they did, but in the end they did modify it some ways, because again for us coming from the rural area, it complicated things.

I know that in our discussion at caucus, in fact, it was interesting that some of our urban members at the end of our discussion indicated that it is not only the rural people who have some of the problems specific to young people going to their activities, the events that they are involved in, whether they be sports related, whether they be other social events that they are going to, they indicated that their own families had concerns with this as well. So they were very concerned about the position that was taken. I think many of them felt that, as I have indicated at the outset, an enhanced driver training course would be something that would be preferable to instituting the requirements that are in there right now the way they are set up in legislation.

I noted that the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), in the discussion that he had I believe a week ago or two weeks ago, indicated

that one of the students in one of the schools that he had attended had said that, listen, give me a temporary driver's licence for one year, but give it to me. At the end of the year, if I can prove that I am a good driver, then I would be able to receive my full-fledged driver's licence. I guess there are a number of variations on the theme that could be used, but certainly I come back to my basic premise. That is that I believe that we should have a very solid and a good defensive driver training program out there.

The other thing, of course, I am just wondering how the Government feels that they are going to institute that, because if we are going to have an enhanced driver training education program, that needs to be equal for all members. I just see the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) talking across the way, but that is where I believe that his department would become involved. Certainly this is something that they need to bring forward and allow their people to be able to administer within the school system.

Mr. Speaker, another area of concern to me is the whole area of regulation. It is nice to put in a lot of things and just have it in regulation, but it allows Cabinet, sort of at the stroke of a pen and at their whim, to make changes without coming back to the general public. It is important that the public have an opportunity to speak to legislation when it is out there. I think that members across would agree that when it is in regulation, with a stroke of pen you can make changes. Where the intentions of it may be good, they may want to do what they think is the best, I do not believe that it allows Manitobans to speak to it, because again it is simply something that is done at the Cabinet table. So that is a real concern to me.

I know that a number of my colleagues have expressed the same concerns specific to that. So I would suggest that they continue to look at this seriously. Possibly, they are going to be introducing some amendments as they bring this bill forward, but I would certainly hope that they would allow Manitobans and also allow some of the novice drivers to be able to speak to this.

One other incident that I do want to relate was when I was talking to a number of seniors

within our area. They were asking me about the graduated driver's licence. I mean, the other side of this one, the flip side was that we did have a young gentleman who had just received his driver's licence, in fact it was the first day of having his full-fledged licence. He took the car and he tried to outrun the police within our local town, not a very smart move, certainly not one that is going to be speaking in his good stead in the years to come, because his driver's licence is now removed for a number of years.

What I was going to say with that, though, was the seniors I met with indicated very clearly: Well, if there had been a program in place, certainly, he would not have been able to take the car out for a test ride the way he did. Nothing did happen, thank goodness, but he did endanger some people. So this was their response to it.

Somehow, in all of this, and I think with all legislation we have, we have to continue to use the words "common sense." We have to have good common sense out there, something that speaks specifically to the people involved, whether they be urban, whether they be rural, whether they be young drivers or whether they be seniors. I know that, in talking to the young people within the high schools, one of the first comments they bring back is they have seen some other drivers out there who usually they identify as being in the category of seniors who are also not safe drivers. I guess my comment to that is I cannot totally disagree with that. On the other hand, the majority of the time they do not drive as fast as some of our young people do when they first receive their driver's licence. So there is certainly a difference in that.

Again, I will come back, and I will wind up my comments, but I believe very strongly that we need to have a good solid defensive driver training course. Certainly, we want to have safety out on the roads. I know we all want that; I know Manitobans want that. As we drive to work or as we go for social events or whatever we are doing, when we hit the roads, we want to know there is safety out there. I need to drive safely, but certainly I need to look out for the next person as well, and I am trusting and hoping that the person that I meet on the highway or on a roadway is also going to be a safe driver. So, with those few comments, Mr.

Speaker, I am going to allow my colleague to continue to debate on this. Again, I trust that, as we take this eventually to committee, where there are amendments coming forward that we can help to enhance this, I would certainly hope that we would seriously look at that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): I am pleased to get up and put some words on the record with respect to this piece of legislation.

This is a piece of legislation that, from a purist view, is doing the right thing. That is, attempting to make our highways safer, to protect life, to protect not only the life of passengers in the car but indeed of the driver himself or herself. In that respect, the intention of this legislation is honourable, but I think that one has to look beneath the surface of this legislation to look at the impact that it has on individual Manitobans and on young people who are in the process of learning good driving skills and good driving habits.

We can take two approaches to an action of this kind. One, we can provide for deterrents in legislation which will discourage, if you like, young people from acquiring bad habits. You can provide deterrents in legislation or in regulation which would make it very difficult for someone who has had an infraction to secure their licence again, and you can make it very difficult for young people to qualify for a permanent good driving status unless they meet a whole series of hurdles.

In and of itself, that is not bad, except that we do not use positive reinforcement in any of this to show that indeed we do have faith in a young driver, that we do encourage that young driver to stay out of trouble, to keep out of harm's way and to practise good driving habits.

*(15:30)

Now, when I talk about the positive side, of the positive reinforcement, if you like, it means that you do not take a stick to an individual's driving ability and hammer that individual at every step of the way. Rather, you provide a reason for that individual to practise good driving habits and to practise a good driving

record, and you begin the process with a good driver education program in our schools.

Now, during our tenure of office, Mr. Speaker, we did provide for an enhanced driver education program, and I will be the first to admit that we could have gone much further than we did in providing a better quality, and if you like, a longer period of driver education programming within our school system. I think that if we look at other jurisdictions that have graduated drivers' licences, there are some success stories there that we can learn from and some things that we could have adopted as a provincial government in Manitoba.

However, with the legislation that is before us and the uncertainty of the regulations that will follow, we have had some indications from the minister, I believe, and members opposite, as to the watering down of the recommendations from the task force in the legislation and regulations. On the other hand, there is still an ability for a government through Order-in-Council to pass regulations, which could provide a significant deterrent and hurdle for young drivers.

Now, if you look at the statistics within the province, and across Canada for that matter, we do have a higher incidence of traffic accidents and fatalities in the younger age groups. For that matter, I think the Government did take the right approach in going out under the leadership and the direction of the Government through the chairmanship of the member from Transcona, where they did listen carefully to what Manitobans had to say. A task force was developed, the task force report was developed, and then action was undertaken as a result of that.

I guess my plea is for the young people who live in areas of the province that are sparsely populated, in the rural part of our province where there is not an access to public transportation, and this bill and the action that is going to follow is going to make it very difficult for families who live in the rural parts of our province. I am not blaming the Chair of the task force or members of the task force for not understanding that, but I think it is a perspective that has to be brought.

I sent out the bill to all of my high schools and asked for comments from the high school students who are at the age where they are going

to be getting their drivers' licences in the next year, and the responses I got were quite overwhelming. What was encouraging to me was that students are taking a much more responsible approach to this and to safety issues in high schools, if you like, whether it is drinking and driving or whether it is responsible driving habits than I would have ever given them credit for a few years ago. I think our youth are showing a high level of maturity in this regard, and that was evident in the correspondence that I received. I have a significant stack of it that I will be responding to, not in a political way, I would have the House know, but in a way which I think is going to address some of the issues that they raise in their letters.

One of the interesting things was that, you know, students do not differentiate, or the majority of students do not differentiate, between government and opposition. They hold us all accountable. They think we are all government. They do not care whether our stripe is NDP, Liberal or Conservative. They look at us as legislators who are here to do a job and are here to pass laws on their behalf. You know, that is probably the right way of looking at things, because indeed government has its roles. On the other hand, we as the Legislature have a responsibility to represent our constituents in a responsible manner.

What I learned from the letters that I received was that students were not objecting, in principle, to a graduated driver's licence where a student does not get his or her driver's licence upon application, but would have to pass a series of steps prior to getting a permanent driver's licence. They were not objecting to that. What they were objecting to were some of the recommendations of the task force that limited the number of persons that that individual could have in his or her presence in a vehicle when they were going down the road. Some of that has been changed, but just as a for-instance, a young person has a child and is just in the process of getting his or her driver's licence. Automatically that person has a difficulty in being able to transport that child in her or his presence if they do not hold a valid, permanent driver's licence. That was pointed out to me by several students, I will not say the number, who found themselves in that circumstance.

The other issue that came forward was, what do we do in rural Manitoba? My home is 25 miles from my school. This particular student told me she was a member of the yearbook committee, she was on the debating team, she was a member of the choir and played volleyball. She said up until this graduation year her older sibling was able to accommodate the driving needs for both of them to this school, but the older sibling is leaving. Now she is just in the process of getting her learner's licence. She said she and her neighbour's children, who are I assume the same age, relied on each other to get themselves to the school to attend these functions and back home, but now they are going to be prohibited from doing that because she has to go through a series of hurdles which will not give her any ability to carpool with her friends or with her neighbours to the school.

Now, if I understand the legislation correctly, in that period of time that she is going through the learner's period and has a temporary licence, she cannot undertake to transport other minors who do not have drivers' licences or who are in the same position as she is. Now, if I am mistaken about that then I think that is a correction that needs to be made in the legislation.

An Honourable Member: The number of seatbelts.

Mr. Derkach: But as long as the others have permanent drivers' licences, right? That is correct. There has to be a supervising driver with this individual, but if there is not one available, what it means is that they have to get somebody, a supervising driver, if you like, a parent to accompany them to the school and either wait there—now, remember, these people are 25 miles from the school—wait there and then transport them back or be in the presence of that student while she or he is driving back during the learner process. The student is complaining about that because of her distance from the school and her location, her home, within the province of Manitoba. She says if she were living in the city of Winnipeg, the city of Brandon, perhaps Thompson or Dauphin or Portage, she probably would not have that problem, because you could easily hop a public transit system and be able to attend all of those functions.

