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Third Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

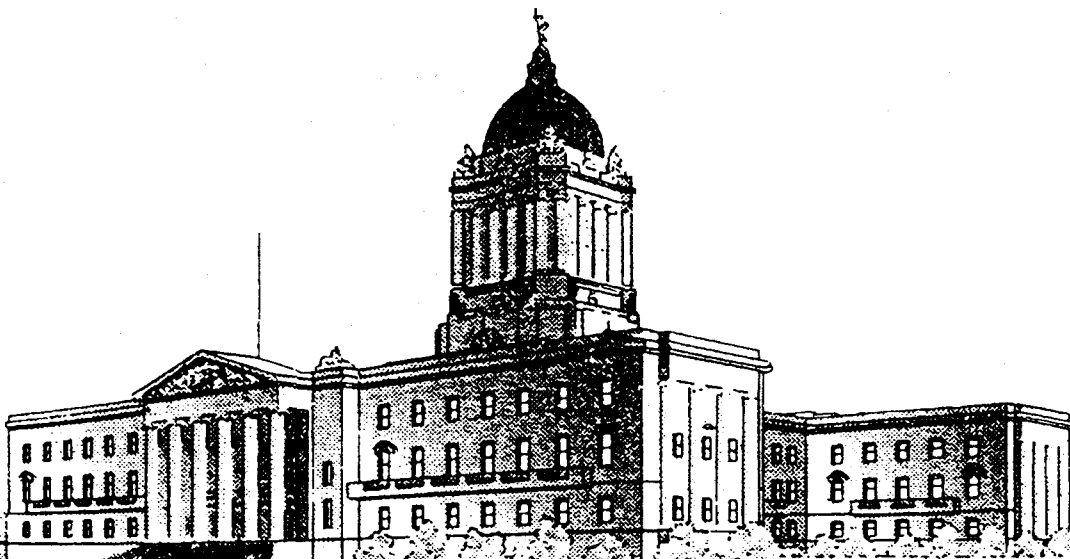
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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authority of
The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HAWRANIK, Gerald	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
SCHELLENBERG, Harry	Rossmere	N.D.P.
SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, June 12, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Transcona-Springfield School Division

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Kathy Stoyka, Colleen Ammeter, Bill Ammeter and others, praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to reverse the decision to split the Transcona-Springfield School Division and allow it to remain as a whole, or to consider immediately convening the Board of Reference to decide this matter.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Transcona-Springfield School Division

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: The Clerk please read.

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

THAT on November 8, 2001, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) announced a split in the Transcona-Springfield School Division but despite repeated requests has been unable to identify any benefits of this decision to the students and taxpayers of said school division; and

THAT this decision was not preceded by adequate public consultation as outlined in section 7 of The Public Schools Act; and

THAT this decision would result in significant hardships for the students in both Transcona and Springfield that would affect the quality of their education; and

THAT the proposal by the Minister of Education on February 12, 2002, neither alleviates nor remedies these hardships; and

THAT this decision results in an increased financial burden on the taxpayers of both the Transcona-Springfield School Division and the province of Manitoba; and

THAT on March 13, 2002, the number of resident electors required by The Public Schools Act requested the Minister of Education to convene a Board of Reference to decide the matter.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly request the Minister of Education to reverse the decision to split the Transcona-Springfield School Division and allow it to remain as a whole or to consider immediately convening the Board of Reference to decide the matter.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

* (13:35)

Flood Forecast

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for Emergency Measures, I rise to update the House on the flooding that continues to affect areas of southern Manitoba.

Local states of emergency have been declared by seven R.M.s and one village, specifically, the R.M.s of Hanover, Piney, Stuartburn, Morris, La Broquerie, Reynolds and Franklin, and the village of St. Pierre-Jolys. In addition to the 14 voluntary evacuees from Piney and Marchand, 100 people were evacuated yesterday

from Sprague. The flooding has required pumping at the community ring dikes at Emerson, St. Pierre, Rosenort, Brunkild and St. Jean, and preparations are being made to begin pumping at St. Malo.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the overland flooding appears to have crested and that water levels are dropping in the Sprague and Marchand areas. The serious problem of river flooding continues to grow, however, and heavy rainfall is resulting in serious flooding on both sides of the border. The Roseau River is at record highs along with tributaries such as Sprague Creek and Pine Creek. The level of the Roseau River will affect Dominion City, Gardenton and Stuartburn, with some sandbagging being a possibility in Stuartburn.

The Red River is also rising, and while it is expected to stay within its banks at most places, there may be some flooding of low-lying areas along the Red. The Whitemouth River and the Joubert Creek are also at near record highs, and a number of provincial drains have been damaged.

Damage to provincial roads has been severe, and I have tabled information for the House regarding road closures. I will not read them, but there are some significant road closures.

This is clearly a wide-scale and a serious event. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we have already made initial contact with the federal government to begin gathering information to consider a program under the Disaster Financial Assistance agreement.

The boil water advisory has been issued for residents in the area, and I urge all residents to follow this advice.

The provincial government is continuing to provide assistance in a number of capacities ranging from medical services to assistance with agriculture matters relating to evacuations and flood forecasting.

If I could, I can indicate that myself, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), and the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) will be visiting the affected area at three o'clock, and we may see if we can try and accommodate, I know

there is one other member of the Legislature as well, when we get a first-hand view of this. It is a very serious situation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the minister's update on the flood situation currently.

I took a drive out to La Broquerie, Marchand, the community of Lonesand, Stuartburn, wherever I could get to by car. As we were sitting at Lonesand, at the bridge, trying to get vehicles past on that bridge, the bridge on No. 12 highway collapsed as we were looking at it. The pilings under the bridge washed away. Certainly, that is the kind of situation we are seeing all over the place.

The road to Gardenton washed out as we were standing there watching, and many homes and farms are being flooded that we do not even know about yet. Cattle were on pond banks and feed was being supplied to them by front-end loader or large equipment.

I certainly appreciate the effect and the process that the highways department was demonstrating, how effective they could be. The Pine Creek bridges, both the east and west, were closed. By ten o'clock last night, they were opened to single-lane traffic. I think that is a demonstration of what kind of people we have in most of our departments.

Certainly, we thank the minister for the update on the advice and swiftness with which he and his department have moved in this event.

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

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member has leave.

* (13:40)

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister for the update. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, it is an area that all of us in this Chamber are concerned about,

concerned about the impact of the flooding, concerned about the impact on infrastructure and on provincial drains. I think it provides another reason for us to have the full assessment and report of the status of all provincial drains, which I asked for I think now a year or two ago and we are still waiting for. I was a little bit surprised that the minister did not comment on what I hear about the flooding or overflow of some sewage lagoons. I am not sure whether this is hog waste lagoons or other lagoons, but I think clearly there are some health concerns here. I hope the minister, perhaps of Health, if not of highways will be able to provide some update on this.

Mr. Speaker: I just want to clarify for the House. I do not want it to be a precedent-setting error on my part. I should have asked for leave of the House for the honourable member to have leave to speak to the minister's statement, which I forgot to do.

Aircraft Accident (Winnipeg)

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I have a statement for the House, Mr. Speaker.

We are all very proud of the community we live in. The reason for our pride was given profound meaning yesterday when a major tragedy was averted in large part due to the heroic efforts of bystanders to the plane crash at the McPhillips and Logan site. Our local citizens have been rightly credited with their quick response to the emergency in a way that likely contributed to the victims' survival.

We understand that individuals rushed to the scene of the burning aircraft to extinguish the fire and that others assisted in the rescue of victims from the plane. These are truly heroic acts and should be commended by all of us in this Legislature and all of us as citizens of Manitoba. We must also commend the quick and professional response of all emergency crews and hospital staff who attended to the victims. I want to congratulate the Manitoba citizens and the emergency teams who responded in such a brave and professional manner. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families who have experienced a rough and traumatic experience, and we certainly wish them a speedy recovery. We should all be very proud of the community we live in today.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I certainly would like to make a comment as well on behalf of our caucus. I think we all agree that we are blessed indeed to live in the province, in the community that we do live in. We know full well that Manitobans, time and time again, have one thing in common and that is when Manitobans are in trouble the community responds. We saw that in spades with this accident that occurred yesterday in Winnipeg.

Again, I think those people, if you think about the fact that there is a burning aircraft, something that could be potentially a combustible item that could have exploded, and what did the people do? They ran towards it because they knew that they might have a chance and indeed were successful in helping to retrieve those people who were locked in that aircraft.

So I would also like to commend the volunteers, the true heroes, those everyday people that when they realize somebody is in trouble they rush to their side to make a difference, and they did, as well as all of those professionals, the medical, the police, all the other people who got involved. I believe that, on this side of the House, we would commend each and every one of them.

* (13:45)

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

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

Mr. Gerrard: I rise to offer my congratulations as well to those who rose to the occasion and performed heroic duties to help those who were injured in the plane crash. I think it is a tribute to the calmness, the actions of ordinary Manitoba citizens who step forward and perform such heroic acts to help others. So I join the other leaders in extending my congratulations and my thanks to those who did.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a document. I am pleased

to table the Progress Report for the period June 1, 2001, to June 1, 2002, of Recommendations from the Report of the Review and Implementation Committee for the Report of the Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Inquest.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 31—The Medical Amendment (Physician Profiles and Miscellaneous Amendments) Act

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale), that leave be given to introduce Bill 31, The Medical Amendment (Physician Profiles and Miscellaneous Amendments) Act; Loi modifiant la Loi médicale (profils des médecins et modifications diverses), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Chomiak: The Medical Amendment Act, physician profiles, improves the appeal and investigation process for the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons, permits the Manitoba College of Physicians and Surgeons to be the regulatory body for Nunavut physicians, updates other portions of the act and permits the College of Physicians and Surgeons to gather and display information about members in order to provide Manitobans with physician profiles.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us the interns from the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan. They are Jessica Waiser, Wendy Moellenbeck, Tim Baker, Maria Kurylo.

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

Also in the public gallery, we have from Henderson Elementary 47 Grades 5 and 6 students under the direction of Mrs. Nadia Yakielashke. This school is located in the constituency

of the honourable Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers).

Also we have from the Norquay Colony School 18 Grades 5 to 12 students under the direction of Mrs. Sharon Funk. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurouchou).

Also in the public gallery we have from Lord Roberts Community School 21 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Terry Welsh. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford).

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

* (13:50)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Manitoba Hydro Manitoba Business Council Advice

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are beginning to see the impact of the Doer government's raid on Manitoba Hydro of \$288 million, the money they raided in order to balance last year's books.

Under the Government, Manitoba Hydro has been forced to pay the Doer government a million dollars a day. I would like to ask the Premier if he followed the advice of the Manitoba Business Council policy regarding taking a dividend from Crown corporations.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, I think I have pointed out in the past, Mr. Speaker, that the Business Council has proposed a dividend from Manitoba Hydro. But to have an ongoing policy dividend decision, we took the advice of payment from Hydro, but we did not take it on an ongoing basis. We thought that the financial situation in 2001, with the economic slowdown; secondly the events after September 11; and thirdly, the uncertainty which remains with the federal accounting law required a bridge.

Part of that bridge was to balance the Budget in the '01-02 year, to pay down \$96 million in

debt, to maintain our commitments on income tax reductions, to proceed with new tax reductions on the second education tax, something that was neglected by members opposite for 11 years, and provide a bridge through these uncertain times.

I would point out, as late as last week, we still do not know with any certainty what the resolution is going to be to the federal error that went back to 1993. So we think this bridge is one of prudence, it is one of balance; and if we had brought in a long-term dividend payment for Manitoba Hydro, the members opposite would probably be yelling even louder.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, we know they took the money. The question is did they take the advice. We know for the past two months that the Premier and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) have tried to justify their million-dollar-a-day raid of Manitoba Hydro simply because they ran a deficit. They could not balance the books from last year. No less than 20 times in this House have the Premier and the minister referenced the Manitoba Business Council's support for this dividend.

I simply ask the Premier: Did the Premier follow the advice given to him by the Manitoba Business Council with respect to taking a dividend from a Crown corporation?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we have taken a short-term bridge dividend. The Business Council prefers a longer-term strategy. So there is symmetry in terms of the recommendation for a dividend, but—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we thought a short-term bridge, as opposed to a long-term dividend, was more advantageous to balancing out the needs of debt repayment at Hydro, and debt repayment in the provincial government sector. I should point out that 40 states in the United States are now running deficits. The Republicans are running a deficit. We are fortunate, many provinces now are running deficits. We are fortunate that we have this export sale as an asset to bridge the

uncertainty of 2001. If people are following advice, I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition is following the advice from the Agassiz School Division that says with respect to the fact that—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

* (13:55)

Mr. Doer: With respect to Bill 14, it is our hope that members of the House will work in the same spirit of co-operation to pass this bill as we did in amalgamating school divisions to ensure that enabling legislation for the school divisions is in place by July 1. I wonder, instead of pointing the finger at the Opposition, will the Leader of the Opposition point the finger at the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler), and let the public debate begin?

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: This Premier is all about arrogance and no answers.

The Manitoba Business Council policy—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Manitoba Business Council policy states that they have strict criteria in terms of this Government taking a dividend out of a Crown corporation. However, what we hear from the Premier is spinning of half-truths and trying to create yet another different story. My question is: Why has the Premier ignored the policy and advice given to him by the Manitoba Business Council?

Mr. Doer: I am sure if we had followed the advice and taken an ongoing, long-term dividend from Hydro, the Leader of the Opposition would be claiming the sky is falling and everything else that he has been doing for the last three weeks.

I wonder if he will follow the advice from the Boundary School Division and Dominion City, Manitoba, that is asking the trustees and staff of the Boundary School Division, in the southern portion of the Red River School Division, and the consolidated school division of Sprague have been hard at work for the last two years preparing for the amalgamation scheduled to take place July 1, 2002.

Why does the Leader of the Opposition not stand up, be a leader and let this bill go to public hearings? Be a leader.

Manitoba Hydro Financing Requirements

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, it is painfully obvious that the Doer government has completely ignored the advice of the Business Council of Manitoba—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will ask the co-operation of all honourable members. When the honourable Member for Fort Whyte was trying to ask his question, I could not even hear a word he was saying. If someone breaches the rules or departs from our practices of the House, I have to be able to hear if a member does that to make a ruling, so I ask the co-operation of all honourable members, please

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will start again. It is painfully obvious that the Doer government has completely ignored the advice of the Business Council of Manitoba. In fact, the Premier will not even speak to it.

I have some information I would like to table for the House. This is information that was filed with the Public Utilities Board on June 4. I am filing it because the minister, in the hallway, admitted yesterday that it was the first time he had seen the numbers. So I am filing this information on the public record which clearly indicates that the Government of Manitoba is taking more than 25 percent of the annual revenue that Manitoba Hydro receives in the form of payments.

* (14:00)

Testimony at the Public Utilities Board from senior officials at Hydro has revealed that not

only will Hydro have to borrow the \$288-million dividend that the Doer government is demanding but that Hydro will also have to give up close to 50 percent of the revenue that is generated from domestic customers to the Doer government this year.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Finance: Was he aware of the effects that a material withdrawal, a withdrawal of over \$300 million from Manitoba Hydro, would have on Hydro and the ratepayers prior to this year's Budget? Was he aware of that?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): I know the Member for Fort Whyte likes to use officially sworn testimony in front of the PUB.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Selinger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, like to use officially sworn testimony from the PUB hearings. Yesterday the member put some inaccurate information or incomplete information on the record. Once again, one of the Hydro officials made it very clear that the dividend we are planning to take from Manitoba Hydro does not come from domestic revenues but comes from payments that are made from export revenues, which were \$601 million for the current year.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple for the minister. I hope he will answer it for the benefit of all Manitobans. Was the minister aware of the effects that a material withdrawal from Hydro would have on Manitoba Hydro and ratepayers prior to the Budget?

