



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
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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.
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CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
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DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
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LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
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MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
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PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
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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

Friday, April 20, 2001

The House met at 10 a.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I beg to present the petition of Fred Butler, Carole Stevens, Nancy Toyne and others, praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Selinger) consider alternative routes for the additional 230 kV and 500 kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [*Agreed*]

Will the Clerk please read.

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

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

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

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

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro consider alternative routes for the additional 230 kV and 500 kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Holocaust Memorial Day

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister responsible for Multiculturalism): I have a statement for the House. Today is Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom Hashoah. On May 1, 2000, Manitoba's Legislative Assembly voted unanimously to pass Bill 19, an act to proclaim Holocaust Memorial Day in Manitoba. The date was established according to the Hebrew calendar on the 27th of Nissan which is today, April 20, 2001.

Today, we join Manitoba's Jewish community in remembering the darkest period of our human history. Today, we remember six million Jewish men, women and children whose lives were snuffed out in the blink of an eye simply because they were Jews. Today we recall the indescribable horrors of the concentration camps, the suffering that took place under the command of men who were just following orders. Today we remember the pain of absolute betrayal, the agony of a vast and senseless slaughter. Today we mourn the hopes and dreams that disintegrated in the Nazi dust, the children's laughter that was forever silenced. Today we remember the millions of others who suffered irreparable harm during the Holocaust simply because of their physical or mental disabilities, race, religion, or sexual orientation.

Today we acknowledge the potential for evil that exists. We join the millions of voices that chant never again. We remember because only by remembering can we ensure that it never happens again. At this time, I would like to propose a moment of silence so that we can all remember together.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We will have a moment of silence.

A moment of silence was observed.

* (10:05)

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Multiculturalism (Ms. Barrett) for her statement today, and I am pleased to join the minister in putting a few words on the record about Holocaust Awareness Week and Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom Hashoah.

Last year, as the minister alluded to, we did unanimously pass legislation that officially designated Holocaust Memorial Day. I am pleased that Manitoba is one of the provinces that have enacted this legislation. As legislators, it is important that we reaffirm our commitment to uphold human rights and to value the diversity and multiculturalism of Manitoba society.

Canada has a tremendous history of mutual acceptance and tolerance. The atrocities of World War II, and indeed all wars, must never be forgotten. It is painful to address these issues, but it must be done. It is the only way to work towards ending hate, discrimination and racism.

Our caucus wholeheartedly supports Holocaust Awareness Week and Holocaust Memorial Day. These events encourage not only remembrance, but also education so the past will serve as a lesson for future generations. Perhaps through continued education our children will be able to achieve what our generation has not been able to achieve, to put an end to systematic violence, genocide, persecution, racism, and hatred that continue to occur throughout the world.

Commemorating Yom Hashoah will reinforce the commitment of all Manitobans to fight intolerance and racism in their daily lives. As time passes, it becomes increasingly important to preserve the memory and reality of the Holocaust in order to combat new forms of hatred. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to speak on the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, on today, Holocaust Memorial Day, we need to rededicate ourselves in the battle against racism and intolerance in all its forms, but part of this is not just a fight against something. It is a fight for equity and fairness of treatment of all our citizens by government, not only in the provision of services, but in the employment of individuals and in the ability of all citizens to contribute, whatever their background, to the political process, to the advancing of democracy, and to the process of government in our province. Thank you.

Flood Conditions

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement to make to the House.

Mr. Speaker, the levels of the Red River have risen close to one third of a foot from Emerson to Ste. Agathe since yesterday morning. The forecast for the Red River remains unchanged. While additional rises will be less than 1.5 feet, this could be quite significant with respect to road closures and access to homes in some areas. The crest is still expected at Emerson on Saturday at the floodway inlet next Wednesday. A minor dike closure may be required at Morris, but this is unlikely to result in closure of PTH 75 to end traffic. The highway will only be closed if the water overtops the bridge just north of Morris which is not likely unless rainfall is heavier than expected.

The Red River Floodway is being increasingly used to prevent levels in the city of Winnipeg from rising further. Levels in the downtown area should remain near 17 feet above datum unless heavy rain develops in the Winnipeg area. The floodway flow is presently diverting 22 000 cubic feet per second of the total 61 000 cfs flowing from St. Adolphe. Levels of the Assiniboine River are again rising in the Spruce Woods area due to additional water coming through Brandon. The second crest at Portage la Prairie will be lower than that of April 12 but will require additional diversions into Lake Manitoba.

Levels of the Assiniboine River from Millwood to Brandon have risen quite rapidly with recent milder weather. Significant flooding of valley lands is under way. Crests similar to those of 1999 are expected in this portion next week. Streams in the Riding Mountain and Duck Mountain areas are rising mainly due to remaining runoff from some escarpment areas. Rises should accelerate somewhat in the next few days due to melt of heavy snow cover at higher elevations. However, reports from operations crews indicate that the melt in high ground is still quite slow. Only a fast melt with some rain would create significant flooding. Such fast melting is unusual but has happened on occasion such as in 1983 when a plus 20 Celsius temperature developed. It is unlikely that serious flooding will develop under normal weather conditions.

Crests on streams in the Dauphin area and on tributaries flowing south of Riding Mountain are not likely to exceed those of 1995. Flooding of low areas will continue, but villages such as Minnedosa should escape flooding. This could change if a rapid melt and/or heavy rainfall develops.

*(10:10)

The Roseau River levels are steady or falling, and no further difficulties are anticipated unless heavy rain develops. Today's rainfall will not be enough to raise levels above the crest experienced earlier this week.

The Souris River is presently cresting at levels significantly lower than in 1999. Low-lying areas are flooded from the international boundary to Hartney. Flooding from Melita to Hartney should end within a few weeks, but flooding at Coulter will remain, as I said earlier, through much of May.

On the Pembina River, flooding of valley lands from Rock Lake through to La Rivière continues. However, this year's crest is lower than those of 1996 and 1997, and therefore the duration of flooding will be shorter unless heavy rain develops.

Levels of the Whitemud River are stable in the Westbourne area. Flooding continues in the

northern portion of the watershed near Glenella and through the Big Grass Marsh. High levels are expected near the outlet of the marsh east of Gladstone for the next three weeks where some cattle may need to be moved to higher ground.

Levels of the Fisher River are again rising at the Peguis townsite due to runoff from snow which fell last Easter weekend. The second crest expected over the weekend should be about 2 feet lower than that of April 12 and 13. A few low-lying homes could be affected.

Overland flooding continues in many areas near Lake Manitoba where drainage is not well established. The Alonsa and Ashern areas in particular are having great difficulty. Water is being pumped and roads are being cut as best possible to alleviate the flooding. These areas seldom experience flooding.

The weather forecast calls for 5 to 10 millimetres of rain over much of southern Manitoba today. This rainfall is not expected to have a significant effect on river levels. Cooler, dry weather is expected over the weekend.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): We on this side of the House thank the honourable minister for giving us an update of the levels of flooding on the various streams, rivers and tributaries and the effect of that flooding on the communities and individual properties.

The Leader of the Opposition, Stuart Murray, and I were out at St. Jean yesterday where we witnessed a lake that has formed that is roughly about 7 miles wide and about as long as 15 miles long. There are 14 residences where the only access they have is via boat to their homes. There are two families that have been evacuated out of that area, and the devastation that these people are facing again for the fifth time in the last seven years is something that I think the Province needs to take a serious look at.

Similarly, the devastation, whether it is an individual farmstead overrun by water and/or roads and bridges cut and lost and the disruption that causes to family lives and communities can never be underestimated. The devastation that those of us that have experienced flooding can

never really truly be expressed. So we urge, on this side of the House, the Province to take all actions necessary to alleviate the pain and suffering that we saw and heard from people yesterday at St. Jean when we visited with those 14 families on the road on the intersection of Highway 217, which was blocked by overrun flood waters, and St. Mary's Road, which has been cut in five places to allow the water to enter back into the river where it should go in the first place.

So we urge the Province to take a sympathetic view and do everything in their power to alleviate the suffering.

Mr. Speaker: Before recognizing the honourable Member for River Heights, I would just like to kindly remind all honourable members when making reference to members of the House to please use the constituency or ministers by title and not by name.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to speak on the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been granted.

* (10:15)

Mr. Gerrard: I rise to comment and to in fact some extent echo what the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) has indicated because I have been down to that area, not actually recently but last year, and this is an area where there has been a recurrent problem. There clearly has been a problem in terms of long-term planning because the frequency with which it has been affected by flooding and the lack of appropriate planning so that the only option has been to cut a municipal road—if I am not mistaken this has happened not just this year but in previous years—I would say that it is rather important that the minister get a grip on the long-term planning that is necessary and make sure that it is implemented so that we do not have these localized and recurrent instances of happening of flooding because there

has not been put in place a long-term approach that will solve the issue.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the following reports. All were distributed intersessionally: the Audit of the Public Accounts for the year ended March 31; the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Quarterly Reports for nine months ended December 31; Volume 4, Public Accounts, fiscal year ended March 31, 2000; Quarterly Financial Reports, nine months, April to December, 2000.

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, from Churchill High, 55 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Ed Lenzmann. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford).

Also in the public gallery we have from Shamrock School six Grades 8, 9 and 10 students under the direction of Mr. Clarence Hofer. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed). On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flooding—Infrastructure Damage Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, with the significant flooding that we are seeing and overland flooding and large area flooding such as we saw in St. Jean, will the Premier give us some indication as to what sort of disaster assistance program through DFA can be offered to these communities to rebuild the infrastructure that has been severely damaged?

The previous government in 1997 offered infrastructure relief and assistance to many of the communities that were not directly affected by flooding but were affected because of huge

damage to roads by frost boils and other things. Can this Premier assure us today that they will implement a similar program through DFA to assist those communities that are suffering this damage?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the member will recall our disagreement with members opposite when the former government stated that when you choose to live in a flood plain you have to suffer the consequences. We would agree with the member opposite, who probably took exception to that comment, that it is necessary to look at the infrastructure, whether it is in the area that the member described or in the areas north of Portage where some bridges were damaged.

We obviously will work with the communities to ensure the infrastructure is proper, and we are going to go beyond that, because in this year's Budget we have added significant additional revenues to the drainage issue in Manitoba, something we know is important to all members.

