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of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

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Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 8, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Joint Housing Initiative

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I have a statement for the House.

As Minister of Family Services and Housing, I am extremely pleased to advise the House that the Government of Canada, the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg have announced their commitment to jointly coordinate our housing initiatives. This agreement signals a new approach to housing development, a community-driven model which recognizes that the best ideas for community revitalization come directly from the community itself. The community development approach in our housing initiative is consistent with, and is in addition to, our Neighbourhoods Alive! Commitment, which will be revealed shortly.

The Province of Manitoba has dedicated new funding of \$8 million over four years to this tri-level partnership aimed at providing community groups with the support they need for housing and physical improvements in our inner cities. The goal of the initiative is to inject a large volume of housing renovation and rehabilitation, 200 to 300 units per year at minimum, into targeted neighbourhoods. The Winnipeg Housing Initiative office, which will open May 15, will be located at 233 Portage Avenue. The office will be staffed by senior employees seconded from the three levels of government, and telephone inquiries regarding the initiative can be addressed to the already operational line, 940-3070. The office has been receiving inquiries from community groups and, with the start of the construction season, is committed to ensuring a timely response to those making submissions.

In closing, I would like to commend the work of the Inner City Housing Coalition which has worked very diligently over the past couple of years to bring together over 20 community organizations from many sectors of our city, including the financial sector, the voluntary sector, the University of Manitoba and the many non-profit groups that are active in the housing world in our inner city. The Coalition will be a continuing vital resource for both community groups and government in developing this new initiative. Thank you.

* (13:35)

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): I would like to thank the Minister for bringing forth this statement in regard to a new direction or supposed new direction that the Government has taken in regard to inner city housing.

I do take a bit of exception to the reference to the program called Neighbourhoods Alive! If they recall, this government here brought forth a program which we called Take Back the Streets. I believe this is just another recycle of one of the ideas and some of the proposals that we were going to take forth in our election campaign and some of the directions we were taking, not only with housing, but with the inner city revitalization of Winnipeg.

The Member mentioned there that this is new funding of \$8 million. I would hope that the Minister is looking at this with a bit of a grain of salt because I believe, with devolution, when the provincial government took back the housing units here in Manitoba, the negotiations that this government initiated, and the total evolution of funding that came back to this province, after everything was finished, I believe it was close to \$40 million. So there is money in the Housing budget, not only for new initiatives, but innovative new initiatives on their part, instead of recycling some of the initiatives that we brought forth and the initiatives that we believe are very, very necessary for the inner city.

Any type of inner city renovations or revamp in this city is very, very important, Mr. Speaker. I believe that housing, the establishment of community groups, the involvement of community groups is the only way that this thing can grow in Winnipeg. Supporting grass roots and bottom feeding, if you want to call it, with people at the bottom being involved, community groups, not top-down government interference that this government feels they have to be involved with, is the best way to have this going.

So, Mr. Speaker, I applaud the Government for taking this initiative in regard to getting involved with the neighbourhood groups and the people in the inner city, and I applaud them for getting this new funding of \$8 million, but I am suspect of that amount.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 27—The Correctional Services Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), that leave be given to introduce Bill 27, The Correctional Services Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les services correctionnels, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill corrects two deficiencies in the Act. It ensures that The Workers Compensation Act can apply to offenders engaged in work programs, and it specifically authorizes regulations respecting the earning of remission.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have, from the Neepawa Area Collegiate, 15 Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Bob Ferguson and Ms. Keri Doerksen. This school is located in the

constituency of the Honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

Also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today His Excellency Sunder Pap, Ambassador to the Republic of Hungary to Canada.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Income Tax Reductions

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the First Minister.

Over the past few months, all other provinces in Canada have recognized the necessity to cut taxes to remain competitive. Alberta, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, P.E.I., B.C., Saskatchewan and most recently Ontario have reduced the personal income tax burden on their citizens. Only Manitoba appears to be left now on a lonely tax-and-spend island. Even an analysis in the most recent budget brought down in British Columbia by the NDP shows that Manitoba is the second-highest taxed province and not keeping up with everyone else.

My question to the First Minister is: Can he indicate what he will do to keep Manitoba economically competitive with other provinces, particularly our two neighbours, Saskatchewan and Ontario, who have slashed taxes in this year's budgets?

* (13:40)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is about 49 hours away for this government to present its budget to show that we will be demonstrating to the people of this province our ability to deliver on our election promises to provide a balanced approach to the economy.

We know that in British Columbia there was pressure on the issue of medicare premiums that

is being maintained in B.C. and Alberta. I know that their figures include counting the payroll tax. I would imagine the members opposite and ourselves would not include that as an income tax. I think that budgets that have been produced in other provinces, such as Saskatchewan, with the affordability of each province, is a good barometer for us and a good set of research for the people of this province. But we will be coming forward in 49 hours with our view of Manitoba.

We certainly do not want to take any lessons from members opposite, for whom, I believe, it has been close to \$400 million in overexpenditure in health care in the last three budget years. That is not what we are going to do in our budget when we bring it in.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, that will be an interesting about-face if the Premier decides that he is going to cut out that \$400 million of overexpenditure in health care as he calls it. I am sure that the nurses and doctors of this province and indeed the consumers of health care will be very interested to know that he believes that there is \$400 million of overexpenditure in the area of health care.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the Member opposite did not answer the question. He does not appear to have any concept of the importance of tax reduction in the future of our province. If we are to remain competitive with other parts of the country, particularly Saskatchewan, Ontario, even Newfoundland, we need to do so in order to keep our young, skilled professionals here in our province, because otherwise they will simply go away to other jurisdictions where the taxes are lower.

Can the Minister indicate today what he is going to do to keep these young, mobile professionals, doctors, nurses, computer specialists, engineers, teachers, who can live and work anywhere they want? What is he going to do to keep them here in Manitoba when they are faced with the second-highest tax load anywhere in the country?

Mr. Doer: I recall just recently, with the same amount of tax revenues, the members opposite bragged that it was the second-lowest taxes in

Canada. Now, with the same numbers, the Member opposite is arguing it is the second-highest. I quite frankly believe that an independent analysis would show that somewhere in between the bragging and the condemnation is the truth, and we are going to bring forward our budget based on the truth.

The Member opposite does not want to talk about expenditures. Members opposite do not want to talk about expenditures. The issue is establishing a budget and making that budget reasonable enough to live within. Close to \$400 million in overexpenditure in health care, close to \$150 million in overexpenditure in this current year's budget in health care is unacceptable, and we want to ensure that we do not go through the famine of 1995 and 1996 and then go through the unbudgeted feasts of '97, '98 and '99 that members opposite practised.

* (13:45)

Secondly, a major expenditure item identified by the Deloitte "truth" audit of last year, and carried on this year, was the unbudgeted expenditures in agriculture. Well, we have brought in crop insurance, and so we are now insured for the 2000 crop year for unseeded acres and moisture.

A third area that was identified was the blank cheque for adult education, \$6 million in the budget, \$17 million in expenditures. We have taken away the blank cheques for our school divisions, condemned by members opposite on one hand, and then we get condemned for spending on the other. Well, we are taking responsible measures on the expenditure side, and that is why we will have balance on Wednesday.

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, we recognize the Rip Van Winkle approach of the Member opposite, who thinks that things have not changed in the last even six or seven months. I just want to tell him how much they have changed. Saskatchewan's budget was for a \$206-million tax cut. That is what is putting you in behind all of the other provinces. The Ontario budget, a \$1-billion tax rebate as well as a 20% tax reduction. That is what has changed. A \$1-billion tax cut in Québec's budget. This Rip Van Winkle has been

asleep over the last six or seven months. He does not know these things have been happening. That is the problem that we are dealing with.

Universities Funding

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): My final supplementary is that during the election the Premier promised to cut tuition by 10 percent for university students. It now appears that universities are going to have to bear the burden of his promise by cutting staff and programming just to maintain the status quo. I wonder if the First Minister can explain how he will make up for those lost university revenues and ensure that they do not have to cut programs as a result of his promise.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): There has been a major change take place over the last six or seven months. The major change has been a change in government where we have men and women now that will actually make promises and they will—*[interjection]* Well, actually, make a promise in the election campaign and follow it through seven months later. That is the change that is taking place here in Manitoba.

It is rather ironic. The Member opposite, the Member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon), is using a Rip Van Winkle approach in his questioning. Perhaps he has forgotten that there was a 9% increase in tuition rates under his last budget, which followed a 10% increase in tuition fee rates. In fact, we had a doubling of tuition fees in the 1990s. We are going to bring hope back to young people, and we do not need lectures from the Member opposite.

Income Tax Federal Reductions

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): On February 25 of this year, Manitoba's Finance Minister indicated that Manitobans would receive the full benefit of the federal personal income tax reductions. However, the Canadian Federation of Taxpayers noted, and I quote: Whatever tax relief Ottawa returns to Manitobans, the provincial government will claw a part of it back. In effect, this NDP government will not pass along the provincial

benefits of the tax cuts announced in the federal budget.

So I ask this Minister: Can the Minister confirm this statement by the Canadian Federation of Taxpayers that Manitobans will not receive the full benefit of tax cuts announced in the federal budget this year?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): All those questions will be answered in 49 hours.

Mr. Stefanson: That does not give Manitobans much comfort. They will have two more sleepless nights, and based on the rhetoric to date, I do not think we can expect a great deal.

But I will ask this minister again: Will this Minister of Finance commit today to provide Manitobans the full benefits of the federal government's income tax reductions, as has been done in virtually every province across Canada, including our neighbour Saskatchewan? Will he commit to that today instead of offering taxpayers his well-crafted spins?

* (13:50)

Mr. Selinger: The Member knows that it would be premature to make any budget announcements 49 hours before the budget.

Mr. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, obviously the Member did not read the two daily newspapers today where he himself is making all kinds of comments—he is quoted—about the upcoming budget, quoted about trying to take credit for a tax reduction already put in place in last year's budget.

Budget Bracket Creep

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): I will ask him one more very simple question. Can this Minister of Finance, given the federal government's actions to eliminate bracket creep and ensure that inflation does not increase an individual's taxes, assure Manitobans that he will introduce the same measures here in Manitoba in the upcoming budget, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): As the Member opposite well knows, all the federal announcements were made the day of the federal budget, and that will be the same when the provincial budget is tabled, as well.

First Nations Casinos Public Consultations

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly asked this government, this Premier (Mr. Doer), this Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs over the last while to slow down this headlong rush to expand casinos in Manitoba. Public meetings, votes in Headingley, the public rally in St. Andrews, phone calls, petitions, and now we see even the aboriginal communities themselves are asking for more time.

I want to ask the First Minister: Will he assure the people of Manitoba that public consultations will be held here in Manitoba before the five casinos are established in Manitoba?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, this government, as we have mentioned on numerous occasions, has a sound framework in place. We have a selection committee, Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman, that is looking at all the proposals, and that is much different from the members opposite. They talk about fast-tracking. When they were certainly in government and dealing with First Nations people, they blew up the railway tracks. They never even allowed the process to proceed.

So I would just like to say that we do have a process in place. The selection committee is going to be looking at all proponents and their proposals and are going to be making their announcements May 31 with regard to those proposals.

Selection Committee

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, then can the Minister confirm, as reported in the *Russell Banner* on April 18, that a committee has been enlisted to do the assessment? What is the composition of this committee, and how many

people are on this committee that are making the selection? He has always mentioned two people. The *Russell Banner* is saying that there is a committee. The committee says there are public and private people on this committee. What is the composition of this committee?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, there is a selection committee, and that committee is a committee of two, Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman.

Mr. Reimer: Mr. Speaker, I am always amazed at the former hockey player the way he can skate around.

Selection Committee—Economist

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): My third supplementary question to the same minister then. Also, reported in the *Russell Banner* on the 18th of April, there is mention that an economist has been hired to evaluate the impact of casinos on the various regions.

Can this minister advise this House who that minister is and what the terms of reference are?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for the question, but there is only one process. Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman are the two gentlemen who have been asked to look at the proposals. The Member opposite makes reference to some other people being part of a committee. There are none to the best of my knowledge. There are only two people.

* (13:55)

I just want to comment to the Member opposite that that process has been put in place and has been in place for a long time, and there are only two people who are the selection committee.

Point of Order

Mr. Reimer: What I am referring to is a spokesperson for the Manitoba Gaming Control Commission. Liz Stephenson is the one who said these things.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Honourable Member does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts that are given.

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): My question is to the Premier. We know that, as a result of his meeting with the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy last Thursday, a new subsidiary agreement would be required for southwestern Manitoba farmers if an agreement were to be found. It was reported that the Premier indicated that his government had already contributed \$20 million to this region.

Could the Premier explain when and where his \$20-million commitment was announced, and can the Premier show these flood victims the money?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I have answered this question in the House before. We believe that part of the \$70 million from last year was appropriate to the disaster assistance program. It should be credited to a disaster assistance program that the federal government should announce, part of which would be 90-10 and another part of which should be 50-50.

Members opposite should realize that the federal Minister of National Defence, Mr. Eggleton, has said no to Manitoba, and it is time we unite to get fair treatment for the farmers in southwestern Manitoba. It is also important that the money that we have, this Legislature and the people of Manitoba, through two different governments, one on the income program and the other under the disaster assistance program, is credited the same way the investments in Québec and Ontario were credited for the \$960 million that came to Québec and Ontario.

