



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

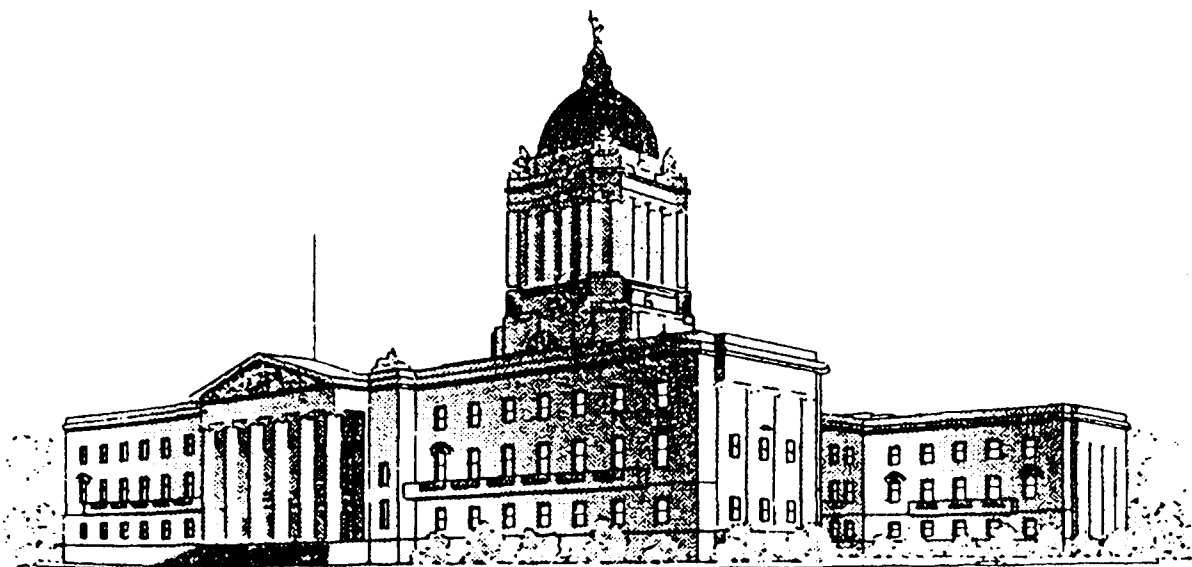
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



Vol. L No. 54B - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 29, 2000

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
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WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 29, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister responsible for the Civil Service): It gives me great pleasure to table the Annual Report for the year 1999 for the Manitoba Civil Service Superannuation Board.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table the Report of Amounts Paid to Members of the Assembly as required by section 52.27(1) and (2) of The Legislative Assembly Act during the year ended March 31, 2000.

I am also tabling today the Enabling Appropriations and Other Appropriations Supplementary Information for Legislative Review 2000-2001 Expenditure Estimates.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): In case you are wondering where I was last week, I was attending my uncle's funeral.

I am pleased to table the report of the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Sustainable Development Strategy

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a ministerial statement.

I am pleased to rise today to announce that we have tabled our government's Sustainable Development Strategy for Manitoba. As many of you may be aware, a number of Sustainable Development Strategy documents have been produced over the past decade. However, to date, the strategies have not been implemented. Our goal is to ensure these documents do not gather dust on the shelf. Today's announcements will

ensure that we begin to integrate these strategies into our daily activities and decisions. We intend to initiate this change by implementing the recommendations of the Consultation on Sustainable Development Implementation or the COSDI report, as it is known.

The COSDI process was commissioned in 1997, and a report of its recommended significant changes in environmental land use and resource decision making was submitted to government in May 1999. However, the report was never formally accepted nor implemented. I am pleased to announce that the Manitoba Government has formally accepted the recommendations of the report as the first step in a Sustainable Development Strategy for Manitoba.

I wish to thank all the members for all their dedication, commitment and exceptional work in taking such a complex issue in developing working recommendations that will guide us into the future. I would also like to point out that the recommendations of the COSDI report are on the cutting edge of land use, resource allocation and environmental decision making. It will also significantly change the way government makes decisions. For example, the report recommends a wide area of planning based on natural areas, such as watersheds and ecoregions. It calls for improved public participation, especially at the earliest stages of a development proposal. It also recommends the inclusion of aboriginal communities in planning and decision making.

This government not only accepts and supports the recommendations of COSDI, but we plan to begin implementing them immediately through a comprehensive strategy. Last fall, the former departments of Natural Resources, Environment and the Energy Division of Energy and Mines amalgamated into the new Department of Conservation. With this new department came a new mandate to focus on environmental conservation, making it the logical choice to be the lead agency in this implementation process. Part of our overall

strategy will be to announce a new Manitoba Round Table on Sustainable Development.

We will be introducing legislative changes to enhance the functions of the round table so that we have one advisory body providing advice to government in all matters of sustainable development. I will be making a formal announcement regarding the composition of the new round table in the very near future.

* (13:35)

Another component of this strategy will be a new Environmental Stewardship Division within Manitoba Conservation. This division will act as a liaison with the new round table and will be responsible for implementing COSDI recommendations. We will also be establishing an Aboriginal Resource Council to ensure that the interests of First Nations people are not overlooked and that First Nations people and Métis are effectively involved in environmental and resource decision making. This council will also provide assistance in implementing COSDI recommendations.

One of our first undertakings for the COSDI report recommendations will be a wide area of planning. I will be releasing details in the upcoming weeks on a planning project for the east side of Lake Winnipeg that will service a pilot for future wide-area planning across the province. By these measures announced today, the Manitoba government has laid the foundation for a Sustainable Development Strategy that is workable, practical and accountable. Mr. Speaker, this will not be an overnight process. The COSDI report suggests that it may take up to 20 years to implement all the recommendations across the province, but we cannot afford to wait any longer. The time has come for us to begin implementing sustainable development in all that we do so that future generations continue to enjoy the benefits of Manitoba's cleaner water and soils.

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): First of all, let me say that I appreciate the statement from the Minister of Conservation and the statements that he has made in support of sustainable development. We on this side of the House are doubly pleased that the Government has now

taken this approach because in the first months of their mandate it seemed as if they were embarked on a route to ignore the legislation in support of sustainable development, and many of us on this side still bear the scars of the ridicule towards sustainable development that many members of the current government at one time expressed. So I congratulate them on coming forward with the acceptance of the COSDI report.

Mr. Speaker, the COSDI report is the result of about two years of diligent and sometimes very mind-numbing work that the members of this committee had to sort through in coming up with co-operative decisions, ones that they believed were for the betterment of the future of this province.

With this statement I believe that we now see that this government, along with the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin), would now be prepared to follow the legislation that was put in place by the previous government. I hope that includes putting enough resources into the Department so that the sustainable development round table and the continued consultation process can continue.

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, while I am encouraged by the Minister's putting forward the COSDI report and providing a strong commitment by his government to implement this as a core piece of his Sustainable Development Strategy, I would suggest, from what we have seen today, that what has been delivered really falls far short of what is mandated under The Sustainable Development Act in terms of a Sustainable Development Strategy.

We still have not had the appointment of the round table. We still have not got a commitment of the Premier (Mr. Doer) to chair it and take responsibility. We still have not got input from the round table into the drafting of this report, which is mandated in the Act. We still have not got a procurement strategy which is mandated in

the Act, mandated to have come through. This falls far short of what a Sustainable Development Strategy should be. The Premier should be embarrassed.

CRTC Decision

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

I am saddened to have to report to the honourable members today that the federal government has announced that it has rejected a petition made by the provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan on the future of telecommunication services in rural and northern areas. In October 1999, the CRTC issued a decision on service to high-cost serving areas, meaning the service to rural and northern areas of Canada. While Manitoba and Saskatchewan agree with the CRTC-ordered improvements for the far North, meaning Nunavut, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories, we felt the commission did not ensure that the needs of rural and northern residents in our respective provinces would be met in the long term.

What was wrong with the CRTC decision was this: It set the basic level of service for these areas so low that it hardly changes what we have today, and it did not provide the means to ensure that rural and northern telecommunication users will be assured access to advanced services into the future.

* (13:40)

In January, Manitoba and Saskatchewan sent a petition to the federal government Cabinet asking it to vary the CRTC's decision. The petition urged, first, that the federal government direct the CRTC to adopt a set of principles to protect and advance the communication needs of Canadians living in all rural and northern areas. Principles of this kind were adopted by the U.S. through federal legislation. Second, that the CRTC's definition of a high-cost serving area should be expanded to include all rural and northern areas of Canada, including such areas within provinces; and third, that a new national fund should be created with contributions from telecommunication service providers from

across Canada to ensure all Canadians in rural and northern areas have access to telecommunication services that are reasonably comparable in quality and cost.

Federal Industry Minister John Manley announced yesterday that the Manitoba-Saskatchewan petition has been rejected. Now the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) asked, you know, we still have not this; we still have not that. The Member for River Heights should be embarrassed because of the federal government and Mr. Manley's decision with this regard, the reasons he gave, for all intents and purposes, the same as those given by the CRTC, when it issued its decision of October 1999. Minister Manley went on to say that the federal Cabinet has ordered the CRTC to issue annual reports over five years on the status of telecommunications competition and deployment of advanced services across Canada.

These announcements are exceedingly disappointing. First, they are a disappointment because rural and northern Manitobans now are asked to believe that the CRTC's slender promise will be fulfilled. The greater likelihood is that they will face rising prices, no appreciable improvement in service and the prospect that they will not be assured access to advanced services.

Second, they are a disappointment because they reaffirm that Ottawa often can turn a blind eye to the needs of Manitobans living in rural and northern areas. Under federal law, it was and is the federal government's responsibility to assure access to affordable service in every region of Canada. By this decision, it is almost inevitable that time will show that Ottawa has reneged on the promise and has failed in that responsibility.

Finally, by announcing its intentions to receive annual reports, the federal Cabinet has added insult to injury. In effect, it is saying to rural and northern people we deny you hope and we are going to watch you fall further and further behind in receiving affordable service and the advanced communication needs to give you the opportunities for the future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Minister for his statement in regard to the CRTC decision. Certainly, it is a disappointment, and we can do nothing but agree with that.

I would say that we have in this statement just another example of federal arrogance. We do not need a government that can ignore rural Manitobans the way they do or Manitobans in general. They have too often found no common ground in assisting us in the needs that we have as a province. So what federal Industry Minister John Manley announced yesterday, that the Manitoba-Saskatchewan petition has been rejected, is just another reflection of the attitude of a federal government that has probably been in office too long.

At the same time, I want to commend the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux) for taking action and giving consideration to rural and northern areas. I can only hope that same consideration will go to farmers in rural and northern areas as well.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Can I have leave to speak on this?

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

* (13:45)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, regardless of the merits or not of the federal decision, the Minister himself should be extraordinarily embarrassed today at how little his government has done.

I have talked to people in the community, and the reality is that Flin Flon and The Pas, which are represented by members opposite, have very narrow band width, 5 to 10 kilobits per second. Even though MTS claims that it has got a little faster, 56 kilobits per second, there is a problem with the organization, which the Government has been very delinquent in sorting out. So the people in The Pas and Flin Flon are not getting good service. The reality is—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to, at this time, remind all honourable members to direct their comments to the Chair.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, some of the answers are within the purview of the Government. Manitoba Hydro has very fast band width fibre in a variety of northern communities. The Government should be working with their own Crown corporation and speed up very high band width service to communities which are really in need of it.

The reality is that in Brandon is a Smart Communities Initiative helping to provide library service all over the North through this, and the provincial government has yet to put their money on the table to make sure that this is a go. The reality is that this is the Government which failed to keep Nortel in this province, and Nortel was building a major centre of wireless communications, and indeed it is wireless which is much of the answer. This is a government which has not done enough. The Minister should be embarrassed.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I am pleased to table the following report: Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act for the period January 1, 1999, to December 31, 1999.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Notices of Motion.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I would like to table a report.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is there leave to revert back to Ministerial Statements and Tabling of Reports? *[Agreed]*

TABLING OF REPORTS

Ms. Friesen: I would like to table the 1999 update of the Winnipeg Development Agreement.

* (13:50)

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 43—The Sustainable Development Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the

Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 43, The Sustainable Development Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur le développement durable et modifications corrélatives), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House.

I would like to table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, I just want to offer a few remarks regarding this bill. This bill is an important component of our strategy for the implementation of sustainable development for present and future generations of Manitobans. The Bill blends the main functions of the Manitoba Environment Council and the Manitoba round table to create one effective advisory body. This body will provide advice and recommendations on implementing sustainable development throughout government. In addition, the Bill amends The Sustainable Development Act by incorporating the responsibilities of the Sustainable Development Co-ordination Unit into the Department of Conservation, making it the lead department on sustainable development. This means that sustainable development initiatives will now have access to the resources of an entire department. We are very pleased to now be implementing sustainable development strategies into the everyday workings of government.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 13—The Taxicab Amendment Act

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale), that leave be given to introduce Bill 13, The Taxicab Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les taxis).

Motion presented.

Mr. Ashton: I am very pleased to be able to introduce this bill. It does not have major significance. What it does is it increases the size of the Taxicab Board to enable the Taxicab Board to have a quorum, but I can indicate it is part of our overall strategy to improve relations between the Taxicab Board and the taxi industry, a very high priority for this government.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 38—The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 2000

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton), that leave be given to introduce Bill 38, The Statute Law Amendment (Taxation) Act, 2000; Loi de 2000 modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité, and that the same now be received and read a first time.

His Honour, the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of the Bill, recommends it to the House.

I would like to table the Lieutenant-Governor's message.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides for the transition and full rollout of the tax on taxable income system in Manitoba.

Motion agreed to.

* (13:55)

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 a delegation from the Greek National Centre for Vocational Orientation. Included in that group is Professor Chris Jecchinis, Mr. Angelos Rissimopoulos, Ms. Alexandra Bouka and Ms. Rea Sgouraki.

This delegation are guests of the Honourable Minister of Highways and Government Services (Mr. Ashton). On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a news article that I have received.

Mr. Speaker, it has been exactly one year since the former administration met with the Rural Disaster Recovery Coalition and announced the comprehensive aid package for the victims of the southwest flood at issue, and our premier met with those people to make that announcement. Sadly, the NDP has not been as forthcoming with aid for this flooded disaster area. I have tabled this because I cannot say in polite company how frustrated farmers are with this government's lack of action in this area. Moreover, farmers are worried that they are going to be short-changed under the AIDA program. Cheques farmers will receive next month will cover only 58 percent of what they were expecting.

Will the Minister of Agriculture explain why her administration is handing out only 70 percent of its contribution through AIDA, and why this government will not commit to contributing more if AIDA runs short?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that the Member has not done his homework with respect to this program. If he would have checked the record, we are paying exactly the same amount that his government paid out last year. There was an initial payment made until we knew how many applications will be in. The deadline for applications is July 31. When we have a more accurate estimation of how much money we are going to need for payments, then the final payment will be made. Nothing different than his administration did last year for the first year of AIDA.

Rural Recovery Coalition Premier's Meeting

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, given that his Cabinet is expected to meet with the Rural Disaster Recovery Coalition

next week to discuss the '99 flood and given the shortfall that we have just heard about, will the Premier confirm his attendance at this critical meeting next week with the Rural Disaster Recovery Coalition?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, I would like to make that a priority and arrange our schedule accordingly.

Flooding Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, then will the Premier explain to this House today what the Province's commitment will be to these flood victims?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, as the Member opposite knows, we raised it as one of the top priorities for Manitobans with the Prime Minister recently. He, unfortunately, stated that it did not qualify under the law. That was wrong because we had a letter from February that contradicted that view and we have now gone back to the Prime Minister's staff and said listen, your briefing was wrong, and if your briefing was wrong, therefore your decision, we believe, has been wrong. We believe the decision has been wrong to treat Manitoba and southwest Manitoba in a different way in some parts of the disaster relief program from the Red River Valley, and it is wrong to have treated southwest Manitoba in a different way than the ice storm of two years ago in Québec and Ontario.

First Nations Casinos Selection Process

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, concern keeps coming to us daily about the horrendously flawed process with regard to native casinos, and now it appears that concern from First Nations communities is beginning to come to us with regard to the influence of outside bodies as to the location of this NDP Government's native casinos. It appears that organizations outside of this province, both in the United States and outside of our province, in a neighbouring province, organizations such as SIGA, did not want Manitoba casinos in

proximity of existing casinos in Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of gaming is: Will this minister assure members of bands which are bordering the Manitoba-Saskatchewan and Manitoba-North Dakota borders that indeed the proposal decisions were not influenced by outside organizations such as the Saskatchewan Gaming Authority or other neighbouring authorities?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): As has been stated on numerous occasions, we had an independent selection committee put into place, Mr. Freedman and Mr. Nadeau. We gave them the authority certainly to look at all the proposals and to certainly make a determination of up to five First Nations casinos that they could recommend, and they recommended five to proceed.

I would just say that, with regard to taking a look at what had guided them, the principles of fairness, impartiality, consistency and reason governed their decisions. They were in charge of the process, and they have done an exceptional job. It was a very difficult job. I am sure all the First Nations people appreciate this, how difficult it was going from 62 to 12 First Nations and then recommending five. It was a difficult task. We certainly appreciate all the hard work that Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman have done, and they are very well respected gentlemen in our community and the legal community as well.

* (14:00)

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, my question had specifically to do with the political interference in this decision-making process. I would like to ask the Minister whether there was a market analysis that was done with regard to the impact of neighbouring casinos to proposed locations, and whether that market analysis did indicate that casinos should not be located in proximity of casinos that are now being operated near the borders of Manitoba?

Mr. Lemieux: I thank the Member for Russell for the question. Certainly there were a number of criteria put in place through the RFP that had

to be attained, and Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman ensured that they looked at those types of criteria to ensure they were looked at by the proponents when they were submitting their proposals.

I know, with regard to political interference, I am not going to raise liquor licences for Cubby Barrett or anything like that because I do not want to go that route. I just want to say that with regard to this process, this process has been exceptional. Mr. Freedman and Mr. Nadeau, in a press conference, said there was no political interference, no interference whatsoever. It was truly an independent process.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, then why were casino proposals from First Nations communities that border the Manitoba-North Dakota border, that also border the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border denied, even though they met all of the criteria, including the fact that they were in compliance, whereas some of the proposals that were chosen were not in compliance? Why were these rejected?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, we have said since becoming a government that we care about Emerson, we care about Falcon Lake, we certainly care about the issues related to Russell and communities on the western border, and we care about northern Manitoba.