Mr. Selinger: Well, once again, Mr. Speaker, officially sworn testimony we have had in front of the Public Utilities Board has made it very clear there is no change in the forecast increase in rates for Manitoba Hydro before the dividend was taken compared to after the dividend was taken, and I have read those integrated forecasts into the record.

Witnesses appearing before the Public Utilities Board have made it very clear that in their

analysis they do not anticipate any rate increases as a result of this special payment being made to the Government of Manitoba.

Transfer Payment—Board Awareness

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister to focus on the question and attempt to answer it for the benefit of all Manitobans. Is this minister, who previously told this House that Hydro found out about this special dividend on Budget day, the same time as all Manitobans, is he now telling Manitobans that Hydro had advance notice of the dividend?

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): Mr. Speaker, I stand by the statements I have made previously in the House. All decisions with respect to the Hydro special payment or dividend were made by Cabinet. They were announced, the specifics of that, were announced on Budget day.

Agriculture Federal Compensation Package

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, just a few short weeks ago members of this House debated a resolution calling on the federal government to recognize the severe distress our agriculture community is under due to the wake of the U.S. farm trade bill and, in addition to that, the ongoing international subsidy disputes.

I have personally participated in an all-party meeting in Regina and in Saskatoon. What we were doing was looking for solutions to the serious problems posed by the U.S. farm bill. Our farmers have been waiting very patiently for solutions. Mr. Speaker, media reports indicate the federal government is on the verge of announcing a package to farmers of anywhere from \$1 billion to \$1.5 billion. Agriculture Minister Lyle Vanclief continues to maintain that agriculture is a shared jurisdiction and that he expects the provinces to pay for part of this package.

Could the Premier tell this House if the Government received any indication from the federal government about the total amount of this package?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, Mr. Speaker, the position we took in Saskatoon two weeks ago and the resolution we passed in Regina four weeks ago basically—the Leader of the Opposition was there—recommends 100% funding dealing with the trade injury from the U.S. subsidies from the federal government. That was the same recommendation made by all the major farm groups. I am trusting the member and leader is of the same view as we are, and he was four weeks ago, that it would be 100% funding from the federal government.

It is 100% federal U.S. funding in North Dakota, an additional \$285 million. It is 100% federal funding in Minnesota where it is another over \$500 million, 460 I think, about \$100 million in Montana. All the border states received 100% U.S. government funding on top of the money they were already receiving with the subsidies that were passed by Washington.

We have sent that message loud and clear to the four federal Cabinet ministers we met with. Our Ag Minister (Ms. Wowchuk) is in touch with Minister Vanclief's office for discussions. He is in Rome at this point. We know that at the western premiers' meeting the consensus we took in Regina was expanded to be all seven jurisdictions including British Columbia for a trade injury payment to be 100 percent funded by the Canadian national government dealing with an international trade dispute. We are obviously reading and hearing about rumours.

We would hope the same spirit of co-operation that took place with the joint meeting between our various legislators, farm groups and federal ministers will be the forum under which any program the federal government is proposing is discussed, and not some media leak out of Ottawa into the various farm communities.

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the resolution we agreed on in an all-party way, we still maintain our support and we continue to be concerned, having built up the support of all seven jurisdictions last week in Dawson City and expressing our similar view on pulse crops to the U.S. Ambassador Cellucci at our meeting in Dawson City last week.

Mr. Murray: I think what we have heard from the Premier is a regurgitation of where we all know we are at.

My question to the Premier is simply: Is he aware, has he had any discussions with the federal government about the amount of money Manitoba farmers as well as other farmers are awaiting patiently and time is running out? Has he heard anything from the federal government?

Mr. Doer: We have not seen a specific proposal from the federal government. The Minister of Agriculture has contacted the office and will be in discussions with the federal Minister of Agriculture in the next period of time. Obviously what we want to prevent from happening is programs being announced through press media releases, not any kind of consultation with the provinces.

Having said that, we believe it is very, very important that this matter be treated in an urgent way. I would note that former Finance Minister Martin said that this was an urgent matter. Obviously, shortly thereafter, I think a few days thereafter, he was switched. Hopefully, the same urgency remains in Cabinet that was there before. Hopefully, the consensus we arrived at, it is an international trade dispute, it needs national treatment, and we believe the federal government has the financial wherewithal to treat our farmers in an effective way.

We also know the programs. For example, we have many programs here in Manitoba, some of which have been initiated by previous members, such as the PST on taxes, gasoline taxes, the GST as applied to excise tax. The federal government has a lot of revenue sources out of agriculture that we do not have. We just want some of that back to deal with the trade injury.

Agriculture Federal Compensation Package

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I would like to ask the Minister of Agriculture what discussions she has had specifically or whether she has specifically had any discussions with the federal minister. Has the federal minister indicated to her whether there will be any provincial requirement for funding to bring forward a new farm bill that will mitigate the trade actions the Americans have put on through their farm bill?

* (14:10)

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, there is one thing we can say about farm organizations and provincial governments across the West and indeed across most of Canada. That is that all provinces and farm organizations recognize that the injury producers are facing now is because of the subsidies that are provided by the national treasuries in the United States and in Europe, and all organizations are standing firmly that it is a federal responsibility to address this issue.

We have raised the issue with the federal government, and when the U.S. farm bill was announced, Mr. Vanclief recognized that there was a need for bridge financing. He said that all Canadians would have to pay for it. We hope that the federal minister will live up to that word and that they will put in place the funding to help bridge our farmers through this injury.

Mr. Jack Penner: It is very obvious that the relationship between Mr. Chrétien and our Premier (Mr. Doer) is not as adequate as we had hoped that it would be. It is also very evident, Mr. Speaker, that the matter of federal-provincial relations needs some significant actions from this Premier.

I would like to again ask the Minister of Agriculture very specifically: Has the federal Minister of Agriculture given any proposal to this minister or to the provincial government that there would be any requirement for provincial funding as Ontario has already said that they have been asked to do?

Ms. Wowchuk: The member is well aware, as the Premier just indicated, the federal Minister of Agriculture is in Rome at this time on some very important agriculture issues.

The member asks whether we have had any discussion with the federal government. Certainly, we have raised the issue jointly with other provinces indicating that there has to be trade injury money. There are all kinds of ideas floating around as to what the programs might be. There are discussions. I hope to have a discussion, it is my intention to have a discussion with the federal Minister of Agriculture on Friday to get an understanding from him as to what it is he is proposing for bridge financing.

But I hope that he will live up to his commitment and recognize that this is a federal responsibility because trade is a federal responsibility, and in the United States not one of the states put any money into it. It is George Bush who is signing the cheque.

Mr. Jack Penner: On a new question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Emerson, on a new question?

Mr. Jack Penner: It has become very evident that we have seen a request from this Minister of Agriculture, from this Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province, to join with them in all-party functions such as making trips to Ottawa to appear before standing committees, to request the standing committee from Ottawa to come to Manitoba and western Canada, to join with them in efforts at Saskatoon and any other meetings. We have given our support totally, without question. We have given of our expertise in advice to the minister and this Government. However, when we ask the question, it becomes very apparent that the relationship between this Government of Manitoba and the relationship with Ottawa is lacking sadly.

Can I ask the Minister of Agriculture if she has had a specific request from the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa to participate in funding of the hurt on the American farm bill?

Ms. Wowchuk: I am really pleased that the member outlined how we are very inclusive as a government, because I can tell you there have been farm crises before, and never when the previous government was the administration did they ever include all parties to try to find a solution for the farmers. Mr. Speaker, they were never inclusive.

I can tell the member I have had many discussions with the federal Minister of Agriculture on the need for support for farmers because of trade injury, and we have not had a specific program outlined by him. The federal minister is in Rome right now. There are all kinds of rumours floating out there. But I hope that the member is not suggesting that he is now breaking rank on all parties and farm organizations saying that the Province should offer up money and not continue to push for 100%

funding, as all farm organizations and all provinces have asked for.

Health Care System Environmental Illness Treatment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Minister of Health on releasing a progress report on pediatric cardiac surgery, but I note that there are a variety of very significant health issues with which the minister appears to be having difficulty. Conditions from environmental illness to tuberculosis are not being adequately addressed.

When in opposition, the Minister of Health said that Manitoba should be a leader in dealing with patients with environmental illness and multiple chemical sensitivities. I ask the minister why, after two and a half years in his position, there is as yet no action plan for caring for patients with multiple chemical sensitivities. Indeed, the minister cancelled the research project that was providing support for one patient to go down to the United States.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to begin with the inaccuracies that the member has portrayed in his question.

The cancelling of a research project with respect to multiple chemical sensitivity is not accurate. There was an individual who went down to Dallas, who was sent for review. Someone was sent down from the Department of Health to review that particular process.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we also engaged, when we came into government, a review of both the literature and the information regarding multiple chemical sensitivity, and we had a review of both the literature and the progress and the processes in place regarding other jurisdictions.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have talked to other jurisdictions regarding multiple chemical sensitivity.

Tuberculosis Treatment

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I am still waiting for the action plan.

My supplementary is to the Minister of Health. I ask the minister: Why is it that a patient with active tuberculosis has had to stay untreated for three weeks in a crowded home in Cross Lake, potentially infecting other members of the community because there was not a bed available in the D. A. Stewart Centre?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about a particular case, and I will certainly look into that case.

With respect to on-reserve situation, I believe that is under the jurisdiction of the member's political party, of which he is a member. If it is off reserve, we have arrangements.

I would like to see the factual situation before I accept the facts that have been put on the record by the Member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: The problem here is that there is no space in the D. A. Stewart Centre for active treatment.

My supplementary is to the minister of Aboriginal affairs and northern development. I would ask the minister what actions he is taking to address the very serious public health concern of tuberculosis in northern Manitoba.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for the question. As with the other issues, the complex issues of suicide that the member has raised—and I might say that the press release that he issued very recently with respect to a statement that I made about a year ago, a year and a half ago, in this House, I would like to just inform him that they did not get the facts right.

I want to further say, Mr. Speaker, that the issue of tuberculosis and other issues that should have been eradicated from the face of the earth is an indication of the situation that Aboriginal people face throughout the nation. It is an issue that requires the participation of the federal government and to a large degree the provincial government. We have been willing partners to participate in improving the lives of Aboriginal people in Manitoba.

* (14:20)

Bill 14 Debate Delay

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education, Training and Youth. A number of my constituents have raised concerns with respect to the slow movement of Bill 14 through this House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Struthers: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite might not think this is a big deal, but I have constituents who do.

Could the minister report to us here in this House on whether any more school divisions have expressed a similar concern?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): Mr. Speaker, there have been a number of school divisions that have expressed that view. Yesterday I read into the record from Agassiz School Division, which the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik) and the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) represent illy right now, in terms of—[interjection] I read from the Boundary School Division.

Mr. Speaker, trustees and staff in the Boundary School Division have been hard at work over the last two years preparing for the amalgamation scheduled to take place on July 1. We are writing to urge that every effort be made to achieve passage of the bill in a timely manner. We respect the fact that it is your duty to debate all legislation fully and ensure the best legislation possible. However, extended debate for the sake of debate and delaying the bill is not an acceptable strategy.

Mr. Speaker, this is a letter from the member from Emerson's constituency. The members opposite are doing a disservice to their constituents in this House and jeopardizing students.

Justice System Court Delays

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, this week a Provincial Court judge threw out a

case against a man caught on tape, on camera, robbing a local 7-Eleven, because of unreasonable delays in the court. The original charge was laid in February 2000, but in the course of more than two years that have passed, two witnesses have passed away and so the judge threw the case out.

Can the Minister of Justice advise whether or not he is aware of this case and, if he is aware, if he has looked into why court delays resulted in what should have been an iron-clad case being dismissed?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Mr. Speaker, in terms of the—*[interjection]* I hear the voice of the Conservative Party in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of what the reasons for the delay are, I will look into that matter that was before the courts. As the member knows full well, the reasons for delay can be many, but there are many initiatives that are underway, including a new level of support for prosecutors in this province to help ensure that in terms of what the Government can do to move cases along. We are facilitating that.

But, Mr. Speaker, the role of the defence, the role of other issues regarding evidence, I will look into.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice inform this House how many other cases have had to be thrown out of court due to inordinate delays bringing them to trial, or is this 28 months the minister's new standard in the court system of Manitoba?

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, the last time I saw difficulties regarding a case that was taking an extraordinary length of time, I believe, as I recall, I could be corrected, the majority of time of that backlog was under the former administration.

Since coming into office, Mr. Speaker, there has been additional support staff hired for Prosecutions. We have hired additional prosecutors. Indeed, the amount of new contributions to prosecutors is far in excess of most areas of budgeting in Justice, with the exception of policing.

As well, we are working with the court. We are working with prosecutors so there are in place better mechanisms, better protocol, so that when the matter is up to the Justice Department to move along, we are able to do that, as well as allow the court to function on a more timely basis, trying to get over a challenge that was quite extreme under the former government.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Justice inform the House how many other cases have been thrown out of court due to lengthy delays?

Mr. Mackintosh: Well, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the specifics of the answer, I will endeavour to determine that. I will also look to see under the former government what the record was in that record.

Adult Learning Centre Funding Repayment

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education made a commitment to the provincial auditor, and it was encompassed in the provincial auditor's report that he would seek appropriate reimbursement of funds provided to The Program, The Program owned and operated by the Orlikow family.

Can the minister indicate whether he has sought the reimbursement of those funds?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): Well, Mr. Speaker, it is noteworthy in the provincial auditor's report that he notes that the adult learning centres in the province were set up with no apparent forethought by members opposite when they were in office. I refer—

An Honourable Member: We did not think we were going to be dealing with crooks.

Mr. Caldwell: Well, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) says they did not think they would be dealing with crooks. They set up a program with no legislative framework, no accountability for resources, and no program accountability.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and not provoke debate. The question was quite clear. It was about The Program, which was from this minister's friends.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would like to ask the honourable—have you completed your answer?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Mr. Gilleshammer: I would ask the Premier: Is the Premier prepared to honour this commitment that was made to the provincial auditor that the Government would seek the reimbursement of these funds from The Program? Will the honourable First Minister indicate whether he is going to honour that promise made to the Auditor?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite will know, with similar advice that his Government had received previous to ours, we did in fact engage the provincial auditor. The Provincial Auditor's report has been produced.

Mr. Speaker, we have subsequent issues that were referred to the Department of Justice. The Department of Justice chose to then send those matters on to the RCMP. There are various investigations proceeding with the RCMP. I think it is very important that if there are any legal wrongdoings in terms of the Criminal Code or any other legal matter, the RCMP fully investigate it so that the legal system can fully enforce the laws of Manitoba. We fully intend on doing that. That is why we sent it to the RCMP, and that is our commitment to the people of Manitoba.

Mr. Gilleshammer: Does the Premier not see a double standard here, Mr. Speaker, in insisting that Morris-Macdonald repay this money with-

out an investigation and, at the same time, letting his friends, who they have committed to going after in the Auditor's report, go scot-free at this time?

* (14:30)

Mr. Doer: I think it is irresponsible to use the term "at this time," when at this time there is an RCMP investigation going on. The only people that let this matter go scot-free were members opposite when they had a recommendation from the Deputy Education Minister to go to the provincial auditor and they sat on it. How dare you make that allegation in this House?