Is the Member opposite suggesting the Manitoba Government and the Manitoba people should be treated in a one-down position than Québec and Ontario? I suggest not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Maguire: We are suggesting that the farmers in Manitoba be treated as previous floods have been treated in this province. Will this government provide, in this Wednesday's

budget, the financial commitment for a 50-50 program for flood relief? Is this government willing to show some of these flood victims the money?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): We have taken steps, since we formed government, to ensure that, should there be another disaster, as we had last spring with excessive moisture, farmers will not have to look at ad hoc programs, that they will be able to draw on crop insurance, as they have been in other provinces.

* (14:00)

Mr. Maguire: My final question, Mr. Speaker, is to the First Minister, and that is—*[interjection]*

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Maguire: My final question is to the Premier. When his ministers are in Ottawa tomorrow to discuss this flood situation in southwest Manitoba, do they have a specific plan? If so, does it involve a 50-50 commitment to cover the lost farm inputs of that region?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do have a plan. It does include the measures we have already taken in crop insurance to deal with the \$50 an acre which was in place in Saskatchewan last year and now is in place in the year 2000 here in Manitoba. There were 5 million acres affected, we believe, that should be covered under disaster assistance. One million acres were seeded, but certainly the input costs and the values of the crops, because of the moisture, were affected.

There were another 4 million acres, I believe, that were unseeded, and the Member opposite knows—*[interjection]* One million unseeded, four million seeded. Both are eligible, in our view, for disaster assistance under the federal disaster assistance program. Part of it is covered, we believe, by 90-10. Part of it should be credited to the people from Manitoba that were involved in covering some of the costs last year in the \$70-million payment, and another part would be eligible, we believe, under 50-50. So, yes, our two ministers have a plan. Let us be clear, the federal government has said no to 50-

50. It said no in the House of Commons last week to the federal Member of Parliament for that area, and the answer so far to us has been no.

Education System Schools of Choice Initiative

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education has very effectively ended the Schools of Choice initiative without informing the public. Schools are saying that they cannot afford to take in students from outside their catchment area next year because of the revision in supplementary support. Does the Minister recognize that this backdoor funding directive virtually eliminates the rights of parents to choose a suitable school for their child?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, of course, when we assumed office as the Government of Manitoba eight months ago, we were confined with extraordinary deficits in the public school system and the post-secondary system from the last 10 years of policies. We have got a crumbling infrastructure. There is no change in Schools of Choice.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, could the Minister of Education please explain the supplementary funding for the schools that would allow schools the ability to accept students next year and not lose money?

Mr. Caldwell: The Government of Manitoba is continually in dialogue with the public schools authorities, both trustees and teachers, as well as parents and students, I might add. We believe the Schools of Choice is an appropriate program that is acceptable to parents and school divisions, and we are supportive of it.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister of Education to directly answer the question how he is going to allow for the supplementary funding to be put in place next year so schools can accept their children from outside the catchment area without losing money. Without that, they cannot accept the children.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, we arrived in office in September to find a devastated public school system in terms of financing. We made, this February, a public schools financing announcement that was the largest in 10 years, a total that was \$4 million larger than the last four years combined, and we intend fully to continue supporting our public school system in accordance with economic growth.

Post-Secondary Education Funding Formula

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Education concerning the role of community colleges and universities in the development of the new economy and high-tech industries. In view of the fact that, over the last 10 years since 1992, funding the community colleges has risen by 65 percent from the provincial government whereas universities has in fact gone down, can the Minister of Education confirm the news in today's *Free Press* that he will continue the Tory policy of substantially increasing funding to community colleges while abandoning universities?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the Honourable Member for River Heights, and he is completely accurate in his assessment of the last 10 years in terms of the devastation that the post-secondary education system had to bear. In terms of the budget announcement, I will echo the First Minister (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) that that will be made apparent in 49 hours.

Universities Property Taxes

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My supplementary to the Minister of Education. Given the fact that one of the problems for universities is dealing with property taxes, which have gone up, whereas funding from the Province has not gone up in a commensurate way, will the Minister of Education address the concern related to property taxes and universities?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the Member for River Heights again for this question. There has been considerable discussion with the presidents and vice-presidents of finance of the post-secondary institutions in the province of Manitoba. Those consultations are ongoing. One of the items, as the Member requests, is property taxation.

Post-Secondary Education High-Tech Training

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My supplementary related to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines deals with the important relationship of her department to that of the universities in terms of building the new economy: When and what will the Minister present in terms of her plans for interacting with the universities to build a high-tech economy?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, we do have, as the Government of Manitoba, a very close relationship with the private sector. We have been meeting regularly with the private sector in terms of strategic investments in the Manitoba economy in relation with Education and Training, and we plan on proceeding very aggressively with our business partners in this area.

Income Assistance Statistics

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, last week I took under notice a question from the Honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger). I want to respond to her today by telling her a couple of things. One is that the data that she referred to are gathered annually by the HRDC federally and published annually. So, as soon as the data for this year are available, I certainly will be glad to make it available. On a provincial basis, I want to tell her—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Sale: Perhaps they do not want to hear the answer to the question, Mr. Speaker.

On the basis of our own internal information based on Manitoba only, as of October of this year, our rate of citizens who are on social assistance had fallen to 5.7 percent, down from 6 percent six months previous to that. I also wish to tell her that, during the six months since our government formed government, those with work expectations had fallen by 1214 cases in that six-month period. In the same period last year, when the previous government was in power, the increase in that caseload was 1090. So there have been substantial changes, and I expect Manitoba to maintain its position.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Maybe you should consider the gross figures.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

* (14:10)

Dauphin Lake Fish Stock Conservation

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, there is considerable concern about the spawn being removed—Lake Dauphin, the spawning fish are being removed in large numbers. I wonder if the Minister of Conservation would update this House on recent meetings that have occurred regarding this use of spring spawn capture and if he has achieved a balanced approach to conservation in this lake.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I am glad the Member raised that issue again, for the third time, I think, because I have been wanting to explain something here. That is to explain why this situation has developed the way it has over a number of years. You see, this is what happens when governments, whether they are federal, provincial, NDP, Tory, Liberal, or even a municipal government, refuse or do not know how to work in a co-operative way with Aboriginal peoples. These people get alienated. They have no sense of ownership. They feel that they are being left out of the loop, and they have no participation in the decision-making process. So, in a lot of cases, it is no wonder that a situation like the one in Dauphin deteriorated to the point that it has.

In the last 10 years, I know the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the provincial government has not been a good one, and we can see why, Mr. Speaker. One can clearly see the state of relationship that the previous government had cultivated with the—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Speaker, if you look at this, the Honourable Minister is already beyond two of them.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The question was an open-ended question. It asked for an update on the status of the situation, and that is the answer that was given. It is not appropriate that only questions are allowed to be heard in this House.

Mr. Speaker: On both points of orders, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable ministers that, according to *Beauchesne* Citation 417, answers to questions should be brief.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Minister to please conclude his remarks.

Mr. Lathlin: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Let me conclude by saying that we on this side of the House want to work with our people in a respectful and co-operative way. We believe that our people do have a rightful place in the society of Manitoba, and we on this side intend to work with them accordingly. Thank you.

Mr. Cummings: Well, Mr. Speaker, I have made every attempt to bring this issue to the House in an open and responsible manner, and I do not think it called for the type of answer that we are getting from this minister. The Minister does not acknowledge and has refused to implement what was a wholly consulted conservation regulation.

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, after rising on a point of order about the answer, sure enough, the question goes on with the preamble to a supplementary question. *Beauchesne* Citation 410 says that supplementary questions require no preamble.

I ask that you call the Member to order.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order.

The Honourable House Leader is quite correct. If it was a supplementary question that was being taken care of here, he would be right. But the Minister clearly asked a number of questions to our critic, and our critic was just responding to those answers.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to also take this opportunity to remind all members that *Beauchesne* Citation 409.(2) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member for Ste. Rose to please put his question.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the conservation regulation that was consulted and put in place with the co-operation of all parties.

Why has this minister continued to ignore the regulation that was in place?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, last week I advised the Member opposite that I would be meeting

with two groups in Dauphin; I did. On my way to The Pas, I stopped in Dauphin, met with the various fishing groups there, the sports fishermen. I met with them for about an hour and a half, and I must say that it was a very positive meeting. I had a very good reception from the group. After our meeting, they acknowledged that it was a good meeting and that indeed, as one member of that group put it to me, he said this is more than what I expected.

About 10 minutes later, I met with the West Region Tribal Council chiefs. In that meeting, the West Region Tribal Council chiefs presented me with a proposal for a co-management agreement, something, I might add, that the previous government had received from various individual First Nations, including tribal councils, including Swampy Cree Tribal Council. I know, because I received a copy when I was in opposition.

In any event, I was presented with a co-management proposal, and I have every intention of reviewing the proposal and then see what parts we can implement as far as that proposal is concerned. It is a very sound proposal. I am sure the Minister will be more than happy to see what is in the report.

Mr. Cummings: I will congratulate the Minister in bringing at least the players to the table, but I am very concerned about issues that are being raised that there have been a number of these spawning fish that were sold on what is reputed to be a black market.

I would ask if the Minister is having this investigated.

Mr. Lathlin: Let me answer the Member's question this way. According to a letter that he wrote to the *Dauphin Herald*, he said that he imposed closure last year when he was on the government side but, as of now, I am not able to find whether any charges were laid as a result of this closure. I think I know why no charges were laid. But let me say this—

Point of Order

Mr. Laurendeau: *Beauchesne* 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal

with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

The Minister was clearly asked: Will he investigate the fish being sold on the black market?

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order, I would like to ask the Honourable Minister to conclude his answer.

* * *

Mr. Lathlin: Let me answer the Member this way. Last week I promised him that I would give him a report as to the progress of my dealing with this issue. This morning I have asked staff to prepare a report. I am willing to give a copy of that report to the Member opposite.

Finally, I guess, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank him for raising that issue and for his concern and his support on this issue.

Highway System Funding

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): My question is to the Minister of Highways.

With the loss of the Crow and increases in heavy traffic, all members of the House recognize the stress that our provincial highway system is under. During the election and indeed beforehand, members opposite made promises in regard to future highway expenditures.

My first question: Can the Minister advise Manitobans how not spending one nickel on southern roads for five years, as recommended by the Member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), will ensure a well-maintained infrastructure crucial to our continued economic growth?

* (14:20)

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): I certainly appreciate the acknowledgement from the Member opposite of the poor condition of the highway system that I inherited and this government inherited, with 70 percent of gravel roads in substandard

condition, close to 30 percent of our paved highways.

Particularly, and I am glad the Member opposite has now some interest in northern highways, where the previous government spent as little as 4 percent of the construction budget in northern Manitoba.

I can assure the Member opposite, we will be fair to all parts of the province, including northern Manitoba, something that that government never did in the 11 years it was in office.

Mr. Dyck: The Minister appeared a little sensitive on that question. I will try another one. Has the Minister identified which highway projects in southern Manitoba he intends to delay or stop so he can, as promised by his Leader, almost triple the amount allocated to northern highways?

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member opposite that we will show a lot more sensitivity to all regions of this province than the previous government, which for 11 years ignored whole parts of this province, not just northern Manitoba. I say to the Member opposite, just wait for the Highways capital project. It will be the fairest we have seen in this province for 12 years.

Mr. Dyck: Well, then a further question: On what criteria will the Minister be basing his decisions? Will it be on the percentage of mileage and roads, population levels or volume of provincial traffic in the area?

Mr. Ashton: I can assure members opposite it will not be based on the numbers of ducks, which seemed to be one of their criteria before. They paid far more attention to Oak Hammock Marsh than they did to a lot of roads throughout Manitoba. I want to assure the members opposite our bottom line will be safety, and that is why we will see a fairer allocation of the Highways budget across Manitoba, based on regional fairness and safety.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Tourism Initiatives Provincial Sales Tax Rebate

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): During the 1999 election, members opposite promised to maximize opportunities in Manitoba's tourism sector. Providing visitors a rebate on their provincial sales tax was one of the ways people were encouraged to visit our province. Unfortunately, this government has decided to rescind this long-standing practice. Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the First Minister how the cancellation of this practice strengthens Manitoba's position as a destination for tourists.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The Visitor Rebate Program was considered by my department's officials to be one of the more inefficient programs. It cost a half a million dollars to provide \$1-million worth of rebates. The value of those rebates was usually less than 2 percent of a tour package offered by the companies in question. It was our view that this money could be better used in the overall budget which will be presented shortly.

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

Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Speaker: During Oral Questions on Thursday, April 27, 2000, I took under advisement a point of order raised by the Honourable Government House Leader (Mr. Mackintosh) concerning a question addressed to the Honourable First Minister (Mr. Doer) by the Honourable Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer). The question was asked in reference to pending civil litigation and asked the Honourable First Minister to give assurances about his actions in connection with the trial. The Honourable Government House Leader raised a point of order and questioned the appropriateness of discussing in the Legislature a matter before the courts. The Official Opposition House Leader (Mr. Laurendeau) also spoke to the point of order. I took the matter under advisement in order to peruse the authorities, given that, in this case, we have the unique situation of a member being personally named in a civil suit.

I thank the honourable House leaders for their contributions to the point of order.

The question that I, as the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, must determine is whether it is appropriate to permit a question on a matter pending a civil trial or whether the sub judice convention should be applied. Even though the case in question has been settled out of court, it is important to give a ruling on this matter so that a precedent is established for future consideration.

There are several criteria that must be examined in order to determine whether the sub judice convention should be applied.

First, is the matter before the House, in the case of civil matters, the same issue that is before the courts?

Second, will a discussion of the matter by legislators be harmful to individuals? *Beauchesne* Citation 5.11 states that "freedom of speech accorded to Members . . . is a fundamental right without which they would be hampered in the performance of their duties. The Speaker should interfere with that freedom of speech only in exceptional cases where it is clear that to do otherwise could be harmful to specific individuals."

