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of the

**Legislative Assembly of Manitoba**

**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report  
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**MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**Thirty-Seventh Legislature**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Constituency</b>	<b>Political Affiliation</b>
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.
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FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
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MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
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PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
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SMITH, Scott	Brandon West	N.D.P.
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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

### PRAYERS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### TABLING OF REPORTS

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to rise to table the following report, copies of which have previously been distributed: the Quarterly Financial Report for the Nine Months ended November 1999 for the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation.

I would also like to table the following reports: first, the Workers Compensation Board Appeal Commission Annual Report for 1999 and, second, the Workers Compensation Board 1999 Annual Report.

**Mr. Speaker:** Notices of Motions, Introduction of bills.

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if I might have leave of the House to revert back to Ministerial Statements?

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

### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

#### Yom Hashoah

**Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to announce today, May 2, 2000, is Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Memorial Day in Manitoba. The Legislature yesterday unanimously approved Bill 19, which created Yom Hashoah as a day of remembrance for the victims of the Holocaust.

As the first act of Yom Hashoah, I would like to read the proclamation, signed by the Premier (Mr. Doer) and myself, acknowledging

May 2, 2000, as the day of remembrance for this year. After reading the proclamation, I would like to ask all members of the Legislature to observe a moment of silence in honour of those who died and in solemn commitment that we will work to ensure nothing like the Holocaust ever happens again.

The proclamation reads Holocaust Memorial Day

WHEREAS the Holocaust was the deliberate and planned destruction of European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators during World War II; and

WHEREAS six million Jewish men, women and children perished under this policy of hatred and genocide; and

WHEREAS we must never forget the terrible destruction and pain of the Holocaust; and

WHEREAS Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom Hashoah, was established to remember, honour and commemorate the victims of that genocide; and

WHEREAS this day shall also provide an opportunity to consider other instances of systemic destruction of peoples and human rights issues;

NOW LET IT THEREFORE BE KNOWN THAT we do hereby proclaim May 2, 2000, as determined by the Jewish lunar calendar, as Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom Hashoah, and do commend its thoughtful observation to all citizens in our province.

\* (13:35)

**Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my colleagues on this side of the House and I would like to join with the Minister and her colleagues in recognizing, for the first time officially in our province, Yom Hashoah, the Holocaust

Memorial Day, a day that results from the passage yesterday of Bill 19, a bill that received unanimous consent to pass through the House in speedy passage so that this day could be recognized officially for the first time this year.

As I said yesterday in my comments on third reading of the bill, I believe that this legislation and the Memorial Day that it creates is important to all Manitobans because it requires us all to remember the terribly barbaric acts and atrocities that were committed by the Nazis, acts of hatred and genocide against not only 6 million Jews but approximately 5 million others with various physical and mental characteristics and infirmities, human characteristics that were seen to be unacceptable to the Nazis, such that they proceeded to try and exterminate all those in the various categories that were listed in the act that we passed yesterday.

This act of remembrance is our way of saying, Mr. Speaker, that we want never to see these kinds of things ever happen again. That dark period of time in this century, perhaps the darkest that we have experienced in modern day history is something that can only be prevented by people all over the world making a commitment to remember and commit to not happen again.

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

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of the motion we have just passed and in support of the commemoration today of Yom Hashoah. I rise to say in remembering the Holocaust that we must all dedicate ourselves on an ongoing basis, not only to eliminate any future potential of genocide but to be constantly aware of the need to fight racism in all its forms and to create a tolerant society. Thank you.

### Telephone Rate Increases

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

Mr. Speaker, members of the House will have read an article in the press this morning

reporting that Manitoba Telecom Services Inc. has applied to the CRTC requesting average rate increases of \$3 per month. This increase is being requested to support a portion of MTS's new tax burden. That means the company is asking the CRTC to allow it to flow its new tax burden to consumers in the form of increased rates.

The present request of \$3 will have serious consequences for Manitoba consumers. These increases would be especially onerous for those of limited means and on fixed incomes. Because MTS already has asked for increases associated with inflationary factors, Manitobans could end up paying even more than \$3. Rate increases in rural and northern areas will be proportionately higher than for urban users. Because of the CRTC's decision to have people in high-cost serving areas bear a larger share of the costs of service in the future, consumers in rural and northern communities are likelier to see even higher rates.