* (15:40)

For somebody who has to first of all get on the school bus to go home and then wants to come back to the school and finds him or herself in that situation, it makes life a little more difficult. I could argue the issue of the rural child who has been driving a vehicle since the age of 12 on the farm. Some will say, well, that is illegal, but I can tell you, having raised three sons, it is a practical approach to, I guess, developing good driving habits. They usually start out with driving the lawnmower or driving a garden tractor and then graduate from there to the little half-ton in the yard that you can spin around the yard or a quad and eventually get their driving habits better and better.

You know, what brought home to me that this was a good practice was a visit from a relative whose child was approximately the same age as my children who had never had any experience driving a garden tractor or a lawnmower. But you know what the attraction in the yard was for him? It was that quad that was sitting in the driveway. This child was about 14, maybe going on 15, and without giving any consideration to the fact that he may not be able to handle this machine, my children outfitted him with a pair of gloves, a helmet, and put him on the machine. To our horror, this kid had not had any experience in driving a machine of this kind or of any kind. He floored the throttle, fortunately in a lower gear, and did not go a hundred yards until it was over on its side and so was he. Luckily for us, he had not achieved a great enough speed to do any harm to himself, but it scared the living daylights out of us because I realized that here was somebody who needed some instruction on the basic operations of a motorized vehicle of any kind.

So I say to a piece of legislation like this, perhaps we need to look a little more carefully at when we start our drivers. We are saying that, at 15 1/2, you should start taking a driver ed program. I am wondering whether we should not do like Alberta and move that age back another half a year and start looking at students who are 15 years old as being students who should be able to handle and operate a motor vehicle of some kind.

You know and I know very well that all of these young people just love to get their hands on a snow machine, on a quad. It does not have to be on a road, and it does not have to be legal. It can be in somebody's back pasture that they get a hold of these machines. They are powerful machines. Maybe they do not achieve high speeds in the beginning, but indeed, at 40 miles an hour, you can do yourself a lot of harm if you do not know how to control a piece of equipment like this.

So, in a practical sense, I am wondering whether there is not some wisdom at us looking at starting a program of some sort, I do not know what it should be, and investing some dollars from MPI surpluses or MPI's programs into voluntary programs, if you like, for students who need this. Not every student needs it. Not every child needs it. Those who live in a setting where parents are around to teach them some of these skills probably will not need these programs, but not every child has that opportunity. You cannot blame this child; you cannot blame the young student. You cannot blame the parents either because the parents do not have an availability of these kinds of things. The setting is not right. You cannot do that if you live in the core of the city. You cannot do that if you live in some of the urban settings, but if we had a program, even a summer program—I say to the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) his Government just announced half a million dollars of programming for summer students here in the last few days.

If we had the setting established somewhere in the city for core area students or for students who have a lot of time on their hands to be able to start acquiring good driving habits at the age of 14 in a controlled setting, I know there would be interest in it for sure, because you cannot keep these young fellows off these machines, but what it would do is provide an opportunity for these people to learn safety, to learn responsibility, and to learn how to handle a piece of machinery in a responsible manner. From there, they can begin to graduate toward acquiring skills in driving an automobile, in driving on a public roadway or a thoroughfare. I think we would do a lot more good in that way.

I think the driver ed program should be starting at 15 years of age in our schools, not at

15 1/2. Let us start it at 15. Alberta starts theirs, I believe, at 14 1/2, if I am not mistaken. I have a niece in Alberta who is just 14 1/2 and is starting her driver ed program already. *[interjection]* That is true, they do not get their licence until they are 15 1/2, for a temporary, and then they are eligible for a permanent at 16.

I think what they are doing, and it has nothing to do with a philosophical approach or anything. It has to do with trying to get our youth to be the best drivers possible when they hit our highways. That is what this legislation is doing. So I do not condemn it. I just have a different approach to the way that I see this legislation impacting on our young people.

I say to the Government that was responsible for this: It is not too late yet to look at the regulation and to make amendments where we can give students, young people, some credit for beginning to drive with a clean record. What I say is you award them two merit points. On the day of getting your permanent driver's licence, we will give you two merits. In New Brunswick, I think, they do get five.

What it does is it says that we have some faith in you that, if you continue to be a good driver, you will continue to receive the confidence of the Province and the confidence of the people of Manitoba to keep your merits. But, if you mess up through an infraction that is your responsibility, whether it is an accident that you have not been cautious enough in controlling your vehicle, whether it is through a speeding infraction which is caused by you or whether it is an accident, then every single merit is taken away from you. Not one merit, not two merits, every merit is taken away from you, and you start out then at zero.

Then the cost of your licence is not going to double; it will quadruple. You hit some of these young people in this way, they are going to respect that piece of paper that is called a driver's licence much more than they do today.

I guess I could tell a story from home, because I have three sons. All three are driving now. My oldest moved to Alberta and received a couple of speeding tickets. He drives from Manitoba to Alberta about four times a year. It

was en route that he received two speeding tickets. Well, what happened to his driver's licence? A good lesson, because when he received the annual renewal of his licence application, all of a sudden there was a change in the cost. Why was this change in cost? Look, I used to have two merits, I do not have any now, I have demerits. Well, why did that happen? You were in charge of your vehicle. You were responsible. He began to respect his licence much more when he realized the cost of his driver's licence.

* (15:50)

Now, his father is another story. We will not go into that in this debate. But let me say that, I think, in the world of today, we need to take a look at innovative approaches to developing good driving habits for our youth and for people who are reaching that driving age.

I say to this Government that I have some difficulty with the legislation as it is presented, because I think it draws too much on the negative and the deterrent side and not enough on the education side, not enough on providing positive reinforcement to our youth with the consequences that are severe if, in fact, that confidence is broken in any way, shape or form.

So I think a bit of a different approach can be taken. I encourage the Government, I encourage the minister to think carefully about the regulations but more importantly perhaps to allow for some changes in the legislation as it sits today to allow for a more practical approach, and I say some of these things based on the responses that I have received from the number of high schools that I have in my area and that I represent.

But I would have to say that one of the major considerations that we need to think about clearly—and perhaps the messaging is not right; perhaps even as a member I have not had the right explanation on it—is this issue of how do we address the rural student? I am not talking about the farm student, because I think that was addressed, as far as I understand it, but I am talking about the rural child who is not necessarily there to drive vehicles on the farm to help the farming enterprise but, more importantly, the student who is an active participant in the community, an active participant in the

school who is really contributing to his or her community, small as it may be, something that we have to think about, something I would encourage the Government to think about, so that we can make life just a little bit easier for these people who do not have access to the public transit system.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to listen to other advice that may be offered on this legislation. Certainly, we will be listening to it carefully in the committee stage. I would hope that there will be some students who feel secure enough to be able to come before the committee and present. I am not so sure that that will necessarily happen, but indeed that may give us some advice as to how we could proceed in a way in which we could all find some comfort in passing this legislation. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers? On Bill 11, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, are there any other speakers?

This bill, when the matter is again before the House, will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Bill 21—The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate, Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act (Loi sur le Conseil ethnoculturel manitobain de consultation et de revendication), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

Is there leave for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Gimli?

An Honourable Member: Stand.

Mr. Speaker: Stand? It will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Gimli.

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to make comments on the record in support of Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act.

As an active member of an ethnic community, I feel that this bill has personal significance to me. For the first time in several years, my community and all ethnic communities in Manitoba are being given an opportunity to communicate effectively with the Government on an ongoing basis.

Since the previous government repealed The Manitoba Intercultural Council Act, many people in Manitoba's ethnic community have felt that they have lost their voice. So it is with eager anticipation that this bill was introduced by the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Barrett) to restore the mechanism for ethnocultural communities to communicate effectively with their governments.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act, MEAAC in short, we are observing and honouring the fact that our people have many different cultural backgrounds and that the quality of life in this province is richer because of it.

In addition, this act recognizes the importance of listening to its citizens and of accepting advice and criticisms with openness. This Act puts into legislation our belief that government must hear from every portion of society, even if what they hear is not to their liking. One of the most exciting elements of this bill is its focus on advocacy as well as advice. Advocacy goes beyond advice. It is a more direct approach wherein the community tells government precisely what it believes needs to be done. Advocacy is an essential element of any conversation between government and its citizens.

Through this legislation MEAAC has both the ability and the opportunity to question what our Government is doing and to tell us what should be done. Repealing The Manitoba Intercultural Council Act in 1993 and cutting funding to all Indian and Métis friendship centres across Manitoba, the previous government indicated that it was insensitive, afraid to give Manitobans such an opportunity.

The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act represents a long history of understanding between my party and the various ethnic communities in Manitoba. Thirty-one years ago, the then-Premier of the Province of Manitoba, the Honourable Edward Schreyer, brought together a Mosaic Congress made up of representatives from different multicultural communities.

The Mosaic Congress recommended among other things that the Government establish an advisory committee on multicultural issues. The idea of an advisory committee has survived since 1970 despite periods of inaction. It is time the Government changed. It was effective until 1977 when a new government was established under Sterling Lyon. Then it was renewed in 1983 until another government repealed it in 1993. Now we are renewing it once again in 2001. Our Government is as determined today as it was in 1970 and 1983 to acknowledge the recommendation of Manitoba's multicultural community. We continue in our commitment to the concepts of multiculturalism, advice and advocacy.

The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act places the commitment into legislation and thereby acknowledges the importance of supporting individuals in communities in protecting and cherishing their culture and their ethnicity, and thus the multicultural identity and diversity of our province is preserved. These are my comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to be brief in addressing Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act. I reread the remarks of the minister on second reading. I have some speaking notes.

I listened with interest to the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) when he spoke immediately after the minister. I reread some of his comments today. It occurred to me that perhaps the Member for Lakeside does not understand the position of some groups in our society. Whereas he thinks that you do not need an advisory council to give advice to the minister, I would say that many, many ethnocultural communities

in Manitoba believe that it is very important to have an advisory council to the minister.