Third, is the matter at the trial stage? *Beauchesne* Citation 507(2) makes the point that the sub judice convention does not apply to civil cases until the trial stage is reached.

Fourth, does the fact that a member is being personally sued have an impact on whether or not the sub judice convention is applicable?

Turning to a discussion of the criteria, the question was indeed asking the First Minister (Mr. Doer) to give a response about his actions in relation to the subject matter of a civil law suit and could therefore be considered to be a similar issue to the matter that would be before the courts.

Regarding the second criteria of whether a discussion of the matter could be harmful or prejudicial to individuals, the recently published procedural authority, *House of Commons*

Procedures and Practices by Marleau and Monpetit, advises on page 535 that the sub judice convention exists to guarantee everyone a fair trial and to prevent any undue influence prejudicing a judicial decision. Page 534 of the same source indicates that the sub judice convention is first and foremost a voluntary restraint on the part of the House to protect an accused person or any other party to a court action or judicial inquiry from suffering any prejudicial effect from public discussion of the issue.

The third criteria, which discusses whether a civil matter is at the trial stage, is critical. The question was asked by the Honourable Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) on April 27, but the trial start date was established as May 1. Although the question was asked close to the start of the trial date, the trial had not yet started and, as *Beauchesne* Citation 507(2) states, the sub judice convention is not applicable to civil cases until the trial stage is reached.

The fourth criteria, the fact that a member was personally named in a civil suit, does not have many precedents in the Canadian experience. In the Canadian House of Commons in 1976, the Member for Central Nova, Elmer MacKay, was served with a civil writ of summons and a statement of claim alleging libel. Mr. MacKay sought to ask questions in the House pertaining to his suit, and Speaker Jerome took the matter under advisement. Mr. MacKay indicated that the matter had not been set for trial and that to deny the Member the opportunity to ask questions impinged on his freedom of speech. The Speaker ultimately ruled the following day that the sub judice convention did not apply until the trial stage was reached. This precedent is different from the current Manitoba case in that it was the Member who was being civilly sued who sought to ask questions pertaining to the suit.

* (14:30)

The 1977 House of Commons Special Committee on the Rights and Immunities of Members released the definitive report on the application of the sub judice convention in Canada. In the committee report, the Committee expressed the opinion that the responsibility of

the Chair regarding the sub judge convention should be minimal, and that the responsibility for applying the sub judge convention should rest primarily with members, although the Speaker is the final arbiter of the application.

I would also like to draw to the House's attention Manitoba's precedents regarding sub judge. On June 6, 1983, Mr. Speaker Walding ruled that the responsibility for application of sub judge convention is with the Member asking the question and with the Minister who answers the question. Mr. Speaker Rocan similarly ruled on April 8, 1992, and on May 10, 1993, that the responsibility rests with the Member asking and the Member answering the question. This finding was reiterated in a ruling given by Madam Speaker Dacquay on October 11, 1995.

I am therefore ruling that there was no point of order because, in this instance, the matter in question was a civil case that had not yet commenced trial proceedings. I would rule that it would be appropriate for the Member asking the question and the Minister answering the question to determine the appropriateness of discussing the matter in the House, but I would offer the caution that members should be cognizant that discussion of the matter in the House could impact on the outcome of the trial. Such questions should be very carefully asked. In addition, the Minister could choose to not answer the question. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

National Nursing Week

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to recognize this week, May 8 to 14, has been proclaimed National Nursing Week, 2000, by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). It is a very fitting time for us to pay tribute to the nurses of Manitoba.

Only thanks to the enormous efforts and dedication of our front-line nurses have we been able to achieve a turnaround in the emergency wards of our hospitals over the last few months. It would be difficult to exaggerate the role they have played in health care and in bringing about a fundamental change in patient care and comfort. Nurses have been key in helping us shape our health care strategies. It was the nurses

and other front-line workers who told us their concerns and advised us as to what was doable in the short term as well as the long term.

Manitobans have particular reason to be indebted to nurses this year. Never before has our health care system asked so much of our nurses. They have endured gruelling stretches of overtime, increased workloads, excessive stress-induced illness and burnout over the last few years. Our government has instituted a number of measures to honour our nurses with our deeds, not just our words. This is the very best tribute we can pay them. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with nurses as we meet the many challenges ahead in health care.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all LPNs, RNs, and RPNs throughout the province of Manitoba for their dedication and commitment to patient care and their contribution to the development of healthy public policy.

Hazelridge Caterers

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, on New Year's Eve, 1969, a group of women from the community of Hazelridge catered a celebration of well over 400 people. Since that time the Hazelridge Caterers, as they were called, have catered well over 1000 events throughout the communities that make up the constituency of Springfield. The people of Springfield and all Manitobans owe a debt of gratitude to the tireless efforts of this group of hardworking, dedicated, community-minded individuals. The efforts of Kay Skibo, Emily Solar, Mildred Burek, Martha Kowalchuk, Margot Garbutt and many others have not only made significant contributions to their community but inspired many others like them to work towards the common goal.

April 30, 2000, marked the end of the Hazelridge Caterers. On that day, \$33,108.63 was transferred to the Hazelridge Community Club for capital projects. This cheque is part of more than a quarter of a million dollars that the Hazelridge Caterers have fund-raised for their community since 1969. These funds have been used to construct an indoor arena in Hazelridge, a fine facility used by people throughout the province.

Nothing unlocks the potential of an individual quite like participation and furthering the public good. The Hazelridge Caterers serve not only as an inspiration to all, but as an example of what can be accomplished when members of a community share a common vision and band together in common purpose to achieve a common goal.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating and thanking all of those involved in the Hazelridge Caterers for their outstanding contributions to their community and wishing them all the best in their future endeavours.

Mrs. Ellen McFarlane

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in appreciation and recognition of Mrs. Ellen McFarlane of Flin Flon, who for many years has been a volunteer par excellence. With 66 other recipients, Mrs. Ellen McFarlane received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award in recognition of her volunteer activities and her selfless dedication to the service of others.

As many of you may know, the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award was first instituted by the Right Honourable Romeo LeBlanc in 1996. The award is a small token of gratitude to those caring Canadians, representative of thousands of other Canadian volunteers, who give generously of themselves in order to make the lives of others better. As well, the focus of the award is to highlight those hidden helpers and volunteers, those generous unsung heroes and heroines whose compassion and charity are part of the Canadian character. Mrs. Ellen McFarlane's altruism meets and exceeds all these expectations.

Since 1977, Mrs. Ellen McFarlane has coached adults in literacy skills and tutored new Canadians in English. She has been secretary at two literacy councils, a Beaver leader, Cubmaster and Venturer Adviser. As well, she has delivered Meals on Wheels and has canvassed for several non-profit organizations. She volunteered at a personal care home in Flin Flon and was part of the visiting committees of the local Rebekah Lodge and Canadian Legion Ladies Auxiliary.

I know that all members of this Legislature wish to join me in thanking Mrs. Ellen McFarlane of Flin Flon for her many years of dedicated volunteer service. Thank you, Ellen.

Nikita Kippen

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate a gifted individual in my constituency. Nikita Kippen has already achieved so much while only being in Grade 8.

Nikita recently received five titles for her project at the Manitoba School Science Symposium held on April 28 and 30. These titles included the gold medal for physics in the junior category, the ASM annual corporate award for the outstanding individual science award for physics in the junior category, and the Innovation and Technology Council award. She will represent our province as the Manitoba delegate to the Canada-wide Science Fair in London, Ontario.

Her project involved the development and testing of environmentally friendly insulation materials that meet the R factor of current industry-standard materials. This has been a three-year endeavour. I will remind you that she is in Grade 8.

Nikita will attempt to receive a medal for the Canada-wide Science Fair as well as for the seven special awards at the fair. I am sure that she will represent our province well at this national competition.

I would like to wish Nikita Kippen success as she journeys to the Canadian Science Competition in London, Ontario, to be held from May 13 to 21. Thank you.

* (14:40)

Lucy Lindell

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw the attention of the House to a constituent of mine in the Eriksdale area named Lucy Lindell, who was recently highlighted in an article in the *Interlake Spectator*.

At the impressive age of 89 years, Mrs. Lindell took it upon herself to write a history of her life in order to pass on to the present and future generations her impression of what it was like to live through the development of the area in the 20th century. Mrs. Lindell makes the point that, although people often refer to the good old days and how bad they actually were at times, they rarely elaborate on the facts, and thus the lesson is lost.

In her book entitled *Rights of Passage* published by Christian Press, Mrs. Lindell tells what it was actually like to live through the hard times of the Depression and what was actually hard about it. In her words, young people are so involved with just learning about life that they do not leave time to think about history very much. Kids cannot imagine a time before they came to this Earth, but it is something they should know.

Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the attention of the Assembly to Mrs. Lindell's efforts in so worthy a cause, especially in light of the fact that she used her own resources to have the story published. The development and advancement of the democratic process in Canada during the 20th century and the inexorable movement toward social justice that accompanied it is a lesson worthy of telling to the whole world.

On behalf of the people of Manitoba, I thank Mrs. Lindell for her story and congratulate her on a life well lived. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call second readings to be followed by the debate on the Government motion introduced by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk).

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by

the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale), that Bill 22, The Court of Queen's Bench Surrogate Practice Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la pratique relative aux successions devant la Cour du Banc de la Reine, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: The amendment sought by this bill is the removal of a provision in the act that requires court offices to offer the service of safekeeping of wills of living persons. The law fees regulation was amended in 1998 eliminating the \$25 administrative filing fees for depositing wills. An amendment to the surrogate practice act removing the safekeeping of wills provision was contemplated but not proceeded with at that time. This is essentially a housekeeping amendment.

Currently, there are 2100 wills registered in the wills registry in the Court of Queen's Bench in Winnipeg and a further 30 wills being held in various regional court offices throughout Manitoba. The Law Society of Manitoba filed the majority of these wills upon assuming conduct of an individual lawyer or law firm's practice. Members of the general public or individual lawyers do not commonly use this service as there are many more appropriate options available for them to safekeep the wills and other professional or personal papers.

The Law Society of Manitoba has been consulted on the proposed amendments contemplated by this bill. The Winnipeg and regional court offices will continue to hold the wills that have been deposited for safekeeping. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 23—The Jury Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move

that Bill 23, The Jury Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les jurés, be now be read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: This bill provides for a minor amendment that allows the Sheriff to send out jury summonses by ordinary letter mail rather than the more expensive method of registered mail. In the Winnipeg judicial centre alone, approximately 10 000 summonses are sent to potential jurors annually at a cost of \$4 per envelope. The use of registered mail with the acknowledgment of receipt cards to send jury summonses provided proof of service. In January 2000, Canada Post implemented a revised registered mail service, which does not provide proof of service in the form of an acknowledgment-of-receipt card, and, in fact, is more expensive to use.

To eliminate any potential consequences of not using registered mail to prove service, a new subsection has been added which deems receipt on the fifth day after the day of mailing. Also, the summons instructs jurors to call the jury coordinator within seven days to confirm receipt and to return a signed acknowledgment-of-receipt card that is included with the summons postage-paid.

Over 60 percent of these acknowledgement-of-receipt cards are returned. Consultation has taken place with other provinces who indicate their use of ordinary letter mail for jury summonses.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), that the debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 25—The Interpretation and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 25, The Interpretation and Consequential

Amendments Act; Loi d'interprétation et modifications corrélatives, be now read a second time and referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: The Bill is largely a revision of Manitoba's existing Interpretation Act, which means that the act has been updated and rewritten in modern language.

Mr. Speaker, The Interpretation Act is the basic tool for interpreting the province's statutes and regulations. Every Canadian jurisdiction has one. It applies to all of our legislation. Indeed, the first act ever passed in Manitoba was The Interpretation Act in 1871, and it has not been thoroughly reviewed and revised since then. Some of its wording could be traced back to 1849 in Upper Canada, and even that might have originated earlier in England.

The Interpretation Act deals with the general principles of statutory interpretation and is used primarily by people who consult legislation on a regular basis. It sets out rules and principles that apply unless a particular statute contains a provision that clearly intends a different effect.

The Act has three primary purposes, Mr. Speaker: (1) it sets out rules for interpreting statutes, rules like the well-known rule of liberal interpretation which says that all legislation is to be interpreted liberally and fairly; (2) it allows other acts and regulations to be shorter because the provisions found in The Interpretation Act do not have to be repeated in those other acts or regulations; (3) it promotes consistency of language in all acts and regulations.

As honourable members will know, Mr. Speaker, we have taken important steps to introduce plain language into House motions and documents during the session. I am pleased that the drafters have made every effort to use plain language techniques in drafting this new act despite the fact that it is a relatively technical act.

Mr. Speaker, we all know we will have the opportunity, of course, to discuss the Bill in more detail at the committee stage, but there are a couple of new matters in this bill that I would

like to bring to the attention of honourable members.

First, Mr. Speaker, I would draw the attention of members to a section of the Bill which ensures that Manitoba's statutes and regulations are interpreted in a way that protects aboriginal and treaty rights. These are the rights currently recognized and affirmed by section 35 of The Constitution Act. This new provision was recommended by the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry in its 1991 report. The report read as follows: "One specific legislative change that could be implemented quickly if aboriginal organizations in this province agree is in the area of the general interpretation acts of Manitoba and Canada. Express recognition of aboriginal and treaty rights within these laws would have a positive effect and assist in ensuring that all legislation is interpreted properly in light of these constitutionally protected rights.