I am advised that MTS's application provides a strong signal indicating that the company will be asking for additional increases to cover its tax expenses in future years. Because in 1998 MTS asked for rate increases of up to \$8 for its then-future tax expenditure requirements, it is possible that another \$5 could be requested for the year 2001 and beyond. Therefore, if the requested rates are approved, the CRTC's decision could set a precedent whereby MTS's future tax-related rate requests could be more easily adopted by the Commission.

Because we do not believe this application is in the best interests of Manitoba consumers, especially those who will be hard pressed to pay more for this essential service, we will be willing to voice our concerns directly and clearly to the CRTC. We will be asking the Commission to ensure that Manitoba consumers are not asked to bear the weight of MTS's tax burden.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we do not want the CRTC to make its decision on this critical matter sitting in its offices in Hull, Québec. We want Manitobans to be given an opportunity to be heard; therefore, we are calling upon the Commission not only to hold full and complete public hearings in Manitoba but in fact to hold

them in a number of locations, including ones in rural and northern Manitoba.

All members of the House would be aware that this kind of application was to be expected. Indeed, if approved, this increase will be directly and indisputably attributable to the privatization of MTS.

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

\* (13:40)

**Point of Order**

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** On a point of order, I just had a flashback to the MTS debate. It speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if you could assist the House in allowing the Minister to make his ministerial statement, as he has full right to do, on a very, very important matter, rather than having the Opposition trying to shout the Minister down and try and keep from Manitobans the results of the MTS debate in this House.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order?

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I do honestly believe that déjà vu is not happening because you do not see one of our members on that side sticking his finger in the Premier's face or cursing at the Speaker. But, beyond that, the Honourable Member does not have a point of order because the Honourable Member is dealing with a hypothetical issue, and the Honourable Minister is provoking the debate and now the Honourable House Leader is doing the same thing. So I would rule that he does not have a point of order.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. On both points of order, there was no point of order.

But I would ask all members to please allow the Minister to continue with his comments, and the Opposition will have a chance to respond after the Minister has concluded his comments.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Lemieux:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All members in this House certainly should have the opportunity to be heard, and I would expect that courtesy, thank you.

Not only that, we want Manitobans to be given an opportunity to be heard. Therefore we are calling upon the Commission not only to hold full and complete public hearings in Manitoba but in fact to hold them in a number of locations, including the ones in rural Manitoba and in northern Manitoba. All members of the House will be aware that this kind of application was to be expected. Indeed, if approved, this increase will be directly and indisputably attributable to the privatization of MTS. When MTS was a Crown corporation, it was not required to pay these taxes. In effect, then, this rate increase and any future tax-related increases, if approved, will be the price Manitobans will pay for the privatization, and no longer will they be able to say that they have the lowest telephone rates in Canada. Because the Official Opposition, when in government, opposed MTS's previous tax-related rate application, we would expect them to support our efforts to oppose this new request. Moreover, because the previous government passed the privatization legislation that made rate applications of this kind inevitable, we believe members opposite have a particular obligation now to stand up and be counted on the right side of this issue. Thank you.

**Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition):** I thank the Minister for that statement. I suspect he was set up a little bit by his House Leader on that. This is the very Minister, who is now calling for public hearings on this issue, who has refused to have public hearings on the establishment of five First-Nations-run casinos in this province. He is grinning because he realizes the irony and the hypocrisy of that kind of position. But that is what we are going to see a lot more of, I am sure, from not only this Minister but all members opposite, is the hypocrisy of what they say and what they do.

I find it interesting that the Minister has referred to the fact that the Manitoba Telecom

Services should be bearing the costs of the taxes and not passing them on to the consumer. He probably does not know that Saskatchewan telephone system, under public ownership, bears the costs of the dividends that it gives to the Crown, to the NDP government of Saskatchewan, and adds that to its costs so that it raises the rates that its people pay, which is why Saskatchewan has higher rates than Manitoba does and which is why Saskatchewan's telephone rates have gone up more under public ownership than Manitoba's have under private ownership.

I will say that it is legitimate for the Government to raise their concerns to the CRTC. We did that when we were in government, and in fact I hope that he is as successful as we were, because on many occasions the CRTC rolled back the rate increases that were asked for by the Manitoba Telecom Services, resulting in the fact that we still have the lowest rates in Canada.

