



Third Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

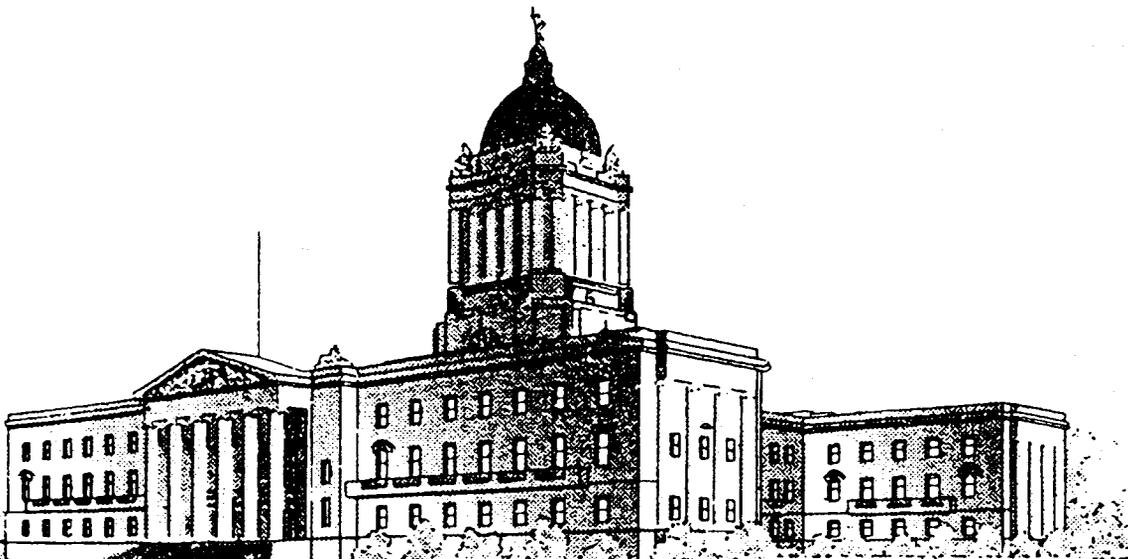
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. LII No. 37 - 1:30 p.m., Monday, May 27, 2002

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, Mariann	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, 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, Myma	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.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSON, 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.
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

Monday, May 27, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

*PRAYERS***Livestock Industry
Tuberculosis Control**

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 24—The Securities Amendment Act

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, Training and Youth (Mr. Caldwell), that leave be given to introduce Bill 24, The Securities Amendment Act, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Smith: The bill gives Manitoba Securities Commission the power to make an order of compensation for financial loss to a maximum of \$100,000 in the course of a hearing under the act.

*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 from Elmwood Horizon's Adult Learning Centre, six visitors under the direction of Ms. Denia Morales. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway).

Also in the public gallery we have from Riverbend Community School 20 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Susan Babynchuk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak).

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

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Manitoba farmers, over the last two weeks, have taken two major hits. First was the U.S. farm bill and the huge amount of problems that it is going to cause. Now we are told that Manitoba Cattle Producers have lost their TB-free status because of an incident that happened in 2001.

Can the Minister of Agriculture tell this House what discussions she and her Government have had with her federal counterparts and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to clarify the issues surrounding Manitoba's loss of the TB-free status?

* (13:35)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I want to correct the member. He said the incident occurred in 2001. In fact, the incident that is under discussion occurred in 1997. There was a case in 1997; there was another case in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, we were not aware that the federal government, that the CFIA had downgraded Manitoba status, and it is a very serious concern for all of us in Manitoba. It is a very serious concern for the producers of Manitoba.

I want the member to know that, since we have been given this information, I have asked that a letter be sent to the head of CFIA, Mr. Don Deering, to clarify the information, because we were told when the CFIA did their annual report to the U.S. Animal Health Association in 2000, they said Canada is TB free except for Saskatchewan whose status is suspended. In 2001, they said that Manitoba is classified as TB accredited according to all Canada's standards. All Canadian provinces, including Manitoba, are

classified as accredited according to U.S. standards.

Mr. Jack Penner: It is quite evident that we have a TB problem in Riding Mountain National Park. Can the Minister of Agriculture explain what action she is going to take and what recommendations she has made to the federal government to, once and for all, eliminate the TB disease in Riding Mountain National Park?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House do recognize this is a very serious issue, Parks Canada, CFIA and, more recently, the Manitoba Cattle Producers have jointly prepared a—I am sorry. The Manitoba Cattle Producers were added in after the departments prepared a draft strategy for dealing with TB in Manitoba.

This strategy deals with several issues, including enhancing TB surveillances in elk and deer, increased elk population monitoring, looking at barrier fences to reduce wild elk and cattle interaction and field research to understand the movement of wild animals around the parks.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell everybody in this House and all Manitobans that we take this issue very seriously. Along with these departments, we have Manitoba Cattle Producers also working with us on this matter.

Manitoba Cattle Producers Association Funding

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): The Canadian cattle industry or the Manitoba cattle industry has depended over the past to a significant portion—I am sorry, let me start this again. Can I ask the Minister of Agriculture why she has eliminated the funding to the Manitoba Cattle Producers for her beef industry development fund? Why is she not funding this anymore? This would help develop a plan to eliminate the disease of TB in the Riding Mountain National Park area once and for all.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, again I have to correct the member. He is talking about the beef development fund. I am sure he understands that

the beef development fund is to develop markets.

What we have is a serious challenge here. That is why we are investing in a five-year strategy to address the TB problem. The TB problem was in Manitoba in 1997. We had another case in 2001. I hope that we can all work together to ensure there is not a further outbreak of this disease in Manitoba, because it does affect our producers, all Manitobans, and it certainly affects our markets.

Livestock Industry Tuberculosis Control

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, the cancellation of support to the beef development fund is a strange way to help agricultural producers in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, my constituency borders Riding Mountain National Park. For the past year, farmers have been extremely concerned about the number of elk that are coming out of Riding Mountain National Park to, I guess, mingle with the herds of cattle, to graze on the fields where the cattle are. The habitat in Riding Mountain is literally being destroyed by beavers.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture whether she is prepared to intervene on behalf of the livestock producers of Manitoba with the federal government to ensure that a strategy is developed to either contain the elk in Riding Mountain National Park or to eradicate the disease-carrying animals in Riding Mountain National Park?

* (13:40)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, as I said to the previous question, we recognize this as an issue. That is why we have put together a strategy between Manitoba Agriculture and Food, Conservation, Parks Canada and CFIA to look at a strategy to deal with those issues and I have outlined the issues: The wild population is being monitored; barrier fences are being looked at to reduce the interaction of elk and cattle; research is being done to understand the movement of

elk; and elk are being collared to see whether they are not moving.

So, if the member is talking about our seriousness to this, we have put money into place in this strategy between Conservation and Agriculture to address this very serious issue, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture why it is that the burden for looking after this problem is falling on the shoulders of agricultural producers. I want to ask the minister why it is the provincial and federal governments do not address the problem, and that is the disease-carrying elk, rather than forcing the farmers to take their feed off the fields, to put up fences around their feed. This is not the farmers' problem. This is a problem that belongs to the federal and provincial government.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. TB is a responsibility of the federal government. It is a reportable disease. All activity into monitoring and controlling the disease is handled by the CFIA. Our Government is working very closely with them, as is this department and Conservation, to learn more and to work with the herd that is in Riding Mountain. We are working very closely with cattle producers. That is why Manitoba Cattle Producers has been invited in to work with us on this strategy.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture or the Minister of Conservation whether or not they are prepared to immediately intervene on behalf of livestock producers on the south side of Riding Mountain National Park to put an immediate action strategy in place where either fencing is put up to retain the elk in the park or whether we are going to eradicate the disease-carrying elk immediately.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Further to what the Minister of Agriculture has already said in her responses with respect to a strategy, the member refers to barrier fencing. Yes, we have started doing that. In fact, about six weeks ago I toured one area around the Ashern area where these types of

facilities have been established, at least in two areas that I visited. In addition to that, Conservation and Agriculture have met with the cattle producers' association, Manitoba Cattle Producers, who have been kept fully informed of what we are trying to do in our response to this issue.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I am currently waiting for a report that will be coming to me in the next short while that will advise as to how we can further improve the enforcement activity with respect to baiting around the periphery of the park. So we have a strategy.

Health Care System Diagnostic Waiting Lists

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): In the last election, the NDP promised that Manitobans would not have to go to Grafton, North Dakota, anymore for diagnostic tests, because if Manitobans just elected them they were going to slash waiting lists in Manitoba.

* (13:45)

I would like to ask the Minister of Health why under his watch waiting lists for CT scans have grown from five weeks to nine weeks, considering the Premier (Mr. Doer) promised to reduce those waiting lists for CT scans by one week for every year they were in government.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member continues to use the Freedom of Information request that she put in, dozens and dozens, hundreds of pages of requests, to try to pick out specific information in which to raise issues. As indicated, we have worked aggressively on a waiting list strategy to deal with all those issues.