* (16:00)

Certainly, many groups feel that they are not part of the mainstream of Canadian society or even Manitoba society. They may feel that they do not have the access to power or to government that other people may have in society. This gives them a venue, this gives them an opportunity, this gives them an avenue, this gives them access to government. I believe that they would say that that is very important. Now they will have a council with elected representatives in the majority, and a minority of appointed representatives.

The bill requires that they provide advice to the minister and that they get to meet with the minister on a regular basis. The minister also can refer important items to this council. So I think it is a good idea to have this council. I look forward to finding out what kind of advice they give the minister. The bill also allows for the minister to refer important items to them in order to find out what the feelings are in the community. You know, we do get lobbied by cultural organizations. Certainly, there are many in Burrows constituency. I think there are about 10 organizations that have their cultural hall in Burrows constituency. It is always a pleasure to go and visit them. For example, there is a Buddhist temple in Burrows constituency. An organization in the Laos community is renovating a former fire hall into a temple in a community centre, and there is the Czechoslovakian benevolent association in Burrows constituency. There are several Ukrainian organizations in Burrows constituency.

We are very proud of the fact that Burrows constituency is a very multicultural community and Manitoba is a multicultural community, and we are proud of the fact that Canada is a multicultural society, and this, as the minister said in her introductory remarks, distinguishes us from the melting concept of American society. It is something that I think we need to fight to not only preserve and protect but to enhance and to assist the communities in keeping their culture and language. In fact, many of them have been here for many generations and still believe that

that is very important, for example, the Ukrainian community.

This week I was very pleased to be with the Minister of Labour and Immigration (Ms. Barrett) and also a representative of the federal government and many people from the Filipino community to announce funding for a new Filipino cultural centre. Although originally it was planned for Inkster constituency, the boundaries changed. I am sure the Member for Inkster (Ms. Barrett) is disappointed, but now it is on the boundary between Inkster and Burrows, actually located in Burrows constituency. I am sure I will get invited to many events and will be attending many events in the new cultural centre. We were at the sod-turning ceremony—I think it was 1994—and we were at the announcement. It took a little longer than people had anticipated or expected, but we look forward to being at the official opening ceremony or ribbon-cutting or dedication or whatever happens when the building is finally opened. I am very pleased that it is in Burrows constituency.

So, in conclusion, I think the purpose of the organization is a good one, that is to provide advice and recommendations to the Government on all ethnocultural matters in the province, including anti-racism, education, human rights, immigration, settlement and cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage, and I think that the Government can only be better for getting that advice. It is not just advice to the Minister of Immigration (Ms. Barrett), but I think it is advice to the entire government. For example, people are pushing us on issues like affirmative action, and that affects every government department. I am sure that we will hear what the priority concerns of the ethnocultural communities are in Manitoba after this advisory council is set up.

So this certainly has my total support and our support as a government. In fact, it reverses action of the previous government to repeal the Manitoba Intercultural Council. I remember that debate quite well. I remember the now-minister speaking for an unlimited time for a number of days in a row on the former bill when it was repealed, and we are very pleased that we are reintroducing legislation, albeit a different organization with a different structure and a

different mandate. In fact, I would encourage the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) to actually read the bill because he referred to a function of handing out money. The Member for Lakeside had some really interesting comments about one of the functions of the new organization that does not exist at all in the bill. So I would recommend that he actually read it. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Are there any more speakers? If there are none, the bill has already been adjourned and will remain in the name of the honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

* * *

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that the House resolve into Committee of Supply.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): The Committee of Supply has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditure for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002.

Are there any questions?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Chairperson, just while we are waiting for Committee of Supply to assemble, I wonder if there is leave of the House just to go back into the House. We can make some committee announcements and come back into Supply.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there leave to revert to the House and then come back to Committee of Supply while we are waiting for someone?
[Agreed]

* (16:10)

IN SESSION

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to

announce that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet this Thursday, June 14, 6:30 p.m., to deal with Bill 24, The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

I would like to announce the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Monday, June 18, at 6:30 p.m., to deal with the following bills: Bill 8, The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act; Bill 10, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods and Consequential Amendments Act; Bill 17, The Student Aid Act; and Bill 41, An Act to Comply with the Supreme Court of Canada Decision in *M. v. H.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It has been announced by the Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Thursday, June 14, 2001, at 6:30 p.m., to deal with the following bills: Bill 24, The Liquor Control Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act.

It is also announced by the Government House Leader that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Monday, June 18, 2001, at 6:30 p.m., to deal with the following bills: Bill 8, The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act; Bill 10, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods and Consequential Amendments Act; Bill 17, The Student Aid Act; Bill 41, An Act to Comply with the Supreme Court of Canada Decision in *M. v. H.*

As has been agreed, the House is now resolved back into Committee of Supply.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion (Continued)

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): In continuing our discussion with the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), one of the areas that I had indicated to him during the Estimates process that I wanted to spend more time on was the area of emergency services in rural Manitoba.

This is an area which I know probably concerns the minister as much as it concerns some of us who represent the rural areas,

because with the development of the regional health authorities and the transfer of these services to the regional health authorities, there has been some call for more assistance in that whole area to try and deal with some of the situations that arise in our communities.

Of course, that happens, because as we centralize more of our services in Winnipeg and perhaps in Brandon, to a lesser extent, there is a greater need for the use of these services by rural people.

When municipalities were responsible for these services, they relied heavily on volunteer staff, but there was always a concern that volunteer staff were perhaps not trained to the standards that Manitoba Health had implemented, so more and more demands were being put on volunteers to become qualified. But, of course, this was all done on the backs of the volunteers, because there was no remuneration given to the employer for allowing his employee to take the training, nor was there any remuneration for the employee who was now going to be training to a standard, so that he could voluntarily give of himself and his family to provide services for the community.

On the other hand, we were providing for assistance to trainers. We were providing for assistance to people who were training professionally, so there was a double standard. What happened in the end is we have a situation out there where volunteers have been diminished. There are things that are happening that are unbelievable, for that matter. We are expecting volunteers to work during working hours, whereas permanent staff come on after working hours. It is almost the clear reversal of what it should be, where volunteers usually have performed their tasks in hours when they do not have to work at their regular jobs. I have met with both the volunteers and those who are hired in the rural part of our province who have indicated to me that there is a real move towards getting rid of the volunteers and moving strictly to a fully staffed emergency services program with paramedics trained for each and every unit.

I guess in an ideal world that is fine, but if it means that we have to curtail some of the local emergency services activities because we do not have the personnel, it really puts a fear into the hearts and souls of residents who live outside

our urban centres. I think I have shared with the minister some of the tragic stories about people who could not be reached by ambulance services quickly enough, and some of those instances have resulted in people dying. In one case, it happened to be a very young person who was about 10 years old who died because of an asthma attack because the emergency services could not get to this child in time. The child may have died in any event, but, on the other hand, it just demonstrates that we need to be more effective in the way we deploy our emergency services.

In rural Manitoba this is a special problem. Our population is becoming sparser. We have fewer people living in our rural settings and they still require a quality of life that may perhaps not be as rich as it is in our urban centres, but indeed it has to be one that compares favourably to other jurisdictions.

So when I said I wanted to discuss this topic, I wanted to discuss it from the point of view of where the minister sees the emergency services area moving, how he intends to fulfil the obligation of providing adequate services to rural people in that whole emergency services area. There is one other factor that comes into play, and we can pursue that in a subsequent question. That has to do with stretcher services in rural Manitoba as well.

So I will stop at this point and allow the minister to answer my first question and then we will proceed from there, but just to let the minister know that the area I want to focus some attention on is the whole area of emergency services right now.

* (16:20)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): We have had this discussion in previous Estimates and during the course of Estimates and probably will have this discussion in the near future and in the continuing future, because the provision and the application of health care has changed. Both the expectation and the delivery of care has changed somewhat in the past period of time.

As the member knows, there were several studies that took place during the 1990s with

respect to provision of services, emergency services, specifically in rural Manitoba. These studies culminated in recommendations that were made concerning the provision of emergency services, and those recommendations came to our attention just upon assuming office. The report that had been undertaken by a variety of principles, Mr. Chair, made a number of recommendations.

Upon assuming office, we took the report and we sent it out to as many rural communities as possible for comment and advice as to the recommendations. As the member is probably aware, several of the key recommendations we have implemented, notably, the provision of new rolling stock, 80 of 160 over the next year or so, the establishment of a call centre for rural Manitoba, and the provision of communication equipment that would be consistent and effective across rural Manitoba. So those were some of the major recommendations in that report that we are in fact implementing.

The issue of the volunteerism and professional service is a fascinating and a complex issue all at once. Clearly, it would be far more advantageous for a health system to continue a volunteer service from the straight sense of delivery of service, cost of delivery of service, and in recognition of that spirit of co-operation and camaraderie that occurs, particularly in rural communities of pitching in and of volunteering one's time and energy.

That principle runs contrary to the other principle that there is an increased awareness on the part of the public and a need for more sophisticated services to be offered in the form of emergency services, and there is a direct desire on the part of the population to have access to immediate medical attention. This occurs not just because we have more ability to offer this service, but because, in many cases, our local hospitals do not offer the wide range of health care services that they did in the past, or indeed in many cases have some of that capability, hence, the need to provide those services on the roll, as it were. So there is a couple of countervailing principles.

There is also the additional factor that we know. As we provide for more sophisticated equipment, there is a need and a requirement for

more sophisticated training and the ability of individuals to obtain that training to provide this service. So these are a couple of countervailing principles that are both in conflict, and in some cases work in collaboration.

The essence of what we are trying to do is to try to provide the best possible service that we can in rural Manitoba for the delivery of health care services. If that service could be delivered by volunteers, I suspect that we would try to do that. Where we could, I think we would be willing to do that because, frankly, for a variety of reasons, it can be very effective.

I am advised that generally, that is not the trend and that generally, the ability to obtain volunteers has diminished dramatically and that it is harder and harder to utilize a service, to use a service utilizing volunteers. Now, there have been representations made and suggestions made for how we can encourage and augment the approach to volunteers. I think that bears scrutiny. I am told that generally the reality is that it is more and more difficult to function with volunteers and that there is a certain trend towards professional services offering an enhanced capacity to deliver care.