\* (13:45)

### Shaken Baby Syndrome

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Mr. Speaker, I have a non-partisan statement for the House.

As Minister of Family Services and Housing and the Chair of the Healthy Child Committee of Cabinet, it is my pleasure to inform the Assembly of the release of this video, *It Only Takes a Moment*, 13 minutes long, about the damage caused by shaken baby syndrome. Over the past 10 years, 11 infants and young children have lost their lives to this syndrome and another 34 have been severely damaged and cannot lead normal lives.

The video was a joint venture of our Healthy Child Initiative and the Child Protection Centre of the Children's Hospital. Many other partners were involved, including public health nurses, teachers and community agencies, who will use the video to provide education about the tragic consequences of shaking a baby or a young child. If we are able to prevent the death or injury of just one child, this video will have proved its worth.

I wish to acknowledge my honourable colleague the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), who initiated the work on this video as the Minister of Family Services, and to thank her for her part in making this resource a reality. I am also happy to inform the House that I will be providing all territorial, provincial and federal ministers with copies of the video and encouraging them to use it freely wherever they can. I am asking each member of the House to make the video available in their constituencies to community organizations as extensively as possible.

I think, as I said in response to a media question, all of us get frustrated with our kids, and it is okay to be frustrated. It is just not okay ever to shake a baby.

I notice, Mr. Speaker, we have some schools in the gallery. I have copies of the video here with me for them, as well. Thank you.

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my honourable friend the Minister of Family Services and Housing for his statement today and indicate that there are many, many issues that do certainly cross political party lines, and this is indeed one of them where the safety and well-being of all of our children in Manitoba are something that I think we collectively share as members of this Legislature and as Manitobans. I want to thank him for the tabling today of the video. I think it is something that we all will be able to use within our communities and our constituencies.

We know that a healthy start to life for all children is very much based on parents and caregivers having an understanding of how to deal with the issues of caring for infants and children within our society. I know that many, many people have worked long and hard to try to ensure, whether they work in the child care community, whether they work in Child and Family Services or within the Government of Manitoba, all those that provide service and support to children along with parents have a responsibility to understand and be educated on the kinds of things that can have an unhealthy impact on our children, and shaken baby syndrome is certainly one of those things. I do want to commend the Children and Youth

Secretariat and those that were involved in the broad community consultation that was done in order to get this video up and running. It takes many within the community coming together to try to ensure that we have the right approach. And just as one word of advice for the new Minister of Family Services and Housing, I would like to indicate that the Children and Youth Secretariat, being separate and apart from any department within government, was in fact the vehicle for that kind of community consultation and collaboration. So very often there are barriers that are put up within departments, not with anyone with bad intentions, but in fact it is really important for departments to break down those barriers and work together. I would hope that the new initiative that has been created within the Department of Family Services still has the ability to reach out to those community organizations that are so valuable to provide their input to government and government departments so that truly community initiatives take priority.

Mr. Speaker, with those comments I want to thank the Minister of Family Services and Housing. I think that Manitoba has proved that it is on the leading edge when it comes to providing education to those that provide services and support to our children and families. Thank you.

\* (13:50)

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Speaker, I rise as a pediatrician who has looked after children to commend the Minister and his Department for doing what can be done to try to minimize or eliminate the condition, shaken baby syndrome. I think that this is commendable and I urge you onward. I would ask only in addition that you make sure that we have a record and can keep track of the progress so that we can measure the effectiveness over time of the program you started.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill 14—The Provincial Railways Amendment Act

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms.

Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 14, The Provincial Railways Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les chemins de fer provinciaux), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

I should also inform the House that I am tabling the Lieutenant-Governor's message on the bill. It states, "I have been informed of the proposed bill and I recommend the bill to the Legislative Assembly for the purpose as set out in the bill."

### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Ashton:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, this bill is in keeping with our Government's commitment to setting up an appropriate process for railways to come under provincial jurisdiction. As members of this House will know, there has been a significant series of developments the last number of years in terms of rail line abandonment. We want to set in place procedures within our own jurisdiction, which basically applies to short lines, to ensure that, when short lines are in a position of seeking to abandon their operation of a rail line, other options are considered, and in fact this process is similar to the federal process where, of course, one looks at main line rail lines abandoning their role in that rail line and turn it over to short line. This is part of an overall series of commitments by this Government to do whatever is possible to either maintain the rail line which is our No. 1 goal and also to look at alternative uses where no other option is available.