If the Member for Russell will take a look at a map, The Pas is bordering on the border of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Member for Russell, with a new question.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, on a new question. The Minister has just indicated that the community of The Pas is bordering the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. However, The Pas community does not have a neighbouring casino in Saskatchewan.

Again, I ask the Minister to come clean and tell First Nations communities that neighbour the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border or the United States-Manitoba border that indeed there was no influence from outside organizations with regard

to the locations of the casinos that have been put forward by the NDP Government.

Mr. Lemieux: The independent selection committee, Mr. Speaker, that was put in place to make recommendations to government is absolutely of the opinion that each selected proposal contain a sound business plan for the destination gaming facility that, properly developed and operated, should meet the projects' objectives.

Mr. Speaker, once again, we get back to this. We know on this side of the House where we stand with regard to First Nations people in giving them an opportunity to create jobs and economic development for their people, and I am not so sure where members opposite stand on that point.

First Nations Casinos Selection Process

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Day after day we have brought forward questions about the ill-conceived and questionable process surrounding the NDP's privatization of gambling in our province. It appears now that their lack of planning, combined with a dose of political interference, is coming home to roost as the chiefs from at least two bands are considering court action.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister responsible for gaming: I ask him to respond to the charge put forward alleging that a number of government departments, including Justice and Culture, Heritage and Tourism, were deeply involved and may have influenced the selection process.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): Mr. Speaker, once again we have to go through the process where Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman made the recommendations to the Government. Government departments added their expertise, certainly, to the process and it is regrettable. I truly feel for First Nations communities, the 12 that put proposals in to an independent selection committee, and it is unfortunate the Bostrom report stated that up to five casinos should be slated, when you have an

opportunity like that and certainly not all 12 were going to be recommended.

I know they put a lot of thought and effort and cost into their proposals, because what are we talking about, Mr. Speaker? We are talking about high unemployment, anywhere from 50 percent to 70 percent on reserves. Children are sick because of poor housing and so on. That is why First Nations people look at this as an opportunity, a great opportunity for them, and we do understand and we feel for First Nations that were not recommended. We truly do, but Mr. Nadeau and Mr. Freedman, once again, made those recommendations on clear business plans and they were recommended in order to proceed, and hopefully they will be successful.

Mr. Tweed: Mr. Speaker, it is nice to note that this government believes that building a community, the way to do it is through gambling. Will the Premier, given his comments, "Perception of the public is more important than realities," explain to Roseau River Chief Ed Hayden why this NDP government is failing to address, and I quote Chief Hayden, the perception that is out there right now regarding political interference.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, the only political interference that has ever been engaged in, in this Legislature has actually been from members opposite who asked us to intervene politically when there were citizens in one community or another before the selection process, which was independent from the Government, had made the recommendations. There is only one group of individuals who has politically intervened in the process and it is the members opposite.

Legal Action—Postponement

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Will the Premier, given that the potential lawsuits facing this government cast a cloud over the entire process, commit today to suspending the entire process if legal action is pursued?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I recall dealing with the Forks negotiations that we had a number of potential lawsuits and a couple, one I know was actually filed. When you

move ahead on behalf of the community and on behalf of the province like we did on The Forks or other examples, sometimes people disagree with you. They have the democratic right to go to court. We respect that right. We are proud of the fact we put up an independent process, and we believe the two individuals will stand the test of time.

First Nations Casinos Revenue-Sharing Formula

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, following on the statement of the Premier, I think he should also include fairness in one of his criteria. It seems to me that we have a situation of gross unfairness in the way that we have seen, first of all, the review process just referred to and secondly the proposed sharing process that other First Nations may or may not receive from this project. My question is to the Minister responsible for gaming or the First Minister, if he chooses to answer. Reports indicate that less than a third of casino revenue will actually be shared by the balance of First Nations. Is that still the plan?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister charged with the administration of The Gaming Control Act): I am certainly pleased to hear the Member opposite state that it is sharing, not giving away or taking away or losing or any of those terms because truly, as members on this side said, it is sharing an opportunity with First Nations people and certainly First Nations people look at this endeavour as a sharing opportunity for all First Nations, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear what we are talking about. We are talking about proposals that say that 70 percent of the revenue will stay with the sponsoring band, 30 percent will be redistributed, potentially 40 percent will go with the consultants.

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

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): This is a supplementary question. It

requires no preamble, Mr. Speaker. He is going on and on and on.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the Honourable Member to please place his question.

*(14:10)

Mr. Cummings: Mr. Speaker, will the Minister responsible for gaming tell this House how much revenue individual First Nations communities that are not directly involved in the operation of casinos can expect to share in, and what will be the make-up of the trust fund board?

Mr. Lemieux: I know First Nations people and the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs looked at this. They certainly wanted to share in this endeavour with all First Nations people. They have a formula which states that 70 percent net of profit and 30 percent to other First Nations trust fund, and certainly to First Nations addiction. Out of that 30 percent, 2.5 percent would go into that possible addictions or people who have problems with gaming trust fund.

Mr. Cummings: Well, it is obvious that even this minister is uncomfortable with the formula he is dealing with. Has he considered any possibility of including Manitoba's Métis community?

Mr. Lemieux: Now, once again, we find members opposite going all over the map with regard to this question. The Bostrom report dealt specifically with First Nations people. This was an endeavour, an initiative for First Nations people in the province of Manitoba.

I know that First Nations people are certainly wanting to seize the moment with regard to this project and are certainly attempting—now that we have five in place, they are looking at going ahead with their proposals and hopefully being successful. All of them may

not be successful, but certainly that is their intent, now that the ball is in their court, to go ahead and proceed with that.

With regard to the guidelines, the Bostrom report was our guideline and it has dealt with First Nations people.

Cataract Surgery Waiting Lists

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health. The waiting list for cataract surgery in most provinces is about 12 weeks. In Manitoba, it is up to 1 to 2 years.

The mother of Elaine Silverberg, who is here today, has been unable to get even an appointment to see her eye surgeon until November, some months away, and understands that, if conditions do not change, she can expect then to wait another 9 to 12 months beyond that.

Clearly this situation is unacceptable. For an elderly person to wait one to two years, when she is partly blind, to have her sight restored by an operation which is a short operative procedure is just not a workable system, Mr. Minister. What is the Minister doing about these cataract surgery waiting lists?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as is always the case when individuals are involved, I would appreciate if the Member would give me an advance so that I could assist the person with it. The last time the Member brought somebody here, the letter had gone to the Member on February 22. I will look into the situation specifically, individually.

It is a problem and has been a problem, and I have dealt with a dozen of them. We do have a proposal that we are looking at to expand cataract surgery.

Mr. Gerrard: Ma suppl mentaire au ministre: Ce n'est pas un probl me seulement pour un individu. C'en est un pour toutes les personnes qui veulent de la chirurgie pour les cataractes. Pourquoi est-ce que cette liste d'attente est si longue en ce moment, et qu'est-ce que le ministre va faire?

[Translation]

My supplementary to the Minister: It is not a problem simply for an individual. It is one for all the people who want cataract surgery. Why is this waiting list so long at this time, and what is the Minister going to do?

Mr. Chomiak: Comme pour toutes les situations dans le domaine de la Sant  au Manitoba, nous avons adopt  un processus pour am liorer la situation dans toutes les listes d'attente partout dans le syst me. J'ai dit, et je dirai encore une fois, nous avons un processus pour am liorer ces situations et on va annoncer quelque chose tr s bient t.

En m me temps, je voudrais que le d put  oppos  aide ce gouvernement   demander au gouvernement f d ral de nous donner tous les fonds qui, quand il  tait membre du cabinet f d ral, ont  t  coup s   la province, ce qui est dommage.

[Translation]

As with all situations in the health area in Manitoba, we have adopted a process to improve the waiting list situation throughout the system. I have said, and I will say once again, that we have a process to improve these situations, and we will be announcing something very soon.

At the same time, I would like the Member opposite to assist this government in asking the federal government to give us all the funding that, when he was a member of the federal Cabinet, were cut to the province, which is a shame.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister: This is a broad issue, but I would like an indication as to when he expects Elaine Silverberg's mother to be able to have her cataract surgery.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, there is a general sense in this House, and it has been for several years, that when matters are brought, we do attempt to deal with the situation as soon as possible, and that is what we will do.

The last time the Member brought a situation here, he got a letter February 22 and brought someone down here to ask us to deal with the problem. We are working on that problem. We will work on this problem.

Mr. Speaker, there is a legacy of waiting lists and problems in this health care system that we have managed to improve and ameliorate in the past nine months, and we will continue to do so. In almost every single area, we will have specific strategies outlined to do this. I will take the particulars, if the Member would provide them, about this particular individual's circumstances, as I do to dozens every single day, and try to improve the situation.

National Child Benefit Maximum Return

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): My question is for the Minister of Family Services, who knows that, when the federal government added new money to the National Child Benefit, they allowed the provinces to deduct all the money from children. He also knows that the provincial previous government deducted all the money from the poorest of the poor children, those on social assistance.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Martindale: My question is: What progress is our government making in keeping our promise to allow all families to keep all of the money from the National Child Benefit?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): As you know, there was a commitment made that during our term in office we would phase out the removal of the National Child Benefit supplement. The progress that we have made this year, first of all, of course, we will no longer be reducing social assistance by any new payments which are made on July 1 of this year. That, for example, will provide somewhere in the order of \$380 to a family that has two children that they would otherwise not be able to use for food and clothing and rent.

In addition, we have increased assistance for children six and under by \$20 a month. In total, to give an example, for a family with two children, this would provide approximately \$860 more per year for people whose supports were cut under the previous government in real terms by between 16 percent and 24 percent.

Cataract Surgery Waiting Lists

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): My question is in relationship to the three private clinics that have contracts with the Government to do particularly cataract surgery. I understand that those contracts are currently expiring. I would like to ask the Minister of Health, in order to manage these cataract waiting lists, will he be re-signing with the three clinics. Western Surgery is one, Pan Am clinic is another, and there is a third one. I am wondering if this minister will be re-signing those contracts so that we can see our waiting lists in cataract surgery continue to come down.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated publicly on many occasions with regard to those particular contracts, that was an arrangement entered into by the previous government. The contracts do expire at the end of the month, and it is our intention to extend those contracts while we put in place an overall plan and strategy to deal with the issue of private clinics overall and dealing with waiting lists overall.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister if he would give any consideration to expanding the number of cataract surgeries that are done at those facilities so that we can speed up the number of surgeries that are done and enhance the quality of life of more patients.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the Member opposite, we are considering options with respect to expansion of cataract surgery.

* (14:20)

Bill 72 Impact on Property Taxes

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, Today's NDP is putting teachers and other Manitoba taxpayers at risk by repealing Bill 72

and removing the "ability to pay" clause from Manitoba school divisions. On June 26, in *The Brandon Sun*, the Minister said: This legislation is not a blank cheque and arbitrators will still consider the financial resources available to school boards.

Given there is nothing in the legislation that compels arbitrators to consider the ability of school divisions to pay, is the Minister going to blame school divisions for irresponsible budget management when taxes begin to go up?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, this government supports our trustees and school divisions in the very difficult and challenging task that they have in managing finite resources in our public school system. This government, when we were in opposition, had tremendous empathy for the tremendous challenge that school divisions had with the year after year of cuts foisted upon local divisions by the Member opposite. The single largest explosion of property taxation in Manitoba's history occurred under the watch of the Tory government, and they were a consequence of massive cuts year after year. We will not be doing that.

Consultations

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, given that the Minister has stated that he supports the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, could the Minister please explain to Manitoba's school trustees association and other Manitobans why the lack of collaboration and the lack of consideration of going all across Manitoba prior to pushing this bill through?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, I really do not know how to respond to that, other than to state again the facts of the matter. Meetings have been held since January, some six months, on this issue. I know the Premier (Mr. Doer) has met with the Teachers' Society and the Association of School Trustees, three or four times each. I have met with both these representative bodies dozens of times in terms of conversations and meetings and discussions. It is a partnership between the school trustees, the Teachers' Society and the Government of Manitoba. We

have had extensive consultations, have a tremendous relationship, have a tremendous respect for each other, which again is in stark contrast to the record of the members opposite.

Bill 72

Impact on Property Taxes

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, given the Minister has a misguided view of collaboration with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, will the Minister guarantee Manitoba property owners that the removal of the "ability to pay" clause will not impact in a negative way on the future property taxes and property taxes will not go up in Manitoba as a result of this?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Speaker, the bill that is being repealed, Bill 72, was, in essence, a bill to bash teachers. The issue about ability to pay has been an issue that has been recognized by arbitrators in this province for half a century.

I quote, again, for the members opposite from Paul Teskey's arbitration settlement in Lord Selkirk Division, 1994, quote: Issues such as comparability in terms of other settlements, ability to pay, general economic conditions, demonstrated need due to existing problems and the inherent logic of fairness of a particular request are always considered and have been in this instance.

This phantom issue that the members opposite have put on the table every day in questioning this is just that, a phantom issue.

Health Care Facilities Rural Manitoba

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): The future of rural acute care facilities is of grave concern to many rural Manitobans, and indeed their future is in the hands of the Premier and his government.

I am wondering if the Premier will now recall his conversation with Mayor Anderson of Boissevain, which led to the conclusion by Mr. Anderson that the Premier has rejected the

template that was circulated to the health authorities in rural Manitoba.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do recall the Mayor at the International Peace Gardens, when we had the western governors and the western premiers at the Peace Gardens, raising a question about the hospital. I recall saying I did not know the specifics of the Boissevain hospital and that the report had been received from the Government, but some of the criteria that was in the report was from the former government.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would point out to the Premier that the criteria, terms of reference, were drawn up on November 1, 1999, and the template and the recommendations were revised on January 25, 2000. This is clearly a report that is in your hands, sir, and you have the ability to give some peace of mind and comfort to rural Manitobans, that the dramatic effects that this report would have on rural hospitals will indeed not be accepted by your government.

Mr. Doer: The Member opposite knows that the material generating the report was established when they were in government, and I think that is clearly on the public record.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Is the First Minister prepared to make a public statement in the House, as he did with Mayor Anderson, that he personally rejects the findings of this report?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, again, as I mentioned to the Member for Minnedosa yesterday, he is making allegations and comments, and we heard different allegations and comments from members on that side of the House that have been totally inaccurate. The members bring to bear a second party—

An Honourable Member: So he is calling the Mayor a liar?

Mr. Chomiak: No. The Member is making statements in this House, Mr. Speaker, and there have been several occasions that I have seen this House—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Member for Minnedosa, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Gilleshammer: The Minister is clearly factually incorrect. The direct quote from Mayor Anderson was, to his colleagues: Why are we discussing it when the Premier and the Government does not support it?

Mr. Speaker: The Honourable Minister of Health, on the same point of order.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, that is not a point of order, that is a dispute over the facts.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for Minnedosa, he does not have a point of order; it is a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: I have seen enough inaccuracies from members opposite with respect to comments, Mr. Speaker, that I am not prepared to accept the comments of the Member, and the fact is the Member went around saying that we set up this report. The process started in August of last year, and the Member, who was a member of Cabinet, ought to have known that and should not have tried to distort the facts with regard to that. So any comments the Member made in this regard—I am not disputing what the Mayor might have said. The Mayor said what the Mayor said, but I am not accepting as fact what the Member says is hearsay with respect to the comments that he is putting forth on the record.

Southwest Regional Health Authority Meeting Request

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, what we are seeing here is a government opposite that seems to be afraid to travel outside the confines of the city of Winnipeg. We have the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) who refuses to meet with people from southwest Manitoba. We have the Conservation Minister (Mr. Lathlin) calling meetings and then cancelling them, and we have the Premier (Mr. Doer) refusing to meet.

I want to ask the Minister of Health if he has checked his schedule and reconsidered my offer yesterday to pair with him and go out and meet with the members of the Southwest Regional Health Authority and also from the Rivers and area Health Action Group.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, when I was up at Island Lake and Garden Hill last Friday, I was thinking about this and wondering if any Conservative Health Minister had ever travelled up there. I wondered about that, and when the Premier was in the Peace Gardens talking with people, I wondered if he had thought about whether any Conservative ministers had been down there.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Health Department to check their records, and we have a health programs and operations liaison officer assigned to the region. They met. There was a meeting with the CEO on June 14 and June 25. The South-Westman Health Authority Chief Executive Officer met with the Assistant Deputy Minister and the Associate Deputy Minister in February. The Chief Executive Officer had another meeting scheduled early in July with the Deputy Minister, and the regional health finance officers meet on a monthly basis.

* (14:30)

Wildlife Amendment Act Public Consultations

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, the public is being invited to examine a discussion paper on the expansion of the livestock industry in Manitoba beginning tonight. When this process was announced, I noted with interest the comments of the Conservation Minister who stated, and I quote: "The discussion paper is a starting point for an open and constructive sharing of ideas and solutions."

Given this new profound spirit of openness and sharing, will the Minister of Conservation today commit to holding a series of public consultations on Bill 5, The Wildlife Act, as he had previously promised, but then cancelled?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question numerous times before in this House. I

do not know if the Member who is asking the question today has brought it up himself, but I know it has been asked several times. My answer has always been to the effect that there will be an opportunity for the public to have input into this process once we get into the hearings process.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Conservation agree that Manitobans should have the opportunity to speak at province-wide public consultations, be it on changes to the province's livestock regulations or changes to The Wildlife Act, before the legislation is passed, not after?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the Member opposite that for years and years, at least the 10 years that I was in opposition, I have never seen the members opposite when they were in government hold extensive consultation meetings province-wide. Although, on numerous occasions, I recall coming into this Legislature asking the Premier and his Cabinet ministers, as one of the ministers said, not to have Perimeteritis, but to go out of the city of Winnipeg and have public hearings all across the province.