In some cases, it becomes almost a philosophical argument, but, in fact, I think, it is more of a pragmatic argument, in my view. If members opposite suggest that we are discouraging or do not want volunteerism, I do not think that is the case. The ability, as I am advised, to operate services with volunteers is increasingly diminished. That is not just my officials saying that, because I have met with the municipal leaders over and over again who have told me that.

If one goes to the convention of municipalities or one talks to municipal leaders, they will tell you that. You will hear varying opinions, but generally, the ability to maintain and operate a volunteer service appears to be diminishing. Clearly, the province operated with volunteerism and volunteer services for decades. If one wanted to, it certainly would be in some cases advantageous to continue that, from a financial viewpoint and from a community viewpoint, but I am not certain that we have the opportunity to do that.

A couple of the things that we have done, though, the member will note that a lot of our initiatives have been to improve the infrastructure, the communications and the rolling stock. In addition, we have put considerable resources into paying for services to paid staff. So largely it is an issue of a pragmatic approach of trying to deliver a service for which there is an increasing recognition of a higher level of care required. From what I understand, there is a diminished capacity to utilize volunteers.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, the minister indicates that there were three areas that they addressed from the recommendations that were made. One had to do with implementing the call centre approach, the other with new vehicles, and the third with the communications equipment. Can the minister identify for me where the new rolling stock has been placed in rural Manitoba? How many vehicles have been replaced in rural Manitoba under his program?

Mr. Chomiak: From what I understand, over the next year or year and a half, 80 of the 160 total vehicles that we have in the system will be replaced. I understand at least 70 of those will be outside of Winnipeg.

* (16:30)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, just those numbers themselves should signal a problem to the minister, because, if out of 160, only 70 find their way into rural Manitoba, that tells me that the area of the province where the transportation is required most is getting the significantly less vehicles than the most populated centres in the province.

Mr. Chair, this is exactly what we have been arguing for in rural Manitoba for a long time. I would have to say that you do not enhance services by providing less than half of your total vehicles to the rural part of the province where transportation requirements are the greatest, so I do not think that is going to be addressing the issue.

The minister is shaking his head in frustration, and perhaps he can clarify this issue for me. I am not necessarily criticizing him for dumping most of the vehicles into the city, but I

am just indicating that where they are needed most, of course, is in rural Manitoba where the transportation requirements are probably the highest because of the distances these vehicles have to travel.

Additionally, the minister says that, on the volunteer side, it would be probably a better approach if we could find those volunteers to work, but training is an important element and so is having consistency in the system. I do not disagree with him, but I have to say that the system itself and the regional health systems, the Manitoba Health, have demonstrated a lack of appreciation or lack of investment in volunteers, because they have not over time provided any remuneration for these people to get upgraded within the system. I have talked to volunteers who have told me that, had they been given some incentive, even if it had meant assisting with some time off from their regular jobs, they would have covered the costs of transportation and the cost of getting upgraded. As a matter of fact, in terms of providing for costs for these people to travel to get their courses, government rates are not even used to provide for the transportation costs, Mr. Chair, so there is a huge area of discrepancy in how volunteers are treated and the attitude, I might say. It is not the minister's attitude, but it is the attitude in the system towards the people who volunteer.

I will just bring another image to the minister, and that is one of an individual living more than five minutes from the emergency centre. That individual is discouraged and, as a matter of fact, disqualified from participation because he or she is farther than five minutes away from the emergency centre. Yet, we have many patients who are transported from our rural settings to Winnipeg who do not require that immediate attention and can wait for an additional five minutes for that individual to get to the station.

So I know that the system is under review and there are lots of things the minister would like to do and is probably seeking some advice and some answers for and he wants to do the right thing at the end of the day, but I think we need a blend. There is no way we can train enough professionals within the next short period of time to accommodate the needs of our

rural RHAs. I know, in the one RHA that I represent, they have launched into a training program. They do not have any money for it, and yet they do not have the people available to take the courses to train them to be able to undertake the responsibilities that lie ahead of them.

They are in a real dilemma. They do not know how they are going to maintain those systems and how they are going to operate those emergency units in the next short while without the necessary personnel unless you start blending the volunteer system with the professional system to make sure you have enough personnel on the ground to handle the needs.

What they are afraid of, what communities are afraid of, Mr. Chair, is they are going to start losing their emergency services because they do not have the personnel to operate the vehicles and to operate the system. So, not only do we have a community that is experiencing some frustration and some anxiety, we have the health units themselves who, from my understanding, are fearful that they are not going to be able to provide the needs and will have to start trimming the system, will have to start prioritizing where their systems are located, which means that there are going to be longer waiting periods of time for people to get medical attention.

I throw that out for the minister and ask him whether he has any views or any advice in this respect from his vantage point.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Chairperson, with respect to the provision of vehicles, this was the largest infusion of new vehicles in the emergency system in the history of the province, and the vast majority, seven-eighths of those vehicles are going into rural Manitoba.

Mr. Derkach: You said 70 out of 180?

Mr. Chomiak: 70 out of 80.

Mr. Derkach: I am sorry. I will apologize to the minister because he said 70 out of, I thought he said, 180. So I certainly retract those comments that I made in that respect, because I thought it was out of 180. He says 70 out of 80. That is quite a different scenario. I will retract those statements I made in that regard.

Mr. Chomiak: I thank the member for that. Just let me clarify, there are 160 emergency vehicles in Manitoba. Mr. Chairperson, 80 of them are going to be renewed, and, of those 80, 70 are going into rural and northern Manitoba. That is from memory. Of the 10 that are not going to rural Manitoba, I think some of those might include Brandon as well. So the vast majority are going to be in rural and northern Manitoba, particularly rural Manitoba.

The issue of EMS is one that is of significance. I note that the funding for EMS did not change from 1991-92 until we assumed government, almost a decade. The funding from the provincial government to EMS stayed static from '91-92 until we assumed government, at which point we doubled the amount of money put in. Now, that is not to say that that solved all of the problems, because we had a long way to go, but we have put significant resources in in recognition of the need for increased volume and service in Manitoba.

The member talks about a blend. We are by necessity going to be having a blend because we are not going to be able to, nor can we function with a total provincial professional system, but there is something that will probably be of a trend line towards that. That seems to be the way that we will be going.

Mr. Derkach: I appreciate the comments with respect to the blended volunteer and professional system, but I guess I want to ask the minister how much money he is dedicating to the area of training volunteers to beef up the volunteers in the rural part of our province in this fiscal year, because I do not see that in the Estimates book.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I do not have that specific program detail. If it is available, I will endeavour to provide it to the member.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, then I want to ask the minister whether he is going to come back to us with an answer during this Concurrence debate, because that certainly is vital information for us. I note that under the Emergency Health and Ambulance Services, if you look at the entire list, I do not see anything that is identified as education or training programs, but I do see that there is an Other Operating Expenditure which is

the same this year as it was last year. I am wondering whether that is the area that the minister will be using for the professional and educational part of the emergency services program?

* (16:40)

Mr. Chomiak: The member knows, Mr. Chairperson, that some of those specific details with respect to the program allocations are not generally identified specifically within the Supplementary Estimates program. It is also clear that there are several references to emergency. I wonder what reference the member is making with respect to emergency response and transportation, what line item he is referring to?

Mr. Derkach: In subappropriation 21-3E on page 69 of the Supplementary Estimates, we have a section on Emergency Health and Ambulance Services which identifies where the dollars are going to be allocated. One of the areas that I do not see in that area is the area of the training and education component. Now that obviously is included in some other category, and I am just wanting to know from the minister how much money he has identified for the training of volunteers for this next fiscal year. I know he can come back to me and say, well, the previous government did not do its job in that regard.

I will not argue with him that this was an area that received less attention than it should have, but I am going to continue pressing the minister because of the way we have changed the health delivery system. We have gone to a regional system. We have taken the ambulances and emergency services and put them under the regional systems. Today what we are seeing in our rural communities, not in the regional offices but in the rural communities, a diminishing in our smaller communities especially of those kinds of services. There is a fair bit of anxiety from people who work in the system, people who operate those units, citizens, about where we are going in this whole area.

I would like to know whether the minister has identified certain dollars for training of

volunteers, and in fact how many dollars have been identified for that purpose.

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated to the member, those particular line items are not specified line by line with respect to the Supplementary Estimates. If they are available, I will endeavour to provide them to the member if during the course of Concurrence or if not shortly thereafter via letter. But I want to point out to the member that the funding of Emergency Services, the line the member is looking at is largely the departmental operation. There is also another appropriation under 21-4A that deals with Emergency Response and Transportation Services that has seen an 8% increase this year over last year.

The year previous, if memory serves me correctly, was a rather significant increase as well from the previous year's Estimates. So I will just point that out to the member.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the minister for that. I recognize that there have been increases, but if I look at my area as an example, in the last year the regional office has acquired, I think, at least two staff positions which would account for some of the increase, I suppose. We now have a co-ordinator for the authority whose responsibility it is to work with the various communities, I suppose, but in terms of on-the-ground provision of services, with the exception of the major centres there is still a huge disparity. As a matter of fact, I think it has widened because I can see what is happening in one of the major centres in terms of the number of vehicles, the number of full-time staff in that centre as compared to a smaller centre there is a huge discrepancy, and it has gotten even larger.

I will identify for the minister the one that really concerns me. That is the one that is going to be facing a fairly serious situation in the next few weeks, and that is the Erickson emergency services unit. They have, I think, two people who are manning the system at the present time, but the population in that area goes from something, perhaps, in the neighbourhood of 5000 to 7000 people to over 40 000 people in the summer months, which will go from, I guess, almost immediate to the end of September.