I think we all know that if we have a big infrastructure like drainage and we spend a significant amount of money, to have that drainage system be plugged partially with lack of maintenance by either trees, soil shifting or silt puts more people at risk.

So, on the one hand, in terms of damages to families, we will implement the emergency measures policies appropriately. On the issue of infrastructure, we must rebuild some infrastructure based on this flood. On the issue of future mitigation, we are working with Rosenort and other communities for increased flood protection.

The member's own constituency will know we have money in the Budget for the extension of the dike in Emerson that is appropriate for flood mitigation, and on the other hand, will deal with the damages, but more importantly I think we will start to rebuild the drainage system.

We are not going to be able to undo about 10 years of neglect, but we will start this year, and I look forward to the member's advice about the priorities of some of those systems.

* (10:20)

Mr. Jack Penner: I thank the Premier for that statement. However, I had hoped that he would leave the undue rhetoric out of his response. I think it is unfortunate that we have to resort to that sort of rhetoric at this time.

The flooding is serious and the infrastructure damage is serious. I would like to specifically ask the Premier: At St. Jean there is a stretch of road that cost half a million to replace two years ago and has had similar cost on that stretch of St. Mary's Road continually during that five-year period. There is a need to build five bridges, small bridges, on that outlet that would let the water back into the river and some ditches. There had previously been money applied to build—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): With all respect to the seriousness of the question, Mr. Speaker, I wonder if you could draw the member's attention to *Beauchesne's* 409(2): "A supplementary question should need no preamble." We had both a preamble and now a couple of sentences as post-ambles. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

I would ask the honourable member to please put his question.

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: The question I asked the Premier: Whether he would concur that the project that was started two years ago to drain that part of the Roseau lake, we call it, and build those bridges to alleviate the flooding. Will the Premier commit today to put funding in place for that?

Mr. Doer: This is why we have to look at all the areas of infrastructure damage. The first priority will be to return certain of our infrastructure that is damaged to the state it was in prior to the damage being created.

We will have to prioritize other projects. We are quite concerned about the Gardenton diversion and floodway protection system. I think it was built in 1929. We are seeing a lot more drainage into the Roseau River there. We know that last week we were six inches away from the top of that area. We know there is a program in place dealing with bridges that still remains in the Budget, bridge replacement programs that have a set amount of money under the budgetary requirements of the Government. Certainly those projects will be prioritized higher than the Kenaston underpass.

Flooding—St. Jean Baptiste Meeting Request—Premier

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): A very short, curt question, Mr. Speaker: Will the Premier commit today to go visit with the residents that are damaged by the flood at St. Jean, and will he do it today or tomorrow?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I will meet with all residents that are both mitigating against flood and are subject to some damages. I have a system where I have been meeting with a number of residents to date. I will continue on with that. If the rise in some of the rivers is more significant than what was forecast, there might be a need. I have talked to the leaders of the Opposition of visiting some of the sites, if it is necessary. Hopefully the rain levels will not get too high this weekend, but certainly I have met with victims in opposition of flooding and I will meet with victims of flooding in government.

* (10:25)

East St. Paul High Voltage Power Lines

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter from Reeve Phil Rebeck written on behalf of the East St. Paul Council to the Government, the council which, by the way, also includes the former NDP

candidate for Springfield, Leonard Kimacovich, who is a supporter of the letter, and I will wait for the minister to get the letter.

I quote from the letter, Mr. Speaker: It is council's belief that the installation of any further lines north of the existing lines may pose a significant health hazard to East St. Paul residents.

Will the Minister of Hydro come to East St. Paul and look the Honourable Edward Schreyer, former NDP premier of Manitoba, Reeve Rebeck, Leonard Kimacovich, former NDP candidate, and the East St. Paul residents in the eye and explain his position to them that hydro lines are not just safe but even desirable, rather than hiding behind his desk in the Manitoba Legislature?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table two documents in the Legislature. One is the agenda and related information that was distributed at the meeting held on April 17. The other is the consensus statement developed by the health experts and through the Clean Environment Commission proceedings.

If you look in the material that was distributed at the meeting, the Member for Springfield is quoted in the news release as saying that numerous studies have linked cancer, in particular childhood leukemia, to the proximity of power lines while other studies have been inconclusive. To the member's credit, he has indicated in this press release other studies have been inconclusive. Then in the petition that is being tabled in the Legislature daily the preamble indicates that numerous studies have linked cancer, in particular childhood leukemia to proximity of power lines. No qualifications. The public health officials employed by our Government and the previous government have said the following: There is almost no evidence that extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields have any adverse health outcomes.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister if he read the letter that was sent to his Government in which the reeve says there is a

connection. I ask the minister: Will he come out to East St. Paul and look in the eye the Honourable Edward Schreyer, former NDP premier from that party, the former NDP premier of Manitoba, Reeve Rebeck, the former NDP candidate and the residents of East St. Paul who disagree with the minister that hydro lines are desirable and safe? Why does he not come out and convince them, come from behind his desk and face the people and tell them his story?

Mr. Selinger: This project, initiated by the former government, went through a full environmental impact review, went through a full appeal procedure. I met with the residents and went the extra mile and had the research done on the impact of these emissions. Our public health official indicates that there is no evidence that extremely low electromagnetic fields—

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

Point of Order

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

Mr. Speaker, if you listen carefully to the member's question, he was asking if the minister would meet with the people. He does not need the other explanation. It is very simple. *[interjection]* I guess the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has now become the House Leader over there, but if the Minister of Finance cannot answer the question, he can just remain seated.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I was listening very carefully to both the question and the answer, and I would suggest that the answer was certainly on point. It dealt with the matters raised, and if the members opposite felt provoked, so be it, but there was nothing said by the minister that in itself would provoke anyone.

They were simply the facts from an independent source.

* (10:30)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I had not heard enough of the comment timewise to determine if the honourable member was getting into debate or if the honourable member was about to answer the question.

* * *

Mr. Selinger: I have had a chance to peruse the letter and the reeve from East St. Paul raises a study, and that was the very purpose of the Clean Environment Commission reviewing the literature to get a proper perspective on the literature. The public health officials are more than ready to meet with anybody in the area to explain the science behind electromagnetic frequency emissions. I think we have to, on a matter of public health, defer to the people who have the expertise in this area rather than the ongoing fearmongering that we see in this Legislature.

Mr. Schuler: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Hydro is: Who is he frightened of? The Honourable Edward Schreyer? Reeve Rebeck? The former NDP candidate? Is he frightened of the residents, and why is he hiding behind his desk in the Manitoba Legislature? Why does he not convince them that hydro lines are safe? Why does he not convince the residents that the lines are desirable? Why does he not come out and look them in the face, hold the meeting and convince them that they should have these extra lines right behind their houses, right behind their backyards, right behind their schools and their community? Why does he not come out and try to convince them?

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the question, the minister that initiated this project was a minister of the former government. I am not aware that he ever met with anybody or initiated the review of the research. I have discussed this matter with the municipal

councillor that was raised here this morning. I have discussed this matter with the former premier of Manitoba. I would be happy to discuss it with the reeve, but I think the most important thing is for accurate public information about the health risks to be conveyed to the residents. I believe the member opposite has a responsibility to communicate accurate information about health risks to his residents.

Point of Order

Mr. Darren Praznik (Deputy Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the minister has referenced the need for accuracy, and he has indicated that he was not aware of a former minister, I take it the former member for Riel, meeting with groups. I speak as a former Minister of Hydro and I can tell him that in my tenure in that department there have been occasions where groups have had concerns about Hydro. It is not uncommon for ministers responsible for a Crown corporation to meet with residents on issues involving the Crown utility. So I say to him, if he wants to be accurate, there are precedents for Hydro ministers meeting with community members and he should get out from hiding behind his desk and meet with the people of East St. Paul.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Clearly that was not a point of order. It was a disruption in Question Period. The member has every right to get up and ask a question; he has a preamble, and he could have done that. This is a dispute of the facts. It is not a point of order.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Lac du Bonnet, it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts. I would like to remind all honourable members, in this House they are honourable members and when bringing facts to the House the Chair accepts them as facts because every member in this House is an honourable member. I would just like to remind all honourable members of that.

Auto Theft Reduction Strategy

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, again yesterday we

raised in this House some very serious matters that were worthy of immediate response from this Government, but, unfortunately for the many victims of crime in our province, no answers were forthcoming. Despite the fact that under the Doer government there have been nearly 1000 more car thefts last year than in 1999, the Premier yesterday indicated he was in no rush to follow through on his election promise to implement a four-year mandatory suspension of drivers' licences for those convicted of auto theft, to move the driving range from 16 to 20 years for youth convicted of auto theft and to implement a notification process whereby neighbourhoods would be notified of any auto theft in their area.

In light of the escalating car theft problem, could the Premier explain why he is, as he indicated yesterday, willing to wait some 18 months before taking action in this area?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member will recall last year in this Chamber we took major legislative action dealing with repeat offences with drinking and driving and increased penalties. The Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) and the minister of highways and transportation have been working on this bill.

We will have it in this legislative session. Hopefully we will pass it quickly. We believe it is long overdue. We believe that after 11 years this is a positive initiative that we have worked very hard to ensure that the drafting is not only in the public interest but will also withstand any legal test. That bill will be coming shortly.

Victims' Rights Legislation Proclamation

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Gang membership is up by 500 since he took over. Car thefts are up by a thousand since he took over. Our communities are not getting safer.

Yesterday the Premier said he would do everything possible to prevent crime and hold people accountable. Yet he refuses to take action. Eight months ago—eight months ago—

this House gave unanimous consent to a victims' rights bill. Yet he has failed to proclaim that legislation.

Could the Premier please explain why, after allocating \$90,000 in last year's Budget for two full-time service workers, his Government has failed to proclaim this legislation?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): We believe that the victims' rights legislation is the best in Canada. We have legislation that has not been proclaimed for five or six years from members opposite when we came into government.

I know this is a novel idea for members opposite, but part of what we are doing is working with our Crown attorneys. The member may not know this, but in the early 1990s the kind of respect we had for Crown attorneys in Manitoba is for the government of the day to have arbitration before the election to arbitrate the Crown attorneys' salaries and then after the legislation to pass legislation to roll back their salaries.