The initiatives that we have announced today in the Sustainable Development Strategy will allow us to have adequate public input. My response, the only thing I can say right now is I wish we would have had this system in place now because we could use it to hold extensive public hearings as the Member is suggesting, but we are in fact holding other public hearings.

The Bill that he is referring to, as I said to him before, there will be an opportunity for the public to become involved during the hearings and also during the development of the regulations.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, I ask again: Could the Minister of Conservation explain to Manitobans concerned about Bill 5 why the open and constructive sharing of ideas and solutions that seemed so great in his opening remarks, in his quote earlier, that province-wide public consultations is not an option that is available to them prior to the Bill passing?

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, for the third time, I will advise the Member that there will be an

opportunity for the public to have input into this process during the third reading committee hearing. Not only then, but also subsequently when the regulations are being developed, we will have time for the public to have input.

First Nations Casinos Economic Impact

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Yesterday the Minister of Finance, when asked a question about Crown gaming losses, indicated that he would not engage in hypothetical questions. This is the same minister who, during Estimates, stated unequivocally that his department reviewed over 185 what-if tax scenarios before they increased taxes.

Can the Minister explain to Manitobans how he can show a degree of thoroughness by having 185 tax scenarios developed and reviewed but cannot show even a moderate amount of preparation when it comes to the loss of Crown gambling revenue?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): The obvious difference between the two cases, in the first case we were bringing in real tax reductions for Manitobans and wanted to make sure those tax reductions benefited as many Manitobans as possible, and we were able to do that.

In the second case, the full process of implementation has not been finalized. When it is, we will know the specifics and be able to do proper projections.

Mr. Speaker: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Glenlawn Collegiate Institute

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Speaker, on June 28, 2000, my colleague from St. Vital (Ms. Allan) and I had the pleasure of attending Glenlawn Collegiate Institute's Graduation 2000. The program highlighted the achievements of 191 graduates of the various programs, i.e., high school, business education, fine arts, world of work, technology education, community living skills and employment training. Fifty-two

students graduated with honours. Congratulations to these graduates who represent the future of this province.

As a former secondary school principal, I was encouraged to hear that many will continue their education at the post-secondary level, including medicine, nursing, education and child care. No one indicated, however, that politics was an immediate goal. It was heartwarming to witness the pride and joy on parents' faces as each young person accepted a Senior 4 portfolio from Donna Bulow, principal; and best wishes from Norbert Philippe, Superintendent of Schools; Terry Parsons and Arpena Babaian, vice-principals at Glenlawn Collegiate.

The graduates thanked their parents and teachers many times during the ceremony for their ongoing support through their high school years. The valedictory address given by Jaclyn Yeo revealed the aspirations of the graduating class, the hopes and dreams of a young generation wanting to make its contribution to the community and to our province. We wish them all well as they meet life's challenges.

Thank you to the staff at Glenlawn Collegiate for helping the graduates achieve their goal of a high school diploma. Thank you for their efforts with our young people who are ready to accept their responsibilities as members of society. May our graduates 2000 make a difference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hire-A-Student Weeks

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Hire-A-Student Weeks are upon us. This year the event runs from June 26 to July 14. Hire-A-Student Weeks encourages businesses and home-owners to employ students and youth this summer. Summer employment provides valuable work experience to young Manitobans. Employers also benefit from the enthusiasm and skills students bring to the workplace. The Hire-A-Student Weeks are made possible by Manitoba Youth Job Centres. There are 34 of these centres located across our province. The referral and placement services they offer to young people are an invaluable aid in finding employment. Each year the job centres help better than 10 000 young people find work.

I would just like to remark on what a fantastic program the Hire-A-Student Weeks and job centres are. The services they provide help keep Manitoba's youth unemployment rate one of the lowest in Canada. Furthermore, the jobs that youth fill as students help them to develop the skills they need to be successful in the future. I strongly encourage both public and private employers to consider hiring young people, providing them the real life work experience essential to anyone beginning a career. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Service After Death Program

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): I want to take a few moments to tell members about a very significant event that I had the honour of attending this week. For several years the University of Manitoba has operated the service-after-death program. This program allows individuals to donate their bodies for study by students in medical and dental education programs, allowing students of the health profession first-hand experience of human anatomy.

The education of health care professionals would not be possible without the gift of these individuals as well as the understanding of their families and loved ones. Every year the university conducts a burial service to pay tribute to the generosity of donors to the program. Families and friends, as well as university staff and students, attend this service.

I was honoured to attend this year's service as a representative of the provincial government. I am sure all members of this House will join me in extending our condolences to the families and friends of donors to the service-after-death program.

As well, I think we should all appreciate the very significant contributions these individuals have made to the education of future doctors, nurses and dentists. We all benefit from well-educated health care professionals. Several university professors, medical students and others present at this event were happy to see someone from the Legislature at this event. They encouraged me to inform everyone in this Legislature about the importance of this program.

Through this statement, I hope I have assisted the University of Manitoba in promoting this very valuable program. I encourage all members of this Legislature to support the University of Manitoba in promoting this important work. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Agricultural Disaster Assistance

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, today marks the one-year anniversary of the former Tory administration's decision to provide a comprehensive aid package to victims of the 1999 flood in southwest Manitoba.

My colleagues entered into this much needed emergency aid program, even though they had no assurances that the federal government would cost-share the aid program. They knew that aid was needed and they provided it, some \$71 million in aid by last August. For farmers affected by the flood, it would mark the last time they received direct aid from this provincial government to help them in the recovery process.

Since taking office last fall, this NDP Government has exhibited a startling inability to resolve this disaster aid issue. Trying to get an NDP Cabinet minister into my riding to discuss this issue is like trying to herd cats. It is nearly impossible to corner one. I am not quite sure what they are afraid of, but flood victims would certainly like the opportunity to meet face to face with government ministers, or they may deal the wrath of Mr. Howe's repressed comments today regarding the issue of federal Liberals which may continue to apply even more to the NDP as well.

It is not unreasonable for my constituents to expect their voices to be heard. Our farmers have a critical role to play in the overall health of the provincial economy. That they are suffering because of the flood should make all of us take note. When farmers cannot do their job, we all suffer. When farmers are not in the fields, they are not purchasing seed, fuel, fertilizer or machinery. They are not employing support staff. They are not purchasing consumer goods. The ripple effects of a crisis in the farm economy is grim indeed.

The sad fact of the matter is that hopes and dreams do not put seed in producers' fields. Cold hard cash does. There are solutions to this problem. The province can either go it alone on an aid package or continue to pursue the JERI-style program with Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Brandon Bypass

Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West): Mr. Speaker, over and over again I have heard from constituents in Brandon West that they have seen ministers of this government and the Premier (Mr. Doer) more in the past nine months than they did in the previous nine years. Again it was reiterated on Tuesday when Highways Minister Steve Ashton and I were in Brandon for the official opening of PTH 110.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members, when making reference to members of this Chamber, to refer to their constituency or ministers by their titles.

Mr. Smith: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. Minister of Highways. The Brandon bypass access will provide an alternative non-residential route for industrial traffic in Brandon. Brandon's industrial expansion will be facilitated by convenient access to the industrial park through the Trans-Canada Highway. Brandon residents will also benefit from the reduced industrial traffic and declined threat to exposure of hazardous materials.

The \$7.3-million project cost, through the surveys, design, land acquisition, surfacing and railway signals, was done by this government. Additionally, our government will spend \$900,000 to widen and pave a section of the road linking Maple Leaf access road PTH 110, as

well, funding for acquisition of right-of-way, utility revisions, and the intersection improvements of PTH 10 and Breacrest Drive.

* (14:50)

The 2000-2001 Highways construction program combines \$80 million in new projects with \$121 million in previously announced projects. The infrastructure supporting industrial expansion will play a significant role in the expansion to the economy and the opportunities for Brandon and the surrounding area. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, July 4, at 10 a.m. to consider the following matters: The Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ended February 29, 2000; the Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board for the year ended December 31, 1999; the Annual Report of the Appeal Commission for the year ended December 31, 1999; and the five-year plans of the Workers Compensation Board for 1998 and 1999.

Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings, Bill 46.

Point of Order

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): I rise today to declare a conflict of interest as far as Bill 42. I understand that it was called for second reading today, and I was not available to declare it at that point.

I declare my conflict of interest, or perceived conflict of interest, because I am receiving compensation due to a special leave provision from my contract in Frontier School Division, where I was previously employed. I am also going to be a member of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, and therefore because of that I

could be in a perceived conflict of interest. So, therefore, I will declare it and withdraw from all debate and discussion of that bill from this point.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the Honourable Member for Assiniboia.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, July 4, 2000, at 10 a.m. to consider the following matters: The Annual Report of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation for the year ended February 29, 2000; the Annual Report of the Workers Compensation Board for the year ended December 31, 1999; the Annual Report of the Appeal Commission for the year ended December 31, 1999; the five-year plans of the Workers Compensation Board for 1998 and 1999.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 46—The Interim Appropriation Act, 2000

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on second reading on the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), Bill 46, The Interim Appropriation Act, 2000 (Loi de 2000 portant affectation anticipée de crédits), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), who has 15 minutes remaining.

Is there agreement to leave it stand in the name of the Honourable Member for Morris? *[Agreed]* The Bill will remain standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Morris.

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): I am prepared to speak on Bill 42 at this time on behalf of the Official Opposition—*[interjection]* Pardon me, Bill 46. Mr. Speaker, I recall during the Throne Speech Debate I discussed the fact that governments, when they come into office, have a certain honeymoon period until they start to make decisions, start to bring down budgets and start to affect the lives of Manitobans. I think, certainly in the area of health care, it is proving, once again, to be the most significant factor that affects the lives of all people in Manitoba. Even though the government of the

day is trying to distance themselves from some of the decisions that they have made and are about to make, the fact is they cannot avoid that.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The first thing I would like to refer to is the template that has been put out for the minimal standards for acute-care hospitals in Manitoba. This is a work that has been provided by people who are employees of the government, employees of the RHA and members of the board of RHAs. In fact, those boards have, to some degree, been replaced, and the members of those boards now are the appointments, not elected members, but the direct appointments of the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak).

The template that I speak of was released in this House some weeks ago. It has been discussed by rural hospital authorities and it has been discussed by municipal councils. I know that the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen) has been attending the round of municipal gatherings over the last number of weeks, and this is one of the topics that is first and foremost on their minds. The reason for that is that the recommendations—the Government has been very careful to say that they are studying them, that they have not formally accepted them—would have a devastating effect on acute-care facilities in rural Manitoba. The Government has every right to take a little bit of time to look at these, although they are certainly sending mixed messages out.

The issues which are of grave concern to Manitobans are that some of the provisions this would put in place for the maintenance of those acute-care facilities, where they indicate that there have to be four medical practitioners on staff, that there have to be three nurses on staff at all times that the hospital is open, and that they have to have a catchment area of some 5000 people, this would affect, if it was accepted and brought into effect, many, many rural acute-care hospitals. In the southwest region alone, it would lead to the closure of seven of eleven facilities. In Marquette, the numbers would be very much the same.

These facilities would be closed at a time when communities are under a lot of pressure

because of the terrible flood that happened in 1999, the fact that that issue has not yet been fully addressed by the provincial government and the federal government, there is a downturn in the economies of those communities and they cannot afford, at a time of stress in the lives of all those citizens, stress in the business community, stress in the farm community, to have an issue like this hanging over their heads.

Now, recently, municipal councils and RHAs have been writing to the Premier (Mr. Doer), writing to the Minister of Health, writing to the Government to come out and discuss these things. Up to this point, the Government has been reluctant to do so.

Now, I raised in Question Period yesterday and today that the Premier indeed was at the Peace Gardens with the western premiers and the northern and western governors not too long ago. At that time, he did have a conversation with the Mayor of Boissevain, Mr. Ed Anderson. I appreciate that the Premier had other things on his mind, that he had other issues he was dealing with and other people he was meeting with, but he clearly left the impression with Mayor Anderson that the Premier did not endorse this plan, that he did not accept this plan, which would be so devastating to these rural communities and rural facilities. In fact, Mr. Anderson was so sure of the comments that the Premier had made that earlier this week at a regional municipal meeting attended by the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen), where she gave an address, Mayor Anderson advised other mayors, Reeves, and councillors in attendance that really they did not have to discuss this any further. It was off the table. The Premier and the Government had indicated that they did not accept it.

Now, I have raised that question in the House today and I raised it yesterday. We are having a somewhat ambivalent answer from the Government.

The Premier and the Government have it within their power to put this issue to rest, to give comfort to rural Manitobans that in fact they are not going to proceed with this initiative that was brought forth not by elected people, rather by people who have been appointed to

RHA boards, people who have been hired by RHA boards and in fact bureaucrats from within the provincial government, most of whom reside in the City of Winnipeg.

There is nothing wrong with groups within the departments putting forth ideas from time to time. When they are clearly unacceptable, it is incumbent on government, incumbent on this government, to make a clear statement that they reject it. Now the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has been playing games with this, saying oh, this is not our report. This is not a report that we commissioned. This is not a report that we are overly concerned about. In fact, this is something he needs to be concerned about. He is now the Minister of Health. His colleagues are now in government, and they have to deal with this, and they cannot continue to play cute with this issue for weeks and weeks and months to come. A number of factors that are indicated in this report would lead one to believe that this report in fact was created under your watch, that I would refer to Appendix B which talks about the terms of reference that this task force on minimally-staffed facilities had to deal with. These terms of reference were drawn up and finalized at a meeting on November 1, 1999, clearly weeks after the current Health Minister was appointed to that portfolio, but this report was a draft revision from January 25, 2000, again some three to four months after this Health Minister took office. So he cannot continue to play cute with this and say, well, it is not our report, we do not have to respond to it. The fact of the matter is he is now the Minister of Health, he is now a part of this government and he does have to deal with this. He should be dealing with it in a manner which would give that comfort to rural Manitobans and reject this report that was drawn up by unelected people, most of whom do not legitimately represent the broader community out there.

* (15:00)

There are many signs that there continues to be stress on the health care facilities. I have a letter that was written to the Minister of Health and it was copied to the Premier and myself and the Leader of the third party, from the Rivers and Area Health Action Group. This is a group that was brought together by the mayor and

members who used to be on the Regional Health Authority and used to be on the old health districts and I can tell you that they are terribly, terribly concerned about the health facility in Rivers. This is a hospital that has served that community for many, many decades. I believe they have 16 acute care beds, they have 20 personal care beds and it is a functioning facility with two doctors, many nurses and health care providers, but this template that has been circulated that is now on the Minister's desk would close this hospital as it now exists, that it would no longer be an acute care hospital.

In fact what continues to concern people in that area is that recently the regional hospital in Brandon sent a memo out saying do not send your patients into Brandon, that patients from Wawanesa and Souris and Minnedosa and Rivers, in fact the whole Westman area which looked to the regional health facility in Brandon as a facility that can perform most of the functions of an acute care hospital that many of the hospitals in Winnipeg provide. They were told that because of overcrowding the Brandon Hospital was no longer receiving patients from outside the boundaries of Brandon. That is part of the dilemma out there as this minister and this premier and this government continues to waffle on this template, on this report which would have this devastating effect on those facilities.

Where, then, would they go for service? They would have to go to hospitals here in the city of Winnipeg, which is a three-hour ambulance ride, which is certainly a long way for people in critical condition to go. I would ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister who received this letter from the Rivers and area health action group to meet with them. That is one of their requests in here, to come out to Rivers, to come to a public meeting, to meet the citizens in that area to hear about their concerns.

They are very proud of their facility. They talk about the occupancy rate being one of the highest in the Marquette RHA, and occupancy rates are usually determined by the services they provide, by the medical practitioners that they put forward that work there and by the care and concern that the staff of this hospital give. They also have emergency, lab and x-ray services that are well used. These would all be lost if this

report was accepted. They also make the point that their medical practitioners would no longer have an ability to make a living while living in Rivers and serving those people if the acute care designation was lost.

So this report and this letter is respectively submitted by the Rivers and area health action committee, signed by Mr. John Russell, Ms. Joan Thomsen, Mrs. Joyce Johnson. They are the executive of this committee. All they are asking for is an opportunity to have the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) come out and meet. Now, he probably rightly brags that he has been around to some facilities and met with some people. That is fine, but we are not talking about the past; we are talking about the future.

This is an invitation that now sits on his desk. This is an invitation to come out there, view the facility, meet the staff, meet the executive and, indeed, meet the public. I know that he has done this before because I recall once he came to Minnedosa when he was in opposition, and Kevin Lamoureux, who is a former member, came out with him. There was an issue dealing with some aspect of health, and I can tell you that we had a number of people there. I was out there. Previous members Jim Downey, Don Orchard and Bob Rose were also there. We met with a crowd that was not all that pleasant that evening, and I dare say the Minister of Health took some advantage of that, as politicians are apt to do, as did Mr. Lamoureux.

Now, I mean, the shoe is on the other foot. He is being requested to come out and meet with some local people about the facility in Rivers. I would, again, through this speech, and in all likelihood someone from his shop is listening or will read this, invite him to come out soon, and if he wants a pair, we will guarantee that he has a pair. We can set this meeting up on short notice. We can set it up so that he can have the full benefit of the advice of these people, and we would urge him to do that. He will undoubtedly have to respond to this letter. I would urge him to respond quickly and set up that meeting in short order.

I want to also reference the South Westman Regional Health Authority, which on the same

issue and on budgetary issues has also written to the Minister on a couple of occasions, asking that they have an opportunity to meet with him before they finalize their budget. They are anticipating a shortfall in their operating budget that was given to them by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) this year. They feel they must make some decisions, but before they do—and it says they are going to finalize that budget on July 7. The chair of the South Westman Regional Health Authority, Mr. Bill Bryant, is inviting the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) to come out for a meeting.

They are very aware, as a regional health authority, that they have to present their draft plan to 38 mayors and reeves, probably six times as many councillors, and the general public in the South Westman region.