Part of what is happening right now, there are two things. There are two financial factors that exist right now. One is the cross-subsidy from the old adult education system as revenues to the public education system. That cross-subsidy was partly eliminated in this year's Budget, and that has not been reported in the media.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Doer: Secondly, Mr. Speaker, there is the issue of the overpayment. I would caution members of the House there is an RCMP investigation going on. The RCMP investigation will include all potential wrongdoing. Any individual involved in that, I am sure, the RCMP will deal with effectively, as a police force.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Grapentine Family

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I rise today to recognize the generosity of Rudolph Grapentine and the entire Grapentine family of Oakbank, Manitoba, who donated to the Rural Municipality of Springfield the land upon which the Kin Place Personal Care Home now stands.

Rudolph Grapentine was born in the town of Solodinone, Russia, in 1870 to a German colonist family. In 1891, Rudolph emigrated from Russia to Canada, likely to escape the persecution that German colonists suffered under, and

the mandatory six-year service in the Russian army.

Along with 200 other Russian-German immigrant families, Rudolph made his home in Manitoba. In 1908, Rudolph married Rozalia Mackees in Winnipeg and in 1913 moved with her to Oakbank, Manitoba, where they lived the remainder of their lives.

Like many other immigrants, Rudolph was a farmer and owned 243 acres of land extending east from Oakbank. Rudolph and Rozalia had a large family, which included seven sons, all of whom were avid baseball fans.

At the beginning of the century Oakbank had no place to play baseball, and so to give his sons somewhere to play their beloved pastime Rudolph donated a piece of land across from his home to the local community club to be used as a ballpark. In time, the community club donated the land to the R.M. in order to have the grounds cared for and the diamond maintained.

In 1985, the Kinsmen, with the permission of the surviving Grapentines, were granted the land by the R.M. of Springfield and subsequently began planning for the Kin Place Personal Care Home. In 2001, the North Eastman Health Association, Manitoba Health and community members of the Springfield municipality co-operated to see Kin Place built.

Recognition of the efforts of these individuals in bringing about the creation of Kin Place has been commemorated by the various plaques placed by the community on the walls of Kin Place. I am proud to say that tonight there is to be placed beside them another plaque which is offered as a sign of recognition and gratitude to the Grapentine family and a tribute to the generosity of Rudolph Grapentine and his descendants. The Grapentine family's selfless donation of the land to the community provided a base upon which the dreams of Kin Place could become a reality.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Legislative Assembly I would like to thank the Grapentine family for their generosity and congratulate them

on the recognition of Rudolph Grapentine's giving spirit.

St. Vital Community Garden

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): I rise today to recognize a wonderful initiative that has been started in my constituency of St. Vital. A vacant lot approximately 35 metres long behind the Morrow Avenue Salvation Army community centre is being rejuvenated by hardworking volunteers. They now call this once dilapidated lot the St. Vital Community Garden.

Evelyn Bercier, the garden co-ordinator, says the plot has been transformed in time to plant various vegetables, berries and flowers. This is an excellent project. Local residents, especially those in apartments who do not have gardens of their own, will be able to take pride in the result of their hard work.

Even more importantly, Mr. Speaker, members of the community who would not have otherwise met will now have a means to meet and become better acquainted with their neighbours. It is this kind of activity that helps build strong communities.

Mr. Speaker, I was happy to learn that Ms. Bercier hopes to distribute some of the garden's yields to those who need it most. I am also happy to hear that there have been several children who have been to the garden to help out and learn more about where food comes from.

The garden's grand opening will be this summer. There will also be a corn roast in the fall to celebrate. I wish the garden much success in the future and hope that it will serve as a community meeting place for many more events.

I would like to thank Schriemer's greenhouse for supporting the project with seeds, plants, top soil and other necessary supplies. I would also like to thank the Salvation Army for generously providing the land.

I would like to conclude by thanking Evelyn Bercier and community members for all their hard work. I hope their spirit will catch on and that people in other communities in Winnipeg may follow their example.

Wardrop Engineering

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): I rise today to draw attention to a notable achievement by Winnipeg's scientific community. Last week, hardware designed in Winnipeg blasted off into space aboard the space shuttle Endeavor to be installed as part of the International Space Station orbiting 400 kilometres above the earth.

Mr. Speaker, Wardrop Engineering has designed an aluminum frame and fixtures for a rail car in space. This frame will slide a robot arm called Canadarm2 along the length of the space station and facilitate the ongoing construction. The system is six metres long, weighs in at 1.5 tonnes and is expected to last at least 15 years. Aside from its construction uses, the frame can be used to transport tools, experiments and astronauts for a space walk.

This mobile system represents a great scientific and design achievement for Wardrop Engineering. Aside from simply designing the system, Wardrop faced the additional challenge of ensuring that it was strong enough to complete its designated task but also light enough to be transported into space.

Established in 1955, Wardrop has been doing space design since 1986, when it completed work for a Canadian communications satellite. Wardrop Engineering is indeed a positive example of Manitoban and Canadian ingenuity. With this latest design it is contributing to a great international project.

I know that all members of the Chamber will join me in congratulating everyone at Wardrop Engineering for their hard work and ingenuity and for advancing the scientific community in Manitoba.

Lance Merritt Centre

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): It gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to highlight an event which took place this past weekend in the community of Lundar. I refer to the opening of the Lance Merritt Support Centre and Thrift Shop, which has been constituted to serve the needs of people in our society who

suffer from some form of mental illness. Throughout his life, Lance himself suffered from manic depression and was a staunch advocate for expanding services in this critical field. Tragically, in the end, his own illness got the best of him and ultimately led to his suicide this past November.

The establishment of the centre came too late for Lance, but his efforts and ultimate sacrifice were the catalyst that mobilized the people and led to its establishment last Saturday.

* (14:40)

I want to acknowledge the efforts of the many people at the local level who contributed their time and money to this worthy cause. Volunteerism and local activism are critical in getting projects such as this one going, given the limited resources that all levels of government are faced with.

Credit is also due to the R.M. of Caldwell for putting their money on the table, which led to a contribution from the Interlake Regional Health Authority. In this sense the centre is a classic example of people working together at all levels for the common good of our society.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I just want to say how disappointed and indeed saddened I was yesterday when the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), who represents the community of Lundar, chose not to use his member's statement to focus on this positive event, at which he was present. Instead, he chose to make disparaging remarks about the members on this side of the House and focussed on me in particular, for some unknown reason. I found this most regrettable.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members, when a matter has been taken under advisement by the Chair, it is not proper to raise that issue until it has been settled as an issue by the Chair. Has the honourable member concluded? He has 11 seconds.

Mr. Nevakshonoff: Yes, I did, Sir. Thank you.

Environmental Illnesses

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I rise to comment on three matters. First, the issue of multiple chemical sensitivities or environmental illness. In 1996, when in opposition, the Member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) was a champion for those afflicted with multiple chemical sensitivities. He went so far as to indicate that Manitoba should be a leader in dealing with individuals who suffer from this condition. However, in government, as the Minister of Health, the Member for Kildonan has done little to date.

In 1999, Dr. Allan Downs travelled to Dallas to learn more about the condition multiple chemical sensitivities and its treatment. He reported there is no doubt that there is something to environmental illness, and he recommended having a consultation group at one of the hospitals. After waiting many months, the Minister of Health asked for another study, which apparently has now been completed but the minister is keeping secret rather than keeping it generally available.

This condition has been the subject of many studies and reviews in other jurisdictions. I will mention two from New Jersey and Ontario. These reviews suggest it would be valuable to have a registry for patients with environmental illness. The New Jersey report indicates that most individuals can remain outpatients while they are guided through an elimination diet, avoidance of possible chemical incitants and rechallenge with specific offenders. The New Jersey report also indicates that the most severe cases, the gold standard for diagnosing chemical hyperreactivity in a patient is the environmental unit coupled with fasting.

Both Ontario and New Jersey reports emphasize the importance of ongoing research to better understand, diagnose and treat individuals who have multiple chemical sensitivities. It is to be hoped that the Health Minister, after months and months of no action, will finally present to Manitobans a plan of action for dealing with patients with multiple chemical sensitivities or environmental illness.

Second, I would like to comment briefly on the presence—

ORDERS OF THE DAY**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS****House Business**

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please canvass the House to see if there is leave to sit from 6 till 10 p.m. tonight so the Opposition has full opportunity to debate Bill 14.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave of the House for the House to sit from 6 till 10 p.m. tonight to debate Bill 14?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: No. Leave has been denied.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second reading, Bill 14.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS**Bill 14—The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended)**

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate, Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act, and the proposed amendment to, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Tuxedo, who has 38 minutes left.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): The existing Public Schools Act, without Bill 14, the minister can effect the amalgamation of school divisions by utilizing provisions under section 5, by referring the matter to a board of reference, or under section 7, by regulation, after referring the matter to a boundaries review commission.

Mr. Speaker, under section 5, the minister may merge or amalgamate or dissolve school divisions, or school districts if he receives (a) a written request from the school board or a municipal council; or (b) a written request from 10 or more residents entitled to vote in the school division. Then the minister refers the request to the Board of Reference, which will decide the matter.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the minister may, on his own initiative, refer the merging or

amalgamation or the dissolution of school divisions or school districts to the Board of Reference, which will decide the matter.

Under section 7, notwithstanding section 5, the minister may, by regulation (a) add territory or withdraw territory from any school division or school district; and (b) amalgamate any two or more school divisions or school districts.

It is very clear, Mr. Speaker, that under the existing Public Schools Act, the minister has the authority to amalgamate school divisions now if he so chooses. So why then, it begs to ask the question, does the Doer government need the legislation of Bill 14? Well, I can tell you there are two reasons why. They need to give themselves more power in order to control school divisions, centralize the power, and, No. 2, to silence the school divisions who decide to pursue legal action against the Government over amalgamation.

So that is why Bill 14 was introduced, and perhaps maybe the real truth should get out, that this Government continuously wants to centralize power which they know how to do so well, and, again, silence people by taking away their authority to challenge the Government in these matters.

Mr. Speaker, in talking about giving more power to the Minister of Education, I would like to refer specifically to the Assiniboine South School Division which I represent in my area. I also represent Winnipeg No. 1 School Division, which is not affected by the amalgamation but is affected by the offloading of the university taxation onto the property taxpayers in that area. I will get into that a little bit later.

The Assiniboine South School Division has concerns regarding the proposed Bill 14. They believe the material changes in this bill will have the effect of transferring significant decision-making authority from locally elected school boards to the provincial government, and they have a number of specific issues that they are concerned about in this Bill 14. We have discussed with the school board. I have had a few discussions with the board, they refer specifically to section 22, the amalgamated divisions to submit budgets; section 16, control

of administrative costs; and section 5, Mr. Speaker, which requests the Board of Reference.

Let us talk about amalgamated divisions to submit budgets. The proposed legislation requires amalgamated divisions to submit their annual budget for ministerial review and approval for three years following amalgamation. The minister may direct a revision to the budget, and failure to comply with the directive may result in a withholding of provincial operational support, more power to the minister, more power to the provincial government.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, effectively provides the Minister of Education with the full authority to make any change to a school division budget without being accountable for the budget changes directed. There is no requirement and no obligation for the minister to consult with the school board and its community, or even to explain the rationale for a budget change. Any ministerial change could have a dramatic impact on the division's special levy and could essentially be done without consultation.

One of the recognized strengths of the Assiniboine South School Division is that they continuously consult the taxpayers in the division, and they have a highly collaborative and consultative division. The extensive consultation with staff and community they do in the fall months. Following the provincial funding announcements, usually in late January, they produce a comprehensive budget document called *The Community Voice*, which is widely circulated throughout the division. Basically, what happens is now they would have roughly six or seven weeks between the provincial funding announcement and the final budget approval March 15.

* (14:50)

Under this new legislation, there will only be allowed 14-day public notice period prior to presenting the budget at an open meeting. The people and the members of the Assiniboine South School Division are extremely concerned that this is cutting back the consultation time in order to make sure that people are properly

apprised of the various goings on with the budget, and that is an extreme concern. Also, they are extremely concerned about the control, again, that this minister has taken away from the local school boards and given to himself. Once again, he feels the need to put in the administrative costs, the 4% administrative costs. The Assiniboine South School Division is extremely excellent in terms of how they operate as a division, and I do not think these types of things need to be legislated. They are extremely responsible, and that should be accepted as such.

Another concern is the ability for a school division to make an application for a boundary change. That has been removed except for the purpose of amalgamating school divisions. Divisions will now have to apply to the minister, again control. They will have to apply to the minister to make any adjustments to a divisional boundary, and the minister has the sole discretion on whether the request would be submitted to the Board of Reference for consideration. The Assiniboine South School Division believes that this is an unnecessary and bureaucratic exercise which would merely result in an increase in administrative efforts without any corresponding benefits or rationale.

Let us keep in mind what this is all about. This is about the students in the school. There is not one thing about amalgamation that this minister talks about that has anything to do with the students. What this legislation has to do with is about control. He wants control over every aspect of our lives to do with this legislation. That is just plain wrong.

In the amalgamation, Assiniboine South School Division will be amalgamating with Fort Garry School Division No. 5 into what is called the Pembina Trails School Division. I think it is appropriate, at this time, to bring forward some of the concerns, as well, of the Fort Garry School Division that have been brought to my attention as, once the amalgamation takes place, these will be concerns that I will be responsible to bring forward in this House as well.

Bill 14 provides changes to The Public Schools Act, and I will read this from a letter that was to the minister from the chair of the board of the Fort Garry School Division dated May 28.

The letter states: Bill 14 provides changes to The Public Schools Act which serves to move certain decision-making authority from the local school boards and centralize it with the Minister of Education, Training and Youth—I say that this minister is perhaps a little bit power hungry. The changes being proposed in this legislation are very significant, they say. It is the local authority which best understands the circumstances and considerations which bear on these decisions. This legislation would permit the minister, who is further removed from the schools, to impose arbitrary and limitless decisions on the local school divisions, which may not be practicable nor necessarily even in the best interests of the students in the local community. That is what this is all about.

Further, the minister is not accountable for these budgets, Mr. Speaker. There is no objective reason for this shift of authority from local school boards to the minister. The only logical conclusion to which a reasonable person can come is that this legislation is politically motivated. The minister would be placed in a position to tailor the budgets of amalgamating boards to suit the political ends of the Government.

This board, being the Fort Garry School Division, Mr. Speaker, believes that all stakeholders, whether the provincial government, school boards, or any other, should pursue ends which serve and enhance the quality of education for students, which serve to make the most responsible and sensible use of tax dollars, and which serve to have decisions made by those who know their own circumstances the best. This legislation has nothing to do with the quality of education of our students.

I would like to take some time to go through the submission by the Fort Garry School Division to the standing committee of the Manitoba Legislature assigned to hold hearings with respect to Bill 14. I would like to say that in this proposal it says Bill 14 provides for some material changes to the latitude of decision making for school boards in Manitoba. Some of the more significant changes move certain important decision-making powers from the school boards to the Minister of Education, Training and Youth (Mr. Caldwell).

These changes remove decisions from the locally elected authority, which is most familiar with the circumstances and reasons for the decisions to a more removed and centralized authority at the provincial government. As a matter of general principle, the Fort Garry School Division believes that school boards ordinarily exercise good judgment when making these decisions. Since these decisions require a high degree of local knowledge, local divisions are much better able to make properly balanced decisions than a minister or other officials in the provincial government.