We have the second largest centre in the province that is being manned by a skeleton crew, that is being manned by a very inadequate, if you like, emergency services system. This is where we have had the unfortunate experience of not one, but I can count, in the last two years, three deaths that could be attributed to the inability of the emergency services to respond effectively. This is not to cast any kind of aspersion on the minister or the people who provide the service. It is just the system that requires some attention. The personnel working in the system will tell you that. They are understaffed. These people, even the ones who are on staff, have to have outside jobs to sustain their families because of the way that the pay scale is arranged for them.

So I pose the question to the minister specifically with the dollars that have been allocated, and he said that he would get back to us, but I want to know whether or not he has charged the authorities to look at areas, the hot spots, and to ensure that those are addressed, especially as we enter the tourism season.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairman, the provision, obviously we rely upon the advice and the recommendations of the people on the ground, the operators and the regional health authority and in the regional system in order to provide the best possible care at the best possible locations, and that is clearly something that they attempt to do within their resources. We have tried, in the past two years, to enhance the resources provided to those regions for the provision of emergency services in the particular region, and obviously, like in all areas of the health care system, there are some significant issues that have to be overcome.

The whole issue of the provision of services has become a significant human resource issue. Right across the system from the provision of emergency services right to the provision of acute care, there has been the need for increasing or providing for the personnel to deliver the service. It is no different in EMS. It is quite clear that, where we can utilize the volunteer component, it would only make sense to do so. It is becoming increasingly difficult. Where it is difficult, then we have to use other forms, and we try to provide resources in order to do that.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, with the greatest of respect to the minister, I have to tell him that I do not accept that response as adequate for the people that I represent. We are entering a very serious time of the year, if you like, in an area whose population grows to become the second largest centre in the province. The population of that area exceeds Brandon. Now, if you were to look at the emergency personnel in Brandon and compare that service to the service that is provided in the Clear Lake, Onanole, Erickson, Sandy Lake, Strathclair area, it just boggles your mind how you could possibly meet the needs of the people in that area with the basically two people who run the system, and I think they get some casual help at the same time.

* (16:50)

I have addressed this issue with the regional health authority, and we have as much difficulty addressing that through the regional health authority as we do through the Department of Health. The responses that seem to be coming back to that community are inadequate help, inadequate services, and I remind the minister, we just went through an issue at the Erickson Hospital where the community finally raised its ire against the health authority and said: You cannot close our facility. The community themselves identified the people who were willing to come in and work, but there was, for some reason, a resistance in the administration with regard to addressing the issues that were confronting that facility. We find the same thing with emergency health services in that region. We need some major attention paid to the people who live in that area in providing them with the kinds of services that they require.

I shudder to think what would happen and the kind of response that would be coming forth from the people of that area, and indeed I would be bringing it forward here to the Legislature, if, in fact, we have more deaths as a result of the fact that emergency services cannot be delivered in time. It only takes one accident.

If you look at the distances travelled by that ambulance, when that ambulance is tied up in Onanole or in Lake Audy and there is an accident in Clear Lake, that means that you have to dispatch a unit either from Minnedosa, if one

is available, or Brandon, or perhaps from Rossburn to deal with that emergency. That means that those vehicles have to travel a minimum of 45 minutes, and it could be as long as two hours. There is no way that you can provide any level of acceptable service when you have that kind of a situation.

That leads me to the next point, and that is, the addition of needed dollars to encourage volunteers and to also provide perhaps an additional vehicle in that region—I do not think the vehicles are the problem. I think the human resource issue is the problem—to address that issue in that region, because if you go to the health authority they will tell you they have no money.

We went through a Question Period today where we identified the Minister of Lotteries was spending \$100,000 a month in advertising casinos and restaurants in Winnipeg. The minister's own Leader, the Premier (Mr. Doer) of our province, in his comments of not so long ago, indicated that advertising dollars for casinos should be spent in the health care field.

I ask this minister whether or not he is prepared to make a pitch to his colleagues to divert some of that money. A hundred thousand dollars a month, if you take the summer months, even a half a million dollars into emergency services for rural Manitoba would go a long way in addressing the problems that we are facing in a critical sense, especially in the areas that I have referenced. I am sure there are others as well in the province.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Chairperson, there are a number of issues that I think I have to deal with. Firstly, I do not think that anyone can suggest that we have not been responsive to the needs of rural Manitoba. In fact, the hospital that the member references, not only did we work with the regional health authority and the local hospital, but the deputy minister went out to visit with the hospital and tried to remedy the situation and, I think, assisted in solving the situation for the whole community. So let us just accept as a matter of course that we all are trying to do everything we can to maintain facilities and resources across the province to provide the care that is needed.

So I think that has to be said. We are aware and I am aware, the member mentioned it last year with respect to the situation, with respect to the build-up of the population in that particular district. That does happen in other areas of the province as well, not in some cases to that great an extent, but that is recognized. We do attempt to deal with that situation within the resources.

We have resourced the health authorities at the highest level they have ever received ever, period.

I do find it strange that some of the member's colleagues have criticized us for spending too much in health care, and then we get criticized for not spending enough in particular areas that are raised quite rightly by individual members, but there is a certain amount of inconsistency in the logic and in the thought process related to that.

For the member now to suggest to take a particular appropriation item from some other department and suggest it be used, there are all kinds of resources that I would like to see to augment the resources in Health. That is one of the reasons why we are funding health care greater than any other time in the history of the province of Manitoba. That is why we are doing that. I have heard over and over again, particularly from the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), that all we are doing is spending money. So there is a real inconsistency there. One day it is, you are spending too much; the next day, you are not spending enough.

Now, I recognize that sitting back in opposition one can try to have it both ways. I am not necessarily accusing the member of saying that, because I do not necessarily recall if the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) has accused us of spending too much in health care. I am not sure. I do not think he has. Some of his colleagues have, but he has not. We have tried and we have attempted to put in—*[interjection]* I think the member is making a confession here, but I will overlook that.

We have tried to resource to the best of our ability the services across the system. We in fact were cognizant of the increased needs in various regions throughout the province in this

budgetary year. Obviously we did not achieve total satisfaction in areas. Obviously everybody in every single area feels that they could use additional resources. I think you could say that. I do not think you could find an area in the health care system where someone would not say, yes, we could use additional resources. That is just a matter of a needs-based demand system. That is not to be criticized, because that in fact is just the reality of the situation.

We did attempt in the last budgetary year and this budgetary year to try to meet the needs of the regions. The vast majority of the funding going to the regions appears to achieve that. In a number of cases we have not achieved that. We have enhanced EMS provision. We have overall enhanced the budgets to each region. There are continuing problems that we are addressing on a daily and a weekly basis to try to continue to deliver care.

We are aware of the situation, the specific situation the member is referencing with respect to the particular area that he represents and during the vacation season of the year the large influx of population and obviously needs that occur during the tourist season. So we are aware of that, Mr. Chairperson, and we are attempting to match the needs and match the resources with the needs of a particular area.

So I suggest to the member that (a) both the region and the department are sensitive to those concerns that he has raised, and (b) we have put in historical highs of funding to all of the regions and will continue to do what we can. Thank you.

* (17:00)

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Chair, the minister is not answering the specific questions which I need some answers to. So I guess I need to continue repeating these questions until such time that we get some acceptable response.

It is not about spending more money. Yes, I am calling for the minister to reallocate dollars within his Government from the Minister of Lotteries. It was his Premier (Mr. Doer) who suggested that, instead of spending Lotteries dollars on advertising in Manitoba, a government would be wiser to spend those dollars on health care for patients, patients needs, nursing

care and those kinds of areas. I agree with him. Rather than spend \$100,000 per month advertising two restaurants in our city, would it not be better to spend those scarce dollars on making sure that the safety of people in rural Manitoba, with respect to their health care needs, was met adequately?

Mr. Chair, I know the minister will say: Well, how many dollars do you want me to throw at it? It is the way we spend our money. It is how we allocate those resources that is important. This issue was before us when we were in government, the issue of emergency services. It is before this Government. Nobody expects that this has to and can be solved overnight, but indeed when I look at how it is being addressed, we are not getting to the bottom of the problem. I see us addressing it on the periphery.

The minister says he sent personnel, he sent his deputy minister out to the Erickson community when their hospital was in crisis. I give him full marks in that regard. When the crisis did occur and it was brought to the attention of the minister, this was a hot potato, and indeed the minister did address it by sending out his top bureaucrat to address the issue. For that, I thank him.

I will never forget the issue because I was driving from Winnipeg to Russell when I received, not one, but several telephone calls regarding the fact that the emergency services at Erickson hospital were going to be closed. I immediately moved to suggest a meeting in the community with the council, the advisory committee and the health authority to discuss the issues, not to necessarily try and point fingers but to try to resolve the issue. From there, the community then mobilized to involve the Minister of Health's department. The minister complied. I do not have any criticism in that respect because it was an issue that was addressed.

In terms of the emergency services, I have a real problem with this one, Mr. Chair, because I think that we could find dollars to address the issue if we really wanted to. It is more than a money issue; it is an attitudinal issue as well. I do not say that as a criticism of Manitoba Health

necessarily, but indeed it is the system that has evolved in the way in which it has and is not allowing for the adequate provision of services to people who need them. To this extent, I reference the whole area of the stretcher services. I know for a fact that at times, the ambulance is taken away from a community to transport a patient from that community to Winnipeg, when, indeed, an identifiable stretcher service could be used to provide that same service, one that costs half the money.

We have to remember who pays the cost. In most of these instances, it is the patient who has to bear the cost. If we have any compassion for the ability of patients to bear the burden of health care costs, then we have to provide a service at the least cost possible. So I want to know from the minister whether he has looked at the whole issue of stretcher services in an unbiased way, and whether or not he has worked with his colleague, the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Ashton), who will not license stretcher services in rural Manitoba, to provide stretcher services in rural Manitoba?