They are concerned about this plan that is on the Minister's desk to close rural acute care facilities. They are also concerned in the short term about their budget. They are asking before they finalize this budget on July 7 that he take the opportunity to come out there and meet with them. Now, there was also a previous request on May 9 to ask him to come to a strategic planning framework meeting and a discussion of their operating budget. Staff in the Minister's office have said that they have noted your request to meet with the Minister to discuss these issues. Unfortunately, the Legislative Assembly currently is in session and the Minister's calendar is very committed at this time. This response comes almost two months after that letter was written. Pardon me, this response was more timely but the request was somewhat two months ago. They have noted that there is a meeting request, and they will try to schedule a meeting at the conclusion of the current sitting.

So what his staff is doing here is putting this meeting off until the fall. In fact, they have to finalize this budget by July 7. The Minister has indicated that he is travelling to other facilities around the province at various times. I know that he has been out to Westman. He often comes out for the Royal Winter Fair. They, I think, had a Cabinet or a caucus meeting out there not too long ago. He could have met with them there, or, barring that, he could invite them in here for the meeting.

So is the Minister saying, or his staff saying, his special assistant, the only time he can meet with people is after the conclusion of this session? That clearly is unacceptable, and I know you will agree with that.

* (15:10)

There are other issues out there. I know the Minister is having third parties represent him to say everything is fine. We have kept our election commitments. Virtually everything we have said we would do we have done. In fact, we have fixed health care. In his mind there are no longer patients in the hallways.

Well, I would like to refer him to a letter that appeared in the *Brandon Sun* yesterday written by someone from Ste. Rose. This person indicates his wife had a hip replacement some time ago and that she was able to stay in the facility for a longer period of time, take physiotherapy, get back on her feet, take the medication twice a day and was well treated by the Brandon facility.

But recently she had a second hip replacement. He says things have changed under the new government. He says: Sure, there is no hallway medicine but at what cost? Nurses are now needed to travel to this person's home. Patients need to pay for expensive medication and beneficial physiotherapy on their own. This person was released from hospital in very quick order after a very serious hip operation, a second operation. If this is the way beds are being made available, simply to turf people out before they are ready to go, that is unacceptable.

Now, I know that I brought another case specific to the Minister in the House some weeks ago. This is an old and dear friend of mine from Minnedosa who is taking chemotherapy. Always when she was taking treatment, it would be a treatment where a bed was provided and the treatment, in fact, continued virtually 24 hours a day in that she was fitted with an IV after the chemotherapy.

Under this minister's watch, she was asked to leave the hospital—this is a senior in her 80s—with no family in the city of Winnipeg and find her own accommodation. She was directed to a

nearby hotel near the Health Sciences. I do not know the names of the hotels in that area, I am sure there are some fine ones, but she was expected to find this hotel near the Health Sciences and recuperate until she returned the next day. In fact, she was strongly considering discontinuing the treatment because of the fact that she was treated in a very shoddy way.

She told me that the IV was discontinued. In fact, it took her an extra week to recover from the chemotherapy because of the fact she was turfed out of the hospital to make room in a bed for somebody else to avoid the fact that somebody would say you have patients in the hallway. This is not an acceptable way to do it. I would urge the Minister to take that very, very seriously and to certainly do the reforms, make the changes that need to be done but not at the expense of elderly patients, not at the expense of good health care, not at the expense of patients simply to say we are going to move them out of here real quick so we can fill that bed up with somebody else.

I would also point out to him that the Erickson emergency services is currently shut down. This is an acute care hospital in Erickson, Manitoba. It has 12 acute care beds, 14 personal care beds, but no doctors for two weeks. This has never happened before in the history of the Erickson hospital, the Erickson Health Centre.

It not only services the community of Erickson, the surrounding R.M.s of Harrison and Clan William, a couple of First Nations reserves, but also Riding Mountain National Park where in the summer months on an average day you would have upwards of 20 000 citizens. The Minister has said a number of times in this House he has put up third parties, questionable third parties, some of who used to work for these people when they were in government before and are to be considered fellow travellers, putting them up to say everything is fine in health care.

I can tell you it is not fine in Erickson where there are no doctors for a two-week period and that the facility is being staffed by other health care professionals but without a doctor. Some of these people would probably have to travel an hour to get to an acute care hospital. As I

indicated to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from my throne speech, as time goes on and governments have to make decisions, governments make mistakes, governments wear some of the issues that are put before them.

I would like to also discuss a couple of other issues that have been before the Government. One is The Freedom of Information Act, FIPPA, and the fact that the Government is looking at amendments to that legislation. I believe they are going to consult with the public on this. This is legislation I believe—and maybe the table officers can help me—was passed in about 1985, the original Freedom of Information Act, passed by a previous NDP Government, but a bill, an act, after it was passed, that sat on the books for some time. It was not until 1988 that that act was proclaimed by the then new Conservative government.

I expect that members of the New Democratic Party had some difficulty with their own legislation, that they took three years to dither on it and then did not proclaim it. I can tell you that this act was strengthened recently in legislation that was passed, I think, one or two years ago.

If the current government is going to work on that legislation and bring further amendments, that is fine, but I can tell you that Manitobans are a little concerned about the way they have treated the legislation or the application of the legislation, that there have been people who have made reasonable requests to this government for information to be brought forward under freedom of information. It is information the previous government did bring forward on a number of occasions and passed on to whether it was the press, opposition parties or other parties who were simply interested.

It is a grave concern to many Manitobans that that process under this government has faltered, that information that was made readily available by departmental staff within a week was held back beyond the deadline for this information to be released to the people who were asking for it. There seems to be an issue over whether government has to readily comply with legislation that is the law of this province. I would caution the Government that they cannot

fool with this. They cannot make Manitobans feel that this is trivial legislation or law and they do not have to abide by it simply because they are government.

* (15:20)

What was even more disturbing was that two of the provincial employees, the Clerk of Cabinet and the chief Press Secretary to Cabinet seem to be making those decisions and telling departments and telling deputies that they did not have to comply with the time limits that are contained within that legislation. I would certainly disagree with them. I would never blame those hired people for making that decision on their own. The Clerk of Executive Council is the deputy to the Premier. If he is making decisions and if he is giving advice to other deputies, it is on the direction of the Premier. The Premier must take this legislation, the laws on freedom of information, more seriously.

I know that in the House he has said, well, we were a new government, there were a lot of things happening, we only delayed it by three or four days. That is fine, but that is not good enough. This law must be upheld, and they must set an example. The First Minister, other ministers and their executives and their deputies must set an example for the entire government and also for the public.

In fact the editorial in the Free Press from June 27 refers to the Lord High Bureaucrat. Well, I am sure that the Clerk of the Executive Council does not see himself that way. I do believe he was working on the direction of the Premier. It is the Premier that really should take the hit over this issue.

The Ombudsman has written very clearly that there has been political interference in providing this information. This is clearly against the law, and the Ombudsman, whoever holds that office, has usually been a person that discusses these issues with deputies, with departments and sometimes with ministers, cautions them about the importance of releasing that information, tells them that they must meet those deadlines. In my experience, the previous Ombudsman and the current Ombudsman have

been very easy to work with, but when you interfere politically with the work of government staff who are carrying out their duties to provide this FOI information, clearly you have crossed the line. I think editorial writers in both Winnipeg and Brandon and other parts of rural Manitoba have seen this. They have taken the Government to task over this. There is absolutely no reason why this legislation and this law should not be abided by and adhered to.

Again, this is one of the marks against the Government in their early days. They have an opportunity as they move on with further decisions, further FOI requests—and they know, and we know, that there will be some from whatever quarters—that they do not interfere, that they comply with the legislation, that they make these reports in a timely fashion, and that they send a clear signal. In fact, the Premier might want to make public a memo to senior staff to abide by this legislation, not politically interfere, make a strong statement that they believe in The Freedom of Information Act and all of the regulations around that. I would urge him to do that.

Another issue that I would like to just quickly mention. I do represent part of the southwest part of Manitoba, along with the Member from Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and the Member from Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire). Believe me, these people have gone back to work to put in a crop this year. Financially, it has been very, very difficult. They know that the only support they got was an announcement made last June where our government, at that time, paid \$50 an acre for unseeded acreages. I believe it was \$10 for custom seeding and there were other payments for forage crops. We also put in place a committee to look at the impact this had on businesses in the southwest.

These people feel very much abandoned by both the federal and provincial governments in being heard on this issue, working together to find some solutions to this. I would say to the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen), the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), and the Minister in charge of emergency measures, please do not forget these people. They are getting a crop in the ground this year, but they are still suffering immensely

from the devastating water conditions that existed last year. If you want to get advice from some of your own members, I would urge the Deputy Premier or the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture to talk to the two representatives they have in their caucus from western Manitoba. Talk to businesspeople in Brandon to see what impact that has had on business. Talk to the Chamber. I know in talking to Chamber members to the people who own and operate Canadian Tire, people who are in business in the mall, there has been a very big downturn on their businesses. It is going to take a while for them to recover.

The biggest hit, because of the flooding last year, is still on the producer who got enough money to pay some of the input costs, really had to dip into savings or borrow from banks or borrow from the government-lending institution that is located in Brandon. These people feel that certainly the federal government, who do not have any representatives in that part of the world, has not understood how devastating those flood waters were last year, compared to 1997 when they bent over backwards to do anything and everything for people in the Red River Valley. I would urge members of the NDP caucus to visit farms and businesses and communities outside of Brandon in that area to see how devastating that situation is. I know that there are discussions going on with the federal government whether there was a disaster or not. I would urge the Minister responsible and the Premier to turn up the heat in whatever way they can to get the federal government to take this seriously and to look at this.

I know one of the federal members from South Winnipeg talked about what a great relationship he had as a federal Liberal member of Parliament, what a great relationship he had with the Premier and some members of Cabinet on the other side. I would urge you to use that fine relationship you have with Reg Alcock to get his support on this. He said that he thought that he and the Premier and members of the Government could work hand-in-hand on many, many issues. I know the Deputy Premier would also be included in that group. She and other members, I am sure, can work with Mr. Alcock and other, perhaps, Cabinet ministers from Winnipeg to make them understand how bad the

situation is out there, and I would urge them to do that on every occasion. I know when I had the opportunity to go to Ottawa recently with the Premier on the military issue, certainly we decided that we were not going to pony up other issues at the time. Every opportunity must be taken to make the federal government realize how difficult things are for producers in the Westman area.

I know that today is the anniversary of the last time some of those producers in the Westman area felt something positive was done for them, and I would urge you to return their phone calls. It is disturbing to me that producers and citizens in the Westman area are saying that they phone the Minister of Highways office, and they have not had a return phone call. I would hope that that is not the case, but maybe check with staff and see if there are groups out there who want to meet and appreciate there is more than one group out there, whether it is Keystone or whether it is an ad hoc group, I believe he would be wise to not only return their calls but set up meetings with them. I hope that maybe he would just check with staff in his office to see if there are any calls that he has not yet returned.

* (15:30)

An Honourable Member: Okay, sure.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I thank the Minister for that, and I believe he is an Honourable Member and he will do that.

Having said those few things, there were some other issues I wanted to get into on the Government's record on gaming, their direction in agriculture and highways and finance. I see and I am sure the Finance Minister is within earshot that I would ask him to take a very good look at taxation issues. I believe that he had a wonderful, wonderful opportunity in this previous budget to make a dramatic, if not dramatic, a substantial move on lowering taxes in this province. I realize all the pressures he has that you have Cabinet colleagues, departments and others who have many, many ways to spend additional money, but one of the things he must do is address the taxation issues to be sure that this province remains competitive. This budget

obviously has been put to bed and we have had our budget debate. We are still talking about budget issues and still in Estimates, but I would say to him that over the long haul, it is very, very important that he be competitive tax-wise. I know he is making major changes, and you do not want to make a mistake there, but I think he has erred on the side of caution. I think he is going to see that his revenue is going to increase because of the flat tax, but I would urge him in the long run to look at the tax measures in Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, other jurisdictions and for his next effort be vigilant as to the requests of his colleagues, look carefully at all of their requests as they come to Treasury Board and make that dramatic move next year on taxation issues.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words, I will yield the floor to one of my colleagues.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to have the opportunity to rise in the House today as well to put on record some of the concerns that I have about the fiscal responsibility that has been addressed by the Government since they brought down the budget speech that they did in mid-May, May 10, and it is a pleasure for me to do so today. My colleague from Minnedosa has certainly outlined some of the concerns that have been raised in the constituencies in southwestern Manitoba in regard to the issues of health and education, as well as the farming crisis. I, too, will discuss some of the concerns that we have today as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, earlier in the House today I talked about the situation in regard to the farming community in both a lead-off question today to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and to the Premier (Mr. Doer) in regard to the crisis situation in southwest Manitoba. As well, this morning I talked in regard to Bill 15 about the circumstances surrounding the extreme water concerns that we had in southwest Manitoba in regard to drainage and the future of our area and how that could be upheld for better economic development in our region.

In a number of these issues, I find it glaringly obvious that they have been overlooked in the Budget of this government as far as being opportunities for economic development beyond Winnipeg and into the total economy of this province, and being included in that whole area would be a benefit for all of us in this province. But it has been a shortfall of the Government to not be forthright with the farming community in that particular part of Manitoba in dealing with some of the issues that have been put on the plate during the Budget, as well as in the presentation that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) made yesterday whereby we are now debating that issue and, in fact, putting on the record some of the items that we feel could be more responsibly dealt with by the Government of the day.

Also, I had the opportunity in private members' statements today to bring up the issue of farm aid to those in southwest Manitoba, and I was just reiterating to the members of this House today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how important it is to make sure that the farm aid situation in southwest Manitoba, indeed all of Manitoba, is dealt with before this government proceeds, before this government goes on with trying to develop long-term safety nets for the agricultural industry that, of course, are very much needed. They are way behind the eight ball in regard to getting on the team to develop that mechanism. Those discussions have been going on for some year and a half at the national level, and this government is playing Johnny-come-lately by coming into this process and not including all of the concerns and issues of the farm community that have been out there.

Many times, they have heard presentations from farmers in my region and farmers in other members' rural areas that have provided them with some clarity and some answers in regard to the whole process of long-term development of safety nets in this province. They have also heard presentations and demonstrations on this Legislature's steps from concerned farmers in southwest Manitoba and in other regions of this province in regard to how cures could be found in the areas of immediate farm aid to take care of the disaster situation that took place in southwest Manitoba.

That is why I tabled today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an article that came out of today's *Winnipeg Free Press* entitled Promised farm aid may come up too short. This is just one more indication of the lack of concern that this government places on agriculture in regard to the priorities that it has in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are definitely many demands on the dollars and the budget of this economy in the province of Manitoba, but here we have a situation where people have been devastated solely because of something beyond their control, completely beyond their control. While there are many shortcomings in the Ag Income Disaster Assistance program, referred to as AIDA, in our economy and agriculture today, this government has shown that they have not made a commitment to this program, to even, if you will—I am grasping for the kind of word to describe what it is other than a disaster itself, because of the fact that it is a program that does not meet the needs of a disaster region which has been even agreed to by the federal Minister of Agriculture and certainly by his colleagues in the other provinces. That is why they are trying to fine-tune it or make changes to it at the national level, it is a concern of mine and certainly other members of rural Manitoba as well as the farming community out there that this government has not recognized that even paying out part of the dollars that might otherwise be prorated now that the federal government and the provinces have come up with the idea that there will not be enough money in AIDA to meet all of the demands clearly shows the demand.

*(15:40)

It clearly shows the negative impact of disasters and shortfalls in dollar values for crops as compared to the subsidization that takes place in Europe and the United States and has caused the shortfall of the independent farm community out here in Manitoba.

So that is part and parcel of why I felt it important today, on the first anniversary of the fact that there was a program announced by then-Premier Filmon and his colleagues before the rural recovery coalition group made up of mayors and reeves and businesspeople and community leaders in the city of Brandon last

June, that very clearly we need to reiterate the concern that this government has been in power now since last September and really, while they have made some efforts, while I have had the opportunity to be in an all-party delegation with them to Ottawa, have not targeted one thin dime, let alone one penny, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the disaster victims of southwest Manitoba.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) completely missed the point in my question today when I asked her why she would not come up with and provide the economic shortfall in a program that albeit I praise them for putting \$46 million aside for their share of AIDA, but with the eligibility of farmers coming closer to \$51 million in the province of Manitoba, why in fact this Minister of Agriculture has not come up with the other 10 percent that is expected to be, or at least given the directive that she would at least look at coming up with that other 10 percent rather than saying we will not fund it to that full extent.

I agree with her that the program that was put out previously had interim and adjustment payments and a final payment on it. Many programs in agriculture do today. But, in the end, they are fully funded. That is the point that the Minister of Agriculture missed today in this House in my question in Question Period is that, unlike the previous government who fulfilled the at least 100% commitment to those programs, she is indicating here that she will not even contribute her 100 percent of a prorated program, a program that is not by its own nature fulfilling the needs of the agriculture community in Manitoba.

For a priority, in this case of \$5 million, and we are not absolutely sure whether or not it will end up being more than 51, but with her own department indicating that it may be, there needs to be a commitment that this government will come forward with those kinds of dollars because these are not disaster dollars that are due to the people of southwest Manitoba because of the natural disaster. They will be part of that because of course those shortfalls are included in parts of AIDA. But I want to say, as well, that even things like the cash advance for \$20,000 that was available this spring after they declared their seeded acreage, that money would have

been available after harvest in the normal process of time, and I respect the fact that those dollars have been made available early. But, under an AIDA program, they are clearly just income that goes into the AIDA program for income purposes and are therefore not multiples of dollars that are being put out there. These are all coming back under one program, AIDA.

Certainly I want to clarify at least and not leave the misconception amongst the general public, who is not up on the support for agricultural programs, that it is not a \$20,000 cash advance early with no repayment process, that it is not a further \$30,000 interest free in the fall to make up the \$50,000 that was normally there, that these are part of the \$250,000 program that is available on your cash advance program provided you prove that you have the grain in the bins, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

By the way, the farmer who does ask for it is therefore paying interest on it. I am proud to say that I was one of the Members of the Wheat Board Advisory Committee when that program came forward for the farming community. We acknowledged that the minimum dollars that were being advanced to farmers in those days did not do anything to recognize the kinds of capital investment and the kinds of input costs that were needed for the farm community as times have changed through the late '80s and early '90s to where we are today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I want to put on the record that we have to make sure the programs that are provided are clear, that there is clarity to them, that the Minister comes through with as much support under these programs as she possibly can, given the letter of the law that are presently in those programs. That is why it is abundantly important that she and her colleagues continue to press the federal government in conjunction with the farm leaders and farm groups of Manitoba to address the issues of the shortfall of disaster programs.