The more dramatic changes to The Public Schools Act provided in Bill 14 are, in order of significance, as follows: requirement for amalgamating divisions to submit budgets for 2003-04, '04-05, '05-06 fiscal years to the minister before final approval and to make such changes as may be directed by the minister; the establishment of limits on administrative costs; issuing of subsequent regulations addressing effective date of amalgamation, interim board, altering of fiscal year; and, No. 4, changes to procedures relating to the Board of Reference.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see from this submission by the Fort Garry School Division, it is extremely similar to those concerns stated and set forth in discussions that I have had with the Assiniboine South School Division.

I hope this minister, as he exercises his newly found powers once this legislation goes through, will take into consideration some of the concerns of these school divisions, which, had he bothered to have any kind of a consultation process, he may have considered in the legislation. But because in this process there was no consultation, now these school divisions have to, in a last attempt, come forward to try and make their views known. That is a terrible thing, because these school divisions deserve to have had much more of a constant consultative process in this province. That is absolutely unbelievable and, quite frankly, unacceptable.

Mr. Speaker, the other reason why this minister had to introduce this bill, because, again, if it was just about amalgamation he could have done that, he could have done that. But you know what? He did not, and he chose not to,

because there are some serious things that he wanted to impose upon Manitobans.

One thing that he wanted to impose upon Manitobans is he wanted to silence them. He wanted to take away their right to seek legal action of this Government over the amalgamation process, and that is, to me, very undemocratic and, to me, just incredibly unacceptable.

* (15:00)

Let us talk about that, Mr. Speaker. Right now, as it stands, there are two school divisions, Transcona-Springfield and Morris-Macdonald, who are pursuing legal action against the Government over amalgamation. However, subsection 9.3 and 21(2)(a)(b)(c) of Bill 14 prevent any court decision from being effectively enforced.

Mr. Speaker, just for the record, let us read those sections out just to remind the members opposite of the kinds of things that they are bringing forward in front of Manitobans. Section 9.3 states: "The School Division and School District Amalgamation (2002) Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 61/02, made by the minister and confirmed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in the School Districts Amalgamation (2002) Confirmation Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 63/02, in accordance with section 7 is validated and declared to have been lawfully made, and everything done pursuant to that regulation is validated and declared to have been lawfully done."

Mr. Speaker, section 21(2): "If any matter has been referred or a request has been made to the Board of Reference under subsection 5(1) of the former Act relating in any way to the amalgamation, formation or continuation of school divisions or school districts under the"—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When debating a bill, it should be the principle of the bill.

Mrs. Stefanson: Mr. Speaker, basically this bill under these subsections takes away the rights of anyone, a citizen's right to question their Government's actions and to do anything in that regard. We have serious concerns, we have from the very beginning, at this minister's lack of

consultation in the whole process regarding this school division amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, right now, the Education Minister and his Government are facing at least two separate court challenges related to amalgamation. One of the biggest concerns that we have with the bill itself is one section that states that everything the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has done in regard to forced amalgamations was lawfully done.

Manitobans, Mr. Speaker, should be able to have the confidence in the ministers of the Crown of this province. They should expect that, as elected representatives and as leaders in their community, that they would respect the law. So given that, why then do they need to put this in a bill? Why would the Government need protection from judicial scrutiny? Why would the Government need to silence the right of any Manitoban to challenge them in court?

When a government begins limiting, Mr. Speaker, the fundamental rights of individual citizens, cutting off legal avenues, ruling by decree, this can be a very slippery slope, and this Government is on the slippery slope to disaster.

Other questions that arise from the debate stipulated in the bill is the deadline for Manitobans to request a board of reference. According to section 21(3)(b) of Bill 14, the minister is only obliged to submit to the Board of Reference if he receives a request obligating him or her to do so on or before March 1, 2002. The March 1 deadline is a curious one when we consider that Springfield School parents council submitted their request for a board of reference to the Minister of Education's (Mr. Caldwell) office on March 13, 2002, just missing the minister's later decree deadline.

Another questionable clause in the bill concerns the appointment of an arbitrator to resolve any disputes between divisions undergoing the amalgamation process. According to subsection 12.3(4)(b), this arbitrator is to be appointed by the Minister of Education, again, the control over the process, the centralization of control—and I am glad that the minister is here to listen to these comments—with no input whatsoever in appointing this arbitrator from the disputing divisions. This is unacceptable.

This power would seem to provide the minister with a great amount of influence on the outcome of arbitration. How can he honestly believe that is a balanced process? Mr. Speaker, there is no process. There is no consultation in this whole thing. This is all about a minister who wants to control the daily lives of Manitobans. What every education bill should be about is, first and foremost, the students that attend these schools, and this has absolutely nothing to do with the students. Every Manitoban should be extremely concerned about this.

I would like to now talk about my school division, the Assiniboine South School Division, and the specific effects that the amalgamation process will have, because continuously this Minister of Education gets up and says, oh, amalgamation is going to save dollars. It is going to save dollars to the taxpayer of Manitoba. Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely incorrect, and the fact that this minister continuously goes out to Manitobans and does not state the truth to Manitobans about this amalgamation is absolutely unbelievable and should not be accepted. This is absolutely disgusting. Maybe he should get up and speak the truth once in a while about this. You know what, Mr. Speaker—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

An Honourable Member: Take the high road.

Mrs. Stefanson: I am taking the high road.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the numbers. Let us talk about the real numbers, because I will tell you that the Assiniboine South School Division will not save money as a result of this minister's education, amalgamation, harmonization, whatever they want to call it. It is not going to save money for the taxpayers of my area and most areas in Manitoba.

Let us talk numbers. Let us talk about the collective agreements, and let us talk specifically about Assiniboine South School Division's professional teaching staff in the area, an average annual cost increase of \$285,000; custodial and maintenance staff, an annual cost increase of \$46,000; all other staff, annual cost increases of

\$157,000. Mr. Speaker, on the harmonization of the collective agreements alone, that comes to \$488,000 annually, an increase directly to the taxpayers of my area, which is unacceptable. This minister is absolutely dead wrong when he goes out and says that this amalgamation process is going to save money. It is just wrong. That does not even take into consideration the transportation operations.

Let us talk about transportation, because, you know what? In 1996 the Fort Garry School Division and the Assiniboine South School Division undertook a study, and the analysis from that study determined that there would be an additional cost of \$82,000, keeping in mind that was in 1996, but we will keep the numbers the same. We will not take into consideration inflation and other factors. We will keep it at \$82,000. Basically what they found is that it would be an increase of \$82,000. So they decided not to do it because it was the wrong thing to do. It was going to cost the taxpayers of the area more.

* (15:10)

Let us talk about, in addition to these transportation costs, the general cost of transportation operation. Let us talk about when both divisions transport kindergarten-to-Grade 6 students who reside more than 1.6 kilometres from the school. While Fort Garry provides this service at no charge to eligible kindergarten-to-Grade 6 students, Assiniboine South charges a user fee to eligible Grades 4-to-6 students. We envision that the harmonization of these policies would result in the elimination of user fees rather than the reverse, as this would be a contentious community issue. The estimated revenue lost to the Assiniboine South School Division would be approximately \$25,000 annually.

Another policy harmonization issue would be an increase in Grades 4-to-6 riders eligible for free transportation. They estimate that this would be an increase of roughly \$50,000. In transportation alone that is an annual increase of \$157,000 to the school division. So let us take the \$157,000; let us take the \$488,000; let us add them together. We come up with about \$645,000. That is an annual increase to the

Assiniboine South School Division and to the taxpayers of that area specifically. That is unacceptable. That is an increase in costs.

Now, let us look at some other costs. That does not even take into consideration such things like the Assiniboine South School Division recently introduced a new computer system, which cost approximately \$400,000. Now, with the amalgamation, they are not compatible between the two school divisions. So what happens? They are either going to have to pay for the Fort Garry School Division to come onto their system, or we are going to have to throw the whole thing out and buy a new computer system to amalgamate. There are no figures that have been set aside for the cost associated with that right now, but I can tell you I am just going to take that \$645,000 annually, the cost to the taxpayers of my area, and add a big plus by it, because this is just never ending in terms of the tax increases in our area.

Let us talk about other costs that are going to be incurred as a result. There are going to be increases in the layers of administration due to larger division size, which would only be partially offset by reductions in trustees and senior administration. There is also more cost that will be associated with the harmonization of educational programming, support services, and board policies. There are no numbers involved with that, but I would suggest that we take the \$645,000 which we have already added a plus to and we would add another plus to it, because it is never ending in terms of the amount of annual increases in costs that this is going to cost the taxpayers of the Assiniboine South School Division.

Those are the cost increases. Let us talk about the revenues. Let us try and spell this out a little bit for the members on the other side who often have difficulty with numbers. Let us talk about the \$50, okay, the \$50 per student that the school division is going to get as a result of this amalgamation process.

Let us talk about the Province having committed \$50 per pupil to the amalgamating school divisions. This will yield approximately \$304,000 to the Assiniboine South School Division over a three-year period. So we are

talking about a \$645,000-plus-plus annual increase to the taxpayers of Assiniboine South School Division, and we are getting \$304,000 over three years. Something does not add up.

Continuously, this minister goes out and misleads Manitobans and says, oh, no, amalgamation is going to save money. Well, not true. This clearly shows, here are the numbers, I am putting them on the record today. Who is going to make up for the extra loss in revenue, the extra costs that are going to be incurred by the school division? Who is going to pay for that? You know who is going to pay for that? The taxpayers of the Assiniboine South School Division. That is shameful.

Let us talk further about taxes. Members opposite are so good at raising taxes or perhaps taking money out of Manitoba Hydro to balance their budget. Let us just talk specifically about this. Rather than taking the money from Manitoba Hydro, this year they are just going to put it on the taxpayers of the Assiniboine South School Division and make them pay for the increase in costs associated with their amalgamation process that they did not even bother to consult anyone in the community.

So let us talk further about taxes. Let us talk taxes, as a member says on the other side. They know more than anyone how to talk taxes.

On January 11, 2002, the Government of Manitoba announced a five-year, phased-in property tax plan for four of the province's universities. The Government of Manitoba's plan shifts the universities' property tax bill directly onto the taxpayers of Winnipeg and Brandon. The cost to the City of Winnipeg for 2002 will be \$1.3 million, rising to \$6.64 million in 2006, for an accumulated loss, and I will add the numbers for the members opposite, of \$19.9 million over five years.

The loss of almost \$20 million over five years will have negative consequences for the City of Winnipeg's efforts to lower property taxes and make Winnipeg more competitive. While all taxpayers in Winnipeg will be adversely affected, those taxpayers residing in the school divisions of Fort Garry, Assiniboine South, St. Boniface, St. Vital, and this gets to the other part of my constituency, Winnipeg No. 1

School Division, there is not one part of the area that I represent that is not going to have property taxes going up as a result of decisions made by this Government. It is despicable.

The Fort Garry, Assiniboine South, Winnipeg No. 1 and St. Boniface school divisions will lose \$1.86 million in total this year, rising to \$9.34 million in 2006, for an accumulated revenue loss of \$28 million over five years.

* (15:20)

The Government of Manitoba has made it clear that it will not in any way make up the loss of tax dollars the universities currently pay to the municipalities and school divisions. What happens? What happens? The taxes go up. This is a result of the amalgamation process and the offloading of the university property taxes that directly affect the citizens of my area. That is unacceptable, and that is why it is so important for each and every one of us here to get up and stand as we represent the electorate in our area, to make sure that we properly tell the truth about what this Government is doing. That is very clear, and that is they are raising taxes as a result of this amalgamation, Mr. Speaker, and it goes on and on. It is just absolutely unbelievable, this Government, what they do, or they do not do, for the taxpayers of our province.

What we need in order to maintain a competitive environment in our city, in our province, is to lower taxes. It is not to increase the taxes for Manitobans. At least, if you are going to go out and do it, just admit. That is what this Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) should do, is just admit to the people of Manitoba what his true agenda is, and that is to gain more control for himself and for his Government by centralizing the powers, taking it away from the communities and so on, taking that power, centralizing it, doing that which the NDP does very well, and offloading everything onto the taxpayers and citizens of Manitoba. I do not understand what that has to do with keeping a competitive environment, attracting people to Manitoba, which this Government continuously says, through their programs: Oh, it is a welcome home campaign to Manitoba. Well, welcome home to Manitoba. Welcome home to one of the highest tax provinces west of—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired. Does the honourable member have leave to continue?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill 14, not for the pleasure to put a few comments on the record, but rather to speak out about a piece of legislation, I think, that tears at the very heart of the values we hold dear in this province. This piece of legislation is the legislation of a very arrogant government. This legislation is looking for the *Good Housekeeping Seal* of approval to validate the actions of a corrupt and bull-headed government. The Doer government has no respect for the law and shows, time and time again, contempt for the democratic process and clearly, clearly misleads Manitobans. I will cite specific examples.

First, under The Public Schools Act, firing trustees. This is not the spirit or the intent of this section of The Public Schools Act, strictly an interpretation to cover up for the minister's own folly.

Mr. Speaker, I quote section 28(1): "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint an official trustee for any school division or school district, the affairs of which are not being or cannot be, in his opinion, satisfactorily managed by the school board of that school division or school district, as the case may be."

This is not the spirit nor the intent of this legislation. I ask if the minister had any idea that he was not just firing trustees, but people that were respected and still are by their community peers. These people are strong members and leaders in their communities they live in. They volunteer; they attend functions, churches, like any of us in this House. They have this passion to ensure that their children and their neighbour's children receive a quality education.

The Public Schools Act, Mr. Speaker, at the same time of the firing of the trustees, the minister, for whatever reason, did not fire the administrative staff, which the legislation clearly indicates must occur.

I quote section 28(3) of The Public Schools Act: "Upon the appointment of an official trustee

under this section for any school division or school district, all other trustees and officials of the school division or school district, if any, shall cease to hold office and after a proper audit they shall forthwith deliver to the official trustee all moneys, books and records, pertaining to the school division or school district to be retained by him while he holds office."

So, Mr. Speaker, there is clearly a violation of legislation here. That exemplifies the statement that I make with regard to this Government having contempt for the law.

Here, again, is another case in point, Mr. Speaker. Under the Teachers' Retirement Fund, ministers operating this fund illegally, without legislation, and even the Auditor General who investigated this situation slapped the minister around for having taken steps without having the proper legislation in place. Now we have the Government in this session, Mr. Speaker, passing legislation with regard to Hydro to make what is an illegal activity now a legal activity, and that is the transfer of funds from a Crown corporation into general revenue. So it is legalizing the theft from a Crown corporation.

Then we have the validation of Regulation 61/02 which was approved by the Doer government way back on April 16 of 2002. Mr. Speaker, that is a full six days even before the spring session of the Legislature even began. If that is not a sign of an arrogant government, I do not know what is. They say we can make all the regulations prior to passing legislation. There will not be any amendments. That is what they are telling us. There are no amendments in Bill 14. They will not accept anything. They want it to go to public committee. They are not going to listen to the public at the committee level.

If there was a brilliant idea that came forward with an amendment, they would not accept it because the regulations are already passed and they are not going to change anything. Arrogance? You bet. So why is the Doer government taking these retroactive actions? It seems that they can make these knee-jerk decisions, and then, well, no problem. We will just create the legislation and the regulations to validate these actions. Is this corruption? Yes. Can they be trusted? No. Are they fit to govern? No.

* (15:30)

Then there is the security bill. It is Bill 2. This is almost a panic piece of legislation in response to the terrorist action taken on September 11 of 2001. Now this Government did not even wait. They did not even wait for the federal government to come forward with any kind of anti-terrorism or security bills. We had to do our own. Man, we have to have a made-in-Manitoba approach. They take such pride in saying: We are introducing legislation that is the first type of its kind in Canada, in North America. They wanted to do the same thing with the security legislation. So they just wanted to have this opportunity to seek more broadly sweeping powers to control and have power over Manitobans.