Mrs. Driedger: Can the Minister of Health tell us why waiting lists for ultrasound have basically doubled under his watch from 11 weeks to 20 weeks, considering this Premier promised that he would be able to decrease these waiting lists to one week? What has happened?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated before, and on many occasions with respect to ultrasound, we have increased the number, I

think it is by 30 percent, with respect to the number of ultrasounds we provide, and will continue to improve that situation right across the board.

I might add, during the tenure when they were in office, we were unable to obtain that information regarding waiting lists from members opposite. It is only recently we started putting those lists up and providing them to the public, and we will stand to be accountable by virtue of those lists and what has been done and what will continue to be done.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister of Health why under his watch waiting lists for MRIs have gone from eight weeks to twelve weeks, and why in Grafton, North Dakota, they now call Thursdays Canada day at their diagnostic clinic.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I will provide the members opposite with a copy of the *Winnipeg Free Press* that quotes the individual from the United States saying that the number of diagnostic tests in the United States have gone down since this Government came into office.

Also, Mr. Speaker, CT scans are no longer—ultra scans, MRIs were 29 weeks in September of 1998. CT scans were 16 weeks in January, 1998, ultra sounds were 20 weeks. We are doing more volume on every single one of those. Members can continue to do that and I will provide members opposite with copies of the article in the *Free Press* indicating that the number of diagnostic tests for Canadians visiting is down from when the Conservatives were in office.

Manitoba Medical Association Contract Negotiations

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, doctors are planning to withdraw services on Saturday if they cannot reach a new agreement with this Government. This weekend we hear of surgeries being cancelled in rural Manitoba. My question is to the Minister of Health: Can he update this House and all Manitobans as to the status of the current negotiations?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): With respect to the negotiations with the MMA,

there were meetings that took place as recently as Thursday, Mr. Speaker. We are immediately available to meet with the MMA to continue discussions. Offers have gone back and forth with respect to the negotiations and we are hopeful we will be able to resolve this matter.

Mr. Tweed: Then my question for the Minister of Health is: Can he explain why the president's letter of the Manitoba Medical Association states that at the most recent negotiation meeting held on May 23, the MMA proposed that parties meet every day prior to the June 1 deadline, but Manitoba Health representatives declined to meet again until May 31, citing a need to get instructions from the Government? Can the minister answer the question: Why?

Mr. Chomiak: I can indicate the member does not have the entire facts in front of him. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we had tendered an offer. We tendered a "without prejudice" offer to the MMA on Friday and awaited their immediate response. We have advised them we are immediately available for discussions all the time. We are available at this very moment.

Mr. Tweed: His answer is in complete contradiction to what the doctors are saying.

My question for the Minister of Health, Mr. Speaker, is: The minister delayed negotiating with the nurses until the eleventh hour and put Manitobans and Manitoba patients in jeopardy; is it his plan to do the same thing with the doctors and wait till the eleventh hour?

Mr. Chomiak: With respect to the nurses, I seem to recall members opposite jumping up and down and calling press conference after press conference saying the sky is falling, the sky is falling, pay them more, pay them more. When we settled the agreement, as I indicated we would, the members ran around saying you paid them too much, you paid them too much.

* (13:50)

I do not look to members opposite to give us advice in terms of the negotiations. As I indicated, we have commenced negotiations. There are ongoing negotiations, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to negotiate in the hopes that we can resolve this issue as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a new question.

Mr. Tweed: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and my question is simple, to the Minister of Health: What does he say to the people in rural Manitoba, in Dauphin, Portage, Boundary Trails, Beausejour, Pine Falls, Minnedosa, Neepawa, Killarney, Virден, Hamiota, et cetera, who will lose their emergency room services effective June 1?

Mr. Chomiak: They have been brought that acknowledgement, Mr. Speaker, on the apprehension that binding arbitration is not available, and that is not the case.

Mr. Tweed: Then will the minister commit to that statement today to the people of rural Manitoba so they can feel comfortable that this Government is not negotiating till the eleventh hour, putting patients at risk all across Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: As I indicated, we are in negotiations. We have put those items on the table. As late as Friday we had tabled a letter with the MMA with respect to a whole variety of issues concerning arbitration in those matters.

Mr. Tweed: Again, Mr. Speaker, what does the minister say to Manitobans who are worried and afraid of being cancelled or postponed or moved to another date? What does he say to the people at Concordia, Seven Oaks and Victoria hospitals who have no doctor of the day coverage effective Saturday, June 1?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as has happened during the most recent nurses negotiations and the doctors, we are continuing our negotiations with the MMA with respect to resolving this issue.

I will not take any lessons from the members opposite, who resolved the previous agreement with the MMA well into June after the collective agreement had expired in April.

Hecla Area Land Expropriation Conduct of Civil Servants

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Conservation. In

regard to the letters of Stuart and Allan Jones delivered to the minister's office in early December of 1999, these letters raised concerns about land allocation issues on Hecla Island. The letters delivered confidentially and written confidentially were then disclosed to individuals outside of Government. The Ombudsman said the letters should never have been disclosed to anyone outside of Government, and the Premier (Mr. Doer) last week said the department went way beyond what it should have done.

My question to the Minister of Conservation: When did the minister first learn of the existence of these letters?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to ask the cooperation of all honourable members. The honourable Member for River Heights asked the question and I think he should have an opportunity to hear the answer. It is very, very difficult to hear when members are debating back and forth.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the Member for River Heights. This is a serious issue indeed. It has been investigated by the Office of the Ombudsman. My understanding is the discussion on how to respond to the Ombudsman's recommendations is continuing between the Ombudsman and our senior department people.

* (13:55)

As the member already knows, a letter of apology was sent to the Joneses by the deputy minister. I want to advise the member that I take this matter very seriously. For that reason, I intend to meet with the Ombudsman myself to determine what further he feels needs to be done in order for us to carry out his recommendations, because I understand that is the normal process. If there is disagreement between the department and the Ombudsman's office, the minister can get into the discussions. That is what I intend to do in the very near future.

Mr. Gerrard: Well, it is about time the minister got involved in a dispute between his department and the Ombudsman, which has been going on for about seven or eight months.

My supplementary is to the Minister of Conservation: I ask the minister what he is going to do to make sure this does not happen again, and what action he is going to take to discipline individuals who were involved in the release of confidential information to people outside of Government.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, personal privacy in handling of complaints from the public is, again, a very serious issue. All departments of Government require, I believe, a clear policy on how to treat complaints that come in from the public. So, for that reason, again, the Civil Service Commissioner, who, I believe, has the confidence of all members of this House, will be providing advice on how a government-wide policy can be developed to address these kinds of issues whenever they arise.

Mr. Gerrard: I ask, once again, the minister to not only admit there was a major error here but to make sure that it is not only investigated but the problem is clear enough that some disciplinary action should be taken and taken right away.

Mr. Lathlin: I think the member is aware this issue is a very complicated issue. It has a history. In fact, it is my understanding the Office of the Ombudsman could not definitively come up with how the issue could be handled. Therefore, he referred the matter over to the office of the provincial auditor, and we are currently waiting for the report to be finished, at which time we will advise the member as to what further actions will be needed.

Bill 5 Forest-Fire Fighters

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, on Thursday last we passed The Workers Compensation Amendment Act. I would like to ask the Minister of Labour today if she could confirm that section 4(5.2) of The Workers Compensation Amendment Act specifically excludes members of the forest-fire fighting departments.

* (14:00)

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister charged with the administration of The Workers Compensation Act): The amendment that was passed in Bill 5, which I believe changed the section the member is referring to, specifically states that there are two elements to Bill 5: One, that presumption for five specific cancers would be available to full-time urban firefighters; and the second amendment that was in Bill 5 said that scientific studies would be undertaken with reference to part-time and volunteer firefighters.

Mr. Derkach: I want to ask the Minister of Labour why the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), during debate on Bill 5 and on page 1814 of the Hansard, why that member would have alleged the exclusion of forest-fire fighters was racially motivated. Can she explain this?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That specific issue was taken under advisement by the Chair and until I deal with it I would ask the member to rephrase his question.

Mr. Derkach: Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess I want to ask the Minister of Labour whether in fact the issue as it relates to forest-fire fighters had any racial overtones in it at all.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I presume that question as well would be part of the element the Speaker is taking under advisement. If it is not, I will answer the question.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

For the information of the House, the honourable Member for Russell's question is in order. He was asking about different aspects of certain actions, and he did not make a reference directly to the action the Speaker has taken under advisement. The question is in order, so I would ask the honourable Minister of Labour and Immigration if she wishes to answer.

Ms. Barrett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, on a new question.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Russell, on a new question.

Mr. Derkach: The amendments that I brought forward to this House had, in fact, included in them the exclusion of forest-fire fighters of Manitoba, but at no time was there any racial overtone to that. I want to ask the minister why her member of Transcona would have in his place put on the record that the amendment I had brought forward was racially motivated.