* (14:50)

Mr. Speaker, the recently formed Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission has consulted with aboriginal organizations and found that they agreed with the recommendation of the AJI. The commission has therefore recommended that The Interpretation Act be amended to deal with aboriginal and treaty rights.

The second matter I would like to bring to the attention of honourable members, Mr. Speaker, is that the new Interpretation Act will contain rules for interpreting Manitoba's bilingual statutes. Although Manitoba's laws were re-enacted in English and French more than 10 years ago, we have never amended The Interpretation Act to deal with the interpretation of our laws in their bilingual context. This new act makes it clear that both the English and French versions of Manitoba's laws are equal and that both are authoritative. It also contains several other provisions to deal with various aspects of bilingual laws.

As I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to the committee stage and the further discussion of more detailed aspects of the Bill, and I will conclude my remarks at this time.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

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

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I move, seconded by the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), that Bill 24, The Personal Property Security Amendment and Various Acts Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sûretés relatives aux biens personnels et d'autres dispositions législatives, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to make some comments about Bill 24, The Personal Property Security Amendment and Various Acts Amendment Act. This bill amends the new Personal Property Security Act which was passed in 1993 but has not yet come into force due to the need for a computer system update.

Mr. Speaker, a view of the new act by two University of Manitoba Faculty of Law professors resulted in the recommendation of some minor amendments. This bill makes several word and section reference corrections. It resolves the confusion between two terms currently used in the Act, "financing statement" and "prescribed financing statement," by replacing them with two other terms, "discharge statement" and "financing change statement." This bill corrects several technical deficiencies and repeals some provisions that are no longer required. For example, a section referring to The Payment of Wages Act is being repealed as The Payment of Wages Act itself has been repealed.

Mr. Speaker, the resulting changes will make the Act more consistent with the personal property security acts in other provinces. This bill will improve the new Personal Property

Security Act for parties who register security interest in collateral.

I look forward to quick passage of this bill, so the amendments will be ready to come into force at the same time as the new act anticipated later this year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), that debate be now adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 26—The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale), that Bill 26, The Court of Queen's Bench Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine, be now read a second time and be referred to a committee of this House.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: For many years now, the Government of Manitoba has offered free mediation services to Manitobans wishing to try to resolve custody and access issues by agreement. These services have been provided through mediators with Family Conciliation in the Department of Family Services and Housing. As the years have passed, the number of trained persons offering private mediation services has increased. Lawyers and other individuals practising as private mediators are helping parties mediate not only custody and access but also other family-related issues.

The Court of Queen's Bench Act currently provides that Family Conciliation mediators and parties to mediation are not competent to give evidence about the mediation in court. Maintaining the confidentiality of mediation in family cases is extremely important to the success of the mediation process. This bill will provide that where parties in a family proceeding have agreed that the mediation process is to be confidential, neither a private practising

mediator nor the parties to the mediation will be able to give evidence of discussions which took place in mediation. The amendments in this bill ensure that parties who are mediating family proceeding issues with private-practising mediators and who agree that the process will be confidential will be entering into these discussions on the same footing as parties mediating family issues with one of the mediators at family conciliation services.

Mr. Speaker, this bill supports the principle that the use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in family cases is to be encouraged by ensuring that where parties agree, the process will be confidential. No one will be giving evidence in court about their discussions in mediation. Naturally, the Bill contains an exception for child protection proceedings. Thank you.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay), that debate be adjourned.

Motion agreed to.

GOVERNMENT MOTION

Federal Reparation for 1999 Farmland Flooding

Mr. Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the proposed amendment of the Honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) who has 24 minutes remaining. Is there leave for it to remain standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Radisson?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to the resolution that has been put forward in the Order Paper. I rise with somewhat reluctance because this is an issue that really has come before this House far too many times. It makes me think and wonder what is happening in the agricultural industry today that keeps

bringing these issues back to this House time and time again and whether or not there is a will amongst all of Canadians in levels of government to put a long-term strategy in place for agriculture. But I rise to support the motion as amended and I cannot support the motion as originally put. I will try to explain to the House the reasons why the amendment is probably the best part of this motion to be supported.

A few years ago when we were in government on this side of the House and I was named as the Minister of Government Services and the Minister responsible for the Emergency Management Organization, we had just nicely concluded the flood of 1996. I want to keep most of my remarks related to the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement that has been struck between the federal government and the provinces.

If you recall with the 1996 flood, a lot of individuals that were affected by that flood had put earthen dikes around their property. Now, that particular policy read that in order for these people to get and receive compensation for their diking costs, that once a dike was put up as a measure to protect against flood waters, the dike had to be removed in order for the compensation to be paid. Well, that was one of the first processes that we chose to go at odds with the federal government on. They agreed with us that individuals who had put up an earth dike should be able to leave those dikes up permanently and still receive their compensation.

As it turned out in the spring of 1997, that was one of the best decisions that we arrived at with the federal government as these individuals were three-quarters of the way or even higher at 90 percent on their way to protection against the 1997 flood.

* (15:00)

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

If you look at the other events that took place in Canada in that same year, if you take a look at the Saguenay, that had a tremendous destruction in 1996, with the Saguenay flood what happened there was that a tremendous

amount of rainfall occurred in that whole region with the result that many of the small dams that were built on the tributaries coming into the Saguenay gave way. As a result, fast-rushing water tended to create a tremendous amount of damage by taking out hydroelectric plants, destroying homes, destroying streets, destroying large parts of communities in that region.

The outcome of that was that there was, in some cases, a special agreement that was drawn up between the federal government and that area to assess and to look at the reconstruction of the specific damages that occurred.

The one example that I would leave with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the area in La Baie, which is down the Saguenay, halfway to the St. Lawrence, where the flood waters came through the city so fast that it actually filled up the old river channel with debris and rock and created a brand-new river channel that, in fact, went right through a Caisse Populaire. I am told that the automatic banking machine that they had in the Caisse Populaire was swept out into the Saguenay and to date has never been found, although I think, if somebody did find it, they probably would not tell us anyway, because there was a whole bunch of money left in the machine.

Those are the kinds of damages that occurred in that region of the country, and so the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement, although it did not apply in a lot of cases, it applied to the reconstruction of the private homes, but it really did not apply to what happens when a river totally changes its course as to what you do with the old existing riverbed. So there was a cost-sharing program put into place to cover those kinds of damages.

Let us get back to Manitoba and talk about the 1997 flood. The resolution, the way it reads, was what we wanted was for the southwestern part of the province to have exactly the same benefits accruing to them as accrued to people in the Red River Valley during the 1997 flood. In the 1997 flood we found out what was covered under the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement. Usually what was covered under that agreement was that if I owned a home and it was destroyed by the flood waters, I would receive

financial assistance to help reconstruct that home. If I was a farmer, I could have the money to help reconstruct my home. As well, if I had a farm business, it would help construct that, and if I had something like a seed cleaning business or something else that was on that farm, I would be then eligible, as well, to get that reconstructed.

But one of the things that we found out very early in the 1997 flood, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that if individuals had rental properties out in the flood plain, under the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement they were not covered. There was also the little bit of a glitch in that agreement which said that if you were a part-time farmer and did not earn the majority of your income off the farm, then you were not eligible for disaster financial assistance. So those were two issues that came out to the forefront very quickly.

Then, as well, the farmers who had applied fertilizer in the fall or who had applied chemicals in the fall also found that there was a total loss of these nutrients and chemicals that they have added. Also, some of the businesses that were evacuated and forced to move out of the flood plain, some of them were shut. Especially in the community of Morris, they were closed upwards of four weeks before they were able to return.

So there was this business closure that took place where they had continued to pay wages to their employees. They had the hydro costs, they had the telephone costs. Everything continued on and under the existing Disaster Financial Assistance agreement, they were not eligible for any kind of cost recovery.

So in our discussions with the federal government at that time, we said that this is not fair to those individuals who were part-time farmers or to those individuals who happen to be living in a rental property or who owned a rental property, or for those producers who had applied fertilizer and chemicals in the fall and now were expected to seed their land and spend this money all over again, as well as those businesses who had been shut down for a month in terms of what their costs were while they were shut down.

So we argued with the federal government as to even the possibility of recovering the wages that they had to pay during that time. Some businesses, in fact, did lay off their employees during that period of time. What happened, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that when the federal government came back to the province, and throughout our discussions, we then agreed upon a 50-50 cost-sharing program which was called the Jobs and Economic Recovery Initiative. Of course, it also helped Manitoba's arguing position and negotiating position that the federal government had decided to call a June election that year, because it was much easier to get hold of the federal MPs as they were busy campaigning throughout the province.

Now, the JERI program when it was put into place, and it was a cost-shared 50-50 program with the federal government and the provincial government picking up each half the costs, it ended up being able to provide the same level of coverage that was available under the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement to those part-time farmers, to those people who owned rental properties, to those people who lived in those rental properties. As well, the agreement was that if a producer applied fertilizer in the fall that approximately half of it would probably be a guaranteed loss. So the policy was put into place that half the fertilizer and half the herbicide, if the producer applied it in the fall and provided an invoice to show that it was applied in the fall, could be recovered under the JERI program. Also, when businesses were shut down, they were allowed to recover costs, such as hydro and telephone and a reasonable amount of money, while the business was shut down so that when they decided to open up again, they would have some help and assistance in that.

The JERI program also covered the loss of breeding livestock. In the case of the livestock, it covered such things as breeding stock of hogs, but it did not cover the breeding cycle that went out of rhythm with regard to the beef cattle industry.

There were also business resumption loans under that program for businesses who felt that they needed to have financial bridging to get their business back up and going, in cases where

they were shut down long enough that they lost part of their market share. So there were business resumption loans provided for those individuals who felt the need to have a marketing advertising program to try to get themselves the exposure back into the marketplace and get up and going.

So, now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what has happened in the southwestern part of the province in 1999? First, it was a lot of rain. The rains kept falling. It was not a case of having all the rain at once to cause a Saguenay, it was not a case of having so much rain that you caused a 1997 flood. It was enough rain to prevent producers from getting onto their land. If you look at the contour and topography of the southwestern part of the province, it is an undulating type of topography that actually acts as little saucers in a quarter section of land that would actually entrap the water.

You say, well, why cannot farmers seed the high areas and go around the wet areas? Well, the configuration of the field was such, and their equipment of today was such, that they could not get into the field and do any kind of a job getting around the myriad of potholes that they had full of water.

* (15:10)

So we had a period of too much rain over a long period of time, and this created an economic disaster. Now, under the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement, there is no description for an economic disaster. You have a disaster as a result of a flood, of an earthquake or of an ice storm, things of that nature, but really there is no definition for an economic disaster within that policy.

So when we were in government, we were then faced with the issue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these producers had to have some assistance. The present Disaster Financial Assistance agreement fit to some degree. The structural damage that took place, such as lost fences, culverts, roadways, if there was mould found in a home, it dealt with that, but that was about it. It did not do anything about the fact that they could not seed their fields.

Our government had announced in June, or at least late summer of that year, that unseeded acreage insurance would be part of the Crop Insurance program for the following year, but it was not available in 1999. So our government tried to act as quickly as possible and came up with the \$50 per unseeded acre for the producers in southwestern Manitoba. Because it was a disaster, an economic disaster, we had no problem taking the funds from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, because indeed that is why the fund was placed there, that if there was ever a situation during a budget year where there were unforeseen expenses that occurred, whether it could be forest fires or an economic disaster due to too much rain like this one, that Fiscal Stabilization Fund was there to offset that. We also provided, I believe, of the \$75-an-acre payment for forage restoration for those producers who had tame forage.

So in the southwestern part of the province, what do you have left to cover? Well, we have producers who applied fertilizer last fall, who applied chemicals last fall, who also during the summertime had to look after that land which was not seeded. Now, in a lot of cases they still could not get onto the land with their equipment, so they had to bring in aerial applicators to spray and to keep down the weeds so that they did not become a problem and spread for the following years and create problems for years to come. So those were the areas that were missing under the DFAA, which is the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement.

So what can be done or should be done? Well, there are two areas. I think that the Government side of the House has said, well, what we need to do is redefine the interpretation or redefine the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement so that this kind of a disaster can be covered. Well, I agree that there is a need for redefinition, but it is not going to happen now. It is not going to happen in terms of being able to address what has happened in 1999. But we can jointly as all united parties be able to put the argument forth that in 1997 precedent was set with the Jobs and Economic Recovery Initiative, which provided a 50-50 cost-sharing program, and that that program should be made available to the farmers of southwestern Manitoba to pick up the costs such as fertilizer, chemical and

maintenance of their land during these wet periods.

You know what is interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that during 1997 every time we tried when we were negotiating with the federal government, Mr. Eggleton and Mr. Young—Mr. Young was the Minister at that time for the emergency preparedness Canada. He kept saying over and over again that the province can do whatever it wants to do with disaster payments. It does not have to stick to the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement. If it feels it should be paying extra money outside that agreement, they can do it. It just meant that the federal government was not going to be there to share it.

So you say, well, the federal government has a responsibility in this area, and I agree that they should have a responsibility. But I think the precedent has been set with the 1997 flood that we can do a 50-50 program and that we should pursue it. In fact, Mr. Axworthy the other day indicated in his comments that a sub-agreement is all that can be done with the existing situation in the southwest corner of Manitoba.

So what we learned in 1997, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that if you continue to wait for the federal government to come forward first, they will never come. So what you have to do is actually, as a provincial government, go there first and drag them along, because then they will see the opportunity that they can access. They are tremendously good at being able to get good spin on any kind of announcement they make. Whether it be first or last, they will get equally good spin. So the federal government, I think, will be there if the Province were to venture out on a 50-50 program itself and say: Here is our 50 percent, we are ready to pay it.