Mr. Speaker, one has to ask the question, do we need this legislation? Do we need Bill 14? The answer is no. The present Public Schools Act right now, as my colleague from Tuxedo pointed out, is the fact that the amalgamation of school divisions and school districts could occur by way of regulation under The Public Schools Act right now. The minister has the full authority to amalgamate school districts. So do not hide this piece of legislation as an amalgamation legislation. It is not that at all. It is to gain more and more power, and to validate what they have done wrong in the past to cover their derriere.

Therefore, there is no need whatsoever for any new legislation.

So what is the rush? Here we have, all this week the House Leader brings forth debate on Bill 14. Well, Mr. Speaker, if they are a government of the people of Manitoba and their job is to govern, then I would ask the question, why we are not debating any of the other pieces of legislation? Why are we debating Bill 2? Why are we not debating No. 15, The Fatal Accidents Amendment Act or The Class Proceedings Act? These are important pieces of legislation. Why are we not doing them? We are doing Bill 14. What is July 1? Where is it written in the regulation? Where is it written in the regulation that there is a July 1 date? Where is it written in the legislation that there is a July 1 date? This is somebody's figment of their imagination that July 1 has to be the date. What is wrong with

July 30? Gee, you know, and here it is, you could have called the House back earlier, could have called the House back in March.

An Honourable Member: Or in February even.

Mr. Pitura: Right. Bill 14 would have been passed by now. But no, no. They have to wait until the bitter end to introduce some legislation. In fact, they probably wrote it just prior to coming into the House.

There is also another piece of legislation that we should be debating, Mr. Speaker. In this Auditor's Report of the investigation into adult learning, a piece of legislation is now tabled in this House, Bill 20, The Adult Learning Centres Act. Is that not an important piece of legislation to have in place in order to have adult learning centres operating properly by the fall? Is it not important?

Goodness, you know, here we are. We are trying to get Bill 14 through, and the minister already has the power under the present act to do it. He could have done it a long time ago, but he chose to sit around and do nothing. So now we have all these pieces of legislation that are on the Order Paper ready to go for second reading and debating and we are not doing it. They are on the back burner.

Here is another one. Here is another important piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, Bill 22, The Public Schools Amendment Act, with regard to the Francophone School Division. All these people want this legislation passed who are members of that school division. *[interjection]* The Member for Elmwood (Mr. Maloway) says we are slowing it down. Well, I remind the Member for Elmwood that his House Leader has to bring it up on the Order Paper, third debate. We cannot bring it up. He is Government. Better talk to your House Leader.

Here is another one that we really should be debating, and that is Bill 23. That is The Pesticides and Fertilizers Control Amendment Act. However, I would think that with the Government members across the way that perhaps this piece of legislation might cover them, and they may require licences as this legislation specifies before they can start saying

some of the things that they are saying. I say that a bit with tongue in cheek, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have had concerns about Bill 14 from the beginning about the lack of process with regard to school division amalgamation. Just one short year ago, the Premier (Mr. Doer) assured the Manitoba Association of School Trustees that there would be no forced amalgamations, that that is not the Manitoba way.

Today, the Education Minister (Mr. Caldwell) and his Government are facing at least two different court actions related to amalgamation and to constitutional rights as in a democratic society, Mr. Speaker. That is something that has been taken away: their constitutional rights. One of those actions is in the heart of the Morris constituency of which I talk. That goes beyond amalgamation to the democratic rights that we as Canadians hold very dear and, in fact, have committed the supreme sacrifice to protect those democratic rights.

Mr. Speaker, in all my years as a member of this Legislature and as a citizen of this great country, I have never seen such contempt for the law that this Doer government has displayed, and for the democratic system, than in its treatment of the Morris-Macdonald School Division.

First, the Doer government commissions an investigation by the Auditor General based on their individual friends' allegations.

Secondly, the Auditor General's report is a report, not an audit. The Auditor General indicates that in many places, including the title page of the document, that it is a report.

The Auditor General sums up his reflections by stating on page 3 and I quote: We believe that the absence of an effective policy framework for adult learning in Manitoba likely contributed to the problems encountered in Morris-Macdonald School Division and the program.

It says very clearly, Mr. Speaker, that the adult learning policy framework, and that would be pointing the finger at the Department of Education, contributed to the problems encountered

in Morris-Macdonald School Division, and here we have a government that is saying that the school division is entirely to blame.

Thirdly, the Auditor General uses such terms as "estimate." That is found on page 25. Again, on page 33, it says specifically, and I will quote again, Mr. Speaker. These pages are getting worn out. It says specifically: We estimate the attendance at September 30, 2000, was likely less than 50 full-time equivalents and that no more than 100 students were ever in attendance. He says specifically we estimate. It is not an audited statement. It is a report, and it is an estimate. I think that is one of the things that has been continually turned aside on this and forgotten about as a fact, that this is a report. It is not an audit. It uses the word "estimate" throughout the report.

* (15:40)

Then there is also on page 36, the Auditor says, based on our estimate of the extent to which enrolment was overstated, we estimate that the administrative allowances were overpaid by between 4500 and 5700. It puts a note in there in terms of what the calculation is based on, but it is always using the word "estimate." Here is a government that is using the word "estimate" as a basis for determining a calculation. You know, it is really amazing to me how that can be brought about, because, if that was the least thing that could happen between the federal government and the provincial government with their latest book-keeping error in terms of the transfer payments, if there was the word "estimate" used by the federal government, the provincial government would be crying. The Doer government would be crying right away, and saying, well, this is just an estimate. How can you ask for that much money back when it is only an estimate? So let us play fairly here on a level playing field. You know, the investigation reports estimates and not actual, audited numbers.

However, the Doer government is using these estimates as a basis for imposing taxation. They are demanding a payback of \$2.5 million. They are imposing taxation, and I say imposition on the taxpayers in Morris-Macdonald. I say that because you do not have the elected trustees to

represent them. You see, the trustees were fired last November and were never replaced through by-elections. Instead, a puppet, an official trustee, was appointed to administer the affairs of the school division. That trustee, who dances to the tune of the minister, has done nothing but abide by the wishes of the minister. In fact, when the minister announced that he wanted \$2.5 million repaid, the trustee immediately incorporated into the tax structure. There was no negotiation, no consultation, no input from the residents.

This was a dictatorial government, not a representative government. We even have a government that cannot make up their mind as to the amount of dollars, adding that the reason they cannot be sure of the amount of money is because the books are a mess. Well, every school division has to follow the same format for accounting. It is called the FRAME system. If the minister's office and the minister cannot read the books, then I would suggest that the problem lies with the minister and not the Morris-Macdonald School Division.

So I ask the question of the Doer government: Did the Morris-Macdonald School Division comply with the rules and policy guidelines of the Department of Education, or did they break the rules? I know that, at the end of the day, and it is unfortunate that they have had to go through the process that they have had to, is that we will find that the rules and policy guidelines were followed.

One only has to go to chapter 3 of the Attorney General's report to see that the minister's own department did not have the proper legislation, policy regulations, monitoring, nor accountability measures. I quote from the auditor's conclusions on page 100 that: Due to lack of monitoring, it is likely that full-time equivalent funding for other adult learning centres was in excess of actual students enrolled and in attendance, and that applies to all the other adult learning centres in the province. The Auditor General also states that the FRAME system was not adjusted properly to account for the adult learning situation, on page 101. The Auditor General also states that adult learning centres were not required to provide audited financial statements by the department. They were not required to provide the financial statements by the department.

Interesting, indeed, that the minister would actually use the adult learning centre as a front to funnel funds to the Agassiz School Division for use in the public education by instructing them to deliberately inflate their adult enrolment in order for more money to flow.

You know, I was very happy to hear today the Premier's (Mr. Doer) comments with regard to the RCMP investigation and the length and the breadth of the investigation, because he said they will investigate absolutely everything within the system. I know that if that is the case then they will also investigate as far up in the system and as far down in the system as they need to go to carry out their investigation. So it might even end up back within some high offices.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many ways of flowing money to a school division that this provincial government could have used that were legitimate, but they were all transparent, and everyone would know. They did not want others to know. They did not want to have other people know that they were flowing this money. So they wanted to hide it and they hid it under the guise of the adult learning centre.

So can we trust this Government? No. Should we pass Bill 14? No. This bill will give the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) a huge increase in power over school divisions. How? First there is a requirement for school divisions to submit budgets for three fiscal years to the minister before final approval and to make such changes as the minister sees fit. The minister has a right to impose a change whether it is a minor change or a change having major impact.

This could impact a special levy for which the school board taxes the local ratepayers, a rate, Mr. Speaker, that is going up and up each year since the provincial government funding has fallen from in excess of 80 percent in the 1960s and 1970s, to just 59.2 percent in 2002, the lowest ever in the history of public education in this province. The minister can make changes to local school division budgets, and the responsibility will be with the local board to defend those changes to the taxpayers, leaving the minister off the hook. The minister has no limitations or guidelines to follow and can do what he darn well pleases.

The minister also has full authority over the administrative costs of amalgamation. Why? Because, Mr. Speaker, he does not trust the new school boards to do their jobs. Well, talking about trust, the feeling is mutual to the minister and to his Government as well. This legislation will permit the minister absolute discretion to set limits whether or not they reflect reasonable efforts or not.

This bill also prevents any court decision from being effectively enforced. The sections that deal with this state: "*The School Division and School District Amalgamation (2002) Regulation*, Manitoba Regulation 61/02, made by the minister and confirmed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in the *School Districts Amalgamation (2002) Confirmation Regulation*, Manitoba Regulation 63/02, in accordance with section 7 is validated and declared to have been lawfully made, and everything done pursuant to that regulation is validated and declared to have been lawfully done."

And "*21(2) If any matter has been referred or a request has been made to the board of reference under subsection 5(1) of the former Act relating in any way to the amalgamation, formation or continuation of school divisions or school districts under the School Division And School District Amalgamation (2002) Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 61/02, (a) the board may not hear the matter or request or make an award;(b) any award made and filed as a regulation is of no force or effect as of the day of filing;and (c) any decision by a court on appeal from any award of the board specified in clause (b) is of no force and effect as of the day of the decision.*"

That is, Mr. Speaker, an arrogant and corrupt government. The bill protects the minister and his Government from any court decision. It essentially gives the Government immunity. How can you in a democratic society pass legislation to grant yourselves immunity under a judicial process where citizens of this country have the right to question actions taken by their Government? How can you do that?

An Honourable Member: Get it to committee, Frank.

* (15:50)

Mr. Pitura: The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) says take it to the committee. Well, he is going to take it to the committee. He is not going to listen to the public. They have already passed the regulations, Mr. Speaker.

You are not going to change the regulations. You are not going to amend the legislation. So, come on, let us be honest about this. Just tell us exactly what you are going to do. You are going to ram this piece of legislation through. Why would the Government need protection? Why would it need protection from judicial scrutiny?

The biggest concern that we have with this bill is the one section that states, as above, that everything that the minister has done in regard to forced amalgamations was lawfully done. It was lawfully done. That would suggest to me, Mr. Speaker, that everything that was done prior to the legislation was unlawfully done. So how can you do that? How can you take unlawful actions? [*interjection*]

I say to the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers), who is talking about changing the law with respect to Manitoba Hydro to make the transfer of monies from Hydro to the general revenues of the Province of Manitoba legal, which they are not now—oh, that is the way to do it.

So, when a government begins limiting the fundamental rights of individual citizens and cutting off legal avenues, ruling by decree, dictating terms and budgets and taxes, it can be a slippery slope, and, Mr. Speaker, it will not be tolerated by the citizens of this great province who gave up so much to defend our democratic rights and freedoms. The minister is forcing amalgamations, even when his Premier (Mr. Doer) stated that there would be no forced amalgamations, that that is not the Manitoba way. Well, you talk about a little bit of hypocrisy here in terms of flip-flops, man, this is it.

With respect to appointing an arbitrator, the Minister of Education appoints the arbitrator rather than the disputing factions seeking an arbitrator and agreeing on an arbitrator. Mr. Speaker, this would seem to allow the minister who is taking a look at a dispute between a

couple of school divisions or school districts to say, well, in this particular case, I think I will just have an arbitrator in who will find this way and therefore this situation will be resolved according to the way I want it. It would give the minister much, much influence over the outcome of the arbitration. This is a slippery slope indeed.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is strange that what an opposition party says and when in government what they do, it has no resemblance.

On March 27, 1996, the then-Education critic, the Member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) said, and I quote: The reports are very consistent in finding potential cost increases and few or no savings if the government proceeds with amalgamation. This is what she said: Few communities see benefits in the reorganization, and, in fact, rural communities are concerned about the potential destructive impact on their quality of life. In Winnipeg, people worry that these new divisions would result in greater bureaucracy, a loss of autonomy and increased taxes. This is what the Member for Wolseley, on March 27, 1996, said about amalgamation.

Even the present Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Ben Levin, on March 8, 1994, in a submission to the Norrie Commission said: Changing boundaries will neither save significant amounts of money nor improve students' learning experience but will involve substantial costs in time and energy. So speaketh the Deputy Minister of Education in 1994. Does the Deputy Minister of Education speaketh that in 2002? No. It is forced amalgamations.

Some critical questions that need answers are: Will there be substantial savings? If so, where and how much? Will there be a substantial increase in costs as indicated by St. Boniface and River East school divisions, which indicated costs of \$2.1 million and \$2 million to these respective school divisions, to merge staff contracts and school programs. So, Mr. Speaker, I ask the question, who is right?

So far the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has decided not to supply any kind of detailed information in terms of where the cost savings are going to be coming from. The minister is also on record as offering school divisions who voluntarily amalgamate \$50 per

student, but those that are forced will only receive this same money over a three-year period.

Well, you know, all you can say is whoop-de-do. Is that a fair system? Is that a fair approach? Because it is up to the minister to decide as to whether a school has voluntarily amalgamated or not.

So, Mr. Speaker, the taxpayers of these school divisions that are being amalgamated will receive the brunt of this dictated amalgamation process and self-justification bill. The losers will be the children, because they will not receive an increased quality of education. In fact, they will receive a decreased quality.

The Minister of Education and the Doer government have promised savings of \$10 million by the 2003-2004 budget year. So I ask the question again of the Government: Show us where the \$10 million in savings comes from. Give us the numbers. Give us the accurate numbers that are calculated in terms of these savings and redirected dollars that the minister is espousing.

So, to this end, Mr. Speaker, the Norrie report that was done in 1994 had indicated that the amalgamation should occur over a time period of three years. So I ask the question: What is the rush on Bill 14? Why rush it through? The Norrie report indicated that it should take three years. He says that year one is where you develop the regulations and you have further consultations with the public. So we have the regulations, actually the regulations way in advance of the legislation.

I want to argue that regulations probably should accompany legislation in most aspects, but at the same time something really suspicious about this, that they were done so far in advance. Then in year two the Norrie report indicated that the amalgamation should occur in the urban areas, and that in year three the amalgamations should occur in the rural areas, a three-year time period to bring about a fluid process in terms of the amalgamation, not try to make the announcement in November and have all the amalgamations in place by July 1.

There are going to be a lot of mistakes, there are going to be a lot of screw-ups, and obviously

people are not going to be very happy. Well, Mr. Speaker, amalgamation can be done and done simply but not in the manner that the Doer government wants with their dictatorial power-seeking legislation and self-vindicating legislation. No. We have to oppose this legislation. If the government backbenchers on that side of the House will read this legislation, and read this legislation carefully, they will agree that it should not be passed.