We have a different approach in Justice to work with all our partners in Justice. We are doing that. We will soon be proclaiming the act with a total implementation strategy that includes inclusiveness with our Crown attorneys.

Mr. Murray: I think what Manitobans are looking for is action, not arrogance.

Very simply, will the Premier give us a date today when he will be proclaiming his victim rights bill?

Mr. Doer: Action includes more RCMP officers at historic levels. Action includes more judges in our provincial courts. Action includes more prosecutors. Action includes working with Crown attorneys, working with Crown attorneys, not rolling back their wages like members opposite. Action includes ensuring that, when the law is proclaimed, we have increased, and we have increased already the number of Crown attorneys in government to ensure that victims will not just have the legislation, but they will have the administration to have greater rights. They will have that shortly here in Manitoba.

Family Violence Court Backlogs

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): It is obvious by the Premier's answer to questions that this Doer government is doing nothing for victims.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Justice: Given the growing backlogs in the court system, I wonder if the Attorney General could indicate to Manitoba women how long they will have to wait for their accused to be tried and for justice to be served.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, the issue of backlogs in the Family Violence Court has been a long-standing and serious challenge facing all Manitobans, but in particular, of course, those who have to deal with the court system, in particular, victims. Initially the Family Violence Court, it was hoped, would be able to reduce the time that it would take to go from a matter and a plea to disposition. We are confident that we are taking steps in a number of ways to reduce the backlogs across all of the courts, but we are looking at the Family Violence Court and information provided to me indicates that there appears to be a trend and some hope that indeed we will be able to wrestle down the backlogs that have plagued this province for a number of years, indeed since the inception of the court by members opposite.

* (10:40)

Victims' Rights Legislation Proclamation

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I guess I would ask the Minister of Justice when he might stop looking and start acting on behalf of women who have not been consulted by Crown attorneys about plea bargaining and sentencing recommendations, something that we all agreed to unanimously here in this Legislature, and we passed the victims' rights bill, but the Doer government has not acted. When is he going to stop looking and start acting?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I thank the member for the question. The legislation that the House agreed on has been hailed by, for example, the Canadian Victims Resource Centre as creating unprecedented rights for victims. What we are doing is changing a system, not simply changing a policy. So I am pleased to advise the member that, as a result of the decision of this Legislature, there have been teams immediately put in place in police prosecutions, in courts, in corrections and with regard to information technology. In particular, with regard to the last working group, there is a tremendous amount of effort and change taking place with a new information system to provide notice to victims. I can advise the member that it is our intention and expectation that the victims' bill of rights will be implemented in a staged way, beginning this summer.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Given that the Minister of Justice is still looking, I am wondering if the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. McGifford) would talk to her Premier and to her Minister of Justice, who has been dragging his feet on this issue, to immediately proclaim the victims' bill of rights, which we all agreed to a year ago.

Will the Minister responsible for the Status of Women stand up for women and get on, have this Government get on with proclaiming the victims' bill of rights?

Mr. Mackintosh: As I said, this is a significant change in the way that victims are dealt with, and it is a shifting, it is a rejigging of the justice system. We have started almost from ground zero with this legislation and the change that is required. The change with regard to information technology is very significant. We have help from the federal government. We are moving along. We are involving the stakeholders. As I indicated, we will be fulfilling this very important promise during the course of our mandate.

I remind members opposite that when they talked in the '95 election about seizing the vehicles of johns, they brought that legislation into force just months, indeed in February of

1999. It took them three and a half years to bring that legislation into force.

Victims' Rights Legislation Proclamation

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): The Minister of Justice wants to make it sound as if this long delay in implementing this showpiece piece of legislation is somehow just in the normal course of events, yet this minister budgeted in last year's Budget, by his own press release, \$90,000 for staff to be working under that bill.

In the legislation, the Minister of Justice also put a five-year review clause in the bill, implying to all of us that after five years of passage we would be able to review it. It is clear he wanted that bill implemented quickly. I ask the minister, since he is now committed to implement this bill at the beginning of summer, can he tell the House what portions will be made into law on the 21st of June, which is the first day of summer?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): The member is imputing some words to me in terms of the first day of summer, and he has got a calendar out. It is our intention that sections of the bill will start to be implemented this August to ensure that victims receive key information, and the remaining sections will be proclaimed as the agencies complete the implementation that is necessary.

We are going to proceed in a sure-footed way to ensure that this bill of rights works for victims of crime.

Mr. Praznik: I would like to ask the minister why a year ago he stood in this House and he said to the people of Manitoba, "It is unfortunate that the person most affected by the crime is the person most left out of the process." I want to ask him why he continues to leave those victims of crime out of the process after he had the unanimous consent of this House to bring in that bill.

Mr. Mackintosh: After a long time, indeed over 100 years of our court system operating in the

way it has and after 12 years of the members opposite being in government, we are making a significant change to the way the justice system deals with victims. We want to do it right. We will make sure that the staff changes, the protocol changes and the information technology is in place so that we can do this right.

Mr. Praznik: The Minister of Justice, who is responsible for Crown attorneys in this province, did not need the bill to consult with victims. I want to ask this minister: What does he say to the McLaughlin family, and families like them whose children were beaten to death, why there was no consultation on the plea bargains? I want to ask him what he says to those people.

Mr. Mackintosh: When the member gets up and makes those remarks, he is indeed reflecting on what were the policies of the former government and policies which have to be changed. We have to put in place a new way—*[interjection]*

I think the member had his question, and now it is time for the answer. It is important that there be put in place a different way of dealing with victims, and to ensure there is a different way of dealing with victims we need the legislation first, we need a good, solid implementation plan, and that is what is unfolding now. I will be very proud, and over the course of this mandate we will have fulfilled that promise. We will have delivered to victims of crime in this province an unprecedented bill in this country.

Immigrant Women's Association Programming Cancellation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Today, on National Holocaust Memorial Day, when it is important to combat racism in all its forms and to help and empower those who may be targets of discrimination, my question is to the Minister of Family Services.

The Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba has been in existence for 18 years. For 15 years they have run a very successful counselling program which has helped, for example, last year more than a thousand immigrant women.

On Wednesday evening they had a board meeting to let people know that you and your department had abruptly removed this counselling program from a group of people who are working so hard to combat discrimination, to combat racism. These are people who in their own countries have come here because they frequently have been targets of discrimination and racism in their own home countries.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I thank the Member for River Heights for that question because it is a very important one.

He probably knows, Mr. Speaker, that the previous government as well as our Government have worked extremely diligently with this association over a number of years to assist them by providing an executive director at one point, by providing a consultant to assist the board in coming to terms with some of the difficulties that they were facing internally as a board. We have a great deal of respect for the work that has been done by this organization over the years. They have run successful programs, but it seems now that they themselves as a board wish to become more focused on their advocacy work and on the work that they do very well and have always done on behalf of immigrant women.

I also want to assure the member and all members that no funding is being changed in terms of the amounts of money. Counselling service will continue, fully funded as it has been, and other positions funded by this Government through other departments will continue to be funded in the future. We are working very closely with the organization to ensure that these things happen.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary question is to the Minister of Immigration. I ask the minister why she has acted to terminate the community-based language training program and the swimming program which was being delivered by the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba when these programs have provided very important services to immigrants and they are run by immigrants to Manitoba for immigrants.

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, there is no intention at all of terminating these very successful, very important programs. We have committed to working with the Immigrant Women's Association and other community groups to ensure that these programs continue operation and actually become strengthened.

* (10:50)

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary is to the Premier (Mr. Doer). When the indications are that this is a bureaucratic and government takeover of a grassroots delivered service, my question to the Premier: Why are his ministers acting in this fashion to end the delivery through a community-based organization when this can be done better helping to empower people to deliver services rather than having this done by a government bureaucracy?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I thank the member for the question. We are working very closely, as the previous government did and as we have done throughout our 18 months or so in office, with this association to ensure that they continue to do the advocacy work that they have done in the past and we will count on them doing in the future and to ensure that the programs the member mentions will continue to be delivered by immigrant associations and immigrant groups on behalf of immigrants.

They are very successful programs, and they will have a very successful future under the proposals that are being made, and, my understanding is, accepted readily by the board of the association.

Graffiti Control Reduction Strategy

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, Winnipeg has a terrible graffiti problem. While in Opposition, the current Justice Minister twice introduced a private member's bill on graffiti control which stated, and I quote: Graffiti, particularly gang-related graffiti, causes fear and intimidation and undermines the quality of life of neighbourhoods. The minister also stated on September 19, and I quote: If left to proliferate,

graffiti contributes to the decaying communities. What plan does the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) have to allay the fears of Penny McMillan of Tourism Winnipeg, who has said of the graffiti problem, "The visitors are certainly seeing it, and it is creating an image that we are not a clean city; it is just changing how they view us"?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I agree with everything that was said because there has to be a co-ordinated effort across different agencies. I, for one, believe and this Government believes that the province does have a role to play in the war on graffiti because, quite frankly, I think right now it appears to be worse than it has been in the past. Accordingly, I am very pleased today that I can announce that next week a directive will be sent to the Crown prosecutors of this province asking them to seek tougher sanctions for offences involving graffiti, including restitution.

I am also pleased to report on the path to, I hope, quadrupling the number of young offenders who will be deployed to remove graffiti as part of their sentencing in this province in a program called Off the Wall. We are also considering a licence suspension for those who engage in graffiti using a vehicle. I might also add that we have committed \$2 million to Green Teams, a very useful way for communities to get graffiti off the wall.

Mrs. Dacquay: Mr. Speaker, we are pleased that he is implementing some programs, but my question is: Now that that minister is in government, can he tell this House if and when the Doer government plans to implement his private member's bill on graffiti that would have seen fines, restitution and community service for offenders?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, part of the directive to Crown attorneys is to seek a minimum 50 hours of community service as part of the sanctions. We think that is very important to be a part of the response by the courts. Of course, we hope that the courts will respond.

I might add that the members opposite got up, I remember one or two of the members

opposite getting up in response to the private member's bill at the time, saying that it was not needed and that they would not support it, so they are flip-flopping on this.