I was addressing the fact in my private member's statement today that the ministers could very much have found solutions right within the province of Manitoba, to have provided more dollars for the income shortfall that has been out there today. They could have

come up with dollars out of the fiscal stabilization program. I never liked to put forth criticism without some form of solution to it, and this is one form of a program where dollars could be used out of the fiscal stabilization account to match federal dollars. I believe still that there needs to be some commitment from the province to the federal government to show there is sincerity in their offer of providing help to the farmers in this region, as has been done in other jurisdictions within the province of Manitoba, and the \$21.5 million that we have been seeking as the province's commitment is only half of the \$43 million that this government has defined through its own departments as input cost shortfalls from the 1999 flood in southwestern Manitoba.

I find it rather interesting, however, that that number is only half of what the southwest rally group and the Minnedosa rally group formally put on the table as part of the shortfall in funding that was required albeit they are being offered through the provincial government. At one point there was a discussion of a 50-50 program that they would be prepared to deal with. They have indicated that they would be onside now for a 50-50 program if the federal government put their money on the table.

I indicated in Estimates, as well as my honourable colleague from Gladstone indicated, as well the Honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings), that we would very clearly be an all-party support program with this provincial government if they would put \$21.5 million from the fiscal stabilization account on the table and then seek the support of the federal government to match that in a mechanism they have already determined could be paid out to farmers in that region based on the unseeded acreage as well as receipts for crop insurance or a receipt for lost farm inputs.

I think it is this skepticism amongst the farm community when they do not see direct—that suspicion that this government lacks integrity amongst the farm community. It is because of the fact that they are not willing to do what the previous government did and take the risk of supporting an industry in our own province that is going through a multiple impact from the loss of the Crow benefit in the western region of

Manitoba, because of the fact that when that \$550 million that had been dwindled down to across the prairie region over many years was completely negated with a one-time payment which amounted to about one year's payment of the freight from the farm community across the Prairies.

I am certainly not just blaming this government. The federal government has a severe lack of understanding of the agricultural needs in that shortfall area as well. That is why, when you elected the two governments that seemed to be somewhat insincere in being able to help in a disaster system, farmers are skeptical as to how they feel that these two parties are going to be able to develop a long-term aid program for them when they do not understand the issues.

In the article that I tabled today from a Souris farmer by the name of Mr. Lorie Howe, he indicated that he was angry when he heard yesterday that AIDA payments might be prorated. Now, I acknowledge that when we were in Ottawa, when I had the opportunity to be in Ottawa with the farm delegation at the end of February, the Minister of Agriculture, when we met him at that time, indicated to us that he was going to be making enough changes in the AIDA program, that by golly, they might even have to prorate it. He was worried at that time that they might not get all of the money out into the farm community. Well, his worst dreams have come true: in fact the applications for aid have outstripped the commitment from the federal government to put dollars on the table. I think that is why it is even more irresponsible of the provincial government in Manitoba to not back up at least their share of all of the claims that would at least come in under the AIDA program.

* (15:50)

The program that the provincial government did put out—the \$100 million program—they did commit \$40 million to it, and I commend them for that. However, I have to take exception with the fact that a good deal of the premium of that, perhaps as high as \$30 million, came from the fact that this provincial government did not participate in negative margins under the AIDA program. Clearly, the biggest area of hurt with negative margins in Manitoba would have been

in my area of southwest Manitoba. The largest amount of the 1.1 million acres of unseeded area in Manitoba was in the constituency of Arthur-Virden. So I take exception to the fact that dollars from that region were used in a program that was made generally available to all farmers in the province of Manitoba, even though in this House many times I have indicated that there is a need from the low commodity prices throughout the province. All this does is exacerbate the problem of the fact that if you did not drill a crop in the first place, it did not matter what the value of the crop was. Zero times zero is still zero, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Of course, Mr. Howe's situation is even more doubly complex because of the fact that a hail storm went through that area this year. After having a somewhat promising crop in our local region, there was a devastating hailstorm went through that region last Friday evening that wiped out tens of thousands of acres of crop throughout a widespread area in the Minnedosa, Arthur-Virden ridings—the Minnedosa riding and the south end of the Minnedosa constituency albeit in the Elgin-Souris-Hartney area. That is the area that I have spent my entire farming career, and I know the impact that this has on a combination of a situation where these people were looking for help from this provincial government from last year's program.

I think that when people see the fact that this government is not even willing to come through with all of the claims on a program that everyone knows has shortfalls and does not meet the needs of the agricultural community while we are trying to develop a new one, is even more frustrating as we have watched farm businesses, community businesses and individuals, with their families in some cases, have to pull up stakes and leave the business, go to Saskatchewan to drive oil trucks; go to Saskatchewan to move rigs; go to Saskatchewan to pay lower taxes. It is a situation that is rather perplexing to many of the farming community out there today.

So that is why I raised it in this House today in regard to Question Period, in regard to my private member statement, and that is why I was so appalled that with only a few lines left after stating that there were ways that this could be addressed through the Fiscal Stabilization

account and others, that I was cut off by the members opposite in regard to the final few words of when I asked for leave of my private members' statement today over such an important issue.

In fact the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) was the one that yelled across the House that, no, Mr. Maguire from Arthur-Virden could not have leave to finish his one or two lines that he had left in his statement indicating some solutions to this process. I find it rather appalling that the Member for Brandon West, in this particular case, would not have supported me in regard to talking about further aid in southwest Manitoba, because this has a direct impact on the city of Brandon. I find that it is somewhat frustrating that with even a member of his nature from his jurisdiction and from the importance of this issue to his region, that he would not have supported me on that issue. But of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not surprising given the fact that he has a lack of understanding of the agricultural community and a lack of understanding of the need to come up with these kinds of long-term planning processes in the community out there today.

It is also not hard to understand, I guess, when you look at the hypocrisy of this government from the kinds of exclamations that we saw last fall where there was all of a sudden a \$400-million deficit that had been left by the previous government to the province of Manitoba, and then they had to announce that when the next study came forward there was only a \$100-million shortfall in their mind's eye in the province of Manitoba. In fact, they eventually admitted that there was a surplus in the province of Manitoba.

So it is not without understanding that the farm community is very skeptical when they hear this government say that they make the case that they are supporting farmers in the farm community and through the budgetary process that they are putting in place today. It is also hypocritical to say that the taxpayers of Manitoba are paying less tax today than they would have under the previous government's provincial share of tax paid on federal tax payable if they had done absolutely nothing.

By delinking from the federal government's announcements in the April budget, of the federal April budget, this government has indicated to Manitobans that they felt that it was a priority to take more money from Manitobans than they would otherwise have done in the case of a family of four, and in many other instances, and that over the next period of time and subsequent years, as opposed to not only the year 2000, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in subsequent years that tax gap that was referred to during the election campaign last fall will continue to widen for many, many Manitobans.

It is becoming very clear that this government has no idea of how to put programs and incentives in place not just for support for farm communities but also for teachers and nurses and young students who are entering the workforce in an effort to try to maintain them in the province of Manitoba, unlike our government that had indicated that during the election campaign that tax incentives, credits, would be available for students who graduated and stayed in the province of Manitoba to practise their particular program of studies and carry it on in the province of Manitoba, that they would very clearly have had an advantage, some advantage clearly to have stayed here, along with the tax reductions going down to a 37% tax payable against the federal tax at that time.

It is disheartening, but very understanding by citizens of Manitoba today, particularly in the farm community, as I have said many times, whereby they perhaps do not trust this government any longer, and they have only been in power for nine months. I know that you are very concerned about that, as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of course it reflects on all of the citizens in this province when we are in a situation when people are leaving and going to other jurisdictions to seek employment. It is unfortunate that we are not able to come up with more creative minds on how to keep these particular people employed in the province of Manitoba and keep them here when, in fact, there is great demand for these types of employment and types of jobs that are needed in just about every jurisdiction in Manitoba.

I was even speaking to someone the other day in regard to the shipping and freighting

situation in Manitoba whereby they indicated that they had lost some 28 years of experience since Christmas amongst their staff because they felt that they could move on in Manitoba to other jurisdictions and shifting around from one business to another. They indicated that there is even a shortage of unskilled labour in the province of Manitoba today. Obviously we are down to about a 4.6 unemployment rate in Manitoba. I would submit that those are just slightly better than the numbers that were there when the Conservatives left office in Manitoba and that the fact that many of these programs that have been put in place during the five straight years of deficit-free budgets under the Conservatives in Manitoba have led people to have the confidence to move their businesses into Manitoba, to bring their families into Manitoba, to continue to work here, and to re-establish long-term implications of employment and economic support for the province of Manitoba for their families.

* (16:00)

But from what we have seen in regard to the changes in taxation in this budget and from what we have seen in the lack of support, even the fact that we have repealed the PST going back across the border by our American neighbours, one small step, the Government said, in regard to being able to save some dollars. I have been on record as saying that perhaps they should have, instead of taking it away, advertised its use more to the American neighbours when they entered the province and perhaps we would have had greater use of that program.

I would say it is sort of like the disaster in agriculture. Unless you are the individual that has been absolutely impacted by it, then it may not mean as much to the general consumer that does not directly feel that impact. But, if you are a business in Killarney, Boissevain, or Melita—never mind the flood that we went through last year—if you were the business that is impacted by a great deal of Americans coming up to Manitoba that you depend on in taking the produce that you are able to supply them back across the line, it can have a devastating impact.

I would indicate to you that in conversations I have had with one clothing store in the

community of Boissevain just last Friday when I was there dealing with some of the issues of that community of course, of which we hope that this government will continue, as my colleague just previously said, to support the expansion of the hospital in that area, the medical clinic and the facilities that have been dedicated for expansion in that region, so that they can get the third doctor that they want—who has already indicated that she would like to work there this fall—on stream. We need to make sure that those kinds of communities have a commitment. The commitment to this business, they indicated to me that of all of the trade shows and of all of the sales days that they have put on in the community of Boissevain in their own store, over the last 50 years of business, the last day of February of 2000 was the biggest day of business that they had ever had. That business came primarily from the American community that came up to buy hockey jackets, baseball jackets, uniforms, skates, goalie pads, sporting goods, not to mention the regular clothing that they sell in their store. This was a very devastating impact on the kind of businesses that we have in our rural communities. I think it goes without saying that this government does not understand those impacts on those rural communities along the American border in regard to the kinds of businesses that these seemingly small issues to them may attract.

There have been problems that I could go on about in regards to the emergency measures process. There are still some outstanding claims in regard to basements. I would bring it to the attention of the Minister of emergency measures that some of these processes have not been dealt with, that there are still some outstanding problems in regard to basements that were okayed to be fixed up but have not been accounted for yet.

There were also some problems in the forage programs that, while this government has now indicated that they are not going to come through with some of the support on those areas, I want to assure this House today that many acres of alfalfa that did not receive flood compensation in 1999 have not produced and are not producing any alfalfa this year at all, which completely, in some cases, negates the ability of the farmer to have an income in regard to the kinds of export markets that are being developed

for this very valuable commodity that just a few years ago was at a very limited acreage supply throughout the province of Manitoba, never mind in the region of southwest Manitoba that I come from.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the headlines that the Government wanted us to pick up on last spring were: Creating new hope for young people, Responsible tax relief delivered in 2000 budget. Things like: Repairing health care is Manitobans' number one priority. It is no wonder that the citizens of Manitoba are skeptical about the future of this province when they know that they were misled by these kinds of headlines back on May 10.

It has only been 50 days since this budget came out and we have already seen an indication that our young people are having to go to other provinces to get better advantages in taxation to put a few more dollars in their pockets, that they are seeing this as an opportunity to raise their families and have more take-home income to be able to do that with, that it is not a priority of this government to reduce taxation so that it can create more economic activity in this province and further gain the confidence of the business community.

It is a clear indication that one government believes that you can build the wall very high around the province of Manitoba, keep all the people inside, tax them to death, so that they can pay for everything that we all think we want and need in this province, as opposed to the conservative view of leaving the borders of our province open so that others can come in and invest. They do so because they see it as an area of Canada where there is an incentive for personal drive and education to be valued and to be utilized in this province.

The fact that they are paying more tax than they would have if nothing had been done is something that will be implanted in everyone's mind in this province for ever and ever. Certainly, they will not forget it by the time the next budget comes around in Manitoba.

This government, in their wisdom, will pay for that in rural areas of Manitoba. As has been indicated in articles in today's papers, they are

perceived in the rural areas on this one virtually the same as the federal Liberals. I must give credit where credit is due, even more of the federal Liberals have been out in Arthur-Virden than my colleagues across the floor in regard to looking at this disaster situation.

I am laying the blame squarely where I believe it needs to be laid in this particular situation. I guess you can probably sense my frustration as well as that of—well, I hope so, because it is the frustration of all of the citizens of that region, that they have not been dealt with fairly in regard to the disaster program. They have not been dealt the same as other areas of jurisdictions in Canada, not just the Red River Valley, but other jurisdictions have been dealt with in the past in this particular issue.

Therefore, they are still seeking meetings with the provincial government from the Rural Recovery Coalition today, as we speak. I have challenged the Premier (Mr. Doer) in this House to meet with them when they do come in here on July 4. It is my understanding that there is a meeting next Tuesday. I believe that I would encourage the Premier, as I did today in Question Period, to come forward and meet with these citizens himself and prove to them that he believes that there is a great deal of dedication in this House that you want to be able to move forward, I guess, with integrity and that you can reveal, as I asked today, the plan that you might have for helping the citizens of this region who feel strongly that they have been left out in the dark and left out to dry, so to speak. No pun intended.

Of course, there is a better crop growing in this region this year. It is more normal than what we might have otherwise seen, but it does not negate the fact that it is being done on more credit than has ever been extended in that agricultural community. It is being done on more grain companies holding credit for the farm community than has ever been done by the traditional banking institutions before.

To that, I believe that this government will pay the political price, if they are not willing to come forward with some support and show leadership that was there during last summer's flood process, when the government of our side

of the House was in power, and deal with the concerns of that region.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of other concerns in regard to sustainable development, to the kinds of consultations that the provincial government has given lip-service to holding. Of course, one of them is on Bill 5, The Wildlife Act, whereby they had a series of meetings established at one point and since then have pulled those meetings, saying that, oh, well, we will pass the Bill, and then we will have some consultation into further input from the community.

You know, this adds to the skepticism of people in the rural areas in regard to the sincerity of this government meeting their needs. They have heard that hallway medicine was ended or that it has been vastly reduced. Certainly, they know now that the promise was not met to eliminate it completely. In early June, there were more people in the hallways in Manitoba than there was a year ago. So therefore it leaves many, many people in Manitoba even more skeptical of this whole process.

* (16:10)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am going to end by indicating that all of these issues could be dealt with, either through the fiscal stabilization process or through the fact that this government has, in its wisdom, received over \$500 million more income, more revenue in its budget than what was previously there in 1999-2000. With a good deal of these dollars coming forward from the federal Treasury in the form of transfer payments, it is no wonder that the federal government is saying we would like to see you put some dollars on the table for the disaster in southwest Manitoba as you put a package of relief forward that is necessary in developing a new subsidiary agreement.

The new subsidiary agreement that was developed through the JERI program, by the federal-provincial government at that time, that was a commitment to move forward, as the provincial government did here in Manitoba, to take the risk on behalf of the citizens of Manitoba, that ended up being a \$71-million payment to those citizens, and send the bill to

the federal government for half of that. It takes some time, and it was the only way to get these bills paid. It was the only way that the Province of Manitoba, under the duress that they were under, could have probably managed this situation to meet the needs of this region. Waiting for federal bureaucrats in the federal government to make up its mind in regard to, well, are we going to pay them or are we not was a means that was not acceptable to the community out there that was in dire straits of needing that support.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Member's time has expired.

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): It is a pleasure for me to rise this afternoon to enter into the dialogue, the debate that is in consideration of Bill 46, The Interim Appropriations Act, which was introduced into the House here yesterday. This particular document is essentially requesting the members of this Legislative Assembly to endorse the expenditure of close to 38 percent of the estimated expenditures of this current government over the course of the budgetary year. That 38 percent is an expenditure on over \$6 billion worth of monies used in this province to, in fact, deliver the services that Manitobans have expressed that they are indeed wanting.

However, on the other side of things, Manitobans are indeed wanting for tax relief as well. It was expressed in the opening comments of the Finance Minister that indeed this was a balanced approach to the finances of the Province. However, the interpretation and the actual definition of "balanced" are up for debate. One does assume, for the most part, that "balanced" means "equitable distribution of revenues." Of the additional revenues that are forecast for this province, more than \$8 of every \$10 of revenue are, in fact, going to be expended, and only a little less than \$2 are going to be in fact reduced in taxation levels here to Manitobans. This is a concern, without question, to myself as the Member for Portage la Prairie and entrusted to represent the viewpoints of those that reside within my constituency.

Bill 46 is just a continuance of smoke and mirrors, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which this

government has entered into play in regard to the operation of government here in Manitoba. The game show that comes to mind when one evaluates the different avenues that this government has decided to travel is one that is remembered as *Truth or Consequences*. One is rewarded for speaking the truth; however, if one is not, he or she, indeed, receives the consequences for that particular act.

I look across the way, and I appreciate the great deal of responsibility that the ministers are entrusted to carry out on a daily basis in the best interests of all Manitobans. But I would like to comment just briefly in regard to a matter that will have financial implications on the Minister of Conservation's budget. That is, in fact, the Thursday, one week ago, the natural resources officers took the opportunity to walk to the Legislature en masse to express their concern about their level of remuneration for the services that they provide to Manitobans, the concerns that they have in respect to the additional responsibilities that they have been charged with, and that their particular remuneration has not kept pace with those responsibilities, which I know the previous government was in recognizing and had, indeed, the intent to address should they have continued to support the Government. However, last Thursday it was recognized by those members of the advances that had been taking place over the last number of years for their participation in belt tightening because of the Province's deficit and debt position, and they did, indeed, show appreciation for the new vehicles that had been dispensed their way over the course of the last couple of years.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

They also appreciated the advances in their communications that they had received over the last year, and they also showed appreciation for the Government's compliance with their request to holster side arms, which would provide a higher degree of safety once they participated in the responsibilities that we have charged them with. So, for all of those things, the natural resource officers expressed that they were very grateful. However, the time is now, they stated, that we be recognized for those additional responsibilities, and the stipend be adjusted.

The Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) addressed the natural resource officers that were on the steps of the Legislature and said, indeed, it was time to recognize the differential between the responsibilities that they are charged with, and the level of remuneration that they are receiving at the present time. They were warmly received by the Minister of Labour. In her comments, she stated that they would be dealt with fairly and that they would be compensated equitably for the responsibilities and services rendered.

However, Mr. Speaker, I am gravely, gravely concerned when one looks to the Department of Conservation Estimates, and in every section of that particular department when it relates to Salaries and Employee Benefits, each category, whether it be in Wildlife, or in fish and game, or in Parks, each Salaries and Employee Benefits estimate line has either been reduced or remains the same as the previous budgeted year.

So it behooves me to understand how the Minister of Labour can make statements to those individuals that have come in good faith to bargain, and essentially give them false hope of substantial wage increases when in fact the Budget, which is the document that this government is charged with implementing, once passed in this Legislative Assembly, is—their hands are tied. I do not know whether the Minister of Finance has a line buried somewhere in appropriations here that will back up the Minister of Labour's statements of last week. But yours truly has yet to find that line because it is obvious that it is not within the Estimates contained in the Department of Conservation. That is the dilemma, I am certain, that the Minister of Conservation is going to have to face because he now has the obligation of negotiating with the natural resource officers of this province with the anticipation that they are, in fact, going to be receiving significant increase in their remuneration.

* (16:20)

So, again, there are going to be consequences to statements made off the cuff, which I believe the Minister of Labour did one week ago today. I believe that the natural resource

officers are going to be bitterly disappointed unless the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) is prepared to back up the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), obviously, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) is going to be unable. Therefore, I leave that topic of which I am most gravely concerned, because these individuals do provide a significant service to all of us here in Manitoba, and are charged with a great deal of responsibility as they carry that out each and every day among their employees.

The other consequence that is in debate here, almost on a daily basis, is that of casino revenue. One is gravely concerned when one department is charged with an activity to essentially examine, and evaluate, and garner additional proposals for expanded gaming within this province. Yet the Department that is charged with this has not had opportunity to compare what the results of this particular study and activity are going to be upon the revenues of this province. It is of great concern to myself, Mr. Speaker, the language that has been used within this Chamber in relationship to revenue sharing.

Revenue sharing was in fact the order of the day of the previous government. Revenue was shared within a formula most equitably within the various levels of government, non-profit organizations, as well as different departments of government which were charged with the services to Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, when one deviates from that particular sharing structure to enter into a companion sharing structure that is essentially privatized and shared only on the basis of race really disturbs this member of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. To say that because one is born of a particular race, one is going to be charged with a different role within society, this government has chosen this route to segregate the Aboriginal population of this province and provided them with a separate sharing agreement of which you or I or others that are not of total Aboriginal descent will benefit from. That gravely concerns me.

If one was to look in the Webster's Dictionary for this particular sharing based on race, the particular word that is attached to this definition is "apartheid." I know we are familiar

with that term "apartheid" because of its extensive usage in South Africa. The global community came together and bore a great deal of pressure on the government of South Africa to in fact change its ways and bury once and for all their apartheid policies they had within their government. But, lo and behold, here in the province of Manitoba, we are undertaking to travel a road that is in fact one previously travelled by this government of South Africa, basing policies and supports and services exclusively on race. Without a change in this current government's attitude, we are going to be recognized by the global community for being the last bastion of apartheid practices on the face of this earth. *[interjection]*

The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) is asking a question. I am afraid I did not capture the question as to what he is wanting for me to elaborate upon. However, I will continue into further departments and bills that are presently within the Chamber and deliberations through the Committee of Ways and Means and considering the Estimates of the proposed budget.

I come upon the Department of Agriculture. I know that numerous members of this side of the House have spoken about the duress that the agricultural sector of our province is experiencing at this point in time.

The Budget gives a great deal of dialogue to the Department of Agriculture and the agricultural industry within our province. The Finance Minister delights in saying that they as government will support the agricultural industry here in Manitoba by supporting research and value-added processing within the province, but that is only lip-service. When one goes to the companion document, which provides for elaboration of the proposed budget, titled *Estimates of Expenditure*, one is really baffled when examination of the lines that are specific to those statements of value-added and research finds that both those lines are in fact either reduced by over \$1 million or held the same.

The Food Development Centre, which is located in the constituency of Portage la Prairie, and of which we are most fortunate to have that facility, has their budget effectively frozen from

last year to this year. Granted, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has stated that the continued operations of the Food Development Centre are under evaluation and study. However, it is well known that the restructuring that came within the changes of Executive Council when this new government came into being, transferring the Food Development Centre from Rural Development to Agriculture, left that particular centre wanting for additional funding and resource personnel.

Rural Development, in fact, supported that particular centre, not just monetarily but with other department resource personnel that significantly enhanced the operations of the Food Development Centre. When one takes that particular support mechanism away and places them within the Department of Agriculture, the Food Development Centre is truly left wanting. They have stated that they require at least a level of funding equal to or greater than \$1.5 million annually to sustain the activities that they are currently engaged in. Those activities are the lifeblood, they are the future of agricultural industry here in Manitoba, because within those four walls of that centre takes place the research and development activities of food products that we produce here in this province and adds value through processing, packaging, marketing and is indeed the only way that the producers, farmers of this province are ever going to find their way through the very, very meagre margins that they have experienced over the last number of years.

* (16:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, again another department where the particular dialogue of the Finance Minister has stated something and in fact been less than supportive of those statements when it comes down to actual support, when it comes to the budgetary process. Another truth broken, and perhaps the consequences unfortunately may only be borne by the producers of this province. It has been stated at length earlier by colleagues of mine as to how this government has in fact treated producers in the agricultural industry in this province.

Mr. Speaker, if one advances through the Estimates book and comes upon the Culture, Heritage and Tourism and wants to, again,

dissect the Estimates as it relates to the dialogue presented to this House by the Finance Minister, we are almost looking at contradictory statements. The dialogue says that we are doing great things in Culture, Heritage and Tourism. Everyone knows that tourism within this province is an industry that is growing ahead of all others because we in this province have, in fact, a Manitoba advantage that is not yet widely known.

I had the pleasure of travelling a number of years ago to the United Kingdom. I was travelling across the Atlantic Ocean, Air Canada flight, and seated beside me was a gentleman who was from Israel. He asked where I was from, and I said that I was from Manitoba. He quickly turned to me with a gleam in his eyes, and he said: Manitoba, I would love to visit Manitoba. I said, well, what is it in Manitoba that you are most interested in, and his statement: aurora borealis, the northern lights, something that he as a gentleman, probably of middle-aged years, had yet to experience, that you and I have the privilege of seeing on many occasions throughout the year, marvelling at the lights in our sky that adorn the twilight hours of us within this province. So it is small things like that in our mind that are huge in others' minds, and we take some things for granted that we should not.

So I say to you, Mr. Speaker, the industry of tourism is not yet developed in any stretch of the imagination, and yet when I look here to the budget of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism and to see it cut by a million dollars, what does that tell the people of Manitoba, the people in the tourism industry as to how they are valued within this current government? Absolutely unbelievable in most persons' minds.

Also within the Department of Culture and Heritage, we look to preserving our heritage because if it is not preserved now and is lost, it is lost forever. We are not looking to rebuild or replicate something, because it is not the same as it would have been had we taken the chance that we have now to, in fact, preserve it. Right here in our Estimates that we are again debating is, again, a reduction in the level of support to complete some of the projects that I know are

most valued throughout this province. Whether it is in the city of Winnipeg or the city of Brandon, in the rural community or the northern communities of Manitoba, it is very, very important that we not lose the heritage buildings that we have within our province because of short-sightedness that this government seems to portray within the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I then also look at the level of support within the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism, and glaring me right in the face after the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) says how important culture is to all Manitobans and how we are a mosaic of cultures here in Manitoba—and that is effectively what makes us strong because we have that diversity of culture. But culture here in the level of Estimates is reduced by 57 percent for the support of culture and cultural organizations in the document known to us as the Estimates of Expenditure, reduced from \$4.3 million annually to \$1.8 million annually.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how one can say one thing and do another, but this government seems to do this on a regular basis. It comes to me as no surprise after the lengthy debate that we have experienced in Estimates over the course of this past number of weeks.

I turn to the Department of Education and Training. Mr. Speaker, I come from that background. I have almost 20 years of elected experience based upon a fundamental belief that our future is indeed our young people. Our young people will be the future of this province, and the young people need, and I cannot stress enough, and require education and training so that they can follow their dreams and indeed capture their dreams, because their dreams are our dreams. We want a better life for our children than you and I had, and the foundation that is built with education and training will be the foundation that our young people of Manitoba can build upon.

That is why I am really, really disappointed as to the way that the Government has ineffectively come to the public education system, and we are now debating a bill, Bill 42, which is known to us as The Public Schools Amendment and Consequential Amendments

Act that is changing a number of fundamental guidelines as to how education is treated here in this province through the working arrangement that we have between elected officials and the teachers, the very proud professionals that deliver our education here in this province. Indeed, the teachers of this province are proud of their profession, and they are very much appreciated by yours truly and the parents.

In fact, last evening, I may be suffering a little bit of fatigue today, Mr. Speaker, having participated in our eldest son's graduation ceremonies and the activities that follow those very momentous ceremonies. It is with a great deal of pride that we see our young people go forward from their formal school education on to post-secondary education, but it leaves me with a little doubt in my mind as to whether or not our universities and our colleges, our institutions of post-secondary education will, in fact, be able to provide the education and training that our young people are going to need.

I know a promise was made by the New Democratic Party to reduce tuition costs by 10 percent. I do not know where that idea was hatched, because, Mr. Speaker, even their own policy people have analyzed it and come to the conclusion that this is the worst way of supporting young people in their quest, in their desires to further their education. A much better vehicle would be to support our young people through the Canada-Manitoba loans act, which would provide the monies for those young people to pursue their education. It would also allow the universities to charge a fair tuition. We would support the young people through loans. They would get their studies and education and instruction by the universities, and the universities would maintain the courses and programs that our young people require.

* (16:40)

Then, upon graduation, encouragement could be made, and incentives made to those young people to take up residency here in Manitoba, and that residency could be encouraged through a proposal that was widely promoted through the last election through the tax credit system.

Mr. Speaker, I know my time is running short here at the present time. I truly believe that a much better way of encouraging our young people to progress in their education and training was to support them through the Canada-Manitoba loans and provide them monies to garner their education and then, upon graduation from those particular course of studies, to encourage those individuals to stay in Manitoba, return and reduce the monies that they have owing on their loans through tax credits. That would be, in fact, reducing their obligations of paying for an education in this province. I think that it does not take a great deal of further explanation to see that universities are, in fact, in disarray over the lack of funding and the confusion that a reduction and freezing of tuitions here in this province have caused for our higher educational institutions in this province, and it is deplorable. It really, truly is.

Mr. Speaker, I know that further education and training is vital, and I also want to remark that my disappointment that this government has also chosen not to pass any of the private members' resolutions. Private Member's Resolution 3 was introduced by myself earlier with regard to further promoting the young people to education and training. It was supported by all colleagues of mine on this side of the House. We wanted to see this resolution that urged the Government to provide affordable and accessible post-secondary education. Who can go and find fault with that statement? Yet the Government chose to use the tactic of speaking out that particular resolution, so the resolution would be dropped to the bottom of the Order Paper and, consequently, I know and you know will never ever see the light of day.

I know members of the Government spoke in support of the resolution, and I am most appreciative of that. However, once again, it mirrors and reflects the dialogue what one minister says and then consequently in another document says something differently. I am very, very disappointed that this Legislative Assembly is being treated in such a fashion as not to acknowledge the private responsibilities that we have to reflect the issues at hand and the concerns of our constituents.

As Portage la Prairie is a centre that is looking to have further post-secondary oppor-

tunities, it is a real concern to parents such as myself to see our children having to move away and take a second residency at great cost, I might add, to further their education. That is why it is so vital that the Council on Post-secondary Education initiative to expand through telecommunications the educational opportunities throughout the province by bringing into classrooms and into living rooms wherever a computer might be housed, Mr. Speaker, the instruction from those particular institutions within our province. I speak of Campus Manitoba, which is a collaborative distance educational programming by the three universities: the University of Brandon, the University of Manitoba and the University of Winnipeg. I also want to compliment the Assiniboine Community College for their placement of the Licenced Practical Nursing program in Portage la Prairie, which will effectively provide 25 young persons with educational opportunities in the licenced practical nursing field.

Mr. Speaker, I know that that was initiated by the previous government, and I do want to compliment the current government for their continued support of that program. I would hope only that that initiative be broadened and expanded and a greater amount of resources be provided, because it is appreciated by the students and the parents of this province.

I know that there are many items that I would like to bring forward, and as I turn the pages each and every government department displays in the Estimates a contradiction to what the Finance Minister (Mr. Selinger) made statements about within this House when he introduced his budget. When one says that they are going to concentrate and bring road travel to more residents in Manitoba and to improve the highways network within the province and then we look to the line of capital expenditure here to see that it is going to be \$10 million less than the previous year's expenditure.

I do recognize, and I will wrap things up here very shortly, that there are other initiatives that the Highways Minister (Mr. Ashton) has got to address as well. He has got to make an impression upon his Minister of Finance that the department of transportation should in fact be increasing year over year, more expenditures,

because currently more than \$40 million worth of depreciation is used up within our roadways of the province each and every year that is not addressed by this current budget, and to see it reduced is deplorable.

In regard to Bill 46, The Interim Appropriation Act, although I understand its necessity within this Chamber, it is very disappointing to see that we have to go through this particular process because of the late delivery of our budget into the House and because seven months based upon the number of years that the members opposite had to prepare for their challenges that they now have in front of them. I would have thought ten years would have been ample to have a budget rip-raring to go by the time they entered office, but then to take seven months more after that to prepare a budget document is something I have yet to find explanation for.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the debate on Bill 46.

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): I also wanted to put a few thoughts and words in reporting to Bill 46, The Interim Appropriation Act. I believe that it is a very important issue that we need to address. The money that we are playing with is taxpayers' money, and we are looking at 38 percent of the budget being drawn down, which is \$22 billion. It is a very serious and significant business—[interjection] Thank you, \$2.2 billion. I cannot read my writing.

* (16:50)

It is hard-earned money. For most of my life I have been simply a taxpayer. For 36 years I have been contributing to these taxes in our business. But when you really think about the tax dollars and where they come from, I did not pay any taxes at all. Although most years we paid income tax—we wanted to pay income tax, and we were proud to pay income tax—every nickel and every dollar came from our customers. Businesses had no money. The business had no money whatsoever. All of the money that was paid in taxes to the governments in Canada, municipal, provincial and federal, was paid by customers when they bought merchandise. It is always built into the price of the merchandise.

The only person in Canada who pays tax, Mr. Speaker, is the consumer. The consumer pays for a tax when they buy a loaf of bread. They pay tax when they buy a quart of milk or a tire or a battery. But all of the taxes that are collected from businesses, all of the taxes that are collected from farms, all of the taxes that are collected from industry were once consumers' dollars, because the only time that tax dollars are generated is when somebody buys something.

Therefore, I think it is extremely important when we think about customers, consumers, taxpayers, that we handle the money with great diligence and with great care. My concern was not for how much tax was collected through our business. My concern was how was it going to be spent? I know that today, many times money is spent rather frivolously by thinking that money solves problems. Sure, we need more nurses. Here is \$18 million. Oh, we need a home renovation plan for Winnipeg. Forget about rural Manitoba, but for Winnipeg, oh, here is \$8 million. We just throw millions and millions of dollars and we think that we are solving problems.

I do not think money solves problems generally. Money is only an avenue. We need to spend money that is well managed, well planned. We will spend less money and get more bang for the buck. We have people out there paying hard-earned tax dollars, and those hard-earned dollars should be spent by governments who really care about customers and consumers, about taxpayers because that is where the money is generated.

You know, paying excessive taxes, Mr. Speaker, reduces investment in our province. Paying excessive taxes reduces employment. Paying excessive taxes consequently reduces the quality of health care that we can afford, and paying excessive taxes consequently reduces the quality of education that we can afford. So it is so important that the money is well-managed and that we do not pay tax excessively. Even though we think of paying tax as a privilege in a democratic country and something that we are proud to be able to do, we do not want the money to be wasted. If our money is well-managed, we certainly will do favours to our citizens and our customers.

I think countries like New Zealand and Ireland who cut their taxes probably in half proved that reducing the taxes brought in more money. Increasing taxes is not a method. Tax and spend is not a method. The NDP of the 1980s tax-and-spend is not a way to go, and we know that they are back, and we are very, very fearful that the tax-and-spend economy will continue on and on.

Mr. Speaker, when the Budget was introduced there was a front page: Highest taxes in Canada. That does not breed any confidence in the investors. That does not breed any confidence in expanding our economy. Another headline that same time read: Budget fails to help Manitoba's middle class. Another one was: Risky tax regime; Rates may have devastating impact.

Mr. Speaker, those were scary times. We are trying to deal with it today by reviewing what is happening in the Budget. It sends the wrong signal to business, and businesses create jobs. So we need to think about taxes as being money that is very precious, very hard-earned, and it has to be very well-spent.

What is to stop businesses today from moving to Ontario or to Alberta? They can do business anywhere in the world, but the NDP expects them to stay and pay more taxes, but for what reason? Why would they stay here? I do not know. I cannot think of a reason why people would stay in Manitoba if they are going to expand their business or reinvest money. Manitobans are being punished for being loyal to their province that they grew up in. Now a family of four in Manitoba pays 66 percent more than those in Ontario. A family of four earning \$60,000 will have the highest personal income tax of any province in all of Canada.