So I am saying to the Government side of the House that they are the leaders, they are the Government, they are the ones that had indicated earlier on that they can negotiate better deals with Ottawa than we ever could. I guess what I am saying to the Government side of the House is to take the leadership on this and come forward with half of their \$40 million or \$42 million, which is \$21.5 million, put it on the table as payment to the farmers to offset their

costs on lost fertilizer, chemicals and maintenance of their fields during the summer.

The southwestern Manitoba farmer will be very grateful to this government if they were to make that kind of a bold move first and then ask the federal government to join in and pay their half. I say to our friends on that side of the House, never forget who you are trying to serve. *[interjection]* Pardon me? Are you not negotiating? You should be. You should be. Well, I am not government.

Anyway, I say to members of the Government that you can never forget who you are trying to serve, the federal government or Manitobans. If you are, then you should leave all the intergovernment wrangling to another day. Make the bold step. Announce a program that you are going to cost-share 50-50. I say to you now, pay now and you can collect the dollars later. We have done it in previous times with the federal government after the fact.

I think my colleague from Southdale talked about the forest fires in 19-whatever. Sometimes it takes a long time to negotiate with the federal government to get them to come to the table and pay their half, but that does not help the producer out in southwestern Manitoba one bit. They need it now. They need that assistance now. You cannot wait till the year 2001 or the year 2002 to have the federal government finally come forward with their dollars.

So I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in finishing up here, that the Government should step forward, announce a 50-50 JERI-type program and that the producers and businesses in southwestern Manitoba will say thank you very much to the provincial government for helping them out.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise this afternoon to place upon the record a few words in regard to the resolution which we are debating upon in this house pertaining to the flood-ravaged farmlands of Manitoba, and I would like to stress Manitoba.

Southwestern Manitoba was, in fact, the greatest affected area of the province. However, affected areas were not limited to southwestern Manitoba. In fact, there were areas throughout the province that had surplus water conditions last year. These surplus water conditions adversely affected the planting and ultimately the growth of crops in various areas within the province.

Understandably, when one's livelihood is derived from the growing of agricultural crops, one is ultimately affected in their income. That is what we are all here to recognize, to recognize that a sector of society in this province has been devastated by an act of God far beyond any control that they can have upon their livelihood.

* (15:20)

This particular resolution indicates that the provincial government is indeed by word wanting to assist those producers in this most difficult time. However, time and time again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are words and they ring very hollow. The previous government backed their words up with cash, and that cash was used by the producers of this province effectively to weather the immediate storm. However, there is a continued fall-out from that particular event, and that is something we have to recognize in this House, that not only are the immediate producers affected from the fall-out but all business and the community that the producers support. Whether it be charitable organizations or church, school, home, all of these areas have been devastatingly affected by the condition that was experienced with the weather and too much moisture at one time.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I urge this Government to recognize the immediate nature of the demands that are being placed upon not only the producers but all community members throughout rural Manitoba.

There has been an amendment put forward by the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), and it acknowledges that, in fact, there have been other occurrences where the federal government and the provincial government have supported those that are in need. I recognize, though, that the federal government is not one that responds

quickly in this particular province, unless perhaps there is an election on the horizon. That not being the case at present, we are left wanting. I think it is imperative, though, that this Government recognize the immediate need of those individuals in rural Manitoba who have been devastated. That is why one must recognize that there has to be alternatives to your ultimate goal, and, recognizably so, the ultimate goal is to get the federal government to recognize the devastation that has, in fact, taken place.

However, already stated, the federal government works at a snail's pace. Our producers and our rural-community Manitobans need assistance now. I do not believe by any stretch of the imagination that the federal government would hold it against this province for their compassionate recognition of the need to support rural Manitobans now. I understand that one has likened this situation to that of a poker game and perhaps that one should hold their cards rather than fold their cards or show them, but I think that in the nature of the public arena, one is always with their cards exposed.

Having said that, I do not believe that if the federal government is not moving at the present time, that the provincial government would lessen its position in the hearts and minds and the ultimate electorate of this province for acting now. There are many programs that have been spoken about, and I do not believe that those that are in the agricultural field want to get too carried away with the different programs that have been in place or not in place or could be potentially in place. They are only concerned with putting food on the table today. Believe me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is, in fact, the case in numerous situations.

We have heard of farming families using their credit lines that should be used for their business being used for family living expenses. We have heard of situations where families have used their personal credit lines to put food on the table. This is an intolerable situation. That is why I am speaking in favour of the amendment and, if passed, ultimately the resolution, because it is very important that we do stand together as the Legislative Assembly because this devastation crosses all political boundaries and it is something where we have to act, put aside

our biases and our sometimes political pet peeves and, in fact, take action at this point in time.

I know the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is indeed very supportive of the agricultural community and ultimately the community that gains its livelihood from the producers. However, they are only words, and without action, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will undoubtedly lose valued community members in rural Manitoba.

So I beg the Minister to talk with her Cabinet colleagues and to effectively bring forward some concrete actions at this time that are in support of the producers of Manitoba and not to get tied up with the wording of the resolution insofar as we want this resolution to pass, but we also want to recognize that we will not be giving up anything if we act now collectively as the Manitoba Legislature because I believe that we will, in fact, be able to make the federal government pay its just desserts.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I appreciate the time on this most vital topic.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? The question before this House is the proposed amendment of the Honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the amendment, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All those opposed to the amendment, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

* (15:30)

Formal Vote

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

* (16:30)

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the following: On the proposed motion of the Honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) in amendment thereto as follows:

THAT the motion be amended by adding the following after the first "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED" clause—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense?

An Honourable Member: No, let us hear it.

Mr. Speaker: BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the current Government of Manitoba acknowledge that to date the assistance it has provided to farmers affected by the 1999 flood has been insufficient, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, if the Manitoba Government is unable to secure support for the 1999 Manitoba flood victims under the DFAA, the Manitoba Government consider negotiating a 50-50 cost-shared program with the federal government; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, should the Manitoba Government fail to come to an agreement with the federal government on a cost-shared disaster assistance program, the Manitoba Government ensure all Manitobans that the monies required to alleviate the disaster will be included in the 2000-2001 budget.

Division

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

Yeas

Dacquay, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Faurshou, Filmon, Gerrard, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Penner (Emerson), Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Praznik, Reimer, Rocan, Schuler, Smith (Fort Garry), Stefanson, Tweed.

Nays

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

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 23, Nays 28.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), which is open.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Speaker, I believe it is extremely important to put on the record what has just occurred in this Chamber, particularly at this time, at the eve, if you like, of the departure of the Minister of Agriculture and others to Ottawa to carry on the negotiations and debates with respect to aid to the southwest farmers, that we in Manitoba and, more importantly, the people of the southwest understand what just has occurred here a moment ago, what the amendment that was put forward by the Member for Emerson onto this main motion asked for, and what we heard repeatedly in the speeches on this resolution: same and equitable treatment to the farmers in difficulty in the southwest that the farmers in the Red River Valley received. That is what was defeated a moment ago in this House.

Had that motion carried with the support and the will of this government, there would have been unanimity in this House on this important issue, but what we are seeing instead, Mr. Speaker, regrettably, I say—I say regrettably—is

some very clever politics being played, some very clever politics being played. I am appalled by that because there is a record, as has been pointed out in different speeches by different members from all sides of the House, that on issues of disaster, we Manitobans and those whom they send to this Chamber from time to time do set aside our partisan concerns and act with unanimity. That has always been a hallmark of how Manitoba governments of any description, NDP or Conservative, and while it has been a while, with all deference to my friend behind me, since we have had a Liberal administration, but even then I would suspect that we would have acted with unanimity under these circumstances.

What we saw here today was crass politics, and let me describe it a little bit for you, Mr. Speaker. Now, it has been mentioned just in passing and it is understandable that we look to history and to hindsight as to how governments have reacted to disasters in different times and on different occasions, but I want to tell you that it was my privilege to have been responsible for shepherding this province through its most difficult fire season in 1989.

Never, Mr. Speaker, was there any thought of holding back support when it was a question of whose jurisdiction should pay. Never did my then-Premier tell me, Harry, you cannot spend 10, 15, 20, 30, 32 millions of dollars for which we had no call to spend; it was 100% federal government responsibility. We laid out the money, we looked after the people, and that is how compassionate government works.

Mr. Speaker, we did not look around to see did we have political representatives out of Churchill, out of The Pas, out of Flin Flon, out of Thompson. No, as a matter of fact, it has been their privilege to be represented by the New Democrats in those seats, but did that make a single difference to the actions of a responsible government? No. No. I do not like saying this, but in their hearts I believe they are saying: What is a bunch of red-necked farmers in the southwest that we have to worry about? We will bamboozle them with some clever politics.

That is exactly what they have done, Mr. Speaker. They have had the word that the federal

government is reluctant to apply the same criteria to the disaster in the southwest as was applied to the Red River Valley. I can give you a number of reasons why. We remember that '97 was an election year, Mr. Premier—I still call him Mr. Premier. We can remember that it was Mr. Iftody and Mr. Goodale and everybody else running around here, even trying to put sandbags in place at that time. I was Minister of Agriculture at the time and I found myself having programs foisted on me by the federales. "No, no, Harry, never mind this sharing business. You want a reseeding program, you got it, 100 percent federal participation. You want a JERI program to help the many businesses that were disrupted and torn apart during that period, you got it under the JERI program, 50-50 funding."

We could talk immediately—my friend is not here, the Minister for water resources who is responsible for the immediate consideration of improving our ring dikes, particularly around communities that were so deeply affected like Ste. Agathe. Commitments, provincial and federal, were forthcoming immediately and we did not wait. We did not wait, Mr. Speaker, until we played the fine game of politics as to who paid for what, but that is what is happening here today, and we have no confidence in what the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) of this province is going to Ottawa with right now. She has not put it on the table for us here.

What this resolution asked for, what this resolution may claim, was nothing less than the same deal, that what was applicable to the Red River Valley is applicable to the southwest. Mr. Speaker, that is what this government callously voted down just a few moments ago. But they are the spin doctors. They expect, because it is in our—because I have the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), who is a most vitally affected member in all this, and we have a track record of being responsive to our farmers in the southwest. We are supposed to be trapped into not supporting this main motion, which is hogwash, which is motherhood, which does not spell out any aid to the southwest.

* (16:40)

Mr. Speaker, we will not have it. I am not the Ag critic, but I will tell you that I will, with a

very clear conscience, vote against the main motion, because it is not doing—in fact, it is doing just the opposite. It is giving the impression of some substance when there is no substance.

The motion, as amended, had substance. The motion, as amended, was fair. The motion, as amended, could have been the unanimous voice of the Manitoba Legislature, as it should be on these kinds of issues. That was not to take place because, Sir, and I suspect we will find out in a few days—I guess it is about 47 hours now. It was 49 hours a few hours ago—or 47 hours that this Government has not anticipated any support for the farmers of the southwest. Unless I see in the budget bill the dollars that are required, the provincial dollars that are required to treat the southwest fairly then, Sir, you have been playing a sham on the backs of troubled southwest farmers, and shame on you for that. We will not stand for it. Thank you.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed that I have to rise in the House today to speak to the original bill so shortly after the amendment put forward by the Agriculture critic on this side of the House has been defeated by the Government. I would like to echo the comments of the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) in expressing my complete and utter disappointment that the government of the day would play politics with the lives of so many people on the farm and in rural communities in southwestern Manitoba.

Being new to this House, obviously some of the nuances I am still attempting to learn, but there is nothing in this amendment, in this bill, in this resolution—*[interjection]* Sorry. This resolution—one of the perils of being a new member. I was looking for some help, but obviously on the other side they do not know what it is either. This resolution does nothing for the farmers of southwestern Manitoba.

In fact, when I first came to sit in this House in the fall, one of the very first issues we dealt with was an agricultural crisis. At that time, through our critic for Agriculture, this side of the House proposed an amendment which was passed. It was a good amendment. During the debates leading up to the passing of that

amendment where we were trying to reach an all-party consensus on the approach that we should all take with the federal government, it was stated many, many times for the benefit of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) that there were, in fact, two issues that needed to be dealt with. We needed to deal with the issue of ongoing support from the European Economic Community and from the United States, which was not being met by the federal government of Canada, which obligations they were not meeting.

But, in fact, we also raised the point that there was a second issue, an issue of a natural disaster, which this Government at that time and to this day has still not recognized. There was a natural disaster of immense proportions in southwestern Manitoba. It is a disaster that hits very close to home, because I have relatives who farm in that area, relatives who were not able to get a crop in the ground, relatives who have suffered as this Government has continued to play politics with this issue.

Mr. Speaker, the previous government recognized the situation. The previous government wrote cheques to farmers in southwestern Manitoba to help them get through the immediate effects of that crisis. That was last spring. What has happened since then? Nothing. This Doer-nothing Government has done nothing to help the farmers of southwestern Manitoba. This government has completely missed the point. They are playing politics over and over again.

We came back to this House late in April, April 25—early for the members across the way perhaps—but we were called back to this House at a time when we should have had a budget weeks before this House was called back to session. In fact, we came back here to find out that this government really had nothing. They had no plans; they had no legislation; they had no package to present to the people of the province of Manitoba. So what did they do? They brought forward a resolution, a resolution that did nothing, that does nothing for the farmers of southwestern Manitoba.

In all honesty, this side of the House took that at face value and in good will proposed

amendments that would see something done, that would see some money directed to the farmers in southwestern Manitoba, to those people in those rural communities that need help, that need assistance. I must tell you how disappointed I am that this government continues to play politics, continues to do nothing. There is nothing stopping the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) from writing cheques. There is nothing preventing this government from getting off its high horse and getting down in the trenches and actually doing the work that it is responsible for, and that is providing support to people in this province who have been affected by a very real natural disaster.