### *Motion agreed to.*

### Bill 15—The Water Rights Amendment Act

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 15, The Water Rights Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur les droits d'utilisation de l'eau), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

### *Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lathlin:** Just a few words. A recent judgment by the Manitoba Court of Appeal has

questioned the Province of Manitoba's right to license drains and drainage. Previous changes to the act and delegation of some drainage responsibility to municipalities have been interpreted by the court to mean that the provincial government has absolved itself of almost all responsibility for drainage.

We feel that this amendment will address the issue.

*Motion agreed to.*

### **Bill 21—The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act**

**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), that leave be given to introduce Bill 21, The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act (Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement hydraulique), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

*Motion presented.*

**Mr. Lathlin:** Again, brief words. The Water Resources Administration Amendment Act provides authority for the Minister, through Water Resources Branch, to manage and administer all matters that relate to construction and operation of water control works including dikes, reservoirs and provincial waterways. The act also provides authority to permit building structures within a designated flood area.

*Motion agreed to.*

\* (13:55)

### **Introduction of Guests**

**Mr. Speaker:** Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have with us from Oakdale School, 18 Grades 7 and 12 students under the direction of Mr. Garth Bradley and Mr. Pepe Labra.

This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon).

Also, we have seated in the public gallery from Linden Meadows School, 46 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Kathy McLennan and Mrs. Gail Hurak.

This school is located in the constituency of the Honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen).

Also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Mr. Terence Curran, British Consul General and Director of Trade Promotion and Investment, Canada.

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

### **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

#### **Wildlife Amendment Act Public Consultations**

**Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Conservation. Like most members in this House, I have been receiving dozens of letters and calls concerning the Government's proposed Wildlife Amendment Act, Bill 5. When the Minister introduced this act into the House, he said it was merely intended to put an end to panned hunting in our province, a measure which I believe has the support of most people on all sides of the House and probably the support of most of the people who are writing us with concerns.

The groups include Keystone Agriculture Producers, Manitoba Cattle Producers, bison producers, the Manitoba sheep producers, even some who raise non-indigenous birds. It appears as though the proposed legislation by the Minister will have a drastic effect on legitimate agriculture operations, particularly ones like the bison producers who are here with us in the gallery today.

I wonder if the Minister would please outline if he or his Department have organized any public consultations to date to discuss the amendments to The Wildlife Act with stakeholders and the public to try and ensure that we eliminate the concerns and rectify the problems that are being caused by this bill?



**Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation):** I thank the member for raising the issue. As the Honourable Member knows, during the recent provincial election, our party and I know his party and the Liberal Party were approached by people, and all three parties committed to banning penned hunting in Manitoba.

Among a number of other issues, this is one of the issues the people of Manitoba gave our Government with a mandate to proceed. Therefore, we are proceeding with the bill. We have introduced it. It will give the Department the ability to close a loophole that essentially endorsed the practice of allowing individuals to shoot certain wild animals within a fenced area.

**Mr. Filmon:** Well, the Minister has completely avoided the question, Mr. Speaker. The question is not whether or not we support the elimination of penned hunting. We have already said that. The question is: What is he going to do about the unintended consequences of the bill and the fact that there are people who are attempting to make their concerns known to the Minister so that they can avoid having their livelihoods destroyed by this bill?

I am concerned because I have just received a copy of a memo from a Natural Resources officer in his Department, sent to an agriculture representative, that says, and I quote: I just received word from the Deputy Minister's office that the public meetings regarding Bill 5 have been cancelled. The word received was that the Department executive was experiencing a degree of discomfort with this topic and we were advised that no public meetings will be held until after the second reading, whenever that may be. We are in the process of cancelling all the meetings.

They list here a series of 10 meetings that had been scheduled by his Department to consult with the public about this issue. These 10 meetings went from Swan River to Dauphin to Neepawa, Ashern, Stonewall, Winnipeg, Brandon, Morden, Steinbach, Lac du Bonnet, all cancelled, which is why there is a tremendous concern on the part of people who are saying that their livelihoods could be destroyed. I think

that I can understand now why he and his department are uncomfortable with this legislation.