Mr. Speaker: I have informed the House that issue has been taken under advisement. I would ask the honourable members to please respect the advisement. I have taken it under advisement. I have not dealt with it yet. Until I do, I would ask members to carefully word their questions.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I just want to ask the minister if she would, on behalf of all members of this House, apologize for that kind of thought even entering a member's mind.

Ms. Barrett: Mr. Speaker, I most certainly will not apologize for the Government of Manitoba correcting a wrong that the former government of Manitoba should have corrected a dozen years ago.

Crime Rate (Plumas) Community Meeting

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): With the increased violent crime in Winnipeg marked by the 3649 known gang members, 1818 who have had known contact with the police department this year, the front pages of the *Winnipeg Free Press* and other papers have been marked with the violent crime that has happened in the province's capital.

Now we hear of increased auto thefts, vandalism and other illegal activity infiltrating rural Manitoba. I ask the Justice Minister: Is he aware that 120 residents of the small village of Plumas, Manitoba, were so alarmed about the crime spree in their area that they had to meet to sit down and try to figure out what to do about this problem?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, first off, the members opposite have the wrong statistics once again. I note that active gang membership in the city of Winnipeg as reported by the Winnipeg Police Service is down over last year. Violent crime in Manitoba was at its record high ever, in fact the highest recorded ever for a Canadian jurisdiction in 1997.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the member opposite that if she is aware of criminal activity, she is aware of incidents. She knows full well her obligation and she should report that to the police.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of communities getting together and looking to see how they can respond to the challenge of crime, we certainly support citizen involvement, whether it is citizen patrols, whether it is neighbourhood watch. That is an important part of responding to the threat against our public safety.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice explain to Manitobans why he takes the issue of violent crimes so lightly in the province of Manitoba when the small village of Plumas had to get together? They were afraid for their safety, afraid for their property damage that was going on. This is an issue the Justice Minister of this province should be concerned about.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, we certainly are concerned about the level of crime in this province. That is why we have been working hard to bring in innovative legislative initiatives, as well, changes in policy, as well as significant changes in funding. Members opposite should be reminded it is under this Government that we have ushered in the highest level of funding for policing ever seen in the history of Manitoba.

Police Services (Portage la Prairie) Staffing

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Is this Justice Minister aware that the Portage police detachment is under complement by 11 members, and is he concerned about the increasing crime spree in that area of the province?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows and I am sure all members opposite do know of their obligation. If they are aware of particular incidents, if they have information on crimes, it is their obligation, I am sure they would appreciate that, to go to the local law enforcement officials so that the matter can be investigated. It would then, if charges are laid, fall to our department to prosecute.

In terms of Portage la Prairie, contrary to the information from the member opposite, it is the city of Portage la Prairie that, in contact with the RCMP, determines the level of policing in that city. It is my understanding, out of the 23 RCMP municipal positions in Portage la Prairie, 22 are currently filled.

Health Care System Diagnostic Waiting Lists

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, diagnostic waiting lists have skyrocketed under this Government, despite all their promises in the last election that they were going to slash waiting lists in Manitoba. We also see that if the doctors on Saturday withdraw services in Manitoba waiting lists for diagnostic services are going to continue to rise, because that is one of the services that will be withdrawn by the physicians.

What is this minister going to do in order to address these diagnostic waiting lists in this province and prevent them from escalating come Saturday?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member re-asks the questions she asked previously. On June 27, the *Free Press* quotes E. Butler of the Unity Center in Grafton, North Dakota, saying that MRI wait times are decreasing in Manitoba because he is, quote: Seeing fewer Manitoba patients.

The average wait for an MRI during Tory months was 19 weeks and it is down to 11 weeks under our tenure.

* (14:10)

Manitoba Medical Association Contract Negotiations

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, if doctors withdraw services on Saturday and this minister allows it to drag on to the eleventh hour, we are going to see emergency rooms fill up in this city. We already know hallway medicine still exists.

What is this minister going to do to protect patients and not put them at risk by allowing this whole negotiation process to drag on to the eleventh hour? That is extremely irresponsible.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, again, the member in her preamble is factually inaccurate.

With respect to hallway medicine, it has been reduced by 80 percent during this tenure, and that is why we put the wait lists up on the Web site with respect to comparisons. Members can check any time, Mr. Speaker, week over week, and we are not afraid to put those lists up, as opposed to the previous condition when members opposite were not prepared to even put those wait lists up.

As the member knows, we are in negotiations with the MMA, and as I indicated in my previous response, in fact as recently as Thursday we had put an offer with respect to matters to them. We are able, ready and willing to continue a negotiation process in the hopes of resolving the issue.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I think Manitobans would like to see more answers than arrogance from this minister.

I would like to ask the minister why he is playing politics with patients in Manitoba when he has an opportunity to address the doctor situation now. Why is he allowing this and, as the doctors are feeling, allowing this to drag on to the eleventh hour?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the critic for the Conservative Party has asked a lot of questions and the Minister of Health has quite properly stated the matters are in negotiations.

She talks about irresponsibility. Perhaps she would want to explain to the people of Manitoba why the Conservatives passed essential services legislation that made a groundskeeper in Dauphin essential but did not cover any doctors under essential services. Perhaps she would want to answer to that. Perhaps, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

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

Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Health cannot answer the questions, maybe the First Minister should replace him.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. Manitoba practice has been to allow leaders' latitude, and I will conduct the same practice until I am given different directions by both House leaders.

* * *

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

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

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed to sustaining the ruling, say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Laurendeau: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Aglugub, Allan, Ashton, Asper, Barrett, Caldwell, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Friesen, Jennissen, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Selinger, Smith (Brandon West), Struthers, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Faurischou, Gerrard, Hawranik, Helwer, Laurendeau, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Penner (Emerson), Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Reimer, Schuler, Smith (Fort Garry), Stefanson, Tweed.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 28, Nays 21.

Mr. Speaker: The motion has been carried. The ruling of the Chair has been sustained.

* * *

*(15:10)

Mr. Speaker: When we rose for a point of order, the honourable First Minister had the floor. We will go back to Question Period and the honourable First Minister.

Mr. Doer: Yes, I was mentioning about essential services covering a gardener in Dauphin and not covering doctors in Manitoba. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we are attempting to negotiate as effectively as we can.

Mrs. Driedger: On a new question, Mr. Speaker. I would like to suggest it is time that patient care be made the No. 1 priority in all of these situations.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: I do think it is time to make patient care the No. 1 priority and not drag the negotiations with the MMA out until the eleventh hour and put patient care at risk.

I would like to ask. Can the Minister of Health please explain why the MMA president, in his May 24 letter to his members, stated, as we expected, the Government will not bargain seriously until the last possible moment?

Can the Minister of Health please explain why the president of the MMA would say that?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, one of the things we do not want to do, one of the reasons we have changed a lot of our health policies is because, as the president of the MMA talked about, the dark ages of the 1990s under the Conservative government, and I am quoting, the dark ages of the 1990s under the previous administration.

As I have indicated in my discussions before with respect to these and other related matters, that is one of the reasons we are at the table with negotiations. We are discussing it with the MMA. In fact we put an offer on the table as recently as last Thursday, as indicated previously. We have also provided a letter in correspondence to the MMA on Friday.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Foyer Valade

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Le mardi 21 mai 2002 j'ai eu le plaisir de me joindre au conseil d'administration et au comité de la campagne de levée de fonds au Foyer Valade, 450 chemin River. L'événement était le début du lancement

de la campagne pour prélever 500 000\$, le but premier de la campagne étant de permettre la construction d'une aile de 40 lits. La nouvelle aile sera un milieu adapté aux besoins des résidents dont la faculté cognitive a été altérée par la maladie d'Alzheimer ou par la démence.

Le Foyer Valade est l'un des seuls foyers pour personnes âgées francophones au Manitoba. Le Foyer s'engage à offrir une qualité de vie à tous les aînés de la communauté qui ont besoin des services en français. En ce moment, 20 patients francophones attendent à l'hôpital une place dans un foyer, en plus des 20 à 40 francophones de la communauté également en attente d'une place. Pour répondre à ces besoins immédiats et futurs, le Foyer Valade a mis sur pied la campagne Bâtissons un avenir meilleur.

Fondé par les Soeurs Grises et au service de nos aînés depuis plus de vingt ans, le Foyer Valade offre également des soins de qualité aux personnes en perte d'autonomie ou atteintes d'une maladie chronique. Le Foyer a ouvert ses portes en 1976 sur la rue Archibald et il a été déménagé en 1988 à proximité du Centre Saint-Amant à Saint-Vital pour y accueillir 115 résidents.

Bonne chance à Brian Denysuik, président, aux membres du comité, à Raymonde Gagné, présidente du conseil d'administration, et à Francis LaBossière, directeur, qui participeront à la campagne Bâtissons un avenir meilleur.