What I am saying is, in government now, the bill was certainly an educational piece. In government now we will be taking action on those ideas by way of directive, change in policy and funding priorities.

School Divisions Amalgamation

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Progress reports on amalgamation are to be tabled with the Doer government today. School divisions have complained about the division's lack of direction in this regard. I quote from Paul Moreau, Superintendent of Transcona-Springfield: Many of us are in the dark. Is there a plan? Brent Castle, the Superintendent of Turtle River said: There is no direction. What does he want? The minister himself has said, and I quote from today's *Free Press*: If they do not provide evidence against amalgamating, we will make our own decisions.

My question to the minister is: How is the minister going to make good decisions about amalgamation when clearly school divisions are in the dark about what the Government wants from them?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question. I am a little disappointed it took two weeks for members opposite to ask a question on education. I have to say that we would have thought that they would have been more concerned about educational issues in the province of Manitoba than to wait two weeks for a question, but I am glad that a question has been asked finally in this session.

Mr. Speaker, this Government, 18 months ago, in stark contrast to members opposite when they were in office, took upon a thorough consultation process with the field, with parents, with trustees, with teachers, with the community at large, with students. We believe in consultation and dialogue. For the last 18

months, there has been active discussion in the field. We respect local input on matters of provincial import as the modernization of the public school system certainly is. We will continue to consult.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: After all these consultations and open dialogues, supposed open dialogues, will the minister force school divisions to amalgamate if the evidence comes back that clearly there is no benefit to the students' education or any tax savings?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, all decisions in education in the province of Manitoba are geared towards the individual student, enhancing student outcomes for young Manitobans, creating a system of excellence in education, and that is how our decisions will be judged.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, in view that the minister has put on record that these decisions will be made due to the reports that are given back to them, will the minister now commit to giving school divisions more clear direction so the evidence that he does receive is very accurate?

* (11:00)

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, during the last year and a half there has been an open dialogue with the field. We have requested very regularly, forcefully, to have the best advice given from school divisions on issues around assessment bases, issues around enrolment trends, issues around trade patterns in the regions, issues around shared services in a very comprehensive fashion.

The people of Manitoba know that we have been seeking the best advice from school divisions in the province, in the regions, around this issue. We expect good faith to take place and we expect serious deliberations at the regional level on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Victims' Rights Legislation

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I wish to use this occasion to address the complete lack of leadership and initiative this Government has demonstrated by sitting on its hands for the past eight months instead of proclaiming an extremely valuable piece of legislation, The Victims' Rights Amendment Act.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this legislation was considered so valuable to the people of our province that it was passed unanimously in this House last year. For a government that states: "New Democrats have long sought a rightful role and healing for those harmed by serious wrongdoing," it sure seems to be taking its time in actually following through on those noble commitments. What baffles me is how this Government can still claim that it is dedicated to the cause of victims' rights but it will not take action on a bill aimed at doing just that.

Furthermore, with all of the news releases put out by the Department of Justice last year, I wonder if the reason this Government is taking so long in proclaiming this bill is because it is too wrapped up in tooting its own horn to actually put the shoulder to the grindstone and get things done.

Mr. Speaker, before coming into office in 1999, the New Democrats said: Tough talk has not made us safer. I would tend to agree. For the past two years, this province has seen a dramatic increase in violent crime. Our gang population has risen by 500 and our car theft has reached record heights. It has become quite obvious to me that this Government's policy of tough talk, no action, is not helping to lower crime rates in our province.

According to one of the Justice Minister's (Mr. Mackintosh) own press releases last year, the Government had allocated \$90,000 for two full-time victim services workers, so it appears that all of the proper mechanisms were put in place at the time the bill was introduced. Unanimous consent of this House was provided, and yet the bill remains on the shelf

unproclaimed and not helping victims of crime in our province.

Northern Transportation Infrastructure

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has been working hard to improve the transportation infrastructure in northern Manitoba. This winter was the first winter in which all of Manitoba's northern communities had winter road access. The road connecting Leaf Rapids and Granville Lake, both communities within the Flin Flon constituency, finally completes the entire Manitoba winter road system. The 2001 Budget continues our commitment to northern transportation infrastructure and particularly to the winter road system. A new 500-kilometre winter road will serve Tadoule Lake, Brochet and Lac Brochet.

Airports also play a vital role in the daily life of remote communities. Adequate air facilities are crucial for better health care, for the development, maintenance, economic opportunities and for an improved standard of living. There are five recently provincially funded airport improvement initiatives in northern Manitoba. Lac Brochet, located in my constituency and 1004 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg, will receive a new \$175,000 airport terminal this year to replace the original terminal which was built in 1979. The new facility will greatly benefit the community of Lac Brochet as well as better accommodate the thousands of passengers that access the terminal each year.

* (11:10)

The other northern projects include runway extensions at Red Sucker Lake and York Landing, maintenance of the runway surface at Pikwitonei and a new facility in Island Lake. The Island Lake airport is the third busiest facility in Manitoba after Winnipeg and Thompson and has seen local passenger traffic increase by 450 percent over the last 25 years. Properly maintained transportation infrastructure is a key factor in expanding and improving the economies of our northern communities and linking them to other Manitoba centres like Thompson, Winnipeg, The Pas and Flin Flon.

I would like to commend our Government for its continued commitment to improving northern transportation infrastructure, including the northern airports and winter roads. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members. It is very difficult to hear the speaker, and if they would take the conversations out to the hallway or loges.

Pedigreed Seed Growers Awards

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): I would like to speak to the House today about three pedigreed seed growers who were recently awarded outstanding service awards by the Manitoba Seed Growers Association. Don Murray of Decker, Jim and John Nickel of Solsgirth, and Dennis and Wilma Garlick of Roland received awards upon achieving excellence as pedigreed seed growers.

This award is presented annually to members of the Manitoba Seed Growers Association, who have been actively involved in pedigreed seed production and have made outstanding contributions to this industry. Along with presentations of the outstanding service awards, Dr. Jim Bole of Winnipeg was inducted as an honorary life member to the Manitoba Seed Growers Association.

This award is presented annually to individuals who have contributed greatly to the pedigreed seed industry and Canadian agriculture as a whole. Once again, I would like to extend my congratulations to these outstanding Manitobans. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Missing Children

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, this member rises today to make a statement to bring attention to the approximately 60 000 children who are reported abducted, lost or missing throughout Canada.

In Manitoba alone, more than 3500 children are reported lost or missing each year. Since our

Lord Jesus Christ described a humble little child as the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, it follows that whoever finds an innocent, lost little child indeed finds one of the greatest of all human treasures. Child Find Manitoba has worked diligently to find missing children. Ultimately, due to this agency, in Manitoba over 90 percent of these children are eventually found.

This Government has announced that, in partnership with Child Find Manitoba, and through the Department of Transportation and Government Services, photos of missing children will appear on envelopes used to mail out 500 000 driver licence renewals throughout the year. This Government initiative keeps the welfare of the children a high priority for all Manitobans. This Government is supporting this important work being done by Child Find Manitoba. We think that this initiative will further enhance our collective ability to locate missing children and reunite them with their families.

International Year of the Volunteer

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): It is an honour for me to rise today to mark the United Nations International Year of the Volunteer and to recognize the thousands upon thousands of Manitobans who freely dedicate their time for the betterment of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I can only imagine that when the United Nations designated 2001 as a year to honour volunteers they must have had Manitoba in mind. What better example is there of an area whose residents routinely volunteer in their day-to-day lives and who answer the call when needed? Members of this Chamber are well aware of the significant events in recent history where the Manitoba army of volunteers came together to distinguish our province and change lives. The flood of 1997, the Pan Am Games, the Grey Cup, the World Junior Hockey Championships, the Canadian Figure Skating Championships, curling championships. The list seems endless.

As much as those events are significant, even more remarkable are the Manitobans who, day in and day out, dedicate their time to

countless organizations and causes without need or desire for recognition. Whether it is volunteering to work with young people, helping the elderly, being a volunteer fireman, on church boards, hockey coaches, these Manitobans are making a difference in individual lives, and they are making our communities better places to live.

Volunteers are an example of what individuals can achieve, not through government support or programs but simply through caring and concern. While these efforts are rarely the top story in the nightly news, they show us the best in humanity and in ourselves.

On behalf of all the members of the House, I would like to congratulate the volunteers of Manitoba and salute them in this year of recognition.

Committee Changes

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Wellington (Mr. Santos), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Agriculture be amended as follows: Thompson (Mr. Ashton) for La Verendrye (Mr. Lemieux).

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUDGET DEBATE (Sixth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray) in amendment thereto, and the debate remains open.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great, great pleasure to rise in the House today to lend my support and the support of my constituents to the Budget tabled in the House by the Finance Minister and to speak against the amendment that was brought forward by the members opposite. I can tell you that we are going to stand up next week and we are

going to vote against that amendment. It has been a great day for Manitoba and it was a great day for Selkirk when this Budget was tabled in this House.

I have been here now for close to 11 years and I have seen a lot of budgets, probably 10 to 12 budgets. I was here in those early '90s when the members opposite were on this side of the House and they controlled the fiscal spending of this province. I was here when all those Tory budgets were tabled, when they were cutting back, starving education in this province which resulted in increases in property taxes, where they were laying off nurses—

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

An Honourable Member: A thousand.

Mr. Dewar: A thousand nurses were laid off by the members opposite. They raised taxes. This is the no-tax Tories across the way. They raised taxes. We recall this, that they broadened the sales tax which increased revenues. They taxed, I believe, baby clothing and, if I am not mistaken, maybe diapers. They reduced the property tax credit, increased the property taxes by \$75. They ran the largest deficit in the history of this province. This is the great Conservative managers. These are the great Conservative managers. *[interjection]* The Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik) admits that they were not exactly the most fiscally responsible group across the way, \$762-million deficit. That was the result of the fiscal policies of the members opposite.