So, using the present Public Schools Act, Mr. Speaker, amalgamation can occur, and I would suggest to the Minister of Education that he withdraw Bill 14 and that we go back to debating the other pieces of legislation that are important on the Order Paper and that he can proceed with amalgamation under The Public Schools Act.

So, with those few comments, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for allowing me the time.

Mr. David Faurichou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise in the House and participate in debate in regard to Bill 14 and the amendment that has been proposed towards this legislation.

Day after day after day I have heard members of the government side of the House complain about the timing and the length of time that this bill has taken to go through the Legislative Assembly. I want to note to the members on the government side of the House that this particular legislation was introduced May 2. If this legislation was truly important to the Government, why May 2? May 2, in many years in the legislative process of this Chamber, would be at the tail end of legislation being introduced into the House. Yet it is one of the first.

The New Democratic Party really has their priorities mixed up, calling the Manitoba Legislative Assembly back April 22. If they truly have a legislative agenda with important legislation for consideration of the people of Manitoba, then why April 22? What was wrong with January, February, March, and the better part of April? For those that catcall across the way saying that the timing and length of time with regard to this bill, that the Chamber and the members of the Opposition, in their debate of this legislation, are

procrastinating, are perhaps filibustering, that is sheer nonsense.

* (16:00)

This House takes every piece of legislation, and I, as a member of the Opposition, believe that it is vitally important that we examine and provide an opportunity to all people living within the province of Manitoba the chance to examine what legislation is being considered and what that legislation will mean to them if passage, as it is proposed, takes place. Putting aside all the rhetoric about timing and length of debate regarding Bill 14, let us concentrate on Bill 14 and what the Government is attempting to enact in law here in the province of Manitoba.

Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act, is a misnomer, in my opinion, right off the hop. I do not believe that anywhere in this book it refers to the changes in legislation as new. Modern means new. There is nothing that I have read within this document that is new, that has not been discussed in the past. So to make reference to the act as being the modernization of The Public Schools Act is not giving the correct impression to the people of Manitoba.

Let us look at the explanatory note that provides for the rationale as to why the legislation should be considered and passed by the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. This bill amends The Public Schools Act to enable the minister to make regulations after school divisions and school districts are amalgamated. It establishes a process for resolving issues about the transfer of assets, liabilities, and employees from former divisions to new ones.

Our province is 132 years old. Over the course of time the responsibility of educating our young people, who are the future of our province and continue to be, because I know, as much as perhaps we would like to consider ourselves immortal, we are mortal and our time will come. So we must prepare our province for the future through education of our young people. That education of our young people has primarily been the responsibility of parents, and, through the course of time, has evolved into more formalized instruction by persons educated specifically to teach our young people.

In the beginning, effectively, it was men and women teaching their young people around their home, the kitchen table, how to read and to write, but, as it evolved, we started to collectively provide for our young people through organized instruction involving a providing by the community of a school through land taxation that gave for the resources for that construction and for hiring of specially trained individuals to teach. Then the responsibility, as essentially it is today for the operation of that instructional institution or school, fell to those elected through the rightful election process, as provided by legislation in the province of Manitoba, trustees that were given the responsibility after election to provide for the amenities for the operation of the local school.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that tradition is still in place today. We take very seriously the election process which provides for individuals to occupy the position of trustee. Trustees are elected on a regular basis to provide for, as I have stated, the amenities that enable our young people to receive instruction and their education so, hopefully, at some time within their lives, they could provide for their own families through living here in Manitoba.

The position of trustee, by him/herself, does not have authoritative powers, however, as an organization called the school board, which is the grouping of trustees, does have that authority to enter into contracts to provide for supplies and services that enable instruction to our young people to take place. This responsibility, Mr. Speaker, is taken very seriously throughout the province of Manitoba.

I had the privilege of being elected as a school trustee in 1983, shortly after the birth of our first son, and I took that election very seriously, as I had a ward, was elected in ward 3 of the Portage la Prairie School Division. There were some 300 persons within that ward that looked upon me to represent their interests in providing for education to the young people of the area. I was one of nine school trustees, four elected from the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie and five elected from the city of Portage la Prairie. We sat as a board on a regular basis to make decisions, to pass by-laws and to effectively operate the Portage la Prairie School Division.

Now, the Portage la Prairie School Division was supported through contributions from local taxpaying property owners, as well as the Province of Manitoba. We looked upon those resources as being one and the same insofar as there is only one taxpayers' pocket, and that pocket has to provide for education, whether it is through the provincial Treasury or that of the municipalities of which we are elected from.

Now, Mr. Speaker, taking those resources and making certain that they are used in the most effective and efficient manner is one that I took great pride in. During my tenure as trustee, I served as chairman of the finance committee and was responsible for the resources through which the school division operated. We received monies from the federal government through the reserve properties that were within the Portage la Prairie School Division. We received federal dollars through the Department of National Defence because we had Southport air base within the Portage School Division. We received resources from the Province as well as locally raised, directly collected by the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie and the City of Portage la Prairie.

* (16:10)

Now, we had a budget when I got elected of approximately \$11 million. It was \$10.8 million, I believe, Mr. Speaker. When I left being a trustee, it was over \$20 million being allocated for education in the Portage la Prairie School Division. Primarily the additional dollars were being raised locally because we recognized that the Province was under significant hardship, that the dollars were being used to pay down deficits that were from previous administrations, and just coincidentally they happened to share the same commonality by party of the current sitting Government, and, too, a slowdown in the economy of our province as well. So we were forced to make certain that every dollar in the Portage la Prairie School Division was spent as wisely as possible.

But, Mr. Speaker, we were frugal with the dollars that we collected, and I will say that we used them as wisely as possible. We were, in fact, for a number of years No. 1 or No. 2 in ranking the lowest dollars allocated towards

administrative costs of any school division or district in the province, either the cheapest to operate or the second cheapest.

I have to look to my colleague from Winkler who has stated that we have had rivalries from time to time. He represents the constituency of Pembina, and within that, Garden Valley School Division is constituted. It was always Garden Valley or Portage la Prairie that were either No. 1 or No. 2 as far as administrative costs.

But, on the other hand, we recognized that it was very important to invest a dollar in roofing or making certain that our school buses were in fine form and up to provincial standards and, indeed, Mr. Speaker, in excess of provincial standards as it pertained to maintenance. We invested very heavily in operating monies because a dollar in that particular expenditure, I believe, does pay dividends. We, in that category, per capita, per student, were No. 1 for five consecutive years as to the number of dollars allocated to building renewal, capital funding, operation and maintenance. We used those dollars very wisely to put Portage la Prairie in good form for the future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we were able to do that by very efficient operations, and, also, we wanted to plan for the future because we did not know whether or not our farming community, as Portage is known for, would be able to sustain that level of support to the school division, because there are downturns in agriculture—as we now are approaching one that is man-made, referring to the U.S. farm bill that was recently signed into law by President George W. Bush that will inevitably put pressure upon our agricultural producers to be able to support education through their special levy dollars collected on their land base assessment.

So, Mr. Speaker, on that premise, we in the Portage la Prairie School Division, I remember very, very well, as chairman then of the school division, just moved on from the chairman of finance to be chair of the school division board of trustees called before the then-Minister of Finance, the Honourable Clayton Manness, the Minister of Finance, as he was previously, then he moved on to be Minister of Education. As the Minister of Education, he called me to his office

to ask me very specific questions, because at that point in time the Portage la Prairie School Division had in excess of \$3.8 million in reserve, and that per student was the highest reserve of any school division in the province.

We believe that it was very important to manage the hard-earned taxpayers' dollars well and did not believe that without a reserve we would ultimately have periods within the year that we would have to borrow funds. We did not believe in paying interest to the banks because monies paid in interest were monies lost to the educational system in the province and specifically in Portage la Prairie.

So we amassed a large reserve, and we used that reserve. Although I have left the board of trustees, it has been used for one-time expenditures. I will say, Mr. Speaker, a change that has had significant impact on the Portage la Prairie School Division is that of the closure of the Department of National Defence Southport operations. So we are not receiving as many dollars from that. *[interjection]*

Well, Mr. Speaker, I am very dismayed. I thought that I was contributing to the debate in regard to Bill 14, and I thought that the minister was appreciating my comments, a little bit of history and understanding as a school trustee, which I know that he has not had the benefit and perspective of. He left the Chamber obviously disinterested in some of the comments that were made, and I am disappointed. I know that the member—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I would like to remind all honourable members when making reference to members not to make reference as to whether they are in the Chamber or out of the Chamber. I would ask the full co-operation of all honourable members, please.

Mr. Faursehou: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate your pointing that out to me. I am new to the Chamber, and sometimes I am not familiar with all the rulings. I did not realize. I just wanted to make it known to yourself that I thought my comments were going to be appreciated by the minister and being that he had left the Chamber, I was dismayed and pointed that out, but I hope that other colleagues of the minister that are here

in the House will convey to the absent minister some of what I am saying.

I really do appreciate some of the ministers opposite, especially the member that represents Minto who was a former school board chair herself, representing Winnipeg No. 1 School Division. I look to her as one with experience, understanding and appreciation for some of the dialogue that is taking place here in the Chamber. I hope perhaps she will take the opportunity to sit with her colleague, her Cabinet colleague, her Executive Council colleague, her near seatmate and try and convince him that Bill 14 as it exists today really is not necessary. It does not accomplish what we here in the Chamber believe needs to be accomplished as it pertains to education here in Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that a lot of us as school trustees, as school elders, as teachers and parents who care about our education, we are the ones who should be making the decisions in regard to the education that our young people receive. Why is the minister asking this Legislative Assembly to pass Bill 14 enabling him to make more regulations, more regulations in regard to the instruction our young people are taking? Why does the minister need these regulations? Does he not believe in individuals like myself who occupied positions of trust as trustees? Why does he ask for the gavel, the heavy-handedness of a minister to effectively overthrow the elected responsibility that trustees have within the province of Manitoba?

* (16:20)

I do not understand. I am hoping some of the debate that occurs here in the House will convince the minister to effectively withdraw the legislation, Bill 14, that has been proposed by the minister.

We have heard here in the House and the Member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith) spoke very well, stating that this legislation was required to facilitate amalgamation. Amalgamation is the bringing together of two entities that operated separately that want to, or may not want to, come together and form a larger or another entity, different from that of the two individuals.

The amalgamation process can take place. I do not know whether the Member for Brandon West is familiar with Pembina school division, and I believe it was Tiger Hills as well, came together, mutually agreed upon an amalgamation process and addressed each and every issue, without the existence of Bill 14. So amalgamation can take place in this province, but under the current set of circumstances it calls upon ourselves as trustees, as parents, to work out our differences, work together and create a more efficient organization so that we can operate and deliver the best education that you and I as parents can provide for our children.

Mr. Speaker, educating our young people is the most important thing we can do on this earth, because our children will be our legacy. We work each and every day to make a better place for our children. Our grandparents worked, our fathers worked and now we as parents hope we can provide for our children a place where they can live out their dreams. Dreams are achieved through education. Education is empowerment. Education provides the knowledge base through which all of us can achieve.

I think we all aspire to achieve our goals we have from being very young. I wanted to grow up and to help my father on the farm, but I had to learn to read and write. I had to learn how to express myself because it took a lot of convincing sometimes to change my father's mind and to do things a little bit differently. Agriculture has to evolve. We do not do the same things as our grandfathers did because we have more technology and we do things in a more efficient manner, we hope.

Without an education, one cannot learn those new technologies and to make use of those technologies in the most efficient manner so that our way of life can be enhanced.

I know I do not have a great deal of time. Members opposite look in fact just a little bored. Obviously, they are not concerned with Bill 14 whatsoever, because we have not had one speaker from the government side of the House in the last week. Not one. Obviously, they are so disenchanted with their own government's legislation, their own minister's legislation, that they do not want to put any words on the record

because they are embarrassed by this legislation, because this legislation is not necessary.

Let us read on here in the explanatory note to find out further, because we have obviously dispelled the rumour that the minister needs the opportunity and legislation to provide for more regulation for amalgamation. Not so. We have dispelled that. Further, the bill restructures the process for initiating a hearing by the Board of Reference, changes the awards the board can make, and allows the board to make final determinations. Mr. Speaker, gobbledeygook. That is all I can use to describe that paragraph as to rationale as to why we have to have Bill 14 passed in the House.

The Board of Reference has worked extremely efficiently, very effectively to resolve issues of boundaries within this province for more years than I have memory. I have to credit those individuals that have served on the Board of Reference throughout those years that examined the issues that came before them and made very responsible and thoughtful decisions. Their decisions incorporated the boundaries which we currently have and work with not only in the Portage la Prairie School Division but the other 53 school divisions and districts. So I look at that rationale once again for this bill and find no fundamental premise in this legislation whatsoever on that basis.

Further the bill provides that a school board must have between five and nine trustees, with certain exceptions. Now, those exceptions will be by the wish and pleasure of the minister. Why would one want a minister, a remotely placed individual, away from where the instruction is taking place, where the parents have the students' best interests at heart? How can he believe, or she, maybe a female occupying the minister's chair, because I do not think that the First Minister (Mr. Doer) is going to tolerate this type of legislation much longer, because it is so poorly thought out. So I think perhaps the minister will be shuffled out of his position for his shortcomings as provided for in legislation that he believes is necessary.

I came from a board of nine trustees. It was very well thought out as to the boundaries of the wards to which each trustee was elected. It was

recognized that some 40 percent of the individuals came from the rural of Portage la Prairie and some 60 percent came from the city of Portage la Prairie. So it was decided that four would be elected from the rural and five from the city of Portage la Prairie. Now, through the evolution of our democratic process for the Portage la Prairie School Division, the ward system was dissolved in the city of Portage la Prairie so that all trustees elected within the city of Portage la Prairie came from one ballot. So five trustees were elected for the city of Portage la Prairie.

They all could, perhaps, come from the north end, west end, downtown, but that was up to the individuals that resided within the city of Portage la Prairie to determine. However, the Rural Municipality of Portage la Prairie believed that it was very important that a trustee be familiar with the area, the roads, the parents of a particular ward for which they were going to represent and therefore maintain very distinct boundaries.

* (16:30)

I represented ward No. 3 and had, as I mentioned earlier, some 300 individuals that lived in and around the Macdonald area, which is up along Highway 16. I also included the community of Westbourne as well as Oakland. I represented that area very proudly, as I resided within ward 3.

Mr. Speaker, coming back to the minister wanting the power to determine how many trustees, would it not be in the best interest of the education that the parents, grandparents, those that reside within the school division to determine how many people they feel is an adequate number to make decisions involving education? I think it is a fundamental right as a resident, taxpaying, as a parent, that I have that ability. If I lived in an area where it was perhaps very geographically expansive, that I have consideration that we have more trustees, because not one individual can look to a large geographic area and be familiar with those that reside in it and understanding of the delivery of, let us say, busing service to that area without knowing the area. So I think it should be left to the school division to determine. I will say that

the number of trustees is such a nominal cost in overall operations of the school division.

I, as a school trustee, saw a stipend of less than \$300 per month. The less than \$300 a month that I received as a school trustee barely covered my additional expenses as were incurred going out and visiting individuals that had raised concerns, checking out bus runs, sitting for many, many hours working through staffing concerns, program concerns, delivery of services, as well as the overall operations of the school division. I did work it out one month, and I believe I was, in conversion to dollars per hour, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 40 cents per hour, is what my stipend worked out to be for the amount of hours spent. So to determine whether it is five or nine or seven, eleven, the number of trustees, I think, should be left with the local school board to determine.