The NDP have had the nerve to take credit for a personal income tax reduction that was introduced and planned for by the previous government. The NDP has set a course for failure with their budget. They have begun the new millennium by bringing back the ideas of the 1980 tax-and-spend Pawley government. It took us ten years to get out of that hole. Our budget has failed to build upon a strong base left by the Filmon government. There has begun the

slow erosion of economic strength and confidence in Manitoba, and we hate to think of where we might be in four or five years.

This confidence was shaken somewhat by the deficit scare that Manitobans had to endure. The deficit scare was simply for political points. Here the Government was saying how much money we had overspent in trying to solve a health care problem when in fact, try as they might, they had a balanced budget. They tried to hide behind a false audit, which was not an audit, and they lowered the expectations and confidence of Manitobans in reinvesting in their own province.

The Filmon government was undertaking a steady reduction of taxes and the economy was performing well because of it. This government has put a halt to that process. The Filmon record is worth repeating. We introduced a learning tax credit to help Manitoba post-secondary students. We introduced a 35% film and video productions credit, which has increased film production in our province exponentially. We have reduced the personal income tax rate by 7 percent, I believe, during our time in office. We have increased the exemption for payroll tax over our time in office.

In 1992, we introduced the 10% manufacturing investment tax credit, which was key in strengthening the manufacturing economy here in Manitoba through the 1990s. With the various reductions, taxes were reduced some \$250 million under the Filmon administration, not including the many one-time initiatives which total another \$140 million.

We introduced the balanced budget legislation act, which was opposed by members opposite, and we navigated through one of the worst recessions in Manitoba's history and came out of it to bring Manitoba one of the lowest unemployment rates in our history.

Then you think about the problems with health care. I was just reading the notes from the southeast health care financial statement and I notice that the southeast health care has been underfunded in the last year or so by \$700,000 or \$800,000, and now has actually a deficit of closer to \$1 million, and they do not even have a

dialysis machine such as are being sent now to Selkirk and Thompson and an increased number of dialysis machines in Morden. Steinbach kidney patients have to drive far and wide to get treatment—*[interjection]* Okay, I want you to spend it more efficiently and fairly.

An Honourable Member: Oh, that will save millions.

* (17:00)

Mr. Jim Penner: That will. The Budget has clearly failed to end hallway medicine.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to go to agriculture. I have been so disappointed with Bill 5. People have been phoning and writing and e-mailing me about Bill 5. They do not understand what we are trying to accomplish when the purpose has stated there are already laws in place which will adequately service the needs of Bill 5. So Bill 5, first of all, is a useless, unnecessary piece of legislation and does not address any need that could not be addressed under existing legislation.

It scared the heck out of exotic species businesses. You have pet dealers thinking, well, why would I go into a pet store? We have parrot breeders who are complaining. We have in Grunthal a guinea pig operation. These are businesses under the Consumer and Corporate Affairs. They would want to have businesses like this. We have bison operations. We have more bison operators in Manitoba right now than we have poultry farms, and bison were not even native to this country at the time they started raising them here. So, why are we saying that we cannot have bison operations overly regulated? We have elk operations.

So I look at Bill 5 as a slap in the face and kick in the rear end for business, and I am sorry to say that it does not need to be there at all. It does not even serve a purpose.

Funding for agriculture has basically remained flat after our government increased support by 14 percent last year. Our government of the day has basically turned their backs on Manitoba farmers. They have made numerous flights of fancy to Ottawa but have come back

empty-handed. They even walk out of meetings. They have failed to deliver for Manitoba farmers who have suffered devastating effects of the flood, and in the hog industry this government has been sending mixed signals to investors. Manitobans investing in the hog industry are very nervous about the purpose of the consultations and the direction that the Government is going in regard to the industry.

Manitobans have invested millions of dollars in livestock operations, and many are left twisting in the wind while this government tries to sort itself out with all the special interest groups that it caters to. By the way, when we support agriculture with tax dollars, we support all of the people in Canada. Reduced costs of farming or assistance to farms helps everybody, because we have the cheapest food in the world or the second cheapest food. As a percentage of cost of living, we spend 10 to 11 percent of our average wage on food in Canada and the United States. That is the lowest cost of food that anybody in the world pays. So when governments support the industry of agriculture, they are not just supporting a few farmers or farm businesses; they are supporting every man, woman and child in the country. It is a fair way of keeping the industry healthy.

When it comes to education and training, I have been on a university board for 19 years, and I sort of have a feel for what universities are facing. The universities are facing substantial cuts to their facilities and programs. Manitoba students may not be getting the training that they deserve. I will just get you some quotes from the university itself on the problems of education resulting from this budget.

In education, the Manitoba Organization of Faculty Associations says: Cheap tuition is one thing; students still need books, teachers and courses. That was Robert Chernomas. Another statement by Mike McAdam, Vice-President of the U of M: We will be looking at further budget reductions. Each department will have to cut its budget by 3 percent.

Can you believe that? This is a budget that has just come down that was going to be sensitive to education, and here they say another 3 percent has to be cut. They talked about our 1

percent and 1.2 percent holdbacks or half percent to try and bring our deficit into line, but here we do not have a deficit, and each department will have to cut its budget by 3 percent. Will that meet our needs? No, it will not. Quite frankly, we will choose our priorities, Jackie Thachuk, Red River Community College said.

You know, to ignore Red River's expansion to the heritage buildings where the money serves a dual purpose is, again, a lack of common sense, a lack of good management, where we could have the same money help both Red River College and help the area of Winnipeg to restore those heritage buildings, using the same money for two purposes. It is like getting something for half price. I do not think this government understands the need to be conscientious with money. Big businesses can be taxed and so what is wrong with spending money anyway we please.

If we look at the real increase, it is not as great as it appears on the surface, said UMSU president. Universities are having serious problems right now because of lack of money. University of Manitoba is so underfunded, it cannot attract or keep the professors it needs, and that quote is from Peter Blunden, U of M Faculty Association.

What they said about Manitoba is that Manitoba tripped over the starting line in the tax race. So education and training is really a very big and significant part of keeping our young people and preparing them for the life ahead, and it needs an understanding by our new government.

Highways is another significant area where I think we have been caught off-guard, unprepared, ill-prepared, lack of planning. Important projects have been cancelled, and the southern part of Manitoba will for sure suffer. There is a lack of appreciation for the significant contribution the south brings in terms of taxes to Manitoba. That was demonstrated by—the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) does not feel the south would suffer if not a dime were spent for the next five years on the southern roads. I can tell you that is not true. The highway I drive home to Steinbach on almost every day has not been improved for 20 years and is in

need of a tremendous amount of repair. The amount of traffic, if you take the traffic counts on those roads, you would see the need for improvement. Highways need improvement for safety. They need improvement for efficiency, and now we are into the hog belt, and they definitely need roads.

I believe that we have also not addressed the needs of our Aboriginal constituents by providing them with casinos. First of all, I think it should have been a consultative process. Manitobans in general were not consulted. Now we have gotten into a process that is rife with allegations of political interference and conflict of interest. I get calls regularly of concern of why this process cannot be cleaned up. Government has been ill-prepared to bring in this initiative. They are causing a good deal of disunity in the Native community. Lawsuits are now being threatened to address the faulty system. Yet the New Democrats refuse to step back and review the process for selection of casinos and restore faith in Manitobans and First Nations people. They have selected several sites that do not meet recommendations and some that are likely to fail because they are in remote locations not likely to draw tourists.

So the NDP suggests they are trying to help Aboriginals by going from two casinos in Manitoba to seven. I think that we could find better ways of helping the Aboriginals. I am certainly in favour of anything we can do for all people in Manitoba, and, especially, do I feel we have to focus on those who have lower incomes and less opportunity. Even by the creation of a new addictive foundations, it is an admission that we are going to harm these people. When you, right off the bat, put \$10 million a year into an addiction foundation, you know for sure that there is going to be a really, really serious problem.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage our government to spend some money on learning to manage and take some courses, and find some ways to use money more efficiently and more effectively and gain the confidence of the people. Even though we are in opposition, we do not want things to go badly. I thank you.

* (17:10)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few comments on the record. As opposition members, the NDP constantly criticized our health care initiatives. Then, when the NDP formed government, the Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak) has publicly said, and he said it on numerous occasions, that the Progressive Conservative government did 90 percent of the things right in health care. Ninety percent, and that is right out of the mouth of the Health Minister. When we hear his continuing criticism, however, it appears he keeps forgetting that, that 90 percent of what the PC government did in health care was good.

I would like to take a few moments to review some of the significant strides our government made in health care. Our government had a strong commitment to reduce waiting lists, contrary to what the current minister chooses to put forward. I would like to just put on record a review of some of the initiatives. We more than tripled knee replacement surgery. We increased coronary artery surgeries by 40 percent. We doubled bone density scans. We decreased waits for bone density scans from 34 to 8 weeks. MRI waits decreased from 32 to 22 weeks. Ultrasound waits went from 15 to 11 weeks. CT scans went from 6 to 4 weeks. A second ICU nursing course was added. In-patient surgery dropped by 30 percent and outpatient surgery increased by 43 percent.

We also reduced the list of long-term care patients waiting for personal care home beds in Winnipeg. We are responsible for adding 901 more personal care home beds since 1988 to the system, such as those at Misericordia Place, which is now 100 beds, Lions Manor, which is 74 beds, and most recently, 140 beds were opened at the Concordia Personal Care Centre. We reduced the number of long-term care patients waiting in hospitals in Winnipeg, those that were waiting to move into personal care homes down to 50 in May 1999.

As a nurse in the system for many years, this really is quite a remarkable achievement. If we had not put those beds in place, a new government would be very, very hard pressed to

be able to open any of the new acute care beds they have now promised, let alone the interim beds they have promised.

We also added 200 more supportive housing spaces and enhanced the companion care program. In 1997, we established the regional health authorities to provide greater input for communities into the health care services they deliver. Millions and millions of dollars were put into new equipment: \$1.3 million into cancer care, \$20.5 million to expand home care, \$10.3 million more to Pharmacare, and it goes on.

Our government committed important resources to increasing doctor recruitment, especially in rural Manitoba, and that was a major emphasis of what we had been attempting to do to address the shortage in rural Manitoba. Specifically, we recruited 40 doctors from South Africa to set up practice throughout Manitoba. We know that the number of doctors in Manitoba has been growing faster than the provincial population since 1988.

In government for over one decade, our commitment to wellness in keeping people healthy was paramount. Most recently this commitment was realized through the creation of the Misericordia Urgent Care Centre, an increase in the flu immunization program and \$1.2 million to hepatitis B immunization for newborns. We also increased our commitment to community care by increasing the role of public health nurses.

Along with wellness, our government placed a significant focus on disease prevention and these initiatives, include but are not limited to diabetes prevention, increased immunization programs in personal care homes, increased awareness about the dangers associated with smoking, the children's asthma education project, an increased epidemiology research.

Hand in hand with disease prevention is the emphasis we placed on furthering research in health related areas such as those at CancerCare Manitoba, the St. Boniface Research Centre, the Health Sciences Research Foundation, Children's Hospital Research Foundation and the University of Manitoba.

We also implemented the prostate program at CancerCare Manitoba and provided \$3 million for disease research.

I am quite proud of our government's commitment to children's health. Our approach to children was very much interdepartmental, and I think that is why it was so successful. Initiatives undertaken by the Children and Youth Secretariat often encompassed health issues for children. We emphasized our Healthy Choices program and increased awareness programs targeting ending FAS and FAE.

BabyFirst and ChildrenFirst also have a strong emphasis on the importance of raising healthy children and how health issues have a strong impact on a child's overall development. Specific to health, we increased services for pediatric speech and hearing services, children's outreach and prevention of solvent abuse amongst children.

I hope that the NDP will continue maintaining all of these very, very valuable programs for children. Our government made significant strides in women's health issues. We established a new women's health unit within Manitoba Health and a new Women's Health Advisory Council.

Breast screening numbers increased tremendously through our government's initiatives such as the mobile breast screening program. Women and their families now have access to the services of midwives, thanks to legislation our government introduced.

Just last year, under a Progressive Conservative government, phase 1 of the comprehensive Breast Health Program was launched. I am strongly encouraging this new government to continue to look at how to enhance that particular program. I was very, very concerned to see the resolution we had put forward on this defeated in the House, and defeated I would speculate because of political reasons. I cannot believe that anybody would not approve a resolution that dealt with enhancing the program in a comprehensive manner by including more prevention programs for women in the communities. When the government defeated the resolution on this, as somebody who has had a

breast cancer scare herself, I was very disappointed to see that this did not happen, and I really hope that this government will proceed with continuing to address this issue.

Other innovations and accomplishments included an integrated co-ordinated approach to managing waiting lists. I was very pleased to see that the whole management of this was something that was begun under our government. Central bed management—and having been a nurse in this system, I know how tough this probably was to even implement—I was glad to see that there was a huge amount of co-operation amongst the city hospitals to take this issue on and to make this work for quality patient care in hospitals in Manitoba.

We enhanced weekend discharges. A commitment to keep Manitobans informed about their health care system was also another important accomplishment, I think, that we had, and I am still waiting to hear how this government is going to keep Manitobans informed about some of the problems within the health care system and some of the initiatives that they are putting forward to address them.

There was an introduction of community-care access centres. There was development of new standards and regulations for long-term care facilities. There is expansion of mental health services. There was an introduction of a cervical screening program. There was additional funding for pediatrics speech and hearing services.

Under our direction the Department of Health increased attention to Aboriginal health issues through the Aboriginal Health Unit and the Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre. We also invested in Aboriginal healing initiatives at the Health Sciences Centre.

Initiatives in addiction treatment and efforts were placed in addressing various issues around the area of addiction.

* (17:20)

The nursing shortage in Manitoba certainly was one of particular interest to me. It is with some dismay to see that in Manitoba the nursing

shortage under this government has increased by 450 nurses since this government took over. We had recognized the issue, and we had been dealing with it for a number of years. I was pleased to have been part of some of the initiatives that we were looking at. One of them was to put in place a \$7 million recruitment and retention plan, and I am pleased to see that the government did continue with that although I am still waiting to see how it has been perhaps refocused or whether or not it will even be continued in the future.

We also more than doubled LPN enrollment from 90 to 190, and I would speculate that there is still opportunity for this government to address that even further, although with the fall classes starting I would hope that we might see some fairly quick announcements coming in that area. We also co-operated with the University of Manitoba to fast-track their baccalaureate program to offer students an accelerated degree program so that they could graduate within three years. And I note that although the Minister was very critical of us with regard to nursing, he has maintained a recruitment and retention program. Nonetheless, he has allowed the nursing shortage in Manitoba to balloon by 40 percent, and according to Maureen Hancharyk from the Manitoba Nurses Union that number is now sitting at 1100 nurses. Members opposite made substantial promises to nurses through the 1999 election campaign, promises they have yet to fulfil. For instance, they promised to convert part-time positions to full-time positions where applicable. Here again I think that the NDP made promises without first having the information they require. They have constantly chastised us for not consulting with nurses and flaunting that they are the party of consultation.

Had the Minister of Health taken the time to consult with nurses, he would have found that many nurses are quite happy being part time. Being largely a women's profession and a profession made up of mothers, there are a lot of nurses, I would speculate a good percentage of them, more than 50 percent, who would be very happy remaining in a part-time position, picking up as they are able to. Had the Minister taken some time to consult with nurses he might have known that before he made what I think was a naïve and reckless promise.

The Government has to stop scapegoating us and take real action to solve the nursing shortage. The Minister likes to talk all the time about the thousand nurses who were laid off, but he always neglects to mention that 830 of those nurses were rehired almost immediately. He also, I would speculate for purely political reasons, neglects to say that the reason they were laid off was because the unions had clauses in their contracts which prevented mobility. So the only way that staff could be moved where the new jobs were in the community or in long-term care was to be through layoff. Perhaps, had the Minister been truly concerned about the issue, he might have gone into some discussion with the nursing unions to encourage them to be more cooperative, and perhaps these problems with mobility might not have occurred.

I think the Government has to work harder to hire more nurses, and instead of ranting and raving about our shortcomings I think the Minister of Health needs to take control of this growing problem in his department. Being at best optimistic, their two-year program may bring as many as 90 nurses to our system. However, according to his assistant deputy minister, he expects a 30% dropout from this particular program, so 30 percent of 90 does not leave us very many students coming out of this \$2.5-million program, and that is hardly going to make a dent in the shortage of 1 100 nurses that we are facing today, and I think the Government has to do a lot more than what they are doing. They had promised to immediately, upon being elected, put forth a nurses-first plan. Well, it took a very long time for that plan to come forward.

The Minister has publicly said that what we did in government in Health, that 90 percent of it was good. Our plan was working, and I think we are still seeing some of the good effects of that being benefited from by this particular government. I think the Minister obviously truly believes that, because when he came into office, I understand he did instruct those around him to keep on doing what they were doing.

I do have some very serious concerns about the NDP's first budget. They asked for years and years, in fact demanded in this House that we dump more money into health care spending,

and we met the challenges as they came along. Then the NDP came into power and the moment they came into power they accused us of reckless spending. So what did they do? They built the reckless spending into the Budget and added 6 percent more on top of that.

We do need to have a strong economy, Mr. Speaker, which, in turn, allows for the adequate funding of health care. It is very questionable to me, though, how Manitoba is going to do this now under this new government, especially now that we have the highest taxes in the country for middle-income earners. Where do nurses fall? Well, according to them, nurses are middle-income earners. Why would they want to stay in Manitoba if they are going to be the highest taxed in all of the country?

So, Mr. Speaker, what has this new government done in terms of health care? I think they have broken a lot of promises for the most part. They promised to end hallway medicine, unequivocally, a black-and-white promise. We are not promising you perfection, is what the Minister chooses to say now. He did promise perfection. He said by a certain date in April we will end hallway medicine. Manitobans believed him and voted for the NDP Government because the Government and this minister indicated they would end hallway medicine.

We continue to have patients in the hallway, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Friday evening at St. Boniface Hospital, for the majority of the evening 10 patients were sitting in the hallway. The promise was to end hallway medicine. It was black and white, unequivocal, not whether they are there overnight. He said they would end hallway medicine.