Translation

On Tuesday, March 21, I had the pleasure of joining with the board of directors and the fundraising committee at Foyer Valade at 450 River Road. This event was the beginning of their campaign to raise \$500,000. The first goal of the campaign is to enable construction of a 40-bed wing. The new wing will be an environment tailored to the needs of residents whose cognitive abilities have been affected by Alzheimer's or dementia.

Foyer Valade is one of the only homes for Francophone senior citizens in Manitoba. It is committed to providing quality of life for all senior citizens of the community who need services in French. At this time, 20 hospitalized Francophone patients are awaiting placement in

a home, in addition to the 20 to 40 Francophones in the community who are also awaiting a place. In order to meet these immediate and future needs, Foyer Valade has launched the "building a better future" campaign.

Founded by the Grey Nuns and serving our senior citizens for over 20 years now, Foyer Valade also offers quality care to persons whose independence is decreasing or who are affected by chronic illness. The Foyer opened its doors in 1976 on Archibald Street and moved in 1988 near to the St. Amant Centre in St. Vital to take in 115 residents.

Good luck to Chairman Brian Denysuik and the committee members, to Raymonde Gagné, chair of the board of directors, and to Francis LaBossieré, director, who will be participating in the "building a better future" campaign.

Beaumont Elementary School

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I would like to rise today to offer congratulations to Beaumont Elementary School on being the ninth school in Manitoba to achieve Earth School status by completing 1000 environmental action projects. Adopting the SEEDS Foundation vision that Canadians will be literate and responsible with respect to energy sustainability and the environment, they have accepted personal and societal responsibility for energy sustainability and the environment.

I attended a ceremony at Beaumont School to celebrate this occasion on May 23. By taking on these projects they have saved trees, reduced landfill site use, recycled objects into new items, saved money, reduced litter, encouraged new solutions for recycling and have set a good example to their families and community. They have recycled plastic pop containers which are used to produce carpet, clothing, insulation, office binders and fencing. Old newspapers and magazines have been recycled into insulation, newsprint, fibreboard, telephone books and other paper products.

Household steel cans end up finding their way to car shredders and scrap yards across Manitoba. The household steel is mixed with old cars and other scrap metals and is sold all over

North America. Aluminum cans are melted down and recycled into any aluminum product, including tin foil, new cans and aluminum car parts. Making a new can from recycled aluminum saves 95 percent of the energy needed to make it from ore. Energy saved by recycling pop cans in one province is enough to supply the electric needs of 100 000 homes. With results like these it is easy to see that recycling pays.

Schools across Canada have completed 510 000 projects through the SEEDS program.

Beaumont School is part of this, and the first school in Assiniboine South School Division to reach the status of Earth School.

Mr. Speaker, a special congratulations to the Beaumont Green School Committee: Rusella McBurney, Elizabeth Allebone, Karen Von Hacht, and Nina Logan. Congratulations also to the staff and students of Beaumont School for a job well done. They have earned the honour of achieving Earth School status.

St. George Parenting Centre

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise today to recognize a valuable asset providing programs and services to families in St. Vital.

The St. George Parenting Centre, which runs out of the St. George School, helps prepare young children for entering school and provides a supportive learning environment for their parents, many of whom are new Canadians. The centre was established through the efforts of the parent association, teachers and staff, and the administration. At the centre parents participate in educational activities with their children, including reading time and crafts. These activities help children develop the literacy and numeracy skills they will need for kindergarten.

In February, which was Literacy Month, the centre organized many activities and programs to help parents develop their children's interest in reading. The goal of this centre is to assist parents with strategies that will help their children learn. Strategies include daily reading and making the written word part of children's lives.

Another asset of this centre is that it provides parents with an opportunity to socialize with others. This gives them the chance to get out without having to leave their children at home and also to meet other parents with common interests in a friendly, safe and supportive setting.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is great to see that this kind of asset is available in my constituency. It provides innumerable vital opportunities for both parents and their children and these kinds of programs build healthy communities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate everyone involved on their successes and wish them many more in the future.

Telehealth Network

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, on May 17, I had the pleasure of attending the open house and official launch of the Manitoba Telehealth Network for Boundary Trails at the Boundary Trails Health Centre.

Manitoba Telehealth uses technology to link people to health care expertise at a distance. That the people of the Morden and Winkler area will have greater access to health care providers and specialists by being able to communicate with them via teleconferencing technology is truly invaluable. Because of this initiative, people seeking medical expertise within the Central Manitoba Regional Health Authority will be spared travel expenses, time and risk. They will also have the option of allowing family members to participate in their appointments, seeing as they are able to stay in their home community.

I would like to make special mention of two individuals who are vital to the Manitoba Telehealth Network for Boundary Trails. They are Marlene Holewka, and Deb Weir, the site coordinators. I am sure I speak for all those living in south central Manitoba when I say thank you for all the hard work you have already put in and will no doubt be continuing in the future. The opportunities and services that become available to the people of rural Manitoba through the efforts of committed individuals such as yourselves are greatly appreciated.

I also want to send a special thank you to Eileen Vodden, the administrator, who did an excellent job of co-ordinating and chairing the event. Thank you.

Annie Theatrical Production

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Good day, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to congratulate all the individuals involved in the Ness School's recent production of *Annie*.

The show was performed at the Gas Station Theatre in order to provide a theatrical environment that could do this wonderful show justice. The show boasted a total cast of 31 students and actually a real dog named Kirby. I think it is very encouraging that on both nights it played to almost sold-out audiences.

I would like to thank Miss Claven, who was the producer and director; Mrs. Peters and Mrs. Lee, who assisted with the music, choreography, and singing; Ms. Cesario, a student teacher who assisted in dance instruction and choreography. Their efforts are really appreciated. I would also like to recognize the parents who were involved in selling tickets, making costumes, transportation and innumerable other jobs.

Experiences like this show give students life-long memories that they will cherish and allows them to develop meaningful friendships with other students. It also teaches them skills that they might not learn in a regular academic program.

This was an excellent event. I am sure they have learned a great deal.

Among the many people I would like to congratulate would be Meghan Roels, who played Annie, and Jason Stanley, who played Daddy Warbucks, for their excellent performances. I would also like to recognize Michelle Montford, a student who worked very hard on technical aspects of this program. Other students that were involved were Erin Roche, Julie Devries, Brock Houndle, Meghan Courcelles, Janis Doran, Sheryl White, Janna Sutherland, Celina Wojtowicz, Dianna Martens, Kali Dufreane, Curtis Cox, Kristi Jackson, Carling Marple, DeNel Johnson, Brenna Philp, Jenna

Miller, Jacqueline Miller and Matthew Hendrickson.

I would also congratulate all the other students that were involved in this wonderful project for a job very, very well done. Excellent work.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call Bill 14.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 14—The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Resumed debate on second reading of Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Is it the will of the House for the bill to remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa? *[Agreed]*

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY (Concurrent Sections)

JUSTICE

* (15:30)

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255): Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting May 22, 2002, in Room 255, considering the Estimates of the Department of Finance, I ruled that, based on a voice vote, item 7.1.(a) Minister's Salary did pass.

This ruling was challenged and sustained on a voice vote. Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken.

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): A recorded vote has been requested. Call in the members.

* (16:20)

In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 on May 22 considering the Estimates of the Department of Finance, the Chair ruled that based on a voice vote, item 7.1.(a) Minister's Salary did pass.

The ruling was challenged and sustained on a voice vote. Subsequently, a formal vote on the matter was requested.

The question before this committee is: Shall the ruling of the Chair be sustained?

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please. Voting is taking place. Order, please.

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 27, Nays 22.

Mr. Chairperson: The ruling of the Chair is accordingly sustained.

The Committee of Supply will now return to the consideration of departmental Estimates referred to in the sections.

CONSERVATION

* (16:30)

Mr. Chairperson (Harry Schellenberg): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This afternoon, this section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 254, will resume consideration of the Estimates of the Department of Conservation.

We are on line 4.(f) Fisheries (2) Fish Culture (a) Salaries and Employee Benefits \$661,300 on page 49 of the main Estimates book. When the committee last met, there had been agreement to skip ahead and ask questions

on 4.(f)(4) Sport and Commercial Fishing Management. Is that still the will of the committee?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Chairperson: Okay. We will continue with 4.(f)(4) Sport and Commercial Fishing Management.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Chair, I am a little confused here. I think last time we sat, the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) was going to be asking questions on Fisheries, specifically Lake of the Prairies and Lake Dauphin. At that time, I think I told him that I would not have a problem going over it again, except it would be rehashing what we had covered earlier in Estimates.

If we are going to go back to that particular piece, I do not feel that we would be using our time wisely. I advised the member that I would give him the information that I had here. Also, I believe I asked him to review Hansard, and if he had any questions, I would be more than willing to give him additional information, information that I had not covered during the Estimates process.

So, if we are going to go back to Fisheries, I would rather not cover that area again, because we spent quite a bit of time, as I recall, covering it.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): With all due respect, Mr. Chairman, I guess, as I have sometimes told members of Government before, this is the Opposition's nickel. If we want to spend it on this particular topic, then that is where we will probably feel that we will get the best value for our nickel.