The explanatory note goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, the bill enables the minister to set limits on prescribed administrative costs of school divisions. Administrative costs to the school divisions, once again, for in whole, as an overall observation, are very minimal.

I know that the former administration looked upon administrative costs as one area that they thought needed to come in line with government expenditures, Mr. Speaker, and other like administrative bodies, and suggested a specific dollar amount per student. The Portage la Prairie School Division was almost half of that suggested. Now, it was not prescribed in law; it was a suggested level of administrative cost.

We, in the Portage la Prairie School Division, have gone from a dual administrative design of decision making to a unitary one under a chief executive officer who also served as the superintendent of schools, Mr. Speaker. Our administrative costs were very, very minor. Where our costs were was in the actual instruction delivery. More than 84 percent of all of our costs to the school division were expended to the staff hired by the school division, employed by the school division for the delivery of the instruction and operations of the school division.

It was 83 to 84 percent. So between 16 and 17 percent of our expenditures bought all the books, paid for all the heat, light, power, water,

provided for gas and maintenance, all the books and photocopiers, computers on 17 percent of the budget. So you can see, Mr. Speaker, how intensive it is as far as delivery of education by involving hands-on, well-educated, well-trained individuals. Portage la Prairie prided itself as being the top in number of staff members to students, because we believe that a hands-on personal approach to education was vitally important to provide a quality program. So we saw that as an important element of education delivery, and so we went about that way, but we kept administrative costs very much in line.

The minister does not need this in legislation. It is totally redundant. If persons that are electing the new school board members this fall do not look at the performance of those sitting in those responsible positions today, do not like the administrative costs, they can surely vote for someone that is committed to making their administrative costs more tolerable to those taxpaying residents of those school division. So why do we need some minister sitting in Winnipeg, remote from most school divisions, making decisions as to how to run our school division?

I only have a couple of minutes left, so I will just conclude by saying that the bill also will require school boards to hold consultations regarding their annual budget. We already do that in Portage la Prairie. We consult with the parent councils. We consult with the RM and city councils. We hold open meetings two and three times before the final budget is passed. Each and every individual residing in Portage la Prairie has the opportunity.

Why does this minister feel that he needs legislation to impose something that is already in existence? It is beyond my comprehension as to why this Government believes that they need to be so dictatorial that I sometimes wonder whether I am living in a democracy or not.

I am very proud of representing Portage la Prairie. I am very proud of the Portage la Prairie School Division and how it conducts its business. We in Portage la Prairie do not need Bill 14. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I am pleased that I can take this opportunity to speak to Bill 14,

although I feel I would rather not, put it that way. I wish that the minister withdraw it, but anyway I want to put on the record the amendment that we put forward, and that is: THAT all the words after the word "THAT" be deleted and the following substituted therefore: this House declines to give second reading to Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act, until such time as the Minister of Education, Training and Youth undertakes meaningful consultations with all affected stakeholders within Manitoba's education system.

Within our jurisdiction, the constituency that I represent, we have taken the approach, and this was during our tenure as government, that voluntary amalgamation was the way to go. I make specific reference to the amalgamation of the two school divisions, Tiger Hills and Pembina Valley School Division, who amalgamated and who are now known as Prairie Spirit School Division, Mr. Speaker, this was the type of amalgamation that I believe everyone should be asking for, and it should not be mandated by this administration to force people to do that.

* (16:40)

In discussion with the superintendents of the day, it became abundantly clear that amalgamation, and again, this was something that we did not advocate or that we did not presume would happen, that there would be significant dollar savings, but what actually happened within Prairie Spirit was that there were no dollars saved. This was something that helped to expedite, to increase, to enhance the education that they received within the area. They had a declining enrolment. Consequently, when the two divisions got together, they made this decision. It was a voluntary one. This was not something that happened overnight. They worked at it for months, in fact, for years. If you would go and talk to them today, the amalgamation which took place was, in I believe it was '98-99, on a voluntary basis, and they are still streamlining. They are still trying to get some of the bugs out of the system. Every time I talk to them, they will indicate very clearly that this is not an exercise in which they are saving costs.

Just to give you an example, this administration, this Minister of Education (Mr.

Caldwell) has come up and said that administratively they are going to put caps onto the dollars that you are able to spend within the administrative area. What happens is that they will take the dollars out of the teaching profession, out of that area, in order to be able to determine, in order to be able to give the services that the young people need. The bottom line of all of this should be what is best for the students. I maintain that this is not the best approach for students. This is not the way that we should be going.

If I can backtrack a little further, in 1994 I believe it was when the then known as Norrie Commission, Mr. Norrie and his committee went throughout the province and asked for comments, asked for presentations as to the feeling of Manitobans as to how they felt about enlarging some of the boundaries. There was a very clear directive that came back from the boards, from the divisions, from the taxpayers, that this was not the direction that they wanted to go. Again, it was stipulated and it was encouraged by the boards throughout the province that a voluntary amalgamation is something that should be encouraged, but it should be done as two communities, as two divisions or three, whatever the numbers may be, get together, and on a voluntary basis would amalgamate.

Mr. Speaker, the other area that concerns me about this, and, of course, there are a few more, and I will over the next number of minutes try and bring these out, is the fact that the Board of Reference is something that is out there which allows the taxpayer to give representation to boards, to an independent board as to whether they want to move some of the land base, whether they want to move the boundaries of the division from one area to another. This independent body then looks at it and then makes their ruling as to the direction they feel would be best for the community.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to spend 18 years on the local Garden Valley School Division board. These were good years; these were enjoyable years, and 10 years, by the way, as the board chairman. So I had opportunity to be able to bring our presentation to the Norrie Commission, and our board, our community, after consultation with the community

leaders, with the residents within the area, the determination was that those divisions that wanted to amalgamate in fact should be encouraged to do so, but they should be encouraged to do it on a voluntary basis.

An Honourable Member: Did you need legislation for that?

Mr. Dyck: We did not need legislation for that, absolutely not, and that is a very good question. That is the problem that we have today with the direction that this minister with his Bill 14 is going. I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the minister does not need to ram this Bill 14 through. If there are divisions that want to amalgamate, they can do that without having this Bill 14 imposed upon them.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So I trust that the minister is listening to this somewhere, that he will, in fact, be taking some of these suggestions that we have, that he will take them and listen to them and, in fact, review them. On the other hand, I must say, as well, that in the last few days, as we have been debating Bill 14, it has been very obvious that the members from the government side do not have a response to this. We are not sure whether, in fact, they believe that this amendment is the one that should be put in place, because they have not spoken to it. So I would encourage them at their first opportunity to get up and make their views known.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to continue in the reference I made to the Board of Reference. This is an independent body which allows representation and presentations to be made by individuals who are impacted by the changing of boundaries. They can bring these to the board. The board will listen to them, will take time, will deliberate and then will come back with a ruling, but this is after hearings have taken place. That is something that I fail to see specific to Bill 14. They have not consulted with Manitobans. They have not gone out and asked them what their opinions are.

Now after it is being imposed upon them—yes, there are two letters, I believe, that they

have been waving in the Chamber here about divisions who are wanting and are encouraging us to expedite the process. The point is that they are asking this to be moved on because it is being rammed down their throats, and, in fact, they are being punished if this has not taken place by the end of June. I believe that is wrong. I believe that is not the way our democratic process should be working in the province of Manitoba.

Now, again, I want to come back to the basic premise of all of this, and that is we are doing this for the students, I hope. I hope that this is the intention of the minister. Is this, in fact, going to be giving better education? Are children going to be better because of it? Are we giving them the ability to be able to function, to be able to succeed in our society? Is this going to help them in that way? I suggest to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that by enlarging the school divisions, and, again, I refer back to Prairie Spirit. What has happened is that the students are now on buses for a longer period of time. This was a voluntary decision that they made at that time, but there are certainly some problems that are associated with it. So I believe that it is wrong to go and mandate. It is wrong to go and force divisions to amalgamate when, in fact, they do not see any benefits in doing it.

The other concern that I have with this, and again, I alluded to it in the experience that we have had with Prairie Spirit, that the minister, the government of the day is continuing to say, oh, we are going to have cost savings. That is not the experience of those divisions that voluntarily amalgamated. In fact, their experience is quite the opposite. They are finding out that their costs have gone up. So what is the intent here? Is the minister, in fact, misleading Manitobans?

I must just interject here. Yesterday, in fact, I had a school in to see me, and I met with them in Room 200. They are from the town of Manitou, and they are within the Prairie Spirit School Division. Incidentally and interestingly enough, the teacher of this class that I met, the Grade 11 classroom, his name is Mr. Caldwell who is a brother to our current minister.

So in our discussions, I threw it open and I asked them all kinds of questions regarding

some of the things, the legislation that was taking place. But the one question that I just had to ask them was whether they felt, after describing what was taking place, that the best approach would be to allow divisions to amalgamate, not force it but allow them to do so. They overwhelmingly indicated that, yes, it should be a voluntary system.

* (16:50)

As we pursued this a little further, we talked about the whole area of democracy. Mr. Deputy Speaker, our school boards are elected in a democratic way. I believe that they are out there and they are the best ones to be able to determine what is best for the students, what is best for the community, and let us get right down to it, the bottom line also, what is best for the taxpayer. Whether we like it or not, education is extremely important. We look at the budgets, whether they are when we were in government or whether they are today, the current government, health care is the No. 1 dollar user, the No. 2 is education. Being a former teacher, being on the school board, I concur with the fact that we need to spend money in education. But we need to spend it properly. There needs to be good stewardship of the dollars that we are spending.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I submit to you that the direction that this Government is going and using a dictatorial approach to imposing Bill 14 upon the school boards is the wrong way to go. On the other hand, I think, as we have been watching the last two and a half years of this administration, that concentration of power seems to be moving only in one direction. They disbanded rural development. They did away with that. Why is it? Because they want to concentrate more of the powers within the Capital Region. When we look at Bill 14, we see the same thing happening. It is a concentration of powers within this building, within the Capital Region.

Now does rural Manitoba not exist? Sometimes I am convinced that the present administration is not so sure that rural Manitoba, what we would call Perimeter vision, those outside the Perimeter, really is important to the economy, to the total of Manitoba. So I have a bit of a concern with that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to move on here. I want to also in my discussion here just again remind the government of the day as to what happened back in 1968. Now, I do not remember those days as clearly, of course, as my parents would. But when I look at the area that I represent, at that time, it was prior to 1968 that we had the school districts. It was during the sixties that the unitary divisions were put in place. My learned colleague here, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), would recall this vividly, but in my area Garden Valley School Division was the last one to become a part of the whole unitary system.

An Honourable Member: Because we refused to force divisions into this.

Mr. Dyck: The comment is made: "because we refused to force divisions into this." So, at that time the sitting member for, I think it was Rhineland, which would have been Mr. J. M. Froese. He sat in the chair that the Member for Lakeside sits in right now. He opposed anything that had to do at that time with the forcing of districts into the whole unitary division. The other thing I should mention was that he was a member of the Social Credit Party.

On the other hand, though, my recollections of it, from what I hear from my parents and those, of course, who were much more involved in politics at that time than I was—I maybe should not give my age away, but I must have been very, very young at that time. So anyway, he did represent our community very well.

What I want to say by this, and the direction I am heading is that education is extremely, extremely important to students, obviously, but to the parents and to the grandparents. I believe that this is a basic concept that the government of the day is overlooking. They are, in fact, forgetting that there are people out there who have a say when it comes to what divisions should be doing, the direction that they should be going and, in fact, are coming back and are imposing it in a dictatorial way upon these divisions and are forcing them to amalgamate. Again, I repeat what I said before. You do not need this legislation to allow school boards to amalgamate. If you read The Public Schools Act as we have it today, you do not need it. School

boards can amalgamate, but you do not need to impose this upon them. The Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) was indicating very clearly that in fact what was taking place with their school division was that their boards had been taken away. They had been wiped from the slate, and someone else was put in place who does not live in the community, in fact, does not represent the community.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

This is the wrong direction to go. We are imposing this upon people, and we are denying their rights. In fact, what is happening is it is a total disregard that any decisions of the court that rules against the Government is making, that they are taking that right away for them to go to the court system. They are trying to silence people. This is wrong. We should be able to give people the right to be able to go to the court system if they feel that they are being wronged. The silencing of people is wrong.

In our democratic system, when I look at and when I talk to my grandparents, for instance, when I talk to them or I talked to my father-in-law today, who came from Russia, they came to this country because they wanted to have the freedom of speech. This was very important to them, that if there were areas that they felt they had been wronged, that they would have an opportunity to go to an independent body in order to be able to give them the concerns that they had, to be able to speak to them. It is a constitutional right to do it. Now we are taking that away from the school boards, where they cannot go in and challenge the Government when the Government, in a retroactive way, is putting in legislation in order to try and justify, make right, the things that they did wrong. This is not the Manitoba way, I hope, although I have a feeling that this is the direction that we are going. It is an undemocratic way. Again, I come back, and I say that the minister should really, really seriously look at the whole area of forced amalgamations.

I just want to add a quote here that the Premier of our province made some time ago. In fact, it is probably about a year ago. I am just going to read it here as it is. It is completely unacceptable that, despite the Premier's promise almost one year ago at the Manitoba Association

of School Trustees, which is MAST, annual convention that there would be, and I quote, no forced amalgamations. It is not the Manitoba way. The Premier broke that promise and moved ahead with his costly forced amalgamations.

It appears to me that the Manitoba way is one of breaking promises. A number of other speakers ahead of me have talked about Manitoba Hydro. That is another whole area that I could get into and speak on for hours. The problems that are created by the Government interfering with a Crown corporation, absolutely wrong, they should not be doing that.

I must come back to some of the comments that are specific to Bill 14 and just a few other things I would like to put on the record. I would like to point out that, just as a few other school divisions have successfully, voluntarily amalgamated in the past, we see no reason why your voluntary amalgamation cannot proceed in the same manner. Our concern rests with those divisions that the Doer government is forcing to amalgamate and with this legislation they have introduced relating to it. As you may be aware, Bill 14 does not outline the role and authority of the interim boards that were described in the minister's announcement in November of 2001. Because of the minister's lack of clarity, some boards have or will incur substantial legal and administrative costs. In fact, we agree with the Manitoba Association of School Trustees' position that Bill 14 fails to provide school boards with the legal framework that they require to fulfil the responsibilities with which they have been charged regarding amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, I come back to the same issue as I have been addressing until now, that this not the democratic way to go. This is not the way that we should be going as a province. It deeply concerns me. Again, I look back at the area that I represent, at the amalgamation that has taken place there, the way it has worked and, in fact, is working well today. But they got together as divisions who were compatible. They could work together, but this imposition is causing a real concern in Manitoba within the school divisions that are out there.

I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that it is not only the rural school divisions that I have

been talking about where the concerns are expressed. They are out there, as well, within the city of Winnipeg. There is the Fort Garry School Division. Here is a division that is really concerned about it, and some of the comments that they are making are that Bill 14 provides changes to The Public Schools Act—

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable member will have 17 minutes remaining.

The hour being 5 p.m., we will now move to Private Members' Business, and we will move to the Proposed Resolution 15, Multiculturalism.