They promised to immediately hire 100 full-time nurses. We are still waiting for those 100 full-time nurses. What a naive, reckless promise to make to Manitobans. He was going to change full-time nurses to part-time nurses. He was going to open 100 beds. *[interjection]* Well, I am still waiting. Where are the 100 beds? This was a broken election promise. *[interjection]* He promised. In fact, in one of the news releases during the election, he said their first priority was going to get rid of frozen food, another broken election promise. They bought the

company. They said they were going to get rid of frozen food and feed the prisoners with it, I believe is what they said, and it was an election promise. It is another broken election promise.

They broke another promise, and this one I find interesting, because they were going to develop standards in consultation with nurses to ensure adequate staffing in hospitals. I do not believe that they have even touched on this one. In Estimates, I think the Minister did not know that this had even been released. I am looking forward to this, because there has been so much criticism from this particular Health minister when he was in opposition and from other of his colleagues that criticized the recommendations of Connie Curran. Well, what has he done to change it? He has had an opportunity now to say this is going to be a priority of mine, it was a priority of mine in opposition. He has not even made a peep in terms of what he is going to do with staff, mixed changes in the hospital. So I have to wonder, you know. If he really did not like it, why is he not doing something with it?

He has also politically interfered, Mr. Speaker, with a decision by the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in regard to having only one site for cardiac surgery. Dr. Brian Postl had made this decision after much thought, research and consultation with those in the health care field. *[interjection]* I will send them out. I will send it out, believe me, and what has happened—

An Honourable Member: You will not.

* (17:30)

Mrs. Driedger: Oh, yes I will. What has happened, we have seen the Health Sciences Centre being offered a heart transplant program. There are some questions, Mr. Speaker, around that. I think before they rush into this, I am really hoping they will do their homework on this. We have asked the question how many heart transplants do Manitobans experience in a year? The Minister refused to answer the question. He still has not answered the question, although he told me: Wait for the next day, you will see a big announcement. Well, he did not announce how many Manitobans receive heart transplants in a year. So he is sitting across the

House right now saying: Why did you not ask? I asked. He refused to answer me.

If we only have six or ten transplants in a year, what is the opportunity for doctors to maintain their expertise in this? Why would we move into a heart transplant program in Manitoba until the baby death inquest results have come out? Because those results might tell us that we have serious problems in the system. We do not know. Why would we not wait, evaluate those and then move on? Our first-hand information coming my way tells me that we do not have a donor base in Manitoba to support this program.

So it is one thing to catch the headlines, make a grandiose announcement, but I have to wonder how much ability this program has to be sustained in Manitoba. I hope that before it gets implemented, the Minister will do his work. I think right now he is hammering through a lot of things, and I really have to question whether there is much planning going on.

An Honourable Member: Pass.

Mrs. Driedger: You wish. I am not done.

Mr. Speaker, the other day in the House, the Minister took credit for something that he had absolutely nothing to do with. He took credit for the hiring of 10 radiation therapists, and he stood in the House and he grandstanded about, I hired these 10 people. Well, 5 of them were new grads out of their program. It had nothing to do with him. He took credit for 5 South African radiation therapists being hired. That was an initiative under our government, and here we have the Minister thinking that he is going to get the credit for that. Well, he had nothing to do with it.

So has this government fixed health care? Not by a long shot. In fact, it does appear to be getting worse. My overriding concern is what I am seeing right now. It has been interesting in reviewing Hansard over the past year and looking at some of the Minister's comments when he was in opposition. What we certainly are seeing are a number of his issues from the last year wanting to be implemented. I am wondering how well they are really fitting in with the overall plan. I hope that as we move

forward, what we see coming out of health care would be a plan, evidence of strategic planning, evidence of some comprehensive approach to health care. I have concern that that is not necessarily something that I am seeing right now.

So I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, to know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) believed that 90 percent of what we did was right, and I am glad to see that he is following a majority of what we put into place. I am very pleased to see that because it was our initiatives. I am still looking forward to seeing more of his initiatives. In nine months, there are very, very few that have come forward.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to put these few remarks on the record.

Committee Change

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that the composition of the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources be amended as follows: the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) for the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik).

Motion agreed to.

* * *

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wanted to just put a few comments on the record in regard to the Bill that is being presented.

I find it a little bit ironic that we are standing here presenting our viewpoints on it, and we are hearing constant heckling and poking from the other side, but I have not seen one member brave enough to stand up and put their comments on the record. I would suggest to them that the opportunity for all Manitobans to be represented is probably being forgotten at this particular time. Maybe the members opposite would care to stand up and make some of their comments public, on the record, as every member has that right.

I think that a lot of the issues have been discussed, and I know that certain areas of the Budget and of the Bill is something that is being discussed by all people, but I want to just speak a little bit about some of the things that have happened and what we have seen in a government that has been into government for now I believe it is close to 10 months.

Every day that passes, I look forward with optimism on my calendar because, as I heard one of my colleagues say, it puts us one day closer to the next election, when we will be able to present our ideas to the people of Manitoba and take our rightful place across the way.

The interesting things that I have seen take place since the government has come into office, one is the fact that during their time in opposition they were constantly agitated about getting into the House and creating legislation and challenging the government on their ideas and their thoughts. Yet after the election they delayed the opening of the House for a long period of time. Thus we have a situation where the Budget was presented late in the spring and brings us to this particular issue.

I think the Member for Portage mentioned in his statements that had this new group of individuals so keen on being the government, a government in waiting that had all the ideas, presented those ideas in their budgets a little earlier, we could have avoided this debate to some large degree. It is also quite ironic I think that a government that has always said it was in waiting and ready to move forward and take the reigns of power and take this province on a new direction, unfortunately, I would say at this point in time, has probably failed miserably. They have neglected to move forward on a lot of issues that they promoted as opposition. Now they are taking it under advisement and under study. That is probably a good thing because some of the ideas that they were putting forward were I suspect a little scary for the people in the province of Manitoba. I think maybe they have seen the light and they will continue to move forward.

I notice in a lot of the committee rooms that I visit when we are doing the Estimates process, so much of this new government has just

followed in the path of the old government. They talk about their priorities in spending. Some have changed somewhat but, as the Member previously stated, health care issues, the Health Minister stated publicly that he was happy with 90 percent, 90 percent of the things that we did in health care were right. That is an absolute—
[interjection]

The Minister comments is this a good thing or a bad thing. Yet when we talk about gambling, a man in his position saying to anyone in the public that we are doing anyone a favour by introducing more gambling into the province of Manitoba, something that he opposed as a member of the opposition, something that the Member for Burrows opposed as a member for opposition, now they are going to stand up and support the government in this step forward. I find that so hypocritical that it is not do as I do, it is do as I say. I am sure throughout the next few years we will see changes again in their thought patterns and some directions. It is quite interesting

I do want to talk a little bit about health care. As members know, we have been asking the Minister of Health questions in the House. I have been asking him questions in regard to constituent issues and the Minister continually avoids the issues. He refuses to meet with a group of people on a board that he has now contributed to with the appointments of new members. He has accepted the memberships of the old boards and he refuses to meet with them.

* (17:40)

To me that is appalling. A minister of the Government should be out there meeting with his communities, should be meeting with the people that he has to work with to make health care work in the province of Manitoba, and he chooses to ignore them. I think that is a statement and I think that that is a reference to the way this government in the first early months of their term has behaved. We have a Minister of Conservation who goes out and talks about the good things, communicating with the public and setting up consultation meetings to discuss the issues that are important to Manitobans, and then decides, well, gee, maybe things are not as good as I thought they were and maybe there is some

dissension out there, and maybe people are not quite as happy with what I am trying to do. Let us cancel the meetings. Let us call them off. Let us avoid speaking to the public and finding out what they are saying and what they want.

We have got a Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). We have had an agricultural crisis in Manitoba for the last two years. The Minister of Agriculture, other than paying lip-service to those people, has totally ignored them, and I say: Shame on them. I say that is the way this government is setting itself up to deal with the people of Manitoba, and I will say to you that the people of Manitoba will not tolerate that.

We have a premier who talks about going out and meeting people, and always wanting—same thing, when people do want to discuss it, when the Mayor of Boissevain goes on the record stating that he spoke directly to the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Premier challenged the remarks, and the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) challenged the remarks. I think that that is a sad sign of the way things are going in this government, and I think it is a sad sign for the future of Manitoba over the next few years.

We have had the Minister of Health and the Premier stand up in the campaign and point to signs going to Grafton, North Dakota. We are going to shut this road down. The health care of Manitobans is far too important. We are going to shut this road down and solve the problems in Manitoba, and what does he do—bypasses Grafton now, and sends them to Fargo. That is a real direct contradiction to what he was saying in the election, and what he is doing as Minister of Health.

We now no longer have hallway medicine according to the Minister of Health. It is easy to do, just change the name, call it a corridor, call it something else, shut a door, but do not call it hallway medicine. We have people from rural Manitoba where now the doctors have to phone into the city of Winnipeg to find out if there is a bed for them before they can come in to receive the health care that they so desperately need, because this government is afraid. They are meddling in the management of this area of health, politically, because they are afraid of the headlines that would say: Hallway medicine has

returned. He can stand up and quote all the numbers that he wants about the numbers that are in over night, and in over two nights, and in over three, but he is forgetting about the people that are sitting out in a hospital bed or worse yet in their homes in rural, and southern, and northern Manitoba, so he can stand up and proudly proclaim to the province of Manitoba: We do not have hallway medicine anymore. I think that is a terrible way for a government to behave, and it is a terrible way for a government to treat the people of the province of Manitoba.

To stand up day after day in this House and talk about the past—if he has got a problem with that, he can talk about the past all he wants, but the plan is for the future. You never plan for the past. You learn from the past. If he says he has got something better to offer, then he should be putting it on the table and presenting it to the people of Manitoba. He refuses to do that, and he refuses to meet with people. To me, that is the worst part of what the Minister is doing in this particular case. People that are responsible for the health care of several thousands of people in rural Manitoba are being neglected and overlooked and ignored by the Minister of Health, and I think that is awful.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak a little bit in regard to the casino issue. Nowhere, and I have said this to members, and I would invite the members opposite, if they are willing to do so, to table one document that talks about five casinos in the election. That is what I would like to see. Show me one news release, one document that talks about building five new casinos in the province of Manitoba. I have looked everywhere, and I cannot find it. I would challenge the members to table it in this House and show what they did do. Instead of telling the people of Manitoba, they met with a group of people and cut a deal and told them that was what they were going to do. You stick with us; we will build you five casinos but let us not tell anybody until the election is over. Let us keep it a secret, and then, after being elected, basically on a health care platform, which they bragged continually day after day, the first priority of this government is casinos—unbelievable.

They talked 90 percent of the election about health care and how they were going to solve

health care, and fix health care, and what is the first priority of the new government? To build casinos. Absolutely amazing. I do not know where their priorities are or where they came from, but they are certainly not the same priorities that the people of Manitoba have.

We have the Minister of Education. We have heard in this House that the Premier has said that he said that they would repeal this bill, and I agree with him. I have read that, and I have heard him say it, but I never heard that announced publicly in the campaign, and I have never seen it on a piece of campaign literature that said that they would repeal the Bill. You cut a private deal with a small group of people, and you earned their support by doing that. Now you have to honour that deal no matter who it disenfranchises or affects. You talk about making a deal that was unfair to teachers, and you have neglected the entire tax paying base in the province of Manitoba by doing that. Did you consult with them? Did you talk to them in the election and say this is one of the things that we would like to do? I suspect not, and again I would challenge members opposite to show me one written document during the campaign that would suggest that.

We have got the casino issue bubbling up all over the province. We have got allegations being brought forward. To me, I think, what has happened is, in their eagerness to satisfy a small group of people, they have created more problems for themselves. They move forward without a plan, without any step by step. Every time we question the Minister, the Minister talks, and he says, well, that is the next step, but we do not even know what that is until we get there. When we get there, it will be the next step. Usually a business plan involves an entire plan, and the steps are mapped out for you, and you can elucidate to the public what those steps are. We have been unable to get those steps. I think that is unfortunate, because, if it is the purpose of this government to do the five casinos and you have the majority of people to vote it and do it and, if you do, then why not do it in a way that everybody or more people will buy in and understand. You keep them alienated, you keep people uninformed, you keep the questions coming in, and people are going to resent the way that they are being dealt with. I think it is

important. I should not probably be giving government that kind of advice because, if they took it, they would probably benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education talks about representation, going out and talking to people and communicating with them. It is something that has been brought to my attention. It happened early in the mandate of the new government, and I found it a little bit, I guess, almost humorous. We have a Minister of Education from the city of Brandon. We have a Brandon University, and the Minister, through his prerogative, made some wholesale changes on the Board. I understand the reasons and why those things happen, but it is ironic to me that 66 percent of the students that attend Brandon University are from rural or northern Manitoba. There is not one rural Manitoban on that board. I think that is shameful. I think that is awful that people that have that type of numbers are not represented and are not being heard from. The input that is needed to meet the demands of students that have to move from one town to the City, the cost, how do we deal with it, and bringing those issues forward and constantly presenting them to the Board to make the decision-makers understand that it is not a matter of just driving down the street to attend Brandon University, but it is actually a commitment of a move, quite often, a lease, long-term agreements on housing. I think that Brandon University will suffer because they will not be hearing from those types of people that can offer the advice that they need when they are making some of their policy decisions.

* (17:50)

We have got a government that, again, refuses to consult with people. We have talked to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). I understand that the federal government is no longer interested in cutting a deal, but there is still a way to move forward on this. Unfortunately, I think like probably most members opposite, when they hit a wall, they do not continue to look around and find an open door. What they do is turn around and go back and say, well, there was no place to go through, so we give up. It is unfortunate because rural Manitoba is suffering dramatically, and we need government support for these people out there.

We are going to continue to provide food for the world. It has to be sustained. It is becoming more and more difficult.

We have a Minister of Agriculture that constantly talks about doing things and constantly talks about understanding the problem yet as a minister of the government has done nothing in her position to advance that cause. I know that the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) talked in his comments about sometimes dealing with the federal government, you have to force them into a box to make them respond. That was our position in June of last year. We were not sure that the feds were going to participate, but the fact was we were prepared to commit and have that fight later. I think this government could do well and serve themselves well by going out and meeting with people, going out and talking with the people that are most affected and trying to assist them in whatever way we can.

The other thing I want to put on the record is in regard to the casino issue. The issue that I am hearing a lot in my communities is the fact that it is now becoming a private industry. We are taking the control of gambling. We are taking the role of gambling out of the hands of the government, and we are putting it into the hands of private organizations, many of whom do not reside in the province of Manitoba, some do not reside in Canada. I think that is a serious issue. We have a Lotteries Corp in the province of Manitoba. I think that if there is faith in that organization, that is probably where it should be managed through. I find it absolutely unbelievable that a government, when awarding those types of dollars and opportunities to people, the ones that are receiving the licensing should be in compliance with the law. Again, this is an example of a government that has failed to do their homework, rushed through something that was long overdue—not long overdue, pardon me—that was rushed and not taken the time to do the homework, do the tourism studies, do the economic impacts, the social impacts. We have got ministers across the way that talked constantly about the impacts on people and the downside of gambling, yet they continue to move forward in a stubborn, ideological way. I think that the people of Manitoba are going to

suffer as a result of this stubbornness and this unwillingness to listen.

Another issue that we talked about, and again to me it absolutely portrays this government to a T is the fact that they are trying to do everything based on perception and nothing based on hard facts. A person once said it is easy to be a mile wide and an inch deep, and there is some truth in that definition when I look across.

We want to talk a little bit about the Highways budget. I know other colleagues of mine have talked about it. They always justify what they are doing by what did you do and what did this do. That is a fair argument, but when you are talking about infrastructure, you are talking about huge amounts of money. He says, well, I took it out of this and I put it into this. Well, yes, but why would you take it out of it? Why would you not add to it?

We all recognize that highways are an important part of our life, that it is a necessity, and to reduce that, again I think it is a government that is going the wrong way, wrong-headedly, and refusing to listen to what people are saying. I know that members opposite in opposition stood and argued with the government for increased funding for highways and the needs for infrastructure, and, in fact, I think there was some agreement on that. We always tried to put as much into those types of programs as possible, and we have a government in their first budget which is so anxious to promote gambling in the province that they have forgotten the other departments that they should be looking after that are the essentials in the Province of Manitoba.

The interesting part, Mr. Speaker, I find in all of the argument is a government comes into government after the election, they probably initiate or continue on the path of 90, 95 percent of the things that the previous government were doing, and yet every day when they get up to answer a question, they use the argument of what we did wrong. It is amazing that we can have done so much wrong in the system and yet have the same paths being followed by the current government.

I sit here and I listen to the arguments, and they almost seem like an echo of the past. They want to portray themselves as having new ideas. I see none. They want to portray themselves as a government that cares for people, and yet their first priority is to build casinos. They want to portray themselves as being a kind and caring and considerate group of people, and yet they reduce the admissions into the hospitals to avoid the political damage of hallway medicine. They reduce the ability of people to travel in from rural and northern Manitoba to access the health care that all people in the province are paying for. They refuse to meet with organizations and groups that can offer them some ideas and some direction as to what the good things are.

I am sure that they can find a large number of people who will agree with what they are doing or some of the things that they are doing. I think they should probably just take a little more time and listen, and they will find out that people with a few suggestions can probably make what they are trying to do a little bit better. The analogy that I like to use when I am making these comparisons is it is always kind of like your family when your big brother, if he can do

it, why cannot I kind of thing, and I suspect that this government is on that path right now, and it is something that concerns me.

I think it is something that is going to be felt long-term. We have seen huge spending. We have seen spending increase at a rate of eight to one, and I think anybody over there that has ever run a family or a business or a household, they know that you cannot continue to do that. You know that that cannot be sustained over a long period of time. I was told by a gentleman in the United States that if the market changed 1 percent in the U.S., it could cripple the province of Manitoba in the exports that they do.

It is a concern that I have because we have to be very, very leery of that, and it is kind of interesting that when—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) will have 15 minutes remaining.

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 29, 2000

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