In those budgets, they closed the Human Resource Opportunity Centre in Selkirk. Then the next year they closed the School of Psychiatric Nursing in Selkirk. They did these things, and I was very pleased to stand up here and to vote against those budgets when they were tabled by the members opposite. Who can forget one of the great tragedies of the last decade in this province, and that is the wholesale sell-off of one of our most valuable public assets. the Manitoba Telephone System? The members opposite sold it off. They took the money and then they spent it. They squandered

that money. These are the great fiscal managers across the way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they sold it. They undervalued the shares. Their rich friends got richer, and they stand up every day in this House, every day in this House and say: Give my rich friends more tax cuts. Now the private MTS has reduced services to rural Manitoba. They cut jobs. They cut jobs in my community. They cut jobs in all rural and northern Manitoba, and it has increased rates. Year after year, in fact it is month after month after month that new MTS is going to the CRTC and asking for additional rate increases. *[interjection]* The members opposite say: No, no, we are going to sell this off, but none of this is going to happen; we are not going to see any job loss; we are not going to see any reduced services to rural and northern Manitoba, and we certainly are not going to see any increase in rates. They are wrong, wrong, wrong.

You know, deep down, members opposite know that this is a good Budget. This is a Budget that is restoring investments in important public services.

* (11:20)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a Budget that restores funding for health care. This is a Budget that restores funding for education, this is a Budget that restores significant funding for agriculture, and this is a Budget that restores public investment in infrastructure. And what are they going to do? They brought forward this amendment suggesting that they do not support it. They are suggesting that they are going to be voting against this Budget. They know in their heart of hearts, the members opposite know that they should be supporting this Budget for many, many reasons.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just highlight some of those important reasons why the members opposite should in fact be supporting this Budget. We know that this Budget is balanced in every sense of the word. This Budget for many, many reasons the members opposite should be supporting it. Let us talk a little bit about some of these tax cuts. This is the Budget that not only does it restore significant investments in education, agriculture,

infrastructure and health, but it also produces a significant tax relief for Manitoba families. This Budget will deliver a 10% cut in personal income taxes for Manitobans, 10.5% cut in income taxes for Manitobans, and the members opposite are going to vote against that. This will save Manitobans over \$165 million annually. As well, it increases the non-refundable tax credit by 2.5 percent, a benefit that will help all the ratepayers in this province by reducing the middle-income tax bracket from 15.4 percent down to 14.9 percent. It even reduces the top income tax bracket. It removes over 4000 Manitobans from the tax rolls. The \$165 million that Manitobans will save on their personal income tax climbs over \$218 million when you add in the property tax credit that was increased by this Government.

We promised during the campaign that we would increase the property tax credit by \$75 in the first year, which we did. We did that again in this Budget. That saves all Manitobans \$150 on their property taxes. I think it is the No. 1 concern of my constituents when they raise the issue of taxes, and that is property taxes, especially the increase that they have seen because of the Filmon years when the Filmon government short-changed education in this province, causing taxes to go up and up. This Government is committing to try to reverse that trend by substantial investment in education, \$48.5 million over two years versus \$15 million over four years from the members opposite. Yet they have the gall to stand up in this House and say, oh, education is underfunded.

The Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) was absolutely correct when he said in this House that the Opposition can have it both ways. They are the great practitioners of that because day after day we have got them standing up and saying, oh, we need tax cuts, tax cuts, which we are delivering, but they are not big enough for them. As well, we have got the members opposite standing up: spend, spend, spend.

You have got the Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) saying he needs an underpass. They have got other members coming and saying, oh, pave my highway. We did not do it when we were in government, come and pave my highway.

Last year during the Estimates, as part of my job, I was attending most of the Estimates, and it is a tale of two Tories. You go to the Finance Minister's (Mr. Selinger) Estimates, and they are lined up, cut taxes, cut taxes. Then you go into the Highways Estimates, and all the Conservative MLAs are lined up, spend more money on my highway, pave my highway, member after member. It is too bad they could not caucus these things before they go into the Estimates, but that is the dilemma of the members opposite.

This Government has, as I have mentioned, reduced the personal taxes. We have increased the property tax credit. We have also made significant tax reductions to help small business in this province. We have announced that the threshold for small businesses is reduced, which is a 50% increase from the current threshold of \$200,000. I know that this really bothers the members opposite, really troubles them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that is, that this Government is reducing the general rate of corporate income tax from 17 percent to 15 percent. This is the first cut in the corporate tax since the Second World War. The members opposite do not like that, and they are going to vote against it. How can they stand up in this House and vote against it? I know my colleagues will be supporting this, of course.

As well, we are extending the Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit for a number of years, a good announcement as well. We are also reducing the small business tax rate which fell to 6 percent and will fall to 5 percent in the year 2002. I just want to quote a small-business person in this province, Doug Saville. He is the president of the Two Rivers Brewing Company. I just quote from yesterday's *Winnipeg Free Press*. The members opposite are standing up with their quotes from Dan Kelly and their quotes from Victor of the Canadian Taxpayers', which represents 2000 people. They are standing up there in quotes.

I want to quote this fellow. He is a young businessman, young entrepreneur here in Manitoba. This is what he says about this Government, and I quote: I think that the Doer government has shown that they care about small business in Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, they are going to vote against that. Here we have a

small businessman who is trying to establish his business and create employment, pay taxes in this province, praising this Government when it comes to its initiatives related to our support of small business. As he said, we do care about small business in this province.

As well, we are looking at the need to address a shortage of skilled workers. The support for cultural industries, there are equal tourism initiatives in this Budget as well. I am quite pleased about this, and that is the lifting of rent controls for 15 years on newly constructed units. I think that is important.

We have experienced strong growth. We are fortunate that we have had strong growth. The members opposite claim it is their policies. We know that a low Canadian dollar, a strong U.S. economy, low interest rates are some of the reasons why we are fortunate to have a strong economy at this time. Members opposite, they want that gloom and doom. They are predicting that gloom and doom. They want those jobs to leave. They want those people to go to Alberta. Every day in this House they stand up and say everyone's moving to Alberta. You know, they are pushing them there. They want them to go there. They would be happy if this happens. Members opposite, they are predicting gloom and doom, and they are hoping. It is a shame, but they are hoping that it does happen.

As well, this Government has taken important steps to deal with the environment. There is more money in this for the floodway expansion.

There was a program to establish a safer drinking water program. It was the members opposite who privatized the water-testing unit in this province, which charged everybody \$25 for a basic water test, and I am very pleased that this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has started to reverse that. We are now covering 70 percent of the cost of having your water tested. We know the concerns in Manitoba, the concerns that people have about the quality of their drinking water. I know that this is an issue that has been raised with me by my constituents.

We are extending the sales tax exemption for manure, slurry tanks and lagoon liners, and I know that is important to my constituents.

* (11:30)

We are supporting the Livestock Stewardship program Mr. Deputy Speaker, through additional enforcement and additional inspection.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a new environmentally sensitive areas tax credit will assist my constituents. I know I have had an individual approach me about this. He owns land in the lower part of the Libau marsh area, and his land is marginal. It is constantly flooding because of such low land, and he has approached us to see if there is anything we can do about taking that land off his hands. Now this tax credit would allow him to receive a reduction in his property tax if the land is being used for environmentally sensitive initiatives. In this case, it would probably be great habitat for the breeding of wildlife in this particular waterfall, while we are setting aside land for boreal forests in Manitoba as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has done an excellent job in restoring confidence in our public education system. As I mentioned earlier, our administration is putting in \$48.5 million in two years versus the \$15 million from the members opposite in their tenure as a government in this province. We are providing universities with \$13 million, a huge increase in the universities and colleges of 3.8 percent. We are allocating almost \$11 million for the College Expansion Initiative. We are supporting training for aerospace and aviation employment, and the members opposite are going to stand up and vote against this. It is absolutely a shame.

As I have said before, we are going to spend \$101 million for colleges and universities. My constituents will be very pleased with that, as they can access education here in the city of Winnipeg. The list goes on and on and on.

Health care, of course, is very important. Currently in Selkirk the Government is training 24 LPNs. They will soon graduate, and they will be providing services to individuals in the Interlake area and the north Eastman area. I know the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr.

Praznik), several of his constituents will benefit from these trained nurses going and working in the health care system.

There is an initiative to keep doctors in Manitoba after they graduate. Now people raise this with me all the time. Is there not anything we could do to keep trained health care professionals in our province after they are trained? We are adding additional 15 spaces for medical school, and they are dedicated to training family physicians for rural and northern Manitoba. Now it takes a long time to train a doctor, but I am glad we are beginning it today. It would have been better had the Filmon administration done this 10 years ago. That probably would not have been the best time, but the second-best time to do it is today, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As well, and I raised this in a members' statement earlier in this week, and that is our administration is funding CT scanners, dialysis machines, medical equipment, to replace a decade-long deficit in this equipment deficit brought on by the members opposite, \$22 million. There will be further announcements later on this year.

The CT scanner that is going into Selkirk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is going to benefit residents of Gimli, the Interlake, Lakeside, and they are all going to vote against it. One of these CT scanners is going into Steinbach. The Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner) will stand up here in this House next week, and he will vote against that. He will tell by standing up in this House, and saying I do not want that CT scanner in Steinbach. That is what he is going to do when he stands up in the House here next week. He is going to have to go back to his community and explain to his constituents why he is against a CT scanner coming into Steinbach. The Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer) will have to stand up. He will have to go to his constituents and say, well, I am against that CT scanner going into the Interlake region.

In fact, the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), just a few minutes ago, raised the fact about the dialysis unit that went into the Selkirk Hospital. I voted in favour of that budget that put that dialysis unit in the Selkirk Hospital. We voted in favour of that budget, so we are asking

the members opposite to vote in favour of our Budget.

How can they not? How can they go back to their community and say I voted against more money for health care, which the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) raises in this House? We vote against more money for education. The Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith) raises—well, she did today for the very first time, from the very first time she has raised an education question, but their leader has put that in his resolution, which I am speaking against, of course, the lack of funding for the public education system.

We are restoring infrastructure in this province. The Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) wants a new underpass there in his constituency. Then, on the other hand, he wants big tax cuts as well. The members opposite cannot have it both ways, although obviously that is what they are trying to do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we are putting in predictable funding for the regions, and we are working with other provinces to find a way to contain the spiralling drug costs. We know that is one of the areas that is increasing every year, Pharmacare costs as well. It was announced recently by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) that we are making further investments in long-term community care and in mental health care—so all these issues. This is a balanced Budget, and you are voting against a balanced Budget. You brought in the balanced budget law, and now they are going to stand up and vote against it.