Will he tell the bison producers who are in the gallery and many others, legitimate agriculture producers, what he intends to do about these concerns?

\* (14:00)

**Mr. Lathlin:** I know that the former Premier knows that there will be an opportunity for talking to the public, second reading; there will be an opportunity.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I might point out to the former Premier, who again I am sure is aware that there will be an opportunity for the public to have input. During the time that the regulation will be made, the public will be consulted.

I also want to advise the Honourable Member that I have met with some groups—the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk) has also met with some groups—and I am not uncomfortable at all meeting with other groups if they want to meet.

**Mr. Filmon:** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the livelihood of many, many producers in this province. This province, in order to ensure that its agriculture producers had opportunities to have their support and their income maintained in this province, have diversified to a great extent. We now have 180 producers of bison in this province. It is a \$70 million a year annual industry growing at 20 percent a year, and it is jeopardized by the legal opinions they have on this bill.

Now, his department had a series of meetings, 10 of them scheduled—Swan River, Dauphin, Neepawa, Ashern, Stonewall, Winnipeg, Brandon, Morden, Steinbach, Lac du Bonnet. Before the bill was discussed in this House and taken to committee stage, these meetings were to have been held. They have been cancelled. They have been cancelled because of a discomfort on the part of the Minister.

My question is: Will he hold these public meetings and get the problems resolved before

they get to legislation, before they get to committee, before people lose their livelihoods? Will he commit to holding these public hearings?

**Mr. Lathlin:** Mr. Speaker, I want to also advise the Honourable Member that most Manitobans have expressed their displeasure with the practice of penned hunting. I can also report here that they are supportive of this initiative. Personally, I am very proud that we are acting to close this loophole.

I also want to advise the Honourable Member that, contrary to what he says, we are not going to go after those people who are making a living from this industry, but we are not going to allow animals to be fenced in so that people can come in and shoot a defenceless animal for a price. That is what we are not going to do.

#### **1987 Subdivision Proposal Out-of-Court Settlement**

**Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet):** Mr. Speaker, I have some questions for the Premier, flowing from the discussions and questions yesterday regarding the settlement of the 1987 lawsuits, which involved him as a former Minister of Urban Affairs. If the House would indulge me for a moment, I would like to table a copy of the Government news release, if I may do that. If I could ask the page just to take a marked copy for the First Minister (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), that deal with my specific question, I think it will make it much easier for the First Minister to follow. If the page could just provide those copies, please. Thank you.

If the First Minister just indulges me for a moment, Mr. Speaker, in this particular news release, the headline is marked as "No Improper Actions" which was never part of the settlement. Also, I would refer the First Minister, if he would just be kind enough to look at it, where he indicates: "In the release, the plaintiffs' note that it has always been the clear position of the government that each of the defendants and all provincial officials and employees 'did not act improperly . . . .'"

What the Government is saying in this press release is that the plaintiffs are saying that the Government is saying that the Government did not do anything wrong. I have never seen such bafflegab in all my years in government. I would just like to ask the First Minister to agree that this press release is really quite frankly bafflegab, putting words into the plaintiffs' mouths that were not part of the release or spoken by them.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** No, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Praznik:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we now have the judge saying that the accused said that the accused is innocent, which is absolutely ludicrous—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

#### **Point of Order**

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, I regret to get up again, but again it is this issue of a lengthy preamble before a supplementary question is asked.

I refer to Beauchesne's 410. First it says: "Preambles to questions should be brief" and secondly, "supplementary questions require no preambles." Thank you.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on the same point of order.

**Mr. Praznik:** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, I will certainly try to be brief, but here we are just trying to find out what the Government is saying in its own press release because it is just so unclear. I think the Premier owes it to the people of Manitoba to be clear on this issue. I am just trying to help him.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. On both points of order, I would like to remind all members, Beauchesne's Citation 410(8) advises that a supplementary question should not require a preamble.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Speaker:** Would the Honourable Member please put his question.