As a matter of fact, I am led to believe that in the regulations that speak specifically to emergency services and stretcher services, there has now been placed an article in that regulation which specifically prohibits the use of stretcher services anywhere else but in Winnipeg. I was not aware of that until it came to our attention just recently, and it is something that has happened through the Department of Health. So I want to ask the Minister of Health whether, in fact, he or his bureaucrats have now changed the regulations as they pertain to stretcher services in Manitoba, to disallow them from being able to operate anywhere else but in Winnipeg?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, first off, in reference to the provision of services, I want the member to know that in the final months leading up to the last election campaign, \$700,000 was allocated for advertising, which really amounted to political advertising from the Department of Health on advertising campaigns.

An Honourable Member: No, do you know what that was for?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I know those ads. I have three of the copies of the pamphlets, and I know. I mean I saw those ads, and the ads

were designed—*[interjection]* I know the member will see it differently, but if he wants to argue this, I have actually talked to people who were involved in those ads. The whole purpose of the ads were "we have a plan." Remember, that was the theme: We have a plan.

I took great exception to those ads, but I did say at the time that the Department of Health should advertise, and we have advertised. But when you start crossing the boundary and start using it to what I believe is political advertising, then you are using money inappropriately. So we are not doing that, and that money is going into health care to pay for delivery of services, not to political advertising with respect to those issues.

An Honourable Member: That is a subjective view.

Mr. Jim Rondeau, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

* (17:10)

Mr. Chomiak: Well, I will give him that. The member says it is a subjective view. I will accept that. However, I must admit that a good many of the issues that we discuss here are subjective views. I suggest that, if one really were to examine those particular ads objectively, one could conclude that they were far more leaning towards political advertising than information advertising, Mr. Chairperson.

With respect to the issue of the regulations—and I did not bring up this issue. It was the member who was talking about advertising and wanted to talk about advertising, and I wanted to make that very clear that, when you take health dollars and use them for political advertising, you are creating a lot of difficulties. That is why we are not doing that at the Department of Health, and we are putting that money into programming and into services to provide for appropriate services.

You know, the member admits that they did not do enough when they were in office for EMS.

An Honourable Member: We needed more time.

Mr. Chomiak: The member says they needed more time. I would think, Mr. Chairperson, in 11 years, if you cannot kind of work out a plan in 11 years, then you are on a long-planning scheme and a long-planning timeline, if it takes 11 years to put in place. *[interjection]* Well, you know, the member is prompting me to discuss—and I know the member is being prompted by the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) with respect to comments and advice. Yes, I have said before and I said after the election, and it is funny how defensive members opposite are with respect to their record. The record stands for itself. There was a judgment made, and we are getting on. I suspect that part of the sensitivity is that, for almost every action we take, there is a reaction from members opposite because of their feeling that, in fact, they did not do what they should have or thought they had done during their tenure in office.

So much time and energy is spent by members opposite in trying to rewrite history and trying to leave the impression that everything was hunky-dory and everything was just moving along clickety-click during their tenure in office. I am very tempted to go down that road and remind members opposite of some of the significant deficiencies that occurred, not the least of which are issues that we have to deal with on a daily basis to try to improve the situation.

I am very tempted. I am very tempted to go down, but the member raised the issue specifically of a change of regulation with respect to stretcher service. I am not, and I will stand to be corrected, and I will confirm this, but I do not believe that we changed the regulations with respect to stretcher service. I will double-check that, but I do not believe that is the case.

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, well, I believe that there is a working document within the Department of Health as it pertains to stretcher services in the province of Manitoba. It is my understanding there was a template, or a document, that was in place prior to this Government coming into office, and within it, those things change as time goes on and needs arise.

One of the issues that has come to my attention is that there has been, without consultation I might add, an inclusion of an article within that, whether it is a working document or a final document, whereby the health authorities, specifically in the city here, the Winnipeg Health Authority, would sign a contract, would be obliged to sign a contract with the provider of a stretcher service so that the stretcher services would be provided by an exclusive stretcher service provider rather than buying those services from a variety of stretcher services, and I think we have two or three in the city of Winnipeg right now. It would preclude the other services from being used and would render them out of business, I guess, in the province of Manitoba, Mr. Chair.

I want to ask the minister who may have instigated that kind of an item and whether he is aware of it and what impact that is going to have on the provision of stretcher services right here in the city, and I am not even speaking of the rest of the province.

Mr. Chomiak: I want to be very precise in terms of my response and check the particular reference the member is making, because the question the member asks is different from the previous question he asked with respect to regulations. I intend to check out the particular references the member is making with respect to those issues.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chairman, I guess I am raising with the minister two issues with regard to stretcher services specific to providing a less expensive mode of transportation for patients who need that service in the province.

First of all, that there is no provision for a stretcher service to operate outside the city of Winnipeg at the present time. Under The Highways Traffic Act I guess, and under the regulations therein, the department will not licence a stretcher service outside the city of Winnipeg. I want to know from the minister whether he is prepared to work with his colleague to eliminate that provision so that stretcher services could be free to operate anywhere in this province that there is a need for them.

That is a pragmatic approach. That is taking off the philosophical blinkers and allowing for a service of this kind to be used anywhere in the province because it will lessen the cost, not only to the authorities, but more importantly to that individual who needs that service.

The other item I raise is the item that has to do with the health authority contracting with a specific stretcher service. I do not care which stretcher service it is. If we can grow our stretcher service providers to a dozen in the province, I think that would be good for the people of Manitoba. I think that would be good for the people who need the services. But to have included in the regulation the exclusion of providers by virtue of a contract is wrong. I was shown the document that had that included in it and yet that was not an item that was discussed with the providers who had, I believe my colleague says, two days of meetings with the department on this very issue.

Mr. Chair, I am asking the minister whether he is prepared to, first of all, look at those two items and whether he is prepared to move to change the regulations so that stretcher services could be utilized anywhere in the province almost immediately to lessen the cost to those people. I will tell him exactly what that would do in my region. We have small communities who have one or two vehicles at their disposal. If those vehicles are called out to take patients to other centres, whether it is here in Winnipeg or, in our case, it might be Yorkton, or it might be Regina, or it might be Brandon, that means that there is no vehicle available in that community.

Many of these patients, and I would say up to 50 percent or more of these patients could be transported by stretcher service because they are not life-threatening situations. It is the doctor who makes the decision as to whether or not a stretcher service should be used. In talking to doctors, I do not care where you go in rural Manitoba, you talk to doctors about the need for providing that service by ambulance or by stretcher service, they will tell you that as much as half the caseload could utilize a stretcher service safely without endangering the patient and at significantly less cost, as much as 50 percent less when it comes to cost. So to me, in a pragmatic way, we should be looking at this

very, very quickly, very seriously, because it is going to allow for a greater amount of those dollars than that are spent on emergency services to be redirected at training people in a proper way.

I call on the minister to deal with the issue of advertising dollars in a very realistic way. I am going to be out there speaking on this issue, that if we have got \$100,000 to spend on a monthly basis advertising two restaurants, you cannot tell me this Government has not got enough money to put into emergency services. You cannot sell that to the public. Now, the minister says that we were advertising before the last election campaign, and I know it was a year before the campaign happened, because I will never forget the debate in this House, the criticism we received for spending a half a million dollars on health ads that told the public what Manitoba Health was doing in terms of changing the way we delivered programs.

I would congratulate this minister if he started to spend dollars in terms of telling Manitobans that he had a plan, because right now that message is not out there. There is no idea of any plan being communicated to Manitobans about where this minister is going in that regard. So we had a minister who had a plan, who was telling Manitobans about a plan, who was advertising it in the papers, was spending a half a million dollars. I would put that up any day to an advertising campaign of \$100,000 a month just to advertise two restaurants. And these are private restaurants. They are not owned by the Manitoba government. They are not run by the Manitoba government. These are restaurants that are run privately, and we have a government of Manitoba advertising them using Lottery dollars. Something is wrong with our priorities if in fact we feel that we should be spending our money rather than where the Premier of Manitoba has said in the past they should be spent, and that is on health care.

I do not expect this Minister of Health to all of a sudden turn his back on his colleague and say, yes, I am going to go after those dollars, but I think privately, in Cabinet, there has to be some prioritization of the issues that are before Manitobans. I am telling the minister that emergency services, not in terms of the amount

of money he is throwing at it—yes, there may be some sweetening of the pot in terms of training of volunteers, providing at least their costs so that their mileage rates for that matter are at least equal to what the Province pays its own personnel, so that the provision of hotel rooms if required, tuition, can be paid for by the regional health authorities or by the department. If he needs to take that money from Lotteries, so be it, but this is the protection of the lives of people in the rural parts of our province who need those services.

If, in fact, we can provide stretcher service almost immediately and call on the providers in the province to expand their services, to provide those services to rural Manitobans, we will expand the provision of that or enable the regulations to allow them to operate anywhere in the province. Mr. Chair, this would not only be a popular item, but it would be one that would be cost-effective and it would be effective in terms of providing those services that Manitobans need.

So if the minister wants to accuse me of arguing this from a philosophical point of view, that is fine. I am more interested in the pragmatic approach where we could actually make a difference to the quality of life and the quality of service that is being provided to the people that I represent and people that other rural members represent as well.

* (17:20)

Mr. Chomiak: Where do I begin, Mr. Chairperson? I will tell you. In '91-92, EMS coverage under members opposite did not increase one nickel, not one nickel. Now members opposite, because we have doubled the amount of money, are complaining. I cannot believe it. I cannot believe that the member would stand up and criticize provision of money we are putting in when we have doubled it and for nine years they did nothing, zero, zilch, *nema*. Now they are criticizing our doubling of the resources—unbelievable.

Now let me talk about what the member referred to in terms of a plan. Let me see if I can get it through to member's opposite, not that I expect it to resonate, but let me try. Let me try

this on members opposite. In 1992, you cut down the Faculty of Medicine. This year, for the first time, we are increasing it. You did it. They cut the Faculty of Medicine, Mr. Chairperson, and we are increasing the number of students at the Faculty of Medicine for the first time in a decade. In addition, we are providing for resources in rural northern health for doctors, something that was not done for decades, and we are providing loan guarantees in order to have students work in rural Manitoba. We have put in a program to train foreign medical graduates. Does that sound like the semblance of a plan regarding human resources?