An Honourable Member: A surplus budget.

Mr. Dewar: A surplus budget. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we now have the lowest debt servicing in the history of this province, 6.7 percent. It is the third lowest in Canada, and he is going to stand up, the Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) is going to stand up and vote against that. They are going to vote against debt retirement. They are going to vote against the balanced Budget. It is regrettable. I think there are a few of them over there. They realize that, oh, well, this is really a good Budget and, well, we do not know what we are going to do

next week. We are supposed to do it this way, but, you know, show some leadership over there, you guys, individual leadership.

As I said, we voted for your budget. I voted for that dialysis machine to go into Selkirk. Should you not vote for a CT scanner to go into Steinbach? Should you not vote for a CT scanner to go into Selkirk? *[interjection]* No, but they are not. I think the Member for Portage, I believe he is on my side. *[interjection]* Yes, that is right. I can hear him now. I think he is offering his support over there, and I am very pleased that he is. I am very pleased that there is someone over there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans need a positive message coming from this Legislature. So I urge the members opposite to withdraw their motion of noncompetence. I think perhaps they will do that. Once they do that, then they can vote for the Budget that invests in health care, education, infrastructure, invest in families, a surplus Budget that reduces taxes, personal income taxes, it reduces business taxes, and it reduces the debt as well. For the first time ever, I believe, first time in many years, there has been money put into the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, as opposed to the members opposite who sold off MTS. They sold off MTS. They expanded gambling in this province. Now it is a \$250-million industry. That is the way they do things opposite. How could they not support this?

I know that Manitobans need to know that we are united in this Chamber behind the fiscal, the social policies and the social plan of this Government and know that they could do it. So I urge them, I urge them to withdraw their motion and do what is right for Manitobans and that is to stand up in the House next week and vote in favour of this Budget. Thank you very much.

* (11:40)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my opportunity to stand up and speak in the House today on the Budget of the NDP government of 2001. I must say a most disappointing Budget, if I can say. We have heard from the last couple of speakers, particularly the member from Selkirk and the member from the Interlake yesterday, going on

at great length and diatribe about some of the wonders that this Government has done when we know that there is so much that they could have done with the proliferation of dollars that they have received in this economy since they took over.

All I can say, as my honourable colleague from Portage la Prairie and I were talking about, is that because these two members are side-by-side it must have something to do with the region. It is either in the dirt or the water up there. It is just fantastic to think that these gentlemen could actually pat themselves on the back for the kind of Budget that they put together in Manitoba and actually take credit for all of those increased dollars that they have received over the last 18 months since they came into power.

I would like to talk today about a number of those issues. I will talk about the Budget and the dollars that they have received. I will talk about the spending that they are doing. I will talk about the lack of agricultural support in the province of Manitoba and a number of issues in regard to health and education.

First of all, I would like to just take this opportunity, as I did not have the opportunity to speak to the Throne Speech last fall, which, there again is a great diversity of opinion between the Throne Speech that they gave a year ago and the lack of substance that is in this Budget Speech. There is just really not a lot of parallel significance between the Throne Speech and the dollars behind the words of the Budget.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate our clerks in the session as we begin this new summer sitting, spring sitting if you will. It will be up to the Government a little bit to determine how long they want to have this sitting and how many bills they decide to bring in. I would like to commend them for the work that they do on a daily basis in this House, and as well to the clerks and the interns that are working with the Government and the opposition parties, as well as the pages who are new to the Chamber and do the work that we call upon them to do in this Legislature on a regular basis daily.

It is my pleasure, too, to give my personal congratulations on behalf of the constituents of Arthur-Virden that I have had the opportunity to represent to say thank you to two members of this Legislature who will be greatly missed, I am sure even by the members of the Government today, but certainly by our side for the direction that they gave the Province of Manitoba over their years in the Legislative Assembly. I am speaking of our former Premier Filmon from Tuxedo riding and also the member from Kirkfield Park who was the former Minister of Health and the Minister of Finance in this province. Both have given a great deal of their personal time over the many, many years, decades, if you will, of involvement in this province.

The people of Arthur-Virden have respected, as well as all Manitobans, I feel, have respected the personal integrity that these gentlemen had and the personal time and effort that they put into guiding the Province of Manitoba through what was left in, if I may add, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a pretty large mess from the kind of overspending that had taken place in the mid-80s in this province, and it takes a considerable amount of time, as any household knows, to turn budgets around and come up with a surplus and actually balance the books for a number of years, and I congratulate them. I congratulate them for being a particular part of the effort of bringing in balanced budget legislation, as Manitoba has been seen as a role model and if they are remembered for one specific issue, and I do not think you can remember either of them for one, but the one that will always stick in my mind is the responsible management of the Province of Manitoba.

I think that is what we are lacking today, is in the role that this Government is going to play, has already started over the last 18 months and will no doubt continue by the looks of this Budget with the kind of spending that will be as out of control as it was in the mid-80s, from the 1984-88 period particularly, when the NDP took the debt of this province from \$1.4 billion to \$5.2 billion in four short years.

Before I get into some of the examples, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to just give you one quick outline of why I feel this is such an

irresponsible position for the NDP to have taken. You know, they have come up with around approximately \$900 million new income since they came into power. Now that, the gentleman I just spoke of, the member from Tuxedo and the Finance Minister, the Member for Kirkfield Park at that particular time, would have loved to have had the increased transfer payments and the increased equalization payments that have fallen in the lap of the NDP in Manitoba since they took power. Those dollars would have gone a long way to balancing the books and reducing the debt of this province, and you know, clearly, as I mentioned earlier, it takes time to turn these things around to the point where you can start to utilize some of the money in a responsible manner to put dollars back in Manitobans' own pockets and provide the services that they expect for their hard-earned tax dollars that they pay. My point is that, if Manitobans have had \$900 million more money come into our pockets in Manitoba, and that is what this Government has had, then surely we should have got better services than what we are receiving over the last 18 months for the dollars that have come into this provincial Budget.

But I want to look at it and say that, as I have pointed out, the budget problems that we had in Manitoba from 1984 to 1988, I want to also say that this Government has had, when the Conservatives took over in 1988, there was a budget of about \$5.2 billion. They left 11 years later, and that budget was at \$5.9 billion, that it increased about 9 percent over 11 years. With this Budget the NDP have taken the Budget up to \$6.8 billion of spending in the province of Manitoba, a mere increase of 16 percent in 18 months. Well, let us just extrapolate that a little bit, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we want to show how absolutely absurd the situation is getting in Manitoba in this short amount of time. If you extrapolate the 0.9 of \$1 million that have been spent in this Budget in Manitoba over the same amount of spending for the 11 years that the Conservatives were in power, then the budget in Manitoba would have been increased by 6.6 billion more dollars from when they came into power. When they left government, as I have said earlier, the budget was \$5.9 billion. When you add the extrapolated process you come up with \$6.6 billion, plus \$5.9 billion. That is \$12.5 billion in the province of Manitoba. That is what

the budget would have been. If we would have done what the NDP have done today, the budget would have been \$12.5 billion by 1999.

Now let us put it this way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would Manitobans have thought that was a responsible way to go? That is without the extra interest it would have taken Manitobans to have paid for that debt that we would have continued to add to the bottom line in Manitoba without any interest costs. So when you want to talk about what are you going to cut here or what school are you going to close there, when they throw back in our face what would you do to make this Budget, who would you cut out of this plethora of spending that we have been on for the last 18 months.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for 11 years the Conservative budget daily had to deal with where are our priorities going to be in the province of Manitoba? Where are we going to be? How competitive are we going to be in other provinces? There were some very hard decisions made, and they affected every one of our families in this House and every family in Manitoba. There are things that this province needs as every household feels that there are things that they need in their homes or would like to give to their families.

* (11:50)

I guess I would draw a little bit of an analogy to Santa Claus, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Right now he has 32 elves running the province—31 more, I guess, if you want to include the Premier as Santa Claus. That is 31 elves running around the province trying to figure out where they are going to distribute these funds, this hard-earned taxpayers' money that they have increased the Budget by in 18 short months. *[interjection]*

The Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) says we will spend it in Arthur-Virden. I can tell the Member for Brandon East that he has had ample opportunity over the last 18 months to direct some \$43 million to the flood in western Manitoba, and I will get into that later. He has not put a cent there. We will look at that as we go. I want to make sure that this is driven home, that this Government

realizes that if we would have spent money at the same rate that they had the budget in Manitoba today would be \$12.5 billion, and they have increased it up to 6.8. That shows the responsible and tough decision making that some members of this House have had to make.

Unlike theirs, we were responsible in the spending of—I cannot say "we" because I was not here, but my predecessors in government for 11 years were the ones that I looked up to and that is why I am in this House today. It is because I felt compelled to contribute to the province of Manitoba, to the strong responsible fiscal management that this province needs.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is great that the economy of Manitoba—do not get me wrong—has been able to attain \$900 million more money, \$350 million of it coming from increased transfer payments out of the federal government in transfer and equalization payments. It had absolutely nothing to do with this Government taking over, but albeit they will take credit for it.

When we talk about the different sectors and where these funds should go, I think it is very clear, and I even heard the Finance Minister himself say at a public meeting in Brandon, in fact it was the fall fair last year when he was invited to speak in Brandon. He spoke to the assembly of some 400 or 500 farmers that were gathered that morning. He made the comment there that health spending in Manitoba was \$2,100 per man, woman and child in the province of Manitoba—more than any other province in Canada.

He is absolutely right. The Finance Minister made those comments. They are exactly the same dollar values as when the Conservatives left power—\$2,100 per man, woman and child in Manitoba.

Now, if anyone was going to correct the health system in Manitoba with more dollars—and there are still some who think that what it will take is more dollars—obviously the elves and Santa Claus and this House today believe that taking the \$500 million that they have spent more in health care in the last 18 months will solve the problem of health care. It has nothing to do with accountability on how those dollars

are spent and where we can go with it, 40 percent of the provincial Budget being spent on health care.

If they thought that \$500 million was going to do it, then that would be one thing. But where is the accountability for that with over half of the increased dollars that they have received in this province to be spent in one particular area?