**Mr. Praznik:** My supplementary to the First Minister is: Would the First Minister please clarify to the House his remarks of yesterday as to which party proposed the settlement of \$100,000 in this matter? I am not asking who initiated overall negotiations, but which party proposed the \$100,000 settlement, because we understand that it was the Government who proposed the \$100,000. Could the Premier please clarify that matter?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, we tabled the settlement yesterday in this Chamber. We made public all the conditions in the settlement, unlike the Gateway North situation. I have looked back over Hansard and in 1988 they did not come into this House and oppose the decisions we made in West St. Paul. In fact, in 1992, Mr. Scrafield, the senior planner of the Department of Urban Affairs, came to the same planning conclusions that we had, and that record is very clear.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, with his final supplementary question.

\* (14:10)

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Speaker, I am just asking the Premier again to clarify to the House as to whether or not it is true that it was government lawyers who proposed the hundred thousand dollars, and if he would also please just put on the record of the House again today that the hundred thousand dollars was to be used for out-of-pocket legal expenses in this case. I am just asking to clarify, please, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) tabled the statement, the agreement yesterday in the House. One of the things that we wanted to clarify with our counsel and the counsel for the plaintiffs was the ability to be fully open with the public on the terms of the settlement. I noticed that the Member opposite was making statements about "orders" in the statement.

I want to table in the House a comparison between the Campbell Trading settlement and

Gateway North for the edification of the Minister who was involved in the other matter. He will note some similarities, but unlike the Member opposite, we thought the public's interest was served by going public.

**Mr. Speaker:** The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a new question.

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the First Minister wants to be so open because I would like to ask him today if he is prepared to waive the gag order under this release, which was done for the benefit of Government. They have the certain right to do that. I would ask if he is prepared, in the interest of truth, to waive that gag order so that the plaintiffs are able to share with the public the facts of this particular matter. I ask the First Minister if he is prepared to make that commitment today.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, I tabled for the edification of the Honourable Member a settlement that he was involved in. If he will compare the two settlements reached by the same government lawyer, he will notice the openness that we displayed yesterday in this Legislature far exceeds the kind of standard put forward by the Member opposite when he was in government.

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the sensitivity of the First Minister, because I ask the First Minister if he will confirm to the people of Manitoba today that, in fact, the hundred thousand dollars, as we learned, was not representative of expenses, but the out-of-pocket legal expenses of these parties was less than \$50,000 and that there was over a \$50,000 profit in this settlement that the Premier authorized? Will he confirm that?

**Mr. Doer:** The Member opposite may or may not know that the legal counsel engaged and hired, as our legal counsel did, a considerable number of consultants that made up part of the costs, to deal with the alleged change in value of land based on different times of decision making and so that, too, added to the costs of the plaintiff. The settlement from the Province of Manitoba that represents liabilities for the Province, Mr. Pawley, myself, the City of Winnipeg and West St. Paul, quite frankly, is

below what the federal and provincial governments settled, a case that the Member opposite was involved with, with the same lawyer, and that is the Gateway North Transportation system.

**Mr. Praznik:** Mr. Speaker, I asked the First Minister—this is incredible. Now he is admitting legal costs, change in value of land. I ask him: Does his own press release not state that the settlement costs were only to defray the legal costs in this case? There is a change in the Premier's statement. I ask him to please confirm exactly what was done, and I ask the First Minister to release the gag order so we can get to the truth of this matter.

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) yesterday tabled in this House the full statement that was reached by the two parties. That does not usually happen. It did not happen with the Member opposite. The document was tabled—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on a point of order.

#### Point of Order

**Mr. Praznik:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the Premier just said to the House that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs tabled the whole document. There are no receipts, there is no proof as to what those legal costs are. Is there more that was not tabled?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. May I remind all members when a Speaker is making a ruling, it is a very serious matter. I would really appreciate it if you would just tone it down a little bit so I can make the ruling and announce it to the House.

On the point of order, the Honourable Member does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the information that is provided by the Government and his information.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Doer:** I have tabled in this Chamber a comparison between a settlement reached by the

same lawyer dealing with a matter that the Minister was involved in, Mr. Speaker, and the fact that we had tabled the document in this Chamber dealing with the matters of last Friday.

Mr. Speaker, you will find that the amount of disclosure available to the public and the standard between the two is a lot less from the Member opposite. He can feign indignation all he wants, but when it was time to act, he failed the test.