Am I surprised? No, I am not surprised, having seen them in action. In fact, I was not surprised when on the very day that we had a large contingent of farmers from southwestern Manitoba arrive at the Legislative Building for a rally, 10 minutes before the speeches started, 10 minutes before the Minister was to speak to the individuals involved, there she was out on the front driveway of the Legislature, trying to explain her view to farmers from southwestern Manitoba that there actually was no disaster and that, in fact, she could not understand why they were here because she, in her opinion, did not believe there was a disaster in southwestern Manitoba.

Obviously, her tune changed between that time—and thank goodness it has—and the time she took the podium because on the podium she did recognize that. Still, saying it and doing it, as we are witnessing first-hand in this House, seemed to be two entirely different things for this government because what we have today is again no action.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) is about to take off to another trip to Ottawa. I wonder what is going to happen this time. Will she come back tomorrow and claim victory when, in fact, she has nothing? That was her strategy in the fall. She went to Ottawa in the fall with a contingent, and she came back after having walked out of a meeting, accomplishing nothing. She came back to this House and had the audacity to tell us that she felt things were well in hand, that she felt she had somehow managed to get the federal government turned

around in terms of their support of the agricultural crisis. In fact, we raised the issue at the time, and we continue to raise the issue day after day in Question Period that nothing has happened.

The farmers in southwestern Manitoba have received no support from this government. They continue to see no support from this government, and yet those very people who have not been recognized by this government are out in their fields, as we speak, planting their crops, doing what comes naturally to them, to the best of their ability, just soldiering on. They are not in here on their hands and knees because that is not the type of people who are out there.

* (16:50)

The people out in southwestern Manitoba have survived and have thrived through one crisis after another. They are proud people. They are hardworking people. They know the value of hard work. They know what it takes to get the job done. They know what it takes to put words into action. They know what it takes to walk the talk, something that this government obviously has lost complete sight of. It is extremely disappointing to be here today over a year after this initial disaster took place—over a year, Mr. Speaker. How long does it take? The previous government recognized immediately there was a situation that needed to be dealt with, and what did they do? They walked the talk. The Honourable Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has stated: They got on with doing business. They did not look around to see where the votes were, to see where the support was coming from. They wrote the cheques. They got the farmers back on their feet. *[interjection]*

I notice the Honourable Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) has a comment. Mr. Speaker, my advice to that member as well as to the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Scott Smith) would be to do whatever they can do, and, in fact, to do something to get their government off the pot, to get their government to support the farmers that support the economy in their area, because without the support of the farmers and those in the rural communities Brandon's economy will suffer and Brandon's economy is suffering.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important, I think it is mandatory that as a House and as an opposition we continue to bring forward to this government the need for them to take some positive action, to take some positive steps, to actually do something to support the farmers of southwestern Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in my role as critic of Inter-governmental Affairs and rural development, I would also like to point out to this government that this is not just a situation that affects the farmers, the people working on the field. This affects the whole area, the whole economics of this rural agricultural area. As the Member for Lakeside points out, schools are affected, hospitals are affected. A whole way of life is affected. If we do not see some action very, very quickly, we are going to see some dire effects throughout the whole economy of southwestern Manitoba.

I only need to point to the study I raised in this House the other day, which was reported in the Saskatoon *Star Phoenix*, in terms of the plight of communities in rural Manitoba, and how in Saskatchewan where their NDP friends have had the opportunity to promote rural development and have failed; how in our province to the immediate west of us, which has many similarities to the province of Manitoba, their rural population in the last 10 years has decreased by over 25 percent. That is a significant figure. Twenty-five percent of the population of rural Saskatchewan has had to leave rural Saskatchewan. The government of today, even in Saskatchewan, recognizes that the way to ensure that that is turned around is by encouraging economic development, by encouraging people to establish businesses, to create businesses, to continue the growth of the economy in order that there is hope for the young people out there, and in order that they can see an opportunity to continue to live in rural Saskatchewan. That has not happened there. It is not happening today.

We are lucky. We are extremely fortunate in this province to have benefited from the wisdom of the Conservative government over the last eleven and a half years, and the vision that Gary Filmon and his colleagues had to ensure that prosperity returned to rural Manitoba, something

that was unheard of for many years under an NDP regime in this province. Thank goodness that Gary Filmon and his team decided to devote their energy and their efforts into rural economic development.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind this House that, in fact, it has paid dividends. It has paid huge dividends, for that very same report that pointed to the loss of citizens, the loss of people living in rural Saskatchewan, pointed to Manitoba. In Manitoba, while it is true our rural population has declined and it has been a struggle, it has declined by 1 percent over the course of the last 10 years as compared to over 25 percent in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, there is one reason for that dramatic percentage difference. There is one reason for the success that we have experienced in rural Manitoba in terms of keeping our citizens, our people in that area. That has been rural diversification.

I would encourage all members opposite to get out into the area, to take a visit from town to town to see what is going on in those communities. I had the opportunity to be in Minnedosa on Saturday. In driving there, I drove through a number of small communities. I also spent some time driving around Minnedosa. It is very encouraging to see the economic development that has taken place in those communities across southwestern Manitoba and, in fact, across all Manitoba.

To do that, to be able to keep our people, to keep the citizens in rural Manitoba, to provide them with hope and opportunity, we must have a continuing economic base that will allow people to see a future, that will allow people to see opportunities. To do that, we are going to have to ensure that the people in rural Manitoba and the people in southwestern Manitoba continue to see that they live in a province where a government will support them in times of need. Not just give them a handout, not just shovel money at them, but to give them a hand up when they so truly need it.

I would like to congratulate many of the honourable members on this side who worked very diligently on the REDI program, who got

the Grow Bonds in place, who got money, made money available through various programs to small businesses across this province and across southwestern Manitoba who needed it.

As I said in the House the other day, it is a very, very different scenario trying to grow a business in a small community compared to growing a business in an urban setting. It takes courage, it takes strength of character for someone to stand up and say: I am going to take a chance. I am going to take a chance on somebody in southern Manitoba. I am going to take a chance on someone in rural Manitoba, going to help them. Because it is a high risk, there is no doubt about it, but if we do not take those risks as a province, we will have nothing. We will be faced with a situation where with the ever increasing size of farms that our rural population continues to decline and decline. That is no future for this province.

In response, you know, it was fascinating to hear members opposite stand up in this House and explain their economic philosophy the other day, about how, in fact, these entrepreneurs and people who had the determination, the drive and the will to set up their own businesses really could not take credit for what has gone on in terms of Manitoba's economy and in terms of rural Manitoba's economy. Again, it is disappointing that this government does not recognize the need to pitch in and help out and take some action when it is needed and when it is necessary.

Mr. Speaker, we heard earlier in statements from this side of the House about how we are starting to feel as a province. We are starting to see the effects of this Government's ignoring the plight of farmers in southwestern Manitoba. We have car dealers who are explaining to us, things are drying up, nothing is happening. That is the first sign. We have implement dealers who are telling us it is not there. The farmers are not coming in. The sales are not there. The products are not flowing through. That is just the first sign of a deep, dark cloud hanging over the people of rural Manitoba and, in particular, southwestern Manitoba.

That is why I am extremely, extremely disappointed that the members of the

Government are not accepting the responsibility they have to the people of rural Manitoba, specifically to the farmers of southwestern Manitoba and their plight. Instead they bring before this House fluff, a resolution that says nothing and does nothing. That is very disappointing.

Yet when members from this side of the House rise and with their tremendous amount of experience propose amendments that would actually see something happen, what do they do? They play politics with people's lives. They stand up in this house day after day after day and try to explain away that, in fact, it is somebody else's fault.

There are a number of members indicating that it is a blame game. Quite frankly, this is another characteristic that we have seen out of this government, this Doer-nothing government. It is the blame game. It is never their responsibility. There is always somebody else. It is somebody else's fault that the farmers in southwestern Manitoba are not getting support. It is somebody else's fault that CFB Shilo is looked at being closed again, having a dramatic effect on the economy of southwestern Manitoba. So what do we have?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member will have 22 minutes remaining.

* (17:00)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

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

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 6—Commercialization in the Classroom

Mr. Speaker: On the proposed resolution, the Honourable Member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), Commercialization in the Classroom.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner), that

WHEREAS the New Democratic Party has removed Youth News Network from Manitoba's classrooms arguing they were against the commercialization of our schools; and

WHEREAS with this decision the NDP have removed a degree of autonomy and decision making from Manitoba's elected school boards; and

WHEREAS in the Member for Flin Flon's constituency, children from MacIsaac School are encouraged to collect Universal Product Code symbols off boxes of Kellogg products in an attempt to raise \$10,000 for technological resources; and

WHEREAS also in the Member for Flin Flon's constituency, MacIsaac School and Subway have set up a monthly classroom reward; and

WHEREAS Wal-Mart Canada has initiated the "Adopt a School Program" in which almost every Wal-Mart in the nation-wide chain has chosen a local school in their community to support.

THEREFORE be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to clarify its position on the autonomy of school boards as well as the ability of schools to enter into contracts with private sector companies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider allowing local school boards to make the decisions they were elected to make without political interference from the provincial government.

Motion presented.

Mr. Dyck: Mr. Speaker, last year a number of Manitoba schools were working with a private sector company called the Youth News Network in an effort to provide their students with enhanced technological and information resources. In return for airing a daily 12 1/2 minute news and current affairs program, the schools would be furnished with a package of

high-technology hardware accompanied by a number of free educational materials.

Well, the schools in question were told by the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) that they would not be able to take advantage of this offer despite the fact that only a scant few minutes of the YNN broadcast would be allocated to advertising and notwithstanding the fact that local school authorities had given the go-ahead to these agreements.

The provincial government claimed it was against the commercialization of the classrooms and shot down the YNN opportunity. Mr. Speaker, just at the outset, that to me smacks of the Minister of Education interfering with the ability of school boards to make decisions and to, in fact, have local autonomy in the decisions that they are making with their own boards.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So when the New Democratic Government outlawed YNN last fall, they were guilty on a number of counts. Not only was the action largely hypocritical, it also ran haphazardly over the autonomy of Manitoba school boards. There was no dialogue with school boards in question, no consultation with parents and educators from relevant schools, and no admission that perhaps the people of Manitoba were intelligent enough to decide what would be an acceptable way to educate their own children.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wanted to just speak from my own experience of the school boards that I contacted. It is absolutely fact that there was no consultation that took place. So I wonder on what grounds Today's NDP objects to YNN, when they are perfectly content to allow schools to invite other forms of private sector involvement. I never heard the Member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) complain about Kellogg's or Subway's partnership with schools in his constituency, nor have I heard any of the Government members from Winnipeg constituencies complain about Wal-Mart or Pepsi getting involved in a mutually beneficial way with local schools, let alone calling on the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to strong-

arm the schools in question to end these partnerships.

It would seem that the NDP believes advertising in the form of sponsorship deals are okay for some schools, but it is not all right for schools to make similar deals with YNN. So therein lies the inconsistency in this whole dilemma that we are facing here. Not only has the Government shown itself to be inconsistent by acting out against a certain kind of private sector involvement in the schools, but it has also overstepped its bounds by doing so. It is not the place of the provincial government to overrule legitimately and democratically elected school boards on matters such as this.

When the Province sees fit to intervene in school board jurisdictions in a seemingly arbitrary fashion, the legitimate authority of elected school boards is severely compromised. This kind of haphazard interference does nothing to promote the co-operative spirit that must exist between local government and the provincial government. Simply put, the Government action has done nothing but deprive schools of an arrangement that has many potential benefits and a few potential shortcomings.

In the light of this apparent inconsistency that has been demonstrated since this government took office, it is high time that the Minister of Education clarified his position on the autonomy of schools, of school boards. Does he feel that the electorate of the school divisions in question are unable to make their own informed decisions on what is appropriate in the classroom? or will he acknowledge that, in fact, they do and ensure the local boards the authority that they have been designated? It is important that this question be answered.

In fact, the Legislative Assembly should take this whole issue one step further. The Government must be urged to recognize the legitimate authority of the school boards when it comes to making decisions and that the trustees were elected to make in the first place. Whether it be decisions pertaining to private sector sponsorship or other issues that are not the business of the provincial government, the members opposite should allow those elected officials to carry out their responsibilities.

That is my challenge to you, that in this resolution you allow school boards to continue to make the decisions that they were elected to make and that you do not interfere in an inappropriate way for them to do that. Thank you very much.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the speech by the Honourable Member opposite illustrates just how ill-informed, how broadly ill-informed the Member is.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

There is a very clear difference, Mr. Speaker, between the educational philosophy of the Government of Manitoba and the educational philosophy of the Progressive Conservative Party as represented in Manitoba, whether that is Progressive Conservative or Alliance or what have you. We are not sure anymore right now.

* (17:10)

Mr. Speaker, the children of the province of Manitoba are not for sale to the highest corporate bidder. We made a judgment on the Youth News Network in Manitoba's classrooms some months ago. It is a judgment that we made in the best interests of the children of the province of Manitoba, in the best interests of integrity of the classroom and the curriculum of Manitoba, and we have nothing to apologize for this. In fact, the public has spoken very loudly and clearly on this matter in my office and in the Premier's Office in resounding support of the decision to remove corporate interests from the curriculum classroom time.