With that in mind, I would like to ask the minister what kind of program is in place to assist with restocking of Lake Dauphin and Lake of the Prairies, because there is considerable local concern about whether it would be possible to not only repeat, but increase the amount of support that is available to the lakes. I am not so much thinking of support in dollars and cents, but support in terms of some artificially raised fingerlings being released, and making sure that

we do not wait a year or two down the road to see how the lakes may recover. There are estimates now by people who, I think, are quite knowledgeable in the reproductive habits of fish that there will be an impact, and the people in the area in many respects have been asking for increased stocking.

I wonder if the minister can, through this medium, assure them that that is going to happen. Or will it be a level the same as or lower than previous levels of assistance?

Mr. Chairperson: The committee will recess for a formal vote in the Chamber.

The committee recessed at 4:37 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:08 p.m.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being after 5 p.m., the committee rise.

FINANCE

* (16:30)

Madam Chairperson (Bonnie Korzeniowski): Good afternoon. Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply, meeting in Room 255, will resume consideration of the Estimates for the Department of Finance. We have one last item of business to complete for this department.

Resolution 7.1. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,452,000 for Finance, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2003. Shall the resolution pass?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Pass.

Voice Vote

Madam Chairperson: All those in favour, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Chairperson: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Chairperson: In my opinion, the Yeas have it. I declare the resolution passed.

Formal Vote

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays.

Madam Chairperson: A formal vote has been requested by two members. This section of the committee will now recess to allow members to proceed to the Chamber for a formal vote.

The committee recessed at 4:35 p.m.

The committee resumed at 5:09 p.m.

Madam Chairperson: The hour being past five o'clock, committee rise.

JUSTICE

(Continued)

* (16:30)

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. This section of the Committee of Supply will be considering the Estimates of the Department of Justice. Does the honourable minister have an opening statement?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have this opportunity to reflect on the advancements accomplished in Justice, and share with the committee what I intend to see accomplished in the year ahead.

First, in no particular order, I have a number of policy areas that I would like to address. First off, with regard to countering the continuing threat of impaired driving, we have continued to tackle the issue of drinking and driving. Manitoba has taken many steps to reduce impaired driving, and we will continue to approach this problem by introducing both efforts to prevent this crime and by new sanctions, where neces-

sary, to address those who continue to offend, break the law and threaten the safety of Manitobans, Mr. Chair.

Since December of 2000, tougher sanctions have been available to the courts to deal with repeat impaired and suspended drivers, and with drivers fleeing from police. These sanctions apply to all vehicles, including now off-road vehicles such as snowmobiles, dirt bikes and ATVs. Licence suspensions have been extended to those found guilty of auto theft offences. At the same time, lifetime driving suspensions are now possible in Manitoba to deal with repeat offenders found guilty of impaired driving, auto theft and other serious driving offences.

Since coming into office, we have, first, expanded the look-back period, as it is called, for a drunk driver to be considered a repeat offender to five years from what was two years in criminal matters, allowing more multiple offenders to be classified as repeaters.

Secondly, we have increased the driver licence suspensions, as I have noted earlier, for repeat impaired drivers, and I should note we have doubled the look-back period for provincial suspensions from five to ten years.

The lifetime driver suspensions for four or more convictions or three or more convictions, if any of them is for an offence involving death or serious bodily harm, has been introduced, which brings us into line with several other jurisdictions in Canada, and I think it was an amendment that was overdue.

We have extended all impaired drinking and driving and driving while disqualified sanctions to operators of off-road vehicles.

Fifth, we have applied impaired driving laws to drivers of all motorized vehicles that can be operated on a highway, for example, including tractors and loaders and graders and backhoes.

Sixth, the vehicle impoundment periods have been doubled for those who refuse a breathalyzer or blow 0.16 or higher. Mr. Chair, I felt very strongly about this coming into office. I thought that tiered sanctions were very important, and I relied heavily on the Traffic Injury Research Foundation for their study and advice.

Seven, we have urged amendment to the Criminal Code to establish a presumption against conditional sentences where impaired driving causes death or injury, and that is along with several other types of offences which we think should not be available for conditional sentencing, which we can talk more about it in the course of Estimates.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (Chairperson of the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255): Mr. Chairperson, in the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255 considering the Estimates of the Department of Finance, a voice vote was requested on Resolution 7.1. Administration and Finance.

Resolution 7.1. RESOLVED that there be granted to Her Majesty a sum not exceeding \$1,452,000 for Finance, Administration and Finance, for the fiscal year ending the 31st day of March, 2003.

The voice vote passed. Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken.

Mr. Chairperson: A recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

All sections in Chamber for formal vote.

In the section of the Committee of Supply meeting in Room 255, considering the Estimates of the Department of Finance, a voice vote was requested on Resolution 7.1. Administration and Finance.

* (16:40)

The resolution was carried on a voice vote. Subsequently, two members requested that a formal vote on this matter be taken.

The question before this committee is: Shall Resolution 7.1. pass?

A COUNT-OUT VOTE was taken, the result being as follows: Yeas 28, Nays 22.

Mr. Chairperson: The resolution is accordingly passed. This concludes the Estimates for the Department of Finance.

The hour being after 5 p.m., committee rise.
Call in the Speaker.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being past 5 p.m., we will now go to Private Members' Business. On Proposed Resolution 8, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), State of the Canadian Grain Industry.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 8—State of the Canadian Grain Industry

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): I would like to move, seconded by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner),

WHEREAS in recent years the federal government has dramatically reduced the level of support to the agricultural sector; and

WHEREAS many Canadian producers have experienced several years of diminished incomes, thereby affecting their ability to farm; and

WHEREAS low world grain and oilseed prices are offset by generous government subsidies in the United States and European Union; and

WHEREAS Canadian farmers have recently faced the lowest grain and oilseed prices in two decades and Canadian grain and oilseed producers are among the lowest net income producers in the world; and

WHEREAS the United States government supports its grain and oilseed producers through tariffs, acreage payments, loan programs and transportation assistance; and

WHEREAS the European Union supports its agricultural sector at an even higher level through various actions and programs; and

WHEREAS Canadian farmers cannot survive on their own in an atmosphere of trade-distorting actions by other countries; and

WHEREAS the federal government—by reducing or eliminating all farm income support and safety net programs—has failed to provide western Canadian farmers with adequate financial assistance in response to this crisis in agriculture; and

WHEREAS safety nets such as the Agriculture Income Disaster and the Canadian Farm Income Program have fallen short of addressing the needs of Canadian agricultural producers; and

WHEREAS many young farmers are either leaving agriculture or are choosing not to enter agriculture as a profession because of the federal government's unwillingness to deal with the challenges facing the agricultural sector.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider taking strong action to ensure the survival of families in farming; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to impress upon the federal government its responsibility to bring a balance of support to western Canadian agricultural producers through equalization of tariffs and subsidies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to live up to its responsibility to ensure a competitive climate for agriculture in Manitoba; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba direct the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly to send a copy of this private member's resolution to the Parliament of Canada, including the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan), seconded by the honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner),

WHEREAS in recent years the federal government—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Mr. Rocan: Mr. Speaker, in the wake of both the ratification of the U.S. farm bill, and the recent release of the results of the 2001 Stats Canada agricultural census, it is very timely that we are debating a resolution that addresses the plight of agricultural producers.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution contains three specific requests of this provincial government, actions that we feel are necessary to help ease the minds of and protect the pocketbooks of Manitoba farmers.

Firstly, we are urging the provincial government to consider taking strong action to ensure the survival of families in farming.

Secondly, we are urging the provincial government to impress upon the federal government the need to fulfil its responsibility in bringing a balance of support to western Canadian agricultural farmers through equalization of tariffs and subsidies.

Thirdly, we are asking that the provincial government live up to its responsibility to ensure that there is a competitive climate for agriculture in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I do not make these requests lightly. Agriculture in Manitoba is under attack on a number of fronts.

* (17:10)

Stats Canada recently released a rather disturbing report about the state of Canadian agriculture. It really does go without saying that the result of the 2001 Stats Canada agricultural census only reinforces the fact that the industry that was always considered the key economic driver in Manitoba is under fire.

Please allow me to elaborate, Mr. Speaker. The Stats Canada report shows that the decline in the number of farmers in western Canada was greatest in Manitoba, where farm numbers fell from 24 383 in 1996 to 21 071 in 2001, a drop of 13.6 percent.

The agricultural census also points out that out of the Manitoba farms with gross farm receipts of \$2,500 or more, the province saw: (1) a 36.6% decrease in the number of dairy farms; (2) a 29.2% decrease in the number of poultry and egg farms; and (3) a 41.1% decrease in the number of wheat farms.

The Statistics Canada agricultural census goes on to report that in Manitoba, in the year 2000, 87 cents of operating expenses were spent for every dollar received in gross farm receipts, compared with just 83 cents in 1995. The margin between operating expenses and gross farm receipts continues to narrow.

Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves. They warn us that the state of agriculture is only going to deteriorate unless governments at all levels step up to the plate and renew their commitment to agriculture.

At the same time that the disturbing figures from Stats Canada were released, Manitoba farmers learned more details about the United States farm bill and its implications for our producers. With the ratification of the U.S. farm bill, subsidies and support for American farmers will increase by more than \$73.5 billion over the next 10 years. At the same time, Manitoba farmers could stand to lose in the neighbourhood of \$345 million because they are in no position to compete with the subsidies being showered on the American producers.

Premier Doer, on May 8 in this Legislature, said about the U.S. farm bill and its impact on Manitoba farmers, and, I quote: "There is going to be short-term income pain on agriculture producers." What an understatement that was. It is my understanding that the concept of short-term usually refers to a transition period for which there is a plausible solution in sight. I am just not seeing that is this case.

My question is this: What does this provincial government plan to do about the \$345 million in short-term income pain?

If past practice is any indication, I am not too optimistic about this Government's ability to deal with the challenges presented by the U.S. farm bill. For example, the 2002-03 provincial

Budget cut funding for agriculture disaster aid programming by 16.7 percent, a reduction of over \$4 million. This was extremely short-sighted.

Moreover, in July 2001, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) joined with her federal and provincial counterparts in signing onto a communique that includes having farmers earn more off-farm income or choose non-farm options as means of addressing the challenges facing Canadian producers. It certainly did not send a very positive message about the future of farming in this country. What our farmers and related industries should expect is for their Premier and this Minister of Agriculture to be mounting a vigorous campaign with the federal government to assure them that the voices of Manitoba agriculture producers count, and that we must be heard. We will continue to pressure them to do so.

Mr. Speaker, what Manitoba farmers and related industries should expect is for their Premier and this Minister of Agriculture to articulate a plan that will provide assurances that the Manitoba government is prepared to go to the wall to protect the interest of our agricultural sector. But the provincial government has yet to define their vision for our farmers, other than to advise them then to seek off-farm income and to get out of farming altogether.

I also have serious reservations about the federal government's handling of the agricultural sector. Sadly, Mr. Speaker, it seems that the Liberal administration in Ottawa does not recognize that there is another part of Canada west of Ontario. It is absolutely imperative that we impress upon the federal politicians their responsibility to the farm community in western Canada. Federal politicians must recognize that a good portion of the food that ends up on their dinner plate comes from farms in western Canada. The federal government must take responsibility to ensure that our farmers do not become endangered species.

Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about the future of farming in Manitoba. The practice of family farms being passed down from generation to generation is quickly becoming obsolete. I know that my constituents and my fellow

Manitobans share this concern. There are many disincentives when it comes to farm children thinking about taking over the family farm. In addition to the usual challenges presented by the environment, young farmers must deal with the challenges presented by low commodity prices, high input costs, transportation problems and escalating international subsidy wars. One has to ask: How can any of our producers—younger or more experienced—be expected to stay on the farm in the face of these difficulties? That our farmers continue to plant crops year after year, that they continue to diversify and meet these challenges head on is a testament to their dedication to Canadian agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, one cannot underestimate the importance of agriculture in Manitoba's overall economic activity, both in its production and consumption. Between 1996 and 2000, agriculture and related industries contributed an average of 11 percent to provincial gross domestic product. Agriculture accounted for almost one dollar in ten of production in Manitoba's economy in the year 2000. For every dollar of net farm income produced in Manitoba, almost \$2 is generated in the overall provincial economy.

In Manitoba, one job in eleven depends on agriculture production. For every nine jobs created on farms in the year 2000, five jobs were created in other areas of the Manitoba economy. In addition to stimulating employment locally, agriculture in Manitoba is directly responsible for thousands of jobs in other parts of Canada. For every dollar of net income produced by primary agriculture in Manitoba, about \$1.90 is generated in the overall Manitoba economy. Agriculture directly or indirectly accounted for more than one dollar in ten of production in Manitoba's economy in the year 2000.

Mr. Speaker, figures such as these show how critical it is that our Government support agriculture. It is high time that the federal and provincial governments started working together on a long-term solution to the challenges facing Canadian agriculture producers. As legislators, it is up to us to pursue policies that will help support the survival of the agricultural sector. This is precisely why I have brought forth this resolution. I would urge all members of this

Legislature to think long and hard about the financial and the social implications of ignoring our agricultural sector, and I would urge all members to support this resolution. Thank you very much.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for bringing this private member's resolution forward. I want to say that it is a topic that is very important to us on this side of the House, and one that we have worked on. But we have several members on this side of the House who would also like to add their comments to this resolution.

* (17:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that the agriculture industry is a very important industry in Manitoba. It is a very important industry in Canada, and it is one that has certainly been under a tremendous amount of pressure over the past few decades. I guess the increased pressure has increased ever since the federal government reduced their subsidies and support for agriculture, support such as the elimination of the Crow which members opposite endorsed fully, and said that this was going to be positive for producers of Manitoba. Certainly, we are seeing the impacts of having those supports for agriculture reduced, particularly in light of the fact that, although other countries have indicated that they plan to reduce their supports for agriculture, in reality, it is not happening. Europe is moving in that direction, because Europe knows that as all of the other countries come into the European Union, it is going to be very difficult for them to support at the level that they are right now.

But there was the impression that the United States was also going to be eliminating subsidies and living up to their word at the WTO and, of course, living up to their commitments under free trade agreements. What we have here is a bill that is causing everyone concern put forward by the United States, that has been passed. Mr. Speaker, I have taken many opportunities to raise this issue with representatives of the U.S. government, and share the fact that I am very concerned that the United States is losing credibility at the WTO, because they gave their

word to reduce subsidies, and they are increasing them.

I am also very concerned that they have now moved into an area of subsidy where they have never been before. That is into the pulse crops, crops that are very important to Manitoba producers, an area where Manitoba producers have diversified into, but under no subsidies anywhere in the world. These are very important crops in developing countries as well.

The United States has decided that they want to move into this market, and increase the production of pulses, and they are going to destroy this market and drive down the prices. They do not really care about that, it seems. It just appears that they have the money, and they are going to do whatever they want. In this case, there are countries around the world that are opposed to what the United States is doing under this bill.

The other area of concern is the labelling of country of origin, which says in the bill that the United States will have a special label for product that was born, raised and slaughtered in the United States, especially in the meat industry. We know that this is very serious for our producers here in Manitoba, because we ship a large amount of livestock into the U.S. market. If they proceed with this, then it could be used as a trade barrier.

I want the members to know that when we heard that they were going to move forward with this bill, and it was not anticipated that the U.S. farm bill would pass until November. But, for political reasons, they have decided to move it forward; since we knew that they were moving it forward I raised the issue at the federal-provincial Agriculture ministers meeting and asked that the federal government work with provinces to do a full analysis of the impact of this bill on producers and to look at whether there were opportunities to challenge the U.S. farm bill at the WTO or under the NAFTA.

As well, Mr. Speaker, when I attended the tri-national accord recently in Nogales, Arizona, I had the opportunity to raise this issue with the Mexican Agriculture ministers, and we agreed that this had very serious consequences for

Manitoba, for Canada and for the U.S. We have jointly sent a letter to President Bush and the heads of the Senate and the Congress, expressing our concern with the U.S. farm bill.

When we met with the United States delegation, we put together a working group consisting of North Dakota, Montana, Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, where we are going to work together looking at what the impacts of country of origin will have; because there are concerns on both sides of the border with this part of the bill.

But our Premier (Mr. Doer) also takes this issue very seriously. He met with Premier Calvert of Saskatchewan, and he brought all parties, the Leader of the Opposition, with him to Regina for one meeting, and from that meeting there was an invitation extended to federal ministers to come to Saskatchewan. That meeting took place last Friday, where we had three federal ministers—Mr. Pettigrew, Mr. Vanclief and Mr. Goodale—at the meeting, as well as Mr. Martin there by phone, and representatives from all sides of the House here.

We had the opportunity to hear from many producer groups at this meeting, and people spelled out very clearly their concerns with the U.S. farm bill, and they also expressed very clearly that this was a trade injury. The federal government signed the trade agreements, and it is the federal government that must put in place some supports.

Now the member opposite talked about his concern that the Premier said that there was going to be some short-term pain. Well, Mr. Speaker, there will be pain and in terms of agreement it will be short-term. It will be probably six years, the length of this agreement, or until such time as subsidies are reduced under WTO. So that will be the term, and that is what we have asked.

We have asked the federal government for bridge funding to help producers through this difficulty for the length of the U.S. farm bill is in place, or until subsidies are reduced. So we have taken a very strong position on this, and I hope that we can keep united and send a very strong message to the federal government on this issue

so, indeed, our farmers can continue. Because our farmers cannot compete against the U.S. Treasury, or the European Treasury, without support from our federal government. If you look at where the level of support is in Canada versus other countries, in Canada it is very low.