#### Income Tax Reductions

**Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park):** During the lead-up to the federal budget, the Premier called on Ottawa to boost health care funding and cut taxes. In fact, he saw no reason why Ottawa could not do both. The Premier, in fact, was quoted as saying: I think we can walk and chew gum at the same time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach this Government's first budget, Manitobans are asking if this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) will cut taxes as his Leader has demanded of Ottawa.

I ask the Minister today: Will he make that commitment to Manitobans?

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** I was pleased that, in Québec City, for the second time, when the Premiers met after the August meeting that took place last summer, we were able to identify that health care is the No. 1 priority for Canadians. Mr. Speaker, that, I thought, was an advance forward from the position articulated at the meeting in August of '99 and I think very consistent in the year 2000 with Canadians' view.

Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite want to read our five commitments, they will note that health care is the No. 1 commitment, but we also acknowledge that property taxes must be dealt with. We have started that with our funding to public education. Stay tuned for our budget.

**Mr. Stefanson:** Since the Premier wants to respond to his call for tax cuts, when will this Premier stop telling Manitobans that he does not have the ability to reduce taxes and instead offer

the taxpayers personal income tax reductions, which is something happening in almost every other province right across Canada but not here in Manitoba under this Premier and this Government?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite has been a Finance Minister in this House for a number of years, and he would know that the Deloitte and truth report—as the former Premier opposite has identified—has identified a number of structural problems. *[interjection]* I did not call it Deloitte and truth; I called it Deloitte and Touche, but only the Member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon) called it that.

It identified a number of structural challenges that we have to deal with: the unfunded liability of pensions that has gone from \$1.2 billion to \$2.6 billion; the fact that many settlements were not factored into the three-year projections, including the elimination of Filmon Fridays and the health care sector; the provision for the SmartHealth boondoggle that members opposite should be too ashamed to talk about; the lack of many of the capital promises made by members opposite in health care, virtual hospitals with no staffing built into the three-year projections. But in spite—

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

\* (14:20)

**Mr. Doer:** No, it is just another bit of information that will come eventually out of an audit, Mr. Speaker, that members opposite will not be happy to hear about; neither will Manitobans.

Having said that, we believe in a balance between health care, hope for our young people, a strategy to get business, labour and government working together in co-operation. We believe in keeping Hydro owned by the public. We believe in affordable government, and we are going to deliver on it.

**Mr. Stefanson:** Mr. Speaker, I am certainly happy for all Manitobans that, in spite of this Government's best efforts to run a deficit, we are

still going to have our fifth balanced budget in a row here in Manitoba because of the decisions that we made when in Government.

In Saskatchewan, the NDP Government has been advised by the experts, heard from the people and listened. When will this Premier and this Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) start listening to the experts and to all Manitobans and implement personal income tax cuts, hopefully, in this budget?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, we did listen to Manitobans when they made their decision on which agenda would go forward on September 21. The most fundamental democratic principle in this Legislature is those of us who campaign on certain visions either get a mandate or rejected in their mandate from the public. I think it is important to note that we recognize—*[interjection]* Well, the members want to talk about casinos. Why do we have double the exposure in expenditures in the casinos in the city of Winnipeg? We need no lectures from members opposite with their virtual hospitals and doubling of expenditures in casinos.

Having said that, Manitobans want an affordable government. We are an affordable government that is delivering on our promises. Read our five commitments. That is what we have a mandate for. That is what we are proceeding with.

#### **Income Assistance Recipients Employment Search**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, while job training, child care services and educational opportunities are invaluable and must indeed form a part of any Family Services program, to be most effective, they must also be accompanied by a mechanism designed to ensure that people on income assistance actually seek jobs afterwards.

Could the Minister advise Manitoba taxpayers what mechanism he will be putting in place to determine if individuals on income assistance actively seek employment after their taxpayer-paid training?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member

for that question because it allows me to say again, more people left social assistance during our first six months in office than during the same period last year. About 1100 were added to the rolls during that period in the previous government; 670 came off the rolls during our time in this first six months.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is strengthening the job programs. The member will probably know that there is a job centre on Rorie Street. The Department of Education is assisting us in that centre by adding resources to assist us in making that centre more effective. We are improving our tracking system so that we actually know what happens to people as they go through our training programs. We believe that we are running a more effective system by putting resources at the front end and by doing intake properly, by strengthening those supports, by working with people on real job training, real opportunities, so that they do not come back on social assistance.