Mr. Speaker, although the focus of this resolution is not the removal of YNN, it certainly was a feature of the Honourable Member's remarks on this item. I recognize that it will likely monopolize the majority of this debate, so I will address it from the outside before moving into school board autonomy and some of the other issues that the Honourable Member raises in his resolution.

Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party is against the commercialization of our classrooms. There are no ifs, ands or buts to that. To argue

that drink machines or sponsored scoreboards or collecting milk carton labels is akin to having the Youth News Network in the classrooms of the province of Manitoba is a gross oversimplification of the issue.

I think the difference lies primarily in the nature of the advertising medium. The Youth News Network is an active medium in that it requires students to use available classroom time to consume corporate advertising. Other corporate slogans throughout schools like Coca Cola machines or Pepsi on scoreboards and so forth assume a passive advertising, and certainly it is something that I experienced in my school years, as I did experience selling chocolate bars and the various other methods of fundraising that schools have been involved with for decades.

This was given to me by a student, in fact, at Kildonan East school, one of the schools that has YNN right now in the classroom, that has the advertising time which we find so objectionable as the Government of Manitoba, that is dedicated time: You shall watch YNN for 10 minutes a day, 2.5 minutes of that is commercial advertising, would be akin—and this is a Grade 12, Grade 11 student speaking to me on this matter: Would it be acceptable to the Government of Manitoba to have children in the classroom watching, staring at, required to look at a Coca Cola machine for 2.5 minutes of a classroom day or to look at a Pepsi machine for 2.5 minutes of a classroom day? That reduces it to an ad absurdum argument. I think it is very accurate, because it does strike to the principle of mandated watching of commercial television for 2.5 minutes of commercials, 10 minutes a day.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is a very, very different criterion: passive medium versus active medium. We will not dedicate classroom time, curriculum time in the classrooms of Manitoba for corporatization, for corporate messaging, for dedicating advertising time to the classroom. I think that basically sums up the degree of concern that we have with the commercialization of our schools and the commercialization of our classroom in an active media such as YNN, which is selling to students commercial products in classrooms, in classroom time, in curriculum time that should be better used and better put for

language skills, for mathematic skills, for science skills, for IT skills. It is precious time, and we do not want to have that previous time lost to corporate messaging.

With regard to school board autonomy, this is a bit of a specious argument, and it has always bothered me, because we get these claims about school board autonomy and the decision that was made by the Government of Manitoba to take an active role in removing YNN from our classrooms, that we are somehow broaching school board autonomy. I find it very ironic after reviewing the files of the last couple of ministers of Education. We had a minister who was in the office for four years, who was a member of the government of the previous administration, that made it a habit of issuing directives to school boards infringing on their autonomy regularly, almost weekly. Everything from singing "God Save the Queen" to—well, I will state that it was very, very widely used, the directives from the Minister's office. We are not in the habit of issuing directives from the Minister's office for any whim that happens to come through Room 168. We are more interested in consultative dialogue with our partners in school boards, with the trustees, with the teachers, with parents and with children.

Part of that consultation, Mr. Speaker, I alluded to it just a moment ago in my remarks about the commercialization of schools. We had a Grade 12 student come into the office and talk to us about staring at a Coke machine for two and a half minutes vis-à-vis staring at commercial advertising for two and a half minutes. I thought that student summed it up quite accurately in terms of the illogic of this claim that commercialization of a classroom is okay, the problem of the issue being directed, watching directed participation in commercial advertising vis-à-vis passive advertising.

We are back to the issue of school board autonomy. The resolution calls for the provincial government to clarify its position on the autonomy of local school boards. Of course, we believe in the autonomy of local school boards. School board autonomy has not been jeopardized by this decision in the least. What we are directing is that schools not be signing on

an agreement that would extend the YNN contracts with Athena corporation.

The Public Schools Act, in fact, does not provide for school boards to be involved in curriculum development. That indeed is the Minister's responsibility. By using the authority of the Minister of Education over curriculum of school boards, the Government of Manitoba has not removed any level of autonomy previously enjoyed by school boards with respect to curriculum. The autonomy that the Progressive Conservatives across the hall, the members across the floor are speaking to, was never there to begin with.

The Department of Education and Training is the office in which curriculum decisions are made, is the office of which decisions for the utilization of classroom time and classroom course work are made. Those decisions are made in the Minister's office and reside within the power of the Government of the Province of Manitoba. So we have no apologies to make for this decision, Mr. Speaker. This decision is made for the benefit of the children of the province of Manitoba, the students in our public school system. This decision was made with the integrity of the public school system of Manitoba being foremost.

We believe that classroom time should be used not for the commercialization, not for selling products to a passive audience, the children of the province of Manitoba, but rather classroom time should be used for the instruction of English language skills, the instruction of mathematics skills, the instruction of science, the instruction of history in our classroom, core curriculum subjects that the people of Manitoba expect the classrooms of Manitoba to instil in students. So we have a very, very different philosophy in terms of the commercialization of our classrooms, the corporatization of our classrooms and the integrity of the public school system in the province of Manitoba.

We on this side of the House will not sell the students of Manitoba to the, as I said earlier, highest bidder. We will not sell the students of Manitoba and the classroom time that the students of Manitoba need to acquire quality education in this province to the highest bidder,

no matter what corporation it may be, no matter what the inducements may be.

Incidentally, speaking of inducements, Mr. Speaker, we are in this jackpot over corporatization because of the tremendous cuts in funding that were made to the public school system over the last 10 years. The funding that took place, the absolutely appalling levels of cuts that were made to the public school system over the last 10 years have led to no end of frustration, no end of need in the public school system, frustration that is shared equally by trustees, teachers and parents at the—

An Honourable Member: The infrastructure is crumbling.

Mr. Caldwell: Crumbling infrastructure, as one of my colleagues suggests. A quarter of a billion dollars worth of infrastructure deficits in the public school system, operating budgets slashed unmercifully over the last 10 years. There is a great, great deal of need in the public school system.

The system has been softened up tremendously so that inducements from corporate interests have a soft audience, because the system is desperate for funding, desperate for support, something that was not forthcoming from the previous administration and something that I am very proud to say my colleagues in the Government of Manitoba have offered for the first time in over a decade, real hope to the teachers and trustees and parents and children that are participants in the partnerships that make Manitoba's public education system one of excellence, that has taken a pounding over the last 10 years and one that has renewed hope for enhancing the excellence that was truly left to lie fallow or left abandoned, in many cases, through successive budgets by the previous administration.

* (17:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, we, the Government of Manitoba, we on this side of the House are committed to restoring excellence in the public school system in the province of Manitoba. We are committed to tying funding decisions for the public school system to the rate of economic

growth so that there is real hope for expanded resources in the public school system over the course of the mandate of this government. There is real hope for partnerships between trustees, teachers, parents and children in rebuilding the public education system in the province of Manitoba. That rebuilding will take place in a context of mutual respect. It will take place in a context of a dialogue that is undertaken in good faith and a dialogue that is undertaken with an understanding that resources will be made available when need is determined, that resources will be made available in a context of economic growth in the province of Manitoba.

We will not have the era of \$20-million cuts one year after an election and \$20-million injections in the system before an election which gave no stability to any business manager, any business official planning with school divisions for budget years. There is no opportunity for any stable, long-term planning in an environment where you have massive swings from cuts, feast-to-famine, depending on election years.

We are committed to provide stable funding with business plans in partnership with our trustee partners and with our partners in the business offices of school divisions across Manitoba so that this pernicious commercialization of the classroom, this pernicious selling of our students' minds in the classroom will stop.

We have the responsibility as the Government of Manitoba to maintain the integrity of our schools and to ensure that our children are receiving the education to which they are entitled. That education does not include commercial messaging to create consumers. It does not include commercial messaging that places a value on our students as commercial pawns in a game of the quickest to the bottom, as it were.

In concluding my remarks, I think it was valuable to have this debate. I am thankful that the Member put it on the Order Paper for debate as a private member's bill, because it highlights very clearly the difference between the Government of Manitoba's view of the classrooms and the province of Manitoba's places of learning with integrity.

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

Mr. David Faurchou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few words on the record in regard to this resolution that does give direction to that of our educational system.

I observe the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) that he must have had a rough and rocky time of late, looking at his hairdo. The teachers and former trustees of his party caucus must have given him a little roughing up before he made some of those comments that we have just been privy to, because indeed this is an important resolution, because it asks that we as members of the Legislature here require the Government to go on the record to effectively spell out what school boards are expected of and how they can enter into agreements with other agencies that are wanting to support our educational system, as well as it gives an opportunity for we as legislators to ask of the Government that the autonomy be maintained. That is their right because they as school trustees have an electorate that has given them the responsibility to reflect their views in our educational system.

The question begs to be answered: Has our educational system been treated fairly and equitably by the Legislature of Manitoba over the years? I would venture to say, no, it has not been, because looking at the participation on both sides of the House by former trustees, teachers, and those educators within the system that have, in fact, education first and foremost, because indeed it involves the future of our province, our children. We, through the support of the educational system, must maintain that support; otherwise, our future is in jeopardy.

Now, I know that a lot of political rhetoric can be made of who has done what to whom and the list goes on, the finger-pointing continues, but, ultimately, we have to recognize the importance of education. The federal government did it to this province back in 1995 when they pulled away millions upon millions of dollars in the educational and health care system within this province. Yes, there had to be cutbacks. It would be fiscally irresponsible if

there were not cutbacks until our economy could, in fact, recharge the coffers so that we could again bring forward the expenditures in the vital fields of education and health care which are so important to all of us.

Stable funding is a critical element for an educational system in which to thrive, but this government has not, to date, answered the call. The bell has been ringing, gentlemen and ladies, but it has not been answered. You say that stable funding will be afforded school divisions throughout the province based upon the economy of this province. There is not one person in this House, there is not one person in this province, that can predict what the level of performance of our economy is going to be next month, next year, five years from now. You have to be more definitive. The previous government provided that definitiveness by stating that funding would be at least—and they provided a benchmark—the rate of inflation or 2 percent. That was a statement that was made last year when the budget was announced.

That stability and that anticipated funding are invaluable to school boards so that they can make their long-term plans for implementation of curricula. Now, a lot has been said by the Minister here just a moment ago about curriculum and whose responsibility it is. But there are two definite fields of responsibility. One is the core curriculum to which the province prescribes how that curriculum is to be implemented and indeed, actually prescribes the curriculum itself. There is another component within that, and that is the elective side of the subjects that are taught within a school division. Those are supposed to be reflective out to the wants and needs of that particular school division as determined by the election of trustees with that responsibility.

That is the autonomy that this Legislative Assembly and, indeed, this government must recognize and has not to date. You talk about directives, and you say that directives were issued in the past and we are following no different path. But the question begs to be answered. Ask them, are you, in fact, being the same as the previous governments have been of which you criticized? *[interjection]* No, the Honourable Member for Assiniboia (Mr.

Rondeau) says, but indeed you are. The first directive that was put forward here was in regard to the YNN proposal that was before many school boards.

* (17:30)

Now, I am not saying that any government is faultless in regard to the educational system. We all try our very best, but I am certain that the Member for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) would not be here if everything was as it should be. I as the Member for Portage la Prairie may not be here if everything was as it should be in our particular constituencies. That is why we put ourselves in the position that we are in today, elected representatives of our constituency. It is fundamentally important for us to reflect the views of our electorate.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Assembly, the electorate of Portage la Prairie are saying, butt out. The autonomy of the Portage la Prairie school board has, in fact, been compromised. Compromised insofar as that the YNN proposal was voted down in Portage la Prairie. That was their decision. They did not participate in this particular program, but I am standing here in the Chamber today with a very clear conscience. I am not in contravention of that decision. I am standing here voicing their disapproval of this government saying that they did not have that right and responsibility to say yes or no to that contractual obligation, and that is at the root of the problem we are facing here today. That is why this resolution is so vitally important that it be passed.

We as a Legislative Assembly must recognize the autonomy of the school boards that have implemented YNN. I support that decision. I perhaps am not comfortable with the particular commercialization as they are, however that is their decision. Those school boards have recognized concerns. They have modified the airing of the YNN broadcasts to a point where the commercial component of the YNN broadcast is now heard and observed by the students within their recess time.

I ask honourable members what is wrong with the usage of recess time? If that is a decision of that school board, it is not taking

from any of the curriculum time. *[interjection]* The Honourable Member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) says the children of the province should have opportunity to play. Well, indeed, they should. Physical education and the social aspects of recess are vitally important. However, within this time frame, look at what those individuals are receiving. They are receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars of technology which we at present cannot afford to deliver to those individuals.

The Honourable Minister made mention of the ongoing activities that have been present in our schools for decades, and that being the fundraising through chocolates and plants and fruit and toothpaste, you name it, it has been sold through the schools for fundraising. Each and every one of those products was labelled by the commercial supplier. You look at the children coming into the schools each and every day carrying the books and their lunch kits and their backpacks, they are all labelled with commercial labels. This is part of our society. Our children recognize what is a commercial and what is not a commercial. They tune in and they tune out. They are very much in tune with what is happening in our society today. So to say that they do not, I think, is grossly underestimating the intelligence of our children in this day and age.

As far as the understanding of what is and what is not appropriate, the question begs to be answered: What of all of the commercial products that are in existence in the schools today? The Honourable Minister cited the score clocks in every gymnasium in every school all over this province. Think about it. In any period in time when those individuals are taking physical education, how many times does one look up at the score clock? They look up at the clock countless numbers of times throughout that physical education period, and each and every time they are exposed to Pepsi Cola or Coca Cola, Mountain Dew, whatever the particular advertisement is in that score clock. Is that acceptable or is that not acceptable? I would like a definition, and that is all this resolution is asking for: a definition of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Therefore, I am very much in support of this particular resolution because this Legislative Assembly should go on

record asking for answers to these very important questions so that our school boards can go ahead and make those decisions that are in keeping with the will of this Assembly.