It is very interesting. If you look at this U.S. farm bill, and you look at the level of funding that is going to go into North Dakota, Minnesota and Montana right along our border, our trading partners, in fact, every year those three states will get \$1.3 billion injected into farm income, more under this new U.S. farm bill. It will be very difficult for our producers to compete. So I want the member to be aware that we are taking this very seriously, and we will continue to pressure the federal government to address this.

The member talked about the agriculture policy framework where I said that our option was to our farmers to get an off-farm job. Well, I would encourage that member to read exactly what was in that and it was not "get an off-farm job." That is absolutely wrong. I guess I would ask the member to really look at what we are doing, and whether or not we are encouraging people to go off-farm or whether we are encouraging them to stay on the farm.

I ask the member to think about the Bridging Generations Initiative that members on his side of the House said was not going to help with the transition of farmers from one generation to the next. But I would ask him to just wait for a while, or else check the statistics. He will see very clearly that this is viewed as a very important tool. Farmers are looking at it as an option to help transfer the land from one generation to the other, and encourage young people to get into farming.

* (17:30)

Mr. Speaker, there are other things that we have done. I look at the changes that we have made, and members will say, well, that is not very much. But, you know, when you start adding things together it does make a difference.

You look at the emergency assistance that we were able to get for producers in this province. In 2000, \$100 million was provided to

grains and oilseeds. In 2001, \$92 million was made available to the producers.

Of that money, in 2000, \$40 million came from the Province of Manitoba; \$60 million came from the federal government. In 2001, Mr. Speaker, of the \$92 million, \$36 million came from the Province of Manitoba. So we have flowed money in emergency situations for producers in Manitoba.

When we look at crop insurance, a very important tool for our producers, one of the issues was that our producers always told us was that there was no assistance when there was excessive moisture and farmers could not seed. Mr. Speaker, when we formed government we brought excessive moisture insurance in for our producers, and they have been able to have that coverage.

I know the member opposite will always like to say that they knew it was coming. I bet they knew that Bridging Generations was coming too. I am sure they knew all of those things, because the previous minister says he was going to do it. The fact of the matter is, he can say all he wants but he did not introduce excessive moisture insurance. It was New Democrats who brought that in. I am very proud of what we have done with crop insurance in this province.

Another issue is property tax. People talk about property tax and how much they pay on them. Certainly farmers have raised the issue many times. But under the previous administration, they raised the portioning, increased farmers' taxes by raising the portioning. New Democrats came into office and recognized this as an issue, and we reduced the portioning. We saved farmers \$7 million.

So, if you look at all of the little things, they all add up. When you look at the property tax credit that has been increased under this Government, that also helps the producers of Manitoba.

Diversification is always very important. Adding value to a product is also very important. Our province, our producers in this province are doing an excellent job in diversifying the economy. They have gone into, as I said, the

pulse industry. The bean industry is very important in this province. They have moved into that area. They are excellent producers there. What we want to do is add value to those products, all of the products.

That is why we were very pleased once we formed Government to have an agreement with Simplot to build another potato processing facility in this province. We were also very pleased to have the investment in the nutraceutical centre at the University of Winnipeg, which will add opportunity for producers to add value. As well, I must say that I am very pleased that we have made the commitment and investment into the Food Development Centre at Portage la Prairie, investing \$11 million, giving producers the opportunity to add value due to products. *[interjection]*

So the member asks what we are going to get for it. Well, I am not surprised the member asked that question, because we know it was their government's intention to close down the Food Development Centre. The member does not believe that there will be any benefit out of it. Well, let us just wait and see, because I have a lot of confidence in business and in producers in this province that they are going to definitely add value to products in this province, just as they will with the nutraceutical centre.

So, Mr. Speaker, the member brings forward a resolution saying that we should be standing up for our Manitoba farmers. We should be raising the issue with the federal government. We should be looking at the survival of the family farm. We are looking at the family farm. We are raising the issue with the federal government. We will continue to be a strong voice and ensure that agriculture continues to be a viable industry in this province. We will take every opportunity we can to work with the producers and improve the quality of life and look at where we can add value to our grain industry by improving the livestock industry.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that members opposite never thought about organic production. We brought an organic specialist into this province so that the organic industry can grow. The members opposite did not have faith in the sheep and goat industry. We have brought

a sheep specialist into this province, and the numbers are increasing.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are issues that we have to address, but I want to tell you that I have a lot of faith in Manitoba farmers. Yes. Some farmers will leave the farm as they have done in the past, and new people will come in.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): It is certainly always interesting to listen to the Minister of Agriculture of this province condemn what the previous government has done or not done. I think it is very interesting that the minister could not focus more on the amount and the program that she has put in place.

Let me say this to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Assembly here today. Our farmers in this province have never seen a greater migration out of this province of Manitoba than we have seen in the last three years. You can look at statistics. You can look at Statistics Canada, and they clearly will tell you that we have lost over 3000 farmers during the last census period. We have lost over 6000 people working in agriculture over the last census period. So let this Minister of Agriculture in this province not try and indicate to Manitobans that agriculture is thriving under her jurisdiction, because it certainly is not.

The farmers of this province have seen two major hits—three major hits during the last two weeks alone. Number one, the introduction of the American farm bill, and should we see that as a great detriment to our farm community? Yes, we should, because our farm community will now have as its direct competitor the United States government and the European treasurer.

The second thing is that the TB situation in the Riding Mountain National Park, which our minister could do something about, directly threatens and jeopardizes a multibillion-dollar livestock industry that has arisen even though she, our Minister of Agriculture, told our former Minister of Agriculture that he was moving in the wrong direction when he gave the freedom of the marketplace to the hog producers in this area. Just look, even the provincial hog board has sold more pigs this year than they ever did when they had single-marketing authority. There

were even twice as many pigs marketed outside the authority. That just goes to show how functional a multi-market system can be in a province, and I think we should not discount that.

I am somewhat amazed at the Minister of Agriculture in her remarks when she says she has put in place a transition program. Well, do you members of the Legislature on the Government side realize what this transition program is? It guarantees that the elderly farmers can actually get off the farm. It does not guarantee the young farmer one iota more than he had the day before he signed the agreement, that this minister had made a lot of to-do about the young farmer interest rebate program.

That young farmer interest rebate program was introduced by our Government, and it has not changed one iota since this Government took office, and she sits there and takes credit for it. That is the only thing in this transition program that will do the young farmer any credit, but it does give the retiring farmer a guarantee that he will be paid if he finances to his son. That it does; and if the young farmer cannot afford to make the payments, the Government will take over the land. Then we are right back into land banking again. Then the Government will lease the land to whom? We are back into the pre-Tory administration kind of thinking, into the socialist thinking that government can do it better.

* (17:40)

Well, farmer after farmer after farmer tells me if government would just get out of the way, they would be in pretty good shape. But, no, we have this Government putting in place drainage legislation that will not even let farmers make decisions on their own land as to whether they can run water after a heavy rain off their land. They cannot make the decision. They have to go ask Uncle Gary first before they can go drain, and Uncle Gary says, no, you cannot because the legislation says you cannot even dig a six-inch ditch on your land without getting a permit from my minister, not from the department, not from the local municipality, but my minister. This is what you call top-down government, and I believe that our farmers deserve a bit more credit than this.

Mr. Speaker, this minister just started talking about the virtues of her ability to increase production in sheep and goats and organic farming. Well, organic farming was practised in my constituency long before this minister ever saw the ministerial portfolio. There are many, many farmers who have practised organic farming many years before there was even discussion in this House about organic farming.

One of the key ingredients that was always used in organic farming was natural fertilizers. The only natural fertilizers that I have ever experienced on the farm where I live had a bit of a smell to them and they were not strawberries. They were not raspberry smells either, but they sort of smelled like something that had gone off a bit somewhere. That was called organic fertilizer.

Well, these ministers in Government today are trying to put in place impediments at every opportunity they can, and I give you Bill 23 that was just introduced in this House a few days ago, which will come to be, in my view, Mr. Speaker, a bill that will be the laughingstock of this Government. It will finally point the finger at how ludicrous this Government has become.

The second one is: I think we have seen in the last newspaper an indication of what the labour legislation that this Government just passed two years ago is actually doing to the industries of this province. I give you the hog plant at Neepawa: Springhill Farms. Big headlines in the paper today: "Springhill Farms shutting down." Well, it is this government that is driving Springhill Farms out of business because of the allowances that are given under the labour law and the labour act to force private investors like Springhill Farms out of business.

I also want to comment on the comments that the minister made on the reduction of taxes on farmland by reducing the apportionment. Well, let me remind the current government that in 1989 the government of the then-Tory administration in this province reduced the taxation on farmland by not allowing the special levies to be applied to farmland in this province anymore. That alone reduced the farmland taxes by \$20 million in this province.

Let this minister not say that they reduced the farmland taxes any more than the previous government has, because she reduced them by roughly \$70 million by bringing the apportionment back down to 27 again. We reduced them by \$20 million by one stroke of the pen. It can be done easily.

What needs to be done is a significant revision of how we fund education in this province. That would, in my view, go a long way to satisfy the needs of the farm community.