Now, there is no doubt that we are all concerned about health care in Manitoba, particularly in rural areas where we are travelling further and further all the time for the kinds of services that we hope to get and that we need as well. We have seen a prime example of it even in the Justice area just this week with the announcement of some of the court dates being cancelled because of the lack of judges in the rural areas.

The NDP stands up and says, well, yes, but we have a whole bunch more RCMP out there; we have got a full slate of RCMP for the first time in decades. That comes from a federal responsibility of putting enough dollars back into the training of the RCMP students in the Regina base to actually come up with the number of RCMP members. It has really nothing to do, or not very much to do at least, with the provincial NDP in this province.

I applaud the fact that we have a number of RCMP back in the rural areas of this province and, as well, here in the city. But the facts, as we have pointed out in the last few days in the House in Question Period, are that crime is still on the increase in Manitoba.

It is a shame that we cannot try harder from this Government with the kind of money that they have had in the spending that they have been on to actually bring crime a little bit more under control than what they have done. We see it in rural Manitoba as well. We may not have the same kind of graffiti problems that they do here in the city. I know I have lived here now for some 18 months on a part-time basis, if you will. As much as I can spend of time in my constituency, I have been.

Maybe one initiative they could look at is one of the things that one of the communities in

the constituency that I represent, Arthur-Virden, has done. Of course, other towns are looking at it as well. Virden won an award for beautification of that community this year. But the prime one in Manitoba is, of course, the community of Boissevain which has won national awards and now international awards for the most beautiful community of its size in Canada. It is certainly done on a volunteer basis within that community. They really have done a tremendous amount of work in attracting tourists and attracting people to that community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I note the honourable member from Rossmere may even try to take credit for having been born in Boissevain, but he certainly does not paint because I do not see his name on any of those murals in that community. But he does acknowledge that it is a beautiful community and that it is a wonderful place to have raised his family.

Hopefully, when we see the opportunity to come back into government, our goal in Manitoba in the future, unlike that of the Government's, will be to keep our young people in our rural communities and not be in the city of Winnipeg trying to take jobs away from some of the people in the city who are trying to keep their own young people in their own urban surroundings. We have to make those opportunities here in Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the situation in agriculture is very—how shall I say?—not disconcerting because there are many farmers out there today who still have, believe it or not, some extreme optimism with certain sectors of our economy in agriculture, and I do not want to be the naysayer of saying that everything is bad in agriculture. Certainly from our side we have many members who farm or have had rural background experience, and it is very hard to deal with some of the issues today that have been forced upon the agriculture community in grains and oilseeds particularly.

I want to just point out a few of the inactivities of this Government in relation to those areas, but I do want to say at the onset that very clearly we have to look at the opportunities that are out there. Government's role in this whole area is to set an economic climate that

will allow investors to invest in our province, to allow farmers themselves to invest in their own operations, and where we cannot do it on an individual basis because of the capital erosion of the last few years, to provide opportunities for others in our economy. We would like to hope that that would be Manitoba-based funds that would invest in our agricultural economy, because there are good returns in some of the sectors that are out there today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hog industry is experiencing good returns in the feeder side of that industry at the present time. The beef sector is holding its own in regard to pricing. Some would say that they are seeing some of the best prices that they have seen in decades. We also hear people say that agriculture is a cyclical business, that our economy, our rises in our prices, and our falls, go in cycles on a normal basis, and they do. What we need in the economy of this province in those sectors though, is some realization, that because of outside factors, the normal cycles of these particular sectors are being impacted today more and more negatively than ever before.

We are in a situation here in Canada today where this weekend we will have 34 countries coming to the city of Québec, in the province of Québec, in the country of Canada, to deal with discussions on democracy and how we as democratic nations, all 34 of them being democracies, come together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to develop agreements and ways we can co-operate. That is what it is about. How we can co-operate on getting along in the future, but there are all these naysayers who say well, it is a big trading block, they are going to hurt people and these kinds of things.

*(12:00)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

We rely on trade, Manitoba relies on trade, so the discussions that will take place in Québec will be very significant. I have not seen this Government make one statement in the House, or one effort to be involved in this whole process to let us know what their opinion is, at least of these talks that are taking place in our country, that are probably more important to the

agriculture and aerospace industries than we have ever seen in our lifetime. So we await those words in this House.

I have to say in regard to agricultural flow of dollars in our economy that some of the grain sector is having a very tough time brought on by the fact that the national plan we have in place for a safety-net mechanism is not fulfilling the needs of the agricultural grains and oilseeds industry today, and, secondly, from the fact that we are in a very exacerbating, not a free-trade climate, but a subsidy climate in the United States and in Europe with the European Union that has caused us great concern.

Whether you are a wheat producer in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta or even in Ontario, you are receiving an average of about 11 percent of our value in that commodity from the government today in forms of subsidies. It is not direct to the farmer in all of those. That includes some of the research budget as well. Whereas the neighbours to the south, who are the ones that we have to deal with on a regular basis, on a daily basis, receive 48 percent of their incomes from those subsidies. That creates quite a shortfall when you are a mile from your neighbour in regard to such things as even who has the upper hand when it comes to being able to purchase land because they are free to come to Canada and invest in our country, invest in our economy, as they have done in many other sectors besides the agricultural sector. It makes it very difficult for our young people here and even some of our family members that have been in the farming community for three and four generations to be able to continue to expand their operations, or to at least in the traditional manner that we have normally looked at having the opportunity of doing that in, Mr. Deputy Speaker—Mr. Speaker, I may say. Welcome.

So I just want to also elaborate on the fact that while we hope that the all-party resolution that we agreed to the other day in this House will have some ability to go to Ottawa and influence them with other provinces, hopefully, who will come on side to seek some support for the agricultural community, we have to be extremely careful that the programs that we put forward do not impact on those sectors that are already doing well in our economy today because we are

having young farmers out there today make decisions on their futures in regard to how they will invest in land, livestock, equipment. As we have seen with the AIDA program, they have been hurt by these kinds of programs because those who have diversified the most are the least eligible for the kinds of support programs that have been designed in Canada today.

The CMAP program, the Canada-Manitoba Adjustment Program that was put out a year ago did the same thing. It took your gross income from grains and oilseeds and excluded livestock and put a 6% payment on it, 6 percent of that eligible income, and paid some dollars out to the rural economy; there is no doubt about that. The program that we have got now, though, it does not seem that either the federal government or the province has learned a thing from that program other than they have added some crops that were necessary to be put in there, forage seeds and other areas, and pulses. Where are we now? This program was announced on the 1st of March in Ottawa, and we are now into the middle of April. The minister announced the program, but we still do not know whether the funding base is going to be 6 percent like it was last year or 7 percent or 5.

So farmers are still left up in the air in regard to the kinds of dollars that they can go to talk to their bankers about. This is a difficult situation to be faced with when we are already just a few weeks away from being able to go to the fields in Manitoba. It is very difficult to negotiate a new operating loan with a banker when many farmers, and particularly in our region because of the flood of '99, have lost more equity than any other region of the province and need that concrete dollar figure to be able to negotiate with many of the banking industry for the kinds of operating loans that they will need this spring.

Before I finish, I would just like to say that I have to go back to the shortfall that this Government has left in the region of western Manitoba. They have shown absolutely no leadership in regard to looking after the concerned farmers in that area who have lost equity due to not being able to have their land brought back to comparable levels to before the 1999 flood. I have fought vigorously in this

House, as well as on three separate occasions, one with the Government, to go to Ottawa to deal with this issue, but there is also, even though I have written letters to the minister of emergency preparedness here in Manitoba and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), not received any kind of support to back up the kinds of comments that they have made in regard to how they have supported.

They have said, of the \$71 million in western Manitoba, that the Conservatives put into that region in regard to support for the flood of 1999, that there is still \$20 million approximately that has not been matched by federal dollars, so they are not going to put anything more up until that is matched. Well, my letters have asked for them to document where that \$20 million would be spent and where it has not been matched, and all I have received to date was rhetoric in regard to the fact that they will not provide those kinds of funds. I think it is just another example of how shameful this Government is of their record in agriculture and how unfortunate it is that they cannot come forward with the simple math. It is not a secret. It is just a number that would be in the department, very easy to provide, you would think, what basis they have made these comments on. Farmers out there expect nothing less.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, they have shown some direction in the Budget, some initiative, if you will, for flood programming in that they have taken \$40 million. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has allowed his Budget to put \$40 million aside if it is matched by Ottawa at some time for the construction of the dike system around the city of Winnipeg to alleviate any kind of flood concerns that might hit us as happened in 1997 again, and we applaud him for taking some of that initiative, even though it was done prior to his own \$750,000 study being implemented to determine which would be the best way to go. So we know that there is just a little bit of lack of planning on his behalf in that area, but we applaud the fact that he has taken some initiative to set these dollars aside. However, I would say that there is great inconsistency in this Government's way of dealing with flooding and dealing with other situations and some of them that I pointed out in

the differences between the initiative they announced in the Throne Speech and the actual dollars that were there to back those words in the Budget speech completely interconnected in many situations.

The \$40 million being set aside for the floodway development, the parallel I draw is that this Government could have taken the same initiative, obviously had the dollars if they would have had the will to do it for western Manitoba. The whole western Manitoba economy would be much better off today if they had paid the \$43-million minimum, which was really only about half of what the rally groups and Rural Disaster Recovery Coalition were asking for in that region but would have agreed to at that time a year ago. They could have used the \$43 million to have settled the issue in western Manitoba and actually targeted some of those funds to that hard-hit region, but they chose to do nothing of that nature, and the area is still suffering because of it.

* (12:10)

They will see that when they come to Brandon next week. I am sure that the kinds of comments that will appear before our committee next week will reflect some of that shortfall in equity in that region, and I would still encourage the Government to do the right thing, to take the initiative with the dollars that they have and pay the region of western Manitoba. Put those dollars out. I mean, it is not like they were all Conservative seats out in that part of the world, Mr. Speaker. There are actually two members from the city of Brandon who would gain extremely well from having these dollars put in to their economy in western Manitoba, but this Government does not see the benefit in being able to do that. It would also provide some of the hard-earned dollars to provide some of the value-added sector advancements that are needed in that area. You know, these are initiatives that a government can take. It is just like giving people back some of their hard-earned tax dollars. It shows that they can actually more wisely spend these dollars themselves than the Government would because they know what is needed in their own operations and in their own regions to be able to expand their base in their own rural communities.