So this Assembly has the obligation to ask of this government what, in fact, is the definition as to what is acceptable and what is not. What companies can and what companies cannot participate in the schools and in what fashion?

We go back to the computers of which the present-day government has stated wants to have a computer available to each and every student in every classroom in this entire province within their mandate. E-mail address constitutes accessibility to a computer. With that e-mail address, every time you go to log on to the World Wide Web, what is the first thing that you see—an advertisement. Honourable members, I do not know whether you have had the opportunity to log on to the World Wide Web, but, indeed, that is the first thing that you see, an advertisement from that particular server.

So then another question begs to be answered: What is acceptable and what is not acceptable as far as an advertisement? *[interjection]* Precisely. This Legislative Assembly demands of the Government through this resolution and adoption of this resolution a request for criteria to answer those very important questions, and I will be looking forward to further commentary in the short 20 minutes that are left in this hour of debate for honourable members opposite to speak in support of this resolution, and prior to six o'clock, I hope, Mr. Speaker, we will have the opportunity to adopt this resolution. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): I would like to answer the honourable members opposite, some of their discussion on this commercialization in the classroom. As a previous school administrator and working on the board, and working actually with school education-business partnerships, I have had a lot of experience in this and would like to respond to some of your issues that you have brought up and some of the discussion points.

The first discussion point is probably the most essential. The Minister of Education (Mr.

Caldwell), according to The Public School Act, section 3, part 1, does have the authority to establish course of study, including the set of instruction time, the authorized programs, the materials for use, and, of course, how they are conducted. That is, The Public School Act gives the Minister the power to set the curriculum. The other thing is that the Minister has the right to say what is taught and what is not taught in our classroom. Exercising this is, in no way, an infringement on the right of the school boards. School board autonomy has not been jeopardized by the Minister's decision to prevent schools from signing or extending agreements within a corporation.

* (17:40)

It is important to note that the curriculum must be maintained, and it cannot be commercialized. The other thing is we have to talk about what a public and a private corporation partnership is all about. By doing that, I have gotten some research on what a partnership has to deal with.

The purpose of an education curriculum is to enhance the quality and relevance of education for the learners. It has to be curriculum based.

Now, for those of us who do not have an educational background, what that means is curriculum is outcome based. That means educational outcomes. That means you are looking for growth in a student. You look for growth by sitting there taking the inputs and coming out with academic outcomes. You do not sit there and say, we are going to put in x and come out with a product. What you are saying is you are looking at the kid, you are devising an education curriculum, you are devising systems by which the student can improve academically. You do not sit them in front of a classroom television and then expect them to learn x, y and z. That is not an appropriate curriculum input nor an outcome. Time in front of a television is not educationally sound. It is not an appropriate outcome, curriculum- or academic-wise.

The other thing is that all successful business-education partnerships need to talk about the learner's needs and come out with the outcomes in consultation with all partners.

Again, YNN does not meet this criterion. What happens is they sit in front of a TV. That does not come up with educational outcomes.

It has to express behaviours and outcomes for all participants that can be measured. Again, how can you measure the productivity and the outcome of sitting in front of a TV listening to a news or so-called news show? It does not work like that.

In order to have an effective partnership between business and education, what you need to do is you have to ensure the quality and relevance of education for all learners. Again, if you have a canned academic program coming out from one sort of group, it does not meet the learners' needs. It does not meet the curriculum needs. Therefore, a TV broadcast from Ontario does not have relevance to what the teacher is supposed to be teaching, does not have relevance to what the students are being examined on or tested on. Therefore, what has to happen is that it has to have relevance, which a TV show canned from Ontario does not have, and quality.

I was able to look at a couple of the early YNN broadcasts, and I do not think it meets either criteria of a successful business-education partnership. It must mutually benefit all partners. What that means is the students have to benefit. Yes, the school has to benefit, but basically we want to have a student-centred educational program. YNN is not student centred. It must treat fairly and equitably all those served by the partnership. In this case, the school board may win. The actual equipment in the classroom might be enhanced, but the students, again, what you are doing is you are taking time away from academic growth. The purpose of a school and the purpose of curricular time is to allow the student to grow academically. YNN does not do that.

The most important part of a business-education partnership is to allocate resources to complement and not replace public funding for education. What you want to do is enhance the education. So what you want to do is not replace what is being done by the curriculum. You are not trying to replace what is done in the classroom. You are trying to enhance it.

Now, those things that I just talked about, it is important to know that it was the Conference Board of Canada in their Business-Education Partnership Forum that talked about that. That is not a group that generally is very left wing. What they are is the right-wing corporations who have said, what is the successful business partnership? They have said that it is not supposed to benefit the corporation. It is supposed to benefit the education of the individual student. It is nice to see that our government philosophy is doing the same thing. It is not benefiting only for the cash, only for the equipment that can be acquired, but what it is doing is we are worried about what the students are learning and how they are learning it, and that, I am very proud to say, our government is following.

In the past, as Frontier School Division co-ordinator of work education, et cetera, what I did was I set up business-education partnerships, and all of the partnerships had to do with working on what the students needed to do in the long term to benefit them either socially, personally, et cetera.

I would like to respond to some of the things my honourable friend from Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurshou) raised. He said: Why not use recess time? Well, we have all shown that lifelong activity, exercise, is really critical for students. The actual ability to interact with each other becomes a lifelong learning process. You need to know how to interact with people. You need to have active life. The kids often sit in front of the TV too long now. After school they sit in front of the TV; they sit in front of the computer. What we have to do is give our students, our children of Manitoba, the opportunity to be active, get active, and live a lifelong learning with lots of activity, lots of energy.

We do not want to be where we are the couch potatoes of North America. We want our kids to enjoy recess, to interact and have fun during recess and give them a break. We should not be taking young kids and making them so that they have to sit all day with no breaks in the classroom. That is inappropriate education, and for those opposite who are not educators, you do

not have young kids sit all day. You have to have activity.

The other thing is that we have to worry about the subliminal messages that are given. I can remember many years ago I was driving with my niece who was 2 years old at the time. I asked her where she wanted to go eat, and at 2 years old she says: McDonald's, good food, priced right. I thought about that afterwards. Originally, I laughed very hard because it was a very strange comment to me, a little 2-year-old girl sitting there, saying that. But then I started wondering what happens with the subliminal messages that are brought to us every day. Every day.

So a few years ago I had the opportunity to go to a conference in Toronto on business-education partnerships, and I was appalled by what some school divisions around the country and in the States do. I went there, and we saw where some corporations actually pay for the textbooks and put in the curriculum in the actual schools. So it is no longer one car and one car; it is one hamburger and one hamburger equals how many hamburgers. You start wondering about that.

You get computers that what you do is you turn them on, and they have a nice corporate message, a commercial, before you get to use the computer. [*interjection*] Yes, you do get that in Grades 2 and 3. You get all sorts of interesting things where you get a message as, oh, the Canadian dollar might not be at the same par as the American dollar, so you cannot buy Nike runners at the same rate as your American counterpart. You start wondering about the subliminal messaging that is being given to the youth. You start wondering about the corporate messaging that is given to youth.

What happens is that sometimes you have to allow the kids to have an educational pause where they know that they can develop critical thinking skills, where they can start looking where they are not inundated by advertising like on TV. Every show seems to have materials that they sell afterwards. Every TV show, every movie has that; every skate, every sport, everything has gotten so commercialized that we have to start taking it where we wonder what

message we are giving to their kids. Are they just a commodity where all they have to do is buy and sell?

I think that our party is taking a stand toward some commercialization where we say we have to stop sometime. Our kids are not for sale. Our schools are not for sale. I am happy that I am with that party.

* (17:50)

I look at some of the people, like in Flin Flon. I know the members opposite referred to Flin Flon. I have had a response from the superintendent in Flin Flon. The superintendent in Flin Flon has done some interesting partnerships that have benefited the kids. He has done some wonderful things where he has worked with kids on curriculum-based material. He has taken them and shown them how to partner with businesses and business-work education opportunities where kids get an ability to work with professionals. He also has got where the kids actually run their own businesses, but, again, using the curriculum. Therefore, the kids are interested in it. He is using curriculum, and he is working with the kids to develop academic and social skills so that the kids are tied to the learning.

The YNN does not do this. YNN is, in fact, commercialization at its worst. It is where we are trying to sell classroom time for economic benefit, and it is wrong. One of the things we should take note of is we wanted to make sure that we have an education system second to none. I agree with the members opposite where what we have is when we are working with our education system, we are working with our future, Manitoba's future, and it is critical to do it right. It is critical to have the best education system that is possible.

You do not do that by having 10, 12, 15 minutes outside of our classroom to watch TV. In the case of Coke, in the case of other advertising, what we want to do is we want to have passive advertising, not active advertising. When you have a group of students forced to sit and watch TV in classroom, that is active; that is incorrect. When you have a Coke machine in the hallway to earn money for academics, that is a

little bit different. I think that is where the line is drawn. The line is drawn where it is not curriculum time, it is not instructional time, it is not school-base time, but what it is it is outside school hours. It is outside our curriculum. We will not change that.

It is important to take the time to make students computer literate. So, if they are spending time in front of a computer, it should be for computer literacy, to ensure technical proficiency. I think what we have to do is start focussing on positive business-education partnerships where kids can get exposed to careers. I think it is important that we spend some time having the kids become critical thinkers. I think it is very important that we take the time and have the kids become good, solid citizens, but I do not think you do that through the use of YNN, sitting in the classroom in front of a TV and responding.

I think it is really critical that we drew the line in the sand. I am very proud that our party has chosen that we do not commercialize our classroom and our learning system. Thank you very much.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to this resolution. I think this resolution is not thought out very well, and it goes totally against The Public Schools Act.

I would first like to point out that I have spent most of my working years in a classroom, and I want to speak from that perspective.

The reason we got into this debate over YNN in our schools is that we do not have any guidelines for partnership between business and our public schools. The former government just sort of opened up this whole debate. Had there been guidelines, we probably would not have had this conflict with YNN.

I want to state that I do not agree with this resolution, and just let me begin. We on this side of the House believe in education as a shared responsibility of government, school boards, administrators, teachers, parents and students. There are many stakeholders in education. According to The Public Schools Act, the Minister of Education has responsibilities for

supervision, control and direction of all public schools.

The resolution questions the power and authority of the Minister of Education in preventing YNN to control our schools. Let me point out, the Minister of Education has the power to establish courses of study including instructional time and authorized programs of materials in public schools and private schools. The point is the Minister has the authority and he has a right to cut YNN from our schools. This is no infringement on authority of the school board.

The Education Administration Act supports what the Minister has done. Also, The Public Schools Act does not provide for school board involvement in curriculum.

The autonomy the Opposition speaks about in the resolution was never there to begin with. It is important to address the language used within the resolution. The language in the first WHEREAS clause is not entirely accurate. We did not justify the removal of YNN by arguing we were against the commercialization of our schools. You cannot compare YNN to drink machines or some other minor advertisement that might have crept into our system. YNN is a very big issue. They have crossed the line, we might say.

The difference lies in the nature of the advertising medium. As our Minister of Education has pointed out, YNN is an active medium in that it requires students to use available class time to consume various corporate advertising. For instance, a Coca Cola machine is not in the classroom and the students do not have to watch it. YNN has a captive audience and it takes up class time. I think it would be a real disruption to students. I think we have enough disruption in our schools.

This YNN does not add to literacy or numeracy, nor is any benefit to the students. We should not try to make our classroom into some profit-making venture. Dropping YNN was an election promise to the people of Manitoba, and we received strong support for this. We want to fulfil our promise.

The quality of YNN has been questioned. Students' reviews of YNN are not good. Many students today are very well informed and they watch enough TV and enough commercials. The *Winnipeg Free Press* had a few quotes here. Let me read. "It's not too useful. They're too short. They don't tell you anything," said a Grade 12 student. Here is another one. "They just show you the headlines. They don't have the details." Here another student says, "Most students would rather use the TV time for homework or class time. I learn more after reading a paper when I get home." Here is another one from the *Free Press*. "Now that we've been watching the program for over a month, my friends and I have lost all respect for the program."

So it is not very popular with the students. Let me tell you, I have been in the classroom a long time. Students are very good judges of good education. Also, educators are basically not for it. There are many people who have informed me before and after the election, they supported us because we cut YNN. The Manitoba Teacher's Society is dead set against it. I will say many trustees also are against this. They are silent. They do not want to speak out against the corporation, you might say, but there are many trustees I have spoken to who are against it.

We must also be careful of whom we let into the classroom. Let us not let the corporate agenda assume or take over leadership in the direction of our schools. Once someone is in your school, they can assume authority.

As a long-time teacher, I was also careful of inviting guest speakers into the classroom, because once they were in front of that classroom, you lost control. I did not often know their script. Here, too, YNN, we do not know their script. We are not sure. Let us be careful what we bring into our public schools. We, as teachers, I thought, we often make mistakes in bringing people in, and we would learn from that. However, when we would let them in as guest speakers or whatever, they were there for an hour and then gone. YNN, once they are in there, they could be in there for a long, long time. However, these guest speakers would be gone after the day and we would review it.

You know, hey, this is the script that we were not sure of. Sometimes we were a bit embarrassed about these speakers, and, of course, we had learned something. We get feedback from students and parents, and we would change our direction very quickly.

What if we do not like the YNN agenda or script in a year or two down the road? It could be difficult to end the relationship with YNN. YNN has promised computers in—

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 8, 2000

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