* (17:00)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 15—Multiculturalism

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub),

WHEREAS Canada is a nation of immigrants, where diverse racial and ethnic groups are welcomed and are acknowledged as equal; and

WHEREAS the various ethnic groups have made an enormous contribution to the Canadian economy and Canadian society throughout our history; and

WHEREAS the diversity of the Canadian population has been recognized in a variety of ways, including public funding of multicultural events, programs and organizations; and

WHEREAS, since the events of September 11, the reality of racism and its terrible effects have been seen even in our own society.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider continuing its support of multiculturalism in this province; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly urge the federal government to also

maintain its support, both financially and through policy, of multiculturalism in Canada; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly take a strong stand against racism and urge all Manitobans to do the same in the spirit of multiculturalism.

Motion presented.

Ms. Asper: Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak on this resolution. As you all know, our country is a nation of immigrants where diverse racial and ethnic groups are welcomed and acknowledged as equal. We only need to look at our own lives to see how our personal backgrounds and experiences have caused us to evolve as Canadians in a multicultural society. I would ask you to reflect on your own background and life experiences.

In my case, my mother's parents immigrated from Liverpool. My father came from Stroud, England. My husband's parents immigrated from Odessa in the Ukraine. I grew up in St. Norbert, a Francophone community at that time. I was fortunate enough to enjoy both a home environment in English symbolized by roast beef, potatoes, fish and chips and Mackintosh's Toffee, and in a Francophone environment in my friends' homes and in our community symbolized by tourtière, frites and sucre à la crème.

I am sure, if you are reflecting on your own past, you will marvel at the wonderful opportunities in our province that have and continue to offer us.

Let me move ahead some years in my life to my mid-twenties when my husband was courting me. I think, if you were talking to Aubrey, he would have a different version of who was doing the courting, but, in my view, he was courting me.

My limited world at that time was opened up to another culture when I met him, which was symbolized by chopped liver, sweet and sour meatballs and cherry blintzes. At first the road was a bit rocky. I remember my family served barbecued pork chops when my future mother-in-law first visited our home. She, of course,

kept a kosher kitchen. My father was an avid gardener, so I thought gardening would be a safe topic at the first meeting with my future mother-in-law, until my father started expanding on the merits and minuses of the wandering Jew plant growing outside our kitchen window.

From then on it was called creeping Charlie. I am safe to say that there were no Charlies on either side of our families. You may chuckle at my images so far, but, as I look back on those years in my earlier life, I realize how superficial my own views about multiculturalism were. It was really when Aubrey and I moved to Nigeria in 1970 for two years, just after the Biafran war—if you remember the Biafran war, it was a tribal war in that West African country and was not very pleasant.

We moved there to live as part of a white minority in that country's diverse racial and ethnic society. It was there that my growth as a Canadian sensitive to multicultural issues really evolved. I will not bore you with the rest of my story, but here I am some 30 years later, and I have the honour of representing Riel, a constituency that reflects our province's diversity more and more with immigration.

I certainly draw on my life experiences to try to be sensitive to people, whether it is going to the mosque in my constituency or listening to a young person who wants an immigrant parent to integrate more into our society. As we looked back on our grandparents' and our parents' lives, we realized that all ethnic groups have made an enormous contribution to the Canadian economy and Canadian society throughout our history.

As we enter into this new century, I think we must look at immigration as an important part of our strategy for growth. Just as immigrants came to Manitoba throughout our history to help build this province, we must look again to this source of renewal and growth for our future.

Today there are over a hundred languages spoken in Manitoba, representing people from all over the world who now call Manitoba home. Manitoba is truly one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in Canada. Our Government firmly believes in the importance of promoting and supporting cultural diversity both in Canada,

in Manitoba and continues to encourage the federal government to maintain its support for multiculturalism in our country.

Manitoba's cultural diversity and vibrancy is further enriched by recruitment of immigrants to our communities. With the release of the 2001 census figures, we can see that immigration is a vital source of economic development and future for our province. Immigration represents a significant portion of new growth in the city of Winnipeg and elsewhere in Manitoba.

As well, many of the immigrants who came to Canada, to Manitoba, do so to reunite with family members who are already here. I must digress to tell you one more family story. Some 25 years ago, my sister-in-law in Toronto read an ad in *The Canadian Jewish News*. It was placed by her father's, my husband's father, sister in Israel, who had immigrated with all her family from Russia, and they wanted to find the Canadian branch of their family. It was just by chance that my sister-in-law read the ad, and the end result of that was that we sponsored 11 family members to Canada. Of course, they have started a whole other branch of the family in this country. I am sure there are many of you here that have similar stories to tell.

* (17:10)

Our Government also supports Manitoba multiculturalism through support and promotion of cultural events, activities and organizations. As you know, these include: Folklorama, the largest multicultural celebration of its kind in the world, and partly funded by the provincial government; the Winnipeg Art Gallery, which holds a collection of contemporary Inuit art that is the largest in the world, numbering some 10 000 carvings, prints, drawings and textiles; and the Festival du Voyageur, western Canada's largest winter festival, celebrating Manitoba's Francophone history and culture.

Since the events of September 11, 2001, the reality of racism and its terrible effects have been seen in our own society. I had the opportunity to visit New York's ground zero in December. The impact of that scene will stay with me for life. It reinforced my belief that we need to continue to support multiculturalism in

this province. We need to continue to educate our young people about tolerance, compassion and understanding, and to serve as role models for our youth. We should urge the federal government to also maintain its support, both financially and through policy of multiculturalism in our country. We must also take a strong stand against racism in any form and urge all Manitobans to do the same in the spirit of multiculturalism. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jack Reimer (Southdale): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the resolution that was brought forth by the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper). I would like to put a few words on the record in regard to the resolution, in regard to multiculturalism and the spirit of multiculturalism in this great province of Manitoba. Unfortunately, I do not have any anecdotes about my early years with my former wife, but I will endeavour to just bring forth some views as to the positions of multiculturalism that I hold and I believe that most of the members in this Chamber hold.

In fact, in the first WHEREAS, the member brings forth: "WHEREAS Canada is a nation of immigrants." I am the son of an immigrant. My father immigrated to Canada in the mid-1900s, 1917, 1918, in and around there, I believe it was, or shortly after. I can relate very closely. I was raised in a family that was of two different nationalities, if you want to call it. My father was from the Russian-Mennonite sector, and my mother was from the Polish sector. So I had the fortune of having the exposure to two different cultures, if you want to call it. A lot of times it was quite interesting around our home. When my mother's relatives would come, they would speak in Polish. When my father's relatives came, they spoke in German. Unfortunately, the only language that I have is English because that was the common language between us.

Manitoba truly is a very, very unique province in a sense that we are blessed with a very, very strong multicultural community. They participate extensively in a lot of the community activities, the economic activities, the growth of Manitoba, the growth of Winnipeg and indeed in the growth of Canada. In fact, if we look at our Member of Parliament from Winnipeg North-St. Paul, I believe he is, the Honourable Rey Pagtakhan, of the Filipino community and a fine

M.P. He works very hard, not only for Canada, but for his community, and these are some of the things that are brought, not only to the federal scene, but here in Manitoba. We have a lot of different ethnic people who are involved. This whole Chamber is a different mixture of people.

I am reminded that, as a Manitoban, we are truly fortunate. We are fortunate that our cultural diversity is a strength for us as a province and a source of pride for us as a people. I am proud that all Manitobans, regardless of race, culture or religion, have the benefit of equal access to opportunity and to participate in all aspects of our society, while, at the same time, having the confidence that our own cultural values will be respected.

In Manitoba, we have learned over time that the opportunities for a multicultural society are best realized through partnerships, partnerships within the communities and with government. Mr. Speaker, I have learned that the image of this province is one of many people with many differences, but many contributions, many variations and views, but a single common desire to live in harmony and to benefit from the opportunities which this offers. In accepting differences, we accept our oneness. We find our togetherness in accepting each other's right to be different, and this is something, I believe, that all members in this Chamber respect and have become accustomed to because of the exposure of not only their heritage, but of their involvement within the community.

It is, indeed, a pleasure to support this resolution that the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper) has come forward with, and I would recommend all members support this resolution, as it is not only brought forth under the spirit of cooperation, but I commend the member for bringing it forth. Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise today and put a few words on record about the private member's resolution brought forward by the member from Riel. In 1998, it became government policy after the passage of the multiculturalism act in Parliament. The policy of multiculturalism acknowledges the value of diversity, equality,

freedom of cultural retention, sharing and understanding and helps break down discriminatory attitudes.

The NDP government firmly believes in the importance of promoting and supporting cultural diversity, both in Manitoba and in Canada as a whole, and continues to encourage the federal government to maintain its support for multiculturalism in Canada. If you look at multiculturalism, multiculturalism is defined as a process of bringing people of diverse background and heritage together to understand and accept each other as equal participants in the development of our society.

In 1987, an NDP government enacted what was called the Manitoba Intercultural Council. Its mandate was that the council shall make recommendations and provide information and advice to the Government of Manitoba through the minister on all ethnocultural matters in the province, including education, human rights, immigrant settlement, media and communications, and cultural heritage, and may undertake such other ethnocultural activities as the council deems advisable.

Mr. Jim Rondeau, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

In 1993, the Conservative government of the day did not see this fullness of the council and repealed the act that established it. During the provincial election campaign in 1999, the ethnocultural community was unanimous in saying that we have to resurrect the MIC. Listening to the wishes and wide support from the ethnocultural community, the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism introduced a bill, yet again a creation of an NDP government, in 2001 called The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

The council is forging a close working relationship with ethnocultural groups in Manitoba. This Government wishes to promote cultural identity, social justice and the recognition of the skill and talents of all Manitobans regardless of origins within a multicultural society. We believe in a society that is open, inclusive, cohesive and equitable.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has introduced the Ethnocultural Advisory to re-establish a positive dialogue with Manitoba's multicultural community.

* (17:20)

Being a member of an ethnocultural community, multiculturalism will allow me to show and retain some of my customs and traditions in my former country of origin.

I urge members opposite to support the resolution. A unanimous support can only mean recognizing the cultural diversity in Manitoba and is a positive step in recognizing the contribution of ethnocultural communities in shaping Manitoba society and its economic potential. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House this afternoon to speak to this particular motion, in support of it.

I think it is very fitting that today we are debating this particular issue for, at a quarter to seven this evening, there will be a ceremony honouring an immigrant family who contributed a lot to our province.

Rudolph Grapentine was born in the town of Solodinone, Russia, in 1870, in a German colony in Russia. They immigrated, in 1891, to escape persecution. At that time, there was forced conscription into the army. There was persecution of minorities in Russia so, with 200 other Russian-German immigrant families, they made Manitoba their home.

In 1908, Rudolph married Rozalia Mackees in Winnipeg, and, in 1913, they moved to Oakbank, Manitoba. They owned 243 acres, which was considered a very large farm at that time. It extended east from Oakbank. To settle that big farm of 243 acres, they also had a very large family, which was comprised of seven sons.

One of the things that they particularly liked to do was to play baseball, and they played a lot of baseball on their acreage, seeing as Oakbank had no place to play baseball. They finally donated the land to the local community club.

All the community club had to do was to upkeep the land, and baseball could continue to be played.

In 1985, the Kinsmen, with the permission of the surviving Grapentines, were granted the land by the Rural Municipality of Springfield and began the planning of the Kin Place Personal Care Home. In 2001, the North Eastman Health Association, Manitoba Health and community members of Springfield municipality saw Kin Place built and opened. This shows you the immigrant spirit. They donated land that could then be used as a community participation in the particular program. The land was evaluated, and that was their contribution, what was necessary for the project.

This evening, in Kin Place, where right now there are several plaques hanging commemorating all different events in the community, there will be another plaque hung in honour of the Grapentine family, of this immigrant family.

I am very pleased and proud that I will be there. I will be able to recognize the family. The plaque will read: The land on which this building is situated was donated to the community by the Grapentine family.

I think it is very fitting. Mr. Speaker, it is another one of those examples of what immigrants contribute, whether it is a donation like this, whether it is helping to build our societies to make our communities the great communities they are. It shows to the new immigrants the kinds of things that have been done in the past, and it is a real encouragement, not just for my community, but for all of those that come and make Manitoba home. We know that they contribute a lot, and we look forward to seeing more immigration into our province. Thank you.

Mr. Conrad Santos (Wellington): Mr. Speaker, it is written: Tu n'opprimeras pas l'émigré. Vous connaissez vous-mêmes la vie de l'émigré car vous avez été émigrés au pays d'Égypte. [Thou shalt not oppress an alien resident. Ye know the soul of the alien resident because you became an alien yourself in the land of Egypt.] According to the poet and Canadian author Frank R. Scott, stating in 1946 in his piece "The Deportation of the Japanese Canadian: An Open Letter to the Press," he said: We in Canada are all immigrants

except the Indian and the Eskimo, and no citizens' right can be greater than that of the least-protected group.

The least-protected groups are the immigrants in this country because, unlike citizens, they only come as a matter of our courtesy. But let me clarify some meanings that are used when we talk about multiculturalism. Terms like mainstream, ethnics, visible minorities, everybody talks about it. According to William Safire, a North American ethnic is one who takes pride in his or her national origin but who is neither Anglo-Saxon, Protestant or black. When they talk about Anglo-Saxon Protestant, those are the dominant United States cultural group which are called the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. They include the Dutch and the Scottish-Irish, but because of the model of melting pot, you could hardly distinguish them anymore.

In Canada, we did not adopt the melting-pot model. We adopted the mosaic culture. This is culturalism because it is our recommendation by commission on bilingualism and biculturalism.

An Honourable Member: Sing us a song for the last minute.

Mr. Santos: Last minute?

An Honourable Member: Yes, last-minute song.

Mr. Santos: I will do that, but let me first go on basic principles. These differences sometimes imply that there are some cultures that are superior than others, that there are some cultures that are better than others, that there are some cultures that are lower and inferior than others. If we embrace as a belief such a doctrine, it is called ethnocentricity. On the other hand, we can have another belief, another model, which is cultural relativism. They are simply different from each other. No culture is better than another. In fact, we have to welcome them all, and we did when we adopted the doctrine of mosaic culture in Canada.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights said: Tout le monde est né libre et égal en dignité et droits. [All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.]

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Santos: The fact that you are nagging me and harassing me shows something in the behaviour.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Santos: Listen then. I am saying we are all different, but we are all equal in dignity and rights. Even the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson, he said: we hold this truth to be self-evident that all men are created with certain inalienable rights that among this is the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Yet look at the behaviour of Jefferson. He took one of his slaves, and you know the rest of the story. The behaviour is different from the doctrine. Terrible. We have to speak from the heart and behave like we are human beings with dignity and rights. That is what we need in this Legislature.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Santos: Do you want me to sing now? I will sing, but I will exceed my three minutes.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Santos: Well, if you want, I can sing, but I do not want to. I want to say something important. We are human beings. We are not animals here. Sometimes we behave like one. I said we, that includes me, too. Now, whatever it is we adopt, the theory of creation or the theory of evolution, we are entitled to it. We can debate it all night long, but, to tell you the truth, there is

a difference between the behaviour of animals and the behaviour of human beings.

Unlike lower animals, when they cough, they yawn, they stretch, that is all there is. When we cough, we smile, we stretch, there is a symbolic meaning. For example, when animals mate, that is all they do. They are coupling. That is all. But we, in a society of dignified human beings, call it marriage. You can behave like animals in the dark of the night, but, in the sophistication of society, you have to behave like a human being. *[interjection]*

Pardon? I think that is all I am going to say. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Are there any other speakers on Resolution 15? No. Is the House ready for the question?

The question before the House is Resolution 15, Multiculturalism, moved by the honourable Member for Riel (Ms. Asper).

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution? *[Agreed]*

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? *[Agreed]*

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