The one thing that I think is absolutely imperative, Mr. Speaker, in closing, we need to recognize that the American government did one thing. They passed a farm bill that will protect their farmers; that will pay their farmers for what they produce. They are going to spend \$190 billion over the next 10 years. It will be drawn back to 6, just watch, but over the next 6 years, they will spend \$190 billion making sure that their farmers are going to be in business.

What is this Government in this province going to do? Well, Mr. Speaker, I can see the legislation already: more controls, more legislation, and more direct involvement in the operations of our farms. That is the last thing that our farmers need. They need less legislation, less regulations, and allow them the freedom to farm. That is what our farmers need; not constant intervention by ministers and premiers and the government of the day.

It is time that we recognize that food production is important to the people of Manitoba, and food production in an economical manner. It is time that the Government of Canada started taking action and put in place the exact same farm programs and measures that the American government has put in place. Only then will the American government start paying attention and the Europeans start paying attention when Canada comes to the WTO table and says: Look, until you guys move on your programs, we are not moving anywhere. We are going to protect our farmers as well as you guys do in the United States and Europe. That is the only way that our farmers are going to be allowed to stay on the farm. Then, maybe then, we will see a reduction of the migration out of agriculture in this province.

I think the last census tells the whole story. This Government has done nothing but talk and talk and talk and go and consult and consult and consult and report and report and report. Well, the time for reporting and consulting and talking is over. It is time that we see an action. It is time that this Government start putting its money where its mouth is. It is time that the federal government in Ottawa started to ensure that the farm communities of this country can be equally competitive on the same basis as the Americans can, and the Europeans can, and the rest of the world. Then, and only then, are we going to have an agriculture industry that is going to be viable and sustainable.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to follow the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), especially when he tried to follow the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). There really was no comparison. The Minister of Agriculture spelled out clearly, what it was that this Government has done to help farmers. This Government has done a lot to help farmers. The reason it is so interesting to follow the Member for Emerson is that I was hoping the Member for Emerson could tell me something that would convince me that we should be actually passing this resolution through today. Instead of persuading me, he got up and yelled at us about all the bad things going on in agriculture. That approach did not work with me. What it made me think of—actually, it made me think of a campsite.

* (17:50)

It made me think of going to camp late at night with a bonfire going, with people all around the bonfire singing *Kumbaya* and things; people sitting around the campfire telling ghost stories and fish tales, because that is all we got out of the member across the way, was ghost stories saying how bad it is out there and fish tales when he tried to defend the lack of action of his government over the 11 years that they had to do something for farmers.

So I think, in keeping with the speech that the Member for Emerson just gave, I would like to contribute a fish story myself. It occurred last summer when the Member for Selkirk (Mr.

Dewar) and I ventured out onto the Red River. We went out early in the morning. We were after the elusive catfish. We had the boat prepared. We had shrimp to put on our hooks. I had never gone catfishing in my life. I had never done that before. The Member for Selkirk told me that we would catch a catfish that day. He guaranteed it. So off we went.

At the beginning of the day, it was fairly nice. It was sunny. We got out there, and, of course, the Member for Selkirk right away catches a catfish just to show the rookie how it is done, I guess. He battled that fish for about 10 minutes, and he brought it in over the edge of the boat. I helped him with it. I measured it along the side of the boat, and it was about 60-some centimetres. Then I actually did hook onto a catfish. I hooked on to this catfish, battled it out. It was just a small, little catfish. Of course, being the catch and releasers that we are, we put the catfish back in the river, and away it went. We have got to leave some for all those other fishermen out there who enjoy fishing and angling in our province.

The Member for Selkirk, he catches another one. We let it go back in. *[interjection]* These are catfish that we are catching. Then the day kind of turned a little bit. Some dark clouds rolled in, and a little rain started to sprinkle. The Member for Selkirk and I got covered up in the boat. It did not deter us. We kept on fishing even through the rain. The rain started coming down harder and harder. We moved up closer to the falls. As every good fisherman knows, you have got to have a cigar with you when you go catfishing. At least, that is what the Member for Selkirk told me. So I went along with it. We tried fishing around the rapids. We could not catch anything, so we went back to our secret location.

An Honourable Member: Where is that?

Mr. Struthers: Right across from the golf course at Selkirk, where there is an oak tree, but we will keep that secret from everyone. Mr. Speaker, we are out there fishing away, and what we notice is that our collection of shrimp that we are using for bait is dwindling, fewer and fewer. We got down to one shrimp, one lonely little shrimp. So I brought my hook in, and I took this

one last little trip and I realized that my friend, my catfish mentor, the Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), did not have a shrimp either. So we had two hooks and one shrimp. Now that was quite the dilemma. So, being good co-operative MLAs that we are, New Democrats, believing in sharing, we took that shrimp and we cut it in half, and each of us got a portion of that shrimp.

Out we cast again, and this is where the story really gets good. This is where the story gets good because we are fishing away, and we are starting to think that maybe it is time that we head in, when all of a sudden, I feel, on the end of that rod, a tug, a gigantic tug, a huge tug. The line started to race back towards Selkirk. I braced myself and I felt like I needed to get a belt like you see when they go sail fishing.

I saw Bobby Orr one time, on the Legends of Ice, Legends of Sport or whatever that show was called, catching bluefins. I wanted to belt myself into the seat because it felt that big, that heavy. Mr. Speaker, on a half a shrimp, I want to say, half a shrimp, I hooked on to a huge catfish. And that catfish battled. I have to say it was a horrendous battle. There was sweat pouring off me as I was trying to bring this catfish in. The rod was just bent right over. That catfish went underneath the boat, around the boat. All the time I was taking all that guidance and all that advice from the Member for Selkirk, who helped me as I guided this catfish ever closer to the edge of the boat. We got that catfish up close to the boat and the Member for Selkirk looked over with the net, and, I do not know, the Member for Selkirk was horrified at the size of this catfish. All of a sudden that catfish dove straight to the bottom. But I battled him all the way.

And we started again. Another 10 minutes it took me to get that catfish back up next to the boat. And my friend, my mentor, the Member for Selkirk, got his net in underneath that huge catfish and hauled it over the end. I think it took pretty much both of us to hold it up next to that tape to see how long that catfish was. Mr. Speaker, 93 centimetres.

An Honourable Member: That is big, right?

Mr. Struthers: I think it has grown since then, too. I think it has gotten bigger. To be a master

angler it needs to be, as I am sure the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) knows, has to be 90 centimetres long. So, by three centimetres we caught a master angler catfish. Now, I do not usually like to brag about these kinds of things but since the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) was telling fish tales, I thought I would add one, too.

Of course, you know Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Tourism (Mr. Lemieux) has a neat little option that he can sign a certificate that says that I have indeed caught a master angler catfish, but you have to have a picture of this catfish to prove that you actually caught it. And the last words that my wife said to me as I left that morning were take a camera with you. My attitude was, well, you have a couple of very honest MLAs, everybody will believe us if we catch a master angler catfish.

An Honourable Member: Honest, they are.

Mr. Struthers: Yes. It seems that some people believe us more than others.

But, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to add that fish tale to the one that the member from Emerson was talking about in his speech. For the member from Emerson to stand and start to defend 11 years of his government as compared to the last two and a half years of our Government when it comes to farming amounts to nothing more than a fish tale. You know what, it was not even that good of a fish tale. I do not think it was all that interesting.

Our Government for two and a half going on three years has proven time and time again our commitment to rural Manitoba and our commitment to Manitoba farmers.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite kind of got a little bit vexed when the minister quite rightly pointed out some of the emergency assistance that this Government has delivered, has come through on for Manitoba agriculture. In 2000, \$100 million was provided to Manitoba grains and oilseed producers, 16 percent or \$60 million from the federales, as the Member for

Lakeside (Mr. Enns) likes to refer to the federal government, and \$40 million from us here in the provincial government.

In 2001, we were not finished yet, Mr. Speaker. In 2001, \$92 million was made available to grains and oilseed producers, and \$36 million of that was provincial money. So in two years, if members opposite are having a little trouble with the math, in two years a total of \$192 million was made available, and \$76 million of that is from the provincial government. As the Minister for Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) points out, to tie it in with my story about the catfish, that is master angler level support for our farmers.

Mr. Speaker, we are not there yet. I am not finished yet with the amount of support we were able to give. Twenty-four percent is what we reduced the crop insurance premium rate by. We did that. Since 2000, we have reduced it by 24 percent. That is a real benefit for farmers. That is not what the previous government did. That is what this Government did. Real support for real farmers; a 24% reduction.

We introduced excess moisture insurance. Boy, there were a lot of farmers through the 1990s and into 1999 who really would have liked to have excess moisture insurance.

Now, the members across the way are talking about all these farmers who are fleeing. Well, yes, they started, and, you know, 1996 up to 2001 is the census that they keep pointing at. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, most of that time was spent by farmers trying to plug along under the reign of members opposite.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have three minutes remaining.

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