Let us talk about nurses. They tried to get rid of the LPN program. They cut the diploma program. They had the lowest registration of nurses in the history of the province. What did we do? We came in, and we put in place a diploma program. We continued the expansion of the LPN program. We now have more nurses in training than at any other time during their last decade. Does that sound like a plan, Mr. Chairperson? Does that sound like a human resource plan?

Let me talk about something that happened on Friday. They cut the medical technologists program in '96. They stopped training them. We are short medical technologists. Was that a plan? Yes, it was. It was a plan to cut and to cut and to cut, and we reintroduced the program to train 25 medical technologists. Does that sound like a human resource plan? Does that sound like maybe rebuilding the infrastructure that has been in tatters? I think so. We are putting into place a cross-training program for lab technologists and X-ray technicians. We cannot operate some of those hospitals that the member has referred to because we do not have X-ray people on because the College of Physicians and Surgeons has changed some of the regulations. So we are training those people, something members opposite did not do.

So, Mr. Chairperson, I know members opposite might have trouble understanding it. Their plan was to cut; our plan is to rebuild, doctors, nurses, medical technologists, X-ray technicians, and there will be more because, when we came into office, we picked, as one of the five issues we had to deal with, human

resources was the No. 1 issue that had been allowed to languish, that had been cut for a decade, statistically and otherwise.

I do not know how the member opposite can possibly suggest, and perhaps that is part of the problem. I always thought in my years in opposition that members opposite never recognized the problems that were occurring, and if you do not acknowledge problems, you cannot solve them. If they did not acknowledge the problems, obviously they could not solve them.

Now, the member refers to a \$700,000 advertising campaign that went around saying: We have a plan. The plan was to try to get re-elected. That was the plan. It was not a health plan. It was we have a plan, ergo we want to get re-elected. They trotted out the civil servants, and they trotted out—

An Honourable Member: How facetious.

Mr. Chomiak: How facetious. You are right. It was facetious. It was phoney, and it did not work. So members opposite claiming that \$100,000 ad campaign that is trying to increase revenue for the provincial coffers, from the very same member who sat around the Cabinet table and checked off and said, yes, let us do this \$700,000 feel-good, we-have-a-political-plan campaign for health, Mr. Chairperson, speaks a little bit of, shall I say, a lack of logical consistency—it took me a while—a lack of logical consistency with respect to—*[interjection]* I am not done.

Mr. Chairperson: One member at a time. He has the floor.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Chairperson. So I suggest that members opposite ought to examine their record and they ought to examine our record before some of those claims and some of those statements are actually made. I find it passing strange.

You know, as we approach each of these individual issues, we have identified specific strategies in virtually every single area that the member has referenced. You talk about emergency services that languished for a decade. Okay, we took your report, we picked the top

three items, and we moved on it. We moved on it, and then we doubled the resources. We doubled the resources. We did not cut. We did not stay stagnant. We also did not say that we were solving it overnight. We are cognizant of the complexity and the difficulty in dealing with an issue that is evolving and changing and—I daresay I am going to get a little bit more political again—was not dealt with for a decade. So I find it almost incredulous that the member could make some of the claims that he has referenced with respect to our approach.

I have already indicated that human resources is probably the single biggest issue that we have faced and are continuing to face. It is not dissimilar to the discussion we are having about EMS personnel, Mr. Chairperson. It fits with the whole issue of volunteerism versus paid staff, et cetera. I have already outlined and already indicated to the member that clearly there is and will continue to be a blend, but clearly the trend lines are going in the other direction.

We will try to, obviously, maintain the systems, but there is an increasing demand and a need for increasing paid staff, and that is costing considerable resources. There is no doubt about that, but I do not feel and we do not feel that we have any choice but to augment emergency services in rural and northern Manitoba. That is why we have done as much as we have done, but I will be the first to say that there is much more that has to be done and that we are continuing to work on it in terms of an overall approach to dealing with this particular issue.

You know, when we canvass the range of services that have been offered, let me just highlight some of the other initiatives that have been put in place with respect to our tenure in office, Mr. Chairperson. There has clearly been a move towards trying to augment resources in the community. That has been very deliberate. That has been by design, and there is some success that we are achieving in that regard. I cite several programs that were announced this budgetary year and last budgetary year that go towards the provision of services in the community in the hope that we can continue to offer a wider range of service in a more appropriate setting and hopefully in the process achieve some savings

that will permit us to offer even a wider range of services, even a broader range of services across the province.

Now, if the member opposite is suggesting that we should launch an advertising campaign from the Department of Health telling the province all of the good things we are doing, Mr. Chairperson, and using public dollars to do that, I am not going to do that because I would rather see that money go into programming, which is why we took the \$700,000, three-quarters of a million dollars, in advertising, and we are putting that into programming to provide service.

* (17:30)

I guess if the member is suggesting that we should do an advertising campaign talking about all of the things that we have done, of course, there is a natural tendency to want to do that, but I do not think we have to. I think, generally, the public is aware of the improvements that have occurred, they are aware of the changes, and they are aware of what the Government is doing in health care.

Perhaps, in order to save time and expedite further questions in this area, I think the member should look at the opening remarks we made with respect to the service that we are delivering and the overall plan that we outlined with respect to my opening remarks that opened the Estimates process.

Not only that, Mr. Chairperson, but we are doing things that were rejected by the former government. We are doing things on a preventative community basis that have never been done before. Pneumococcal vaccination, never before undertaken in Manitoba, we undertook last year. Why? Because it prevents pneumonia and serious respiratory illnesses in our elderly population. We chose to do that. We chose to have the largest flu vaccination campaign in the history of the province

We are undertaking—[interjection] Well the member says: Who initiated that? That is a good point. Yes, the members opposite did start a flu vaccination campaign. I will admit it. I will admit it, but we expanded it to make it the most extensive and most comprehensive in the history

of the province of Manitoba. We added pneumococcal, something members opposite had rejected. It was on medical advice that we should because of the number of pneumonia, as I have said, Mr. Chairperson, probably the best, the member opposite said, medical advice. I think that is probably one of the best examples of this Government listening to people in the health care system and listening to their advice and providing the kind of care reflected on that.

I could go on and on. Whether it is the attack on the hallway situation—I just love to have this opportunity to deal with that and to talk about having one's head in the sand. Let me just cite a clipping here from March 28, 1998, in the paper, and it was day after day after day, which indicated that there were 26 people in the hallway of one facility.

What we have done is, we have been recognized across the country, CIHI, as doing the best job of dealing with hallway medicine of any province in the country. In fact, our efforts have been emulated. Members opposite ridiculed and voted against our efforts to deal with the hallway situation. They voted against it. That is why when we came into office we said we have to take some measures to deal with the hallway situation. We cannot put our head in the sand.

I have never argued that we have achieved perfection, Mr. Chairperson, but we are going to try. We are working at it every single day, and there are continuing to be attempts at changes to deal with that situation, both inside and outside.

Mr. Chairperson, there are a variety of services. As I was saying, with respect to this specific stretcher issue, that has been around for a considerable period of time. There were considerable efforts in that regard. I will take the member's suggestions as advice.

Mr. Chairperson: I will give the floor now to the Member for Russell.

Mr. Derkach: Unfortunately, the minister has not responded to the issues that I raised with him, the specific issues, and that was the article in the working paper with respect to having the health authorities contract with a specific stretcher service for their needs, rather than

buying them from whichever service is available, and, secondly, the other issue which does not allow stretcher services to operate outside the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Chair, I cannot help but respond to some of the allegations and some of the rhetoric that the minister has put on the record and continues to put on the record. He puts erroneous information on the record, unfortunately, but that is characteristic of this Government and this party. We have seen it from years gone by where accuracy of an item does not matter. As long as you get your message across, that is the important thing.

As a matter of fact, it was a few years ago that I approached the then-Leader of the Opposition and indicated to him that his information was inaccurate that he shared with the media, and at that time his response was, well, I got the headline, did I not? You see, that says volumes about the integrity of the individual and also of this party.

Mr. Chair, the minister references the issue of nurses. In the next year or so, we are going to be graduating the nurses who were put in place into the programs not by this Government but by the former administration. When he talks about the expansion of spaces at the University of Manitoba for physicians, that was not initiated by this Government. That was initiated by the previous government.

As a matter of fact, back when I was Minister of Education we insisted on four more spaces for rural students in the School of Medicine, and at that time, the School of Medicine argued that they did not need any more doctors in Manitoba, that we needed to keep the lid on the number of spaces that were provided for medical students in the province of Manitoba. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, I recall very vividly, I believe it was Jim McCrae, who was at that time the Minister of Health, who aggressively negotiated for a greater number of slots at the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Medicine.

So let the minister not attempt to take credit for things that have happened in this province as a result of his actions, because indeed these were

things that were on track long before this minister came into office. He has reaped the benefit of programs that were launched by the former administration, and that happens. That happens. It is absolutely true, Mr. Chair. That can be verified by records which would indicate that indeed we did launch into programs that are now coming to fruition. Now this administration is reaping the benefits, and Manitobans are reaping the benefits of those programs.

Regional health, for that matter, was not a brainchild of this Government, Mr. Chair. It was an approach that was taken by the former administration. Yes, there needs to be modifications and changes and enhancements and enrichments to programs out there. That is what you expect of your Government.

But, Mr. Chair, what is at issue here is that this minister, this Government, made promises to Manitobans that it would take action on issues that have not been taken. Now, the minister criticizes us for advertising a health plan, for spending not \$700,000—it was, I think, in the neighbourhood of \$450,000 that was spent on advertising a plan, a new direction in terms of providing health services to Manitobans. That is a communication piece. That is a communication vehicle that is necessary. Today, that kind of information is provided for by the health authorities. Health authorities were not in place at that time, so that kind of activity was done through Manitoba Health.