Now, I have spent considerable time, Mr. Speaker, of my time here today on this, because it is the most important issue in western Manitoba: development of our agriculture commodities and, thank goodness, Manitoba has already diversified as much as it already has. Thank goodness, the former government that I believed in so credibly well that I decided to run and hopefully continue to expand the area of diversification in the rural economy of Manitoba as well as make Winnipeg a better place to live as well. We needed to have an initiative there that would allow people to develop these kinds of diversification because that is, bluntly, how we keep people in rural Manitoba. If you keep people in rural Manitoba, then you need hospitals, you need schools, you need all the initiatives that this Government thinks that they are the only ones that ever did anything with. They were not. Obviously, the Filmon government at that time took the initiative to take money from the provincial budget and make it a priority that the Budget of Manitoba would cover the shortfall and cutbacks that the federal government made for health transfers in the country, to all of the provinces in Canada, and that was a responsible action, one of the most responsible actions the Conservative government took in its mandate of 11 years.

They did not rely on Ottawa, and they did not blame Ottawa. They blamed them, but they actually took action on issues like health care, on issues like putting money into western Manitoba when the flood took place, in the Red River Valley in 1997 when the flood took place, in 1989 in the Swan River area when fires went through that region, when flooding took place in that region, as well. The provincial government took the initiative to drive the funds into those areas, and at that time then debate with the federal government whether or not they needed to get the dollars back, and in most cases, all cases, did so. Sometimes it took a couple of years of heated debate with our federal counterparts in Ottawa.

This Government does not know how to do that. They do not have any initiative, even though they told Manitobans that they would have a much better relationship with the federal government in Ottawa when they took power. Well, it is obvious that there is no relationship

there at all. So they hoodwinked Manitobans during that election process into believing that there would be a better relationship there, and Manitobans have not forgotten even today that that relationship does not exist.

Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that if \$500 million—to go back to that for a moment—in health care was going to have fixed the solution, then I would like to just reiterate one of the election issues that the Government made or that today's Government made when they were in opposition and running in that area. One of the quotes from the Premier was during the election campaign in one of his television election ads, and I quote: If it means having diagnostic equipment to operate a couple hours more a day to make sure that people are not going to the United States, then we do it. If it means having our nurses rehired to have the beds we have already paid for staffed, rather than having people in hallways, then we do it.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in 18 months the nursing shortage in Manitoba has doubled. In 18 months, in fact even from a year ago, there are still more people in hallways than there were a year ago in the province of Manitoba. We have conflicting views, even within their own government, from the Premier (Mr. Doer) saying that people misinterpreted his election promise to the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) saying that, well, it was irresponsible to have thought we could end hallway medicine in six months anyway, and that was a statement made by his own Health Minister after they came into power.

The waiting lists in Manitoba are longer, longer than they were in September of '99 when this Government took over. On CT scans, there are still seven weeks as of February of this year. MRIs, we are still 13 weeks. Ultra sounds, we are about the same. The point is Manitoba government has received approximately \$900 million more in income in this province, and they should be absolutely ashamed of the services that they are not providing Manitobans today.

They talk about corporate tax cuts, and I have not got into the situation here of taxes very much, but one thing that they pride themselves on is the fact that they upped the small business

capital tax cap to \$300,000. They are talking about reducing the rates on those levels and how they have increased it by 50 percent, the cap that they have raised this to. The point that has been missed here in this whole debate is that the competing provinces are Alberta and Ontario, not Saskatchewan, as they have drawn a parallel to now, but the provinces where they even talk about our people going to have a \$400,000 cap. So we are only three quarters of the way, even with the increase that they have given us, to where we need to be, to be competitive to try to keep our young people here in Manitoba, to try to keep the sectors of training in Manitoba after we have put the dollars into the training in education and all of the efforts that I applaud that need to be done in this province. We need to train our young people. We need to provide more opportunities for technicians in this province, for university students to graduate and become lawyers and accountants in this province. I say that because of some personal endeavours that family members have taken in my own family in this area, but we need to be able to put programs in place that will keep them here after they graduate and that is missing in this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to end by saying that the communities of western Manitoba await this Government's redirection, if you will, in the Budget of 2002. The direction that they have taken has not been one that will sustain Manitoba's youth or seniors in the long run in this province. It will not keep businesses intact here in Manitoba. It will not stop the movement of head offices out of the province even though equipment and people may stay.

What we are missing the most in this Budget is the acknowledgement—we all talk about who will leave this province—but what is missing the most is who will not come to Manitoba, what is the potential that we will not realize in Manitoba because of this kind of playing around with budget numbers. The 90% spending, the 10% tax relief that they have offered, if you want to put it in numbers, are virtually the same as the roulette they played with farmers in western Manitoba last year when they said: We will go to Ottawa. We will demand money. We will get some support for you. It is 90-10 or nothing.

By God, they got nothing. It is just amazing that they could play with people's lives in that manner. I thought that it was only because there were no NDP seats in the rural areas of this province, but, you know, Mr. Speaker, they are now doing it with every seat in this province in this Budget. They need to recognize that Manitoba citizens come to us on a daily basis on this side of the House and indicate to us that they are deeply concerned with the kind of budget that has been put forward.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

* (12:20)

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): It is a pleasure to rise today in the House and a privilege for me as the MLA for St. Vital to speak to the 2001 Manitoba Budget. I would like to thank the constituents in St. Vital for their support over the last year and a half which has provided me with the opportunity to be here today to speak to the Budget.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), the MLA for St. Boniface, for his diligence and integrity in putting together the 2001 Manitoba Budget. The 2001 Manitoba Budget supports our election commitments. It is fair and balanced and it represents the mandate that we were given when elected on September 21, 1999. I would also like to thank the Cabinet colleagues that worked with the minister to put together the Budget for their diligence and their hard work.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many civil servants throughout the government departments that supported our Cabinet colleagues with the Budget process. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the staff in the Speaker's office, in the Clerk's office, and in the Hansard office who are always so professional and who assist us in doing our jobs in the Legislature and running the affairs of the Government.

Budget 2001 focuses on the priorities and the mandate that we were given by the people of this province, investing in health care and

education, providing hope for young people, and building healthy and safer communities.

I would just like to share a little story with you. When I was canvassing in the constituency of St. Vital prior to winning the election campaign, I was going door to door one night and I actually ran into a constituent in St. Vital who was canvassing as well. She was canvassing for the Canadian Cancer Society, and we had an opportunity to stop on the street and have a good conversation about the previous government's record on health care. She said to me: You know, this Government is kind of like a pair of socks—the longer you wear them, the stinkier they get.

So I would like to focus today on comments actually made by the Leader of the Opposition and MLA for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), who said in his speech during the Budget Debate, you are taking this province in a different direction than the rest of the country. Now I never thought I was going to agree with the Leader of the Opposition of the Tory Party, but I have to tell you that he is absolutely correct. We are taking this province in a different direction, and we are proud of it.

First of all, I would like to talk about education. We made a promise in the 1990 election campaign to provide stable and predictable funding to education. Now let us read the Tory record on stable and predictable funding. There was no stable and predictable funding. In 1993-94, there was a minus 2 reduction in funding to our education community. In 1994-95, minus 2.6 percent. In 1995-96 during an election year—

An Honourable Member: Oh, what happened then?

Ms. Allan: Oh, it was zero percent. But then after they won the election in 1996-97, it was minus 2 percent again, minus, minus, minus. Over nine years of Tory government, they took \$135 million out of the public education system. They reduced 700 teaching positions, and what have—

An Honourable Member: Almost as bad as nurses.

Ms. Allan: Almost as bad as nurses. Mr. Speaker, we are the only jurisdiction in Canada that has made a commitment to provide stable and predictable funding to our public education system over the course of our mandate. We realize we have a long way to go after the unprecedented years of underfunding by the previous government. We have a huge hole to fill, but we will continue to work with our education partners to rebuild public confidence in our public education system with all the professionals who work on behalf of students in our communities.

It is a privilege for me as a legislative assistant to the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to work with the Minister of Education in rebuilding public confidence in our education system. The minister has visited over 150 schools throughout Manitoba communities. There will be no more directives from the minister's office. He has met with educators, students, parents, trustees, and community members to dialogue with them about our collective vision for public education.

Last month when the minister and I were in the Interlake on a tour visiting schools, five schools in one day, the minister and I visited a school, Brant-Argyle in the Interlake. It is a small four-room school built in 1914. It was the first time a Minister of Education had ever visited the school, despite the fact that the Tory Education Minister was from that constituency during the Lyon government.

Another direction that we are taking that is different than the rest of the country is our initiatives around reduction in tuition fees at our post-secondary institutions. We are the only jurisdiction in the country that has made double-digit reductions in tuition fees. Combined with the tuition reduction strategy to further provide support to young people, we have implemented a Manitoba bursary program to complement the Millennium Bursary Program. This is a comprehensive strategy to promote affordability and accessibility, and I have to tell you this strategy is working.

Manitoba's college tuition is the second lowest in Canada and our university tuition is the third lowest in the country. These numbers are

reflective of the Province of Manitoba's commitment to keep post-secondary education affordable to all Manitobans. Mr. Speaker, we are taking our province in a different direction and we are proud of it.

Let us look at our enrolment increases. Our enrolment increases in Manitoba post-secondary institutions have increased by 5.1 percent. University increases are at 2.4 percent and colleges have increased at 13.1 percent overall. The largest percentage increase in university enrolment is in Brandon at 5.8 percent. Red River shows the highest percentage increase at 14.5 percent. There were approximately 2637 new students in our post-secondary education system in the year 2000-2001.

Let us just read the news release that came out of Red River Community College just on the 12th of April. Red River College applications soar to record heights. Their increase in enrolment is 44 percent more than the '99-2000 figures at this time last year, and 60 percent higher than the '98-99 figures.

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan) will have 32 minutes remaining.

The hour being 12:30, this House stands adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Friday, April 20, 2001

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