* (17:40)

Now, that is vastly different than advertising two privately run restaurants and spending a hundred thousand dollars a month doing it. Now, I ask the Government where are your priorities, when you can spend that much money on a monthly basis advertising two privately run restaurants. I do not know how many more millions of dollars are spent in advertising our casinos, luring Manitobans into our casinos when, in fact, this Government, when in opposition, criticized the former administration for having a billboard. Today, you do not need billboards. Under this Government, you simply have to click on the television at prime time and you will see them advertising to Manitobans, to the children of this province, the amenities that

have been established within this province. They are advertising how glorious the new facilities are which they themselves criticized only a year and some months ago. The hypocrisy that we see emanating from this Government's benches is just unbelievable.

The Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) says we now live in different times so we have to advertise. We have to be competitive with other provinces. Hello. Where is the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger)? The Government of British Columbia just lowered the personal income taxes in their province by 25 percent. Do you want to be competitive? Maybe that is where we should be going. Maybe we should leave more money, yes, leave more money in the pockets of Manitobans. They know better how to spend it than a government does. And now they are saying: Oh, is that what you are advocating? Absolutely. If this Province can afford to spend \$100,000 a month advertising two restaurants in the city of Winnipeg, I am sure that Manitobans know better how to spend those scarce resources than someone who is spending it on that kind of a frivolous activity.

Mr. Chair, I say to the Minister of Health that specifically we need to address the issues of human resources as it relates to emergency services. The minister says he has done more than the previous government did. I remind him that emergency services were not under the health authorities. They moved under the health authorities in his time in office, and therefore it is his responsibility now to make sure that they are adequately resourced. I am not expecting him to do it overnight, but there are hot spots as they relate to providing those services to Manitobans, and I have identified one of those for him. There are ways in which we can address the critical need for transportation of medical patients which is much more effective than utilizing an expensive ambulance, utilizing those valuable paramedic resources which are required at the community level and instead providing that service through the stretcher services that are now available. Respectable, they are accredited, their personnel are trained every bit as good as emergency services personnel who serve our ambulances, but they do it at half the cost.

Now can the minister provide one good reason why you would not allow a stretcher

service to operate in the rural part of our province? What is the barrier that does not allow for the Minister of Health to expand the provision of those services in rural Manitoba? And what is the reason for his department incorporating into the new by-law or regulations which will govern the stretcher services to have regional health authorities contract their services with one provider. Why? What is the thinking behind that kind of a move without adequate consultation with the people involved in the industry? So I repeat those questions for the minister, and I would like him to answer specifically on those two counts.

There is one other area that the minister went into in his response to me, and that was the area of expanding the nursing training in this province. As I said before, and I repeat, that was an initiative that was undertaken by the former administration. The graduates are just coming out of those programs now. Now, yes, the minister went back to an LPN program, I have to give him credit for that. But the diploma program, Mr. Chair, was one that was recommended for elimination by the profession. They insisted on it. Today, we have LPNs working in the system who want to work, but who are going to be prohibited from working because their association says you have to upgrade or else you cannot work.

* (17:50)

Now, I give the minister credit for one other thing, and that is on working with the profession to allow a grandfathering of these professionals for a period of time. I can give him credit for that because in rural Manitoba we need those services. I do not want him to simply cast all kinds of blame on the former administration when in fact he himself said that 90 percent of what was happening in health care was okay, was the way that he would go, was very good and that in his estimation only 10 percent needed fixing.

Well, he has the responsibility to fix that 10 percent. He is the one who promised he would fix the hallway medicine in six months with \$15 million. I think he has spent much more than that, and hallway medicine has not gone away. As a matter of fact, we have changed it to

avenue medicine. We have put more patients on the highways today than we ever did before, going to the United States to get treatment. Grafton, North Dakota, was going to be shut down completely. Today, we have more patients going there than we have ever had in the past. What is happening, Mr. Chair, they are being sent there by Manitoba Health. They are not going there just on their own volition. They are going there as a recommendation from Manitoba Health because services cannot be provided in this province.

We need to do that. We should be able to exchange those services back and forth. But, Mr. Chair, it was the words of this minister and his leader which were somewhat offensive during the election campaign. When they were in an advertising ad campaign, they tore down the sign and put a closed sign on the Grafton sign to indicate to Manitobans there was going to be no cross-border medicine after they became government. Welcome to the real world, folks. Today we still have it, and it is going to be probably alive long beyond this Government's mandate.

So, Mr. Chair, bringing the topic back to where I had the specific questions, I ask the minister those two issues about stretcher services being provided in rural Manitoba and the provision of services by whichever stretcher service, not simply isolating it to one through a regulation that is about to be proclaimed, I suppose.

Mr. Chomiak: Well, Mr. Chairperson, the member is factually wrong in a number of areas, and I do not know if it is because he is being prompted or just is not aware, but he is factually wrong in a number of areas.

Let me just deal with the issue of nursing. One of the reasons we have an acute shortage is that the nursing program of three and four years ago was the lowest ever. Why was it the lowest ever? Because members opposite did not want nurses. They fired a thousand nurses. They stopped the diploma program. They were going to get rid of the LPNs, and so what happened? What happened, Mr. Chairperson?

Mr. Chairperson: Point of order being raised, the Member for Russell will state the point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Chair, a point of order, one of the rules of this House is that we should be accurate in our comments. The minister has just indicated that I was factually wrong and then went on to indicate that we fired a thousand nurses.

He knows that this is factually wrong. It has been proven to him time and time again. As a matter of fact, the media have written about the fallacy of that statement. It is no different, Mr. Chair, than us accusing him of firing 600 nurses in Winkler and Morden and VONs. That is the same type of issue, but he has chosen and his party has chosen to twist this, to use the political expediency of trying to convince the public that somehow our party fired a thousand nurses when, in fact, that is wrong, factually incorrect and misleading, and the member knows it.

Mr. Chomiak: On the same point of order, Mr. Chairperson, I will not say this is a dispute over the facts because what the member puts on the record is not factual. This is inaccuracy.

I will quote from a report that was tabled in this Chamber that says, quote: Over the past several years, approximately a thousand nurses have been laid off by government.

This is a report that was provided in this Chamber and was tabled in this Legislature. So I suggest, Mr. Chairperson, not only does the member not have a point of order because it was a dispute over the facts, but, more importantly, even in the dispute over the facts, his facts are not accurate.

Mr. Chairperson: I have to rule on the point of order.

An Honourable Member: On the same point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: You cannot use the point of order for debating. I am ruling now on the point of order.

An Honourable Member: She wants to raise a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: No, you raised the point of order. It has to be settled, but she can raise another one.

An Honourable Member: It is the same point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: This is not a debating mechanism. The Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) raised a point of order on the basis that inaccurate facts are being given. If one pot said to the other pot why are you so black, what will the other pot say? So I am ruling that disputes as to facts, whether precise or not, are not points of order. Points of order relate to violations of the rules of this House or the use of unparliamentary language.

* * *

Mr. Chairperson: Now, the Member for Charleswood is raising her hand. Do you want to raise a point of order?

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I wanted to speak to the same point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: It is already ruled that it is not a point of order. [*interjection*] There is a point of order we are debating and we are using the point of order to debate factual information. That is not the way to go.

The floor is now open for questions.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, I had the floor before I was interrupted.

Mr. Chairperson: No, I ruled on the point of order.

An Honourable Member: I will wait till the Chair recognizes whoever, who you see first.

Mr. Chairperson: The Chair will recognize the first one put—who was the first one who put their hand first? I would like to ask the audience. I lost it. I am not looking. My eyes can only focus in one direction.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Chairperson, on a point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: You are raising a point of order?

Mr. Chomiak: Yes, Mr. Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable minister is raising a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Chomiak: I do not have the precise quotation in *Beauchesne's* for this particular issue, but during the course of my response to the member's question, which I assumed he wanted an answer for, I was interrupted with respect to a point of order.

Following that point of order on which you ruled there was no point of order, I was attempting to conclude my response to the member insofar as I had had the floor previous to the member interrupting the flow of discourse.

I cannot find the precise reference in *Beauchesne's*, but I believe that, in fact, it would be appropriate to allow the member who is speaking during the course of the interruption for the point of order to continue the response.

An Honourable Member: To the same point of order. To his point of order.

Mr. Chairperson: All right. You can speak to his point of order.

Mr. Derkach: I would like to speak to the minister's point of order.

Mr. Chair, you as a Chair have to make a decision as to who is going to be recognized. That is not something that I would want to debate or reflect on in terms of your authority in that respect. Therefore if you chose to identify the minister as having the floor, I would acknowledge that. If you chose me, that would be fine, too.

But, Mr. Chair my point of order has to do with telling the truth in the House. And my point of order, in my reflection on this issue, I indicated that the minister was wrong, that in fact he was putting inaccurate information on the record, and that the situation with respect to a thousand nurses was identical to the 600 nurses that were laid off by this Government. So that

was our point of order where we ended in the last few minutes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. There is no point of order on the floor now. I rule there is no point of order. But let me recall what is happening. The minister was trying to answer the question from the Member for Russell, when the Member for Russell raised a point of order. So the minister was correct that he still has the floor, and in that regard I give him the floor for one minute.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: I will attempt to complete my response to the member who asked a number of questions, despite the interruptions. It is very clear that a number of efforts have been put in place with respect to enhancing the role of EMS across the province. The member says that EMS is now a provincial responsibility and it was not a provincial responsibility before. I believe that that particular measure was in place prior to our assumption.

But, as I was indicating to the member opposite, there are a number of strategic areas that we approached and we recognized that we had to provide enhancement and improvements to, and EMS was clearly one of them. Clearly, we used the basis of a dialogue and a report that had taken place during the course of the time when the member sat around the Cabinet table, which was a consultation process that reviewed matters in rural and northern Manitoba to see what kind of enhancements were necessary and what had happened in terms of EMS services. That report, which came to our attention upon assuming office, we sent it out to the various regions, we asked for responses back—

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise. Please call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, June 12, 2001

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