**Mrs. Driedger:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the Minister could tell me what will be the consequences to those who decide not to seek employment? I hope he is not naive enough to think that everyone is going to look for work. I mean, where is he building accountability into this system, or is he making this a welfare-friendly Manitoba?

**Some Honourable Members:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Mr. Sale:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I just simply refer to the facts. The facts are that more people left the social assistance system for work during the first six months we were in office than during the same period in the previous year. So the facts speak for themselves. Secondly, the Member will know and the previous Minister opposite will know that there have been sanctions as part of the social assistance system since it was essentially invented. Those sanctions are no different today than they were 10 years ago in terms of how they are applied.

A very small percentage, less than 0.7 percent of our system is even at maximum affected by abuse. We have at present something

in the order of 0.6 percent of our recipients who are subject to any form of sanctions. Many of those sanctions are relatively mild. That is because most people on social assistance do wish to work.

### Statistics

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** Mr. Speaker, it does bear repeating that it was our welfare reform that has taken 22 000 people off welfare.

Could the Minister tell us if the statistic of July 1999 that Manitoba had the second-lowest percentage of the population on welfare is still current?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** Mr. Speaker, I just note for the Member that the vast majority of those who left social assistance in the 1990s were on the caseloads of the City of Winnipeg. It was the City of Winnipeg's programs and the City of Winnipeg's activities that were successful in reducing that number of people on social assistance very, very significantly. I can take the question of the exact percentage as notice, but I would say to the Member that, given that more people have left social assistance during our first six months than were in the same period in the previous year, I would imagine that the statistic still is borne out. I will take the question as notice and provide her the answer very quickly.

### Flooding

#### Agricultural Disaster Assistance

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** My question is to the Premier. In the legislative session before the end of last year the Premier and I believe the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) referred to the fact that they had written, I believe November 29, to request a JERI program shared with the federal government. What has been less clear is whether the present government is ready to put its dollars on the table in a 50-50 cost-shared JERI program to help farmers in southwestern Manitoba.

**Hon. Gary Doer (Premier):** Mr. Speaker, the Member will know that there are some parts of disaster assistance that are 50-50 and the

Member will also know that there are some parts that are legitimately 90-10. I would not want to see the Member for River Heights suggest to the Manitoba producers in southwest Manitoba that they should get less support than the people that were hit by the ice storms in Ontario or Québec or the people hit in the Red River Valley, so let us make sure that we look at the programs that were in the Red River Valley at 50-50 and let us not walk away from a national disaster assistance program that southwest Manitoba deserves to be treated in the same way as Québec and Ontario after the ice storm.

\* (14:30)

**Mr. Gerrard:** My supplementary to the Premier: Given the fact that there was a JERI program in '97, that this is now many months after the events of last year, will the Premier not finally admit that he is not prepared to put on the table the dollars for a 50-50 cost-shared program?

**Mr. Doer:** I will not admit that, Mr. Speaker. The Member for River Heights should know that in the Red River flood of '97, over \$200 million was cost-shared on a 90-10 basis and approximately \$11 million was cost-shared on a 50-50 basis. The people of southwest Manitoba deserve a national disaster assistance program similar to the people of Québec and Ontario during the ice storm and similar to the people in the Red River Valley, and that is the position we will take and that is the money we will put on the table.

**Mr. Gerrard:** My supplementary to the Premier: Given the strong statements of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) yesterday in support of a JERI program, will the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture not write, requesting a 50-50 shared program, to the federal government?

**Mr. Doer:** Mr. Speaker, let us look at the Red River Valley. There were parts of it, the majority of it, that was covered under a national disaster assistance program that triggered a 90-10; there was a minority of it that was 50-50. We support that model. We are not going to walk away, though, from the federal responsibility on the 90-10 for the people that are affected and are

victims of the disaster last year of flooding in southwest Manitoba. We are not walking away from that position and only going to the 50-50 position. We have to have full disaster assistance, and that means 90-10 for the flooding that took place in southwest Manitoba and 50-50 on a similar program as suggested, not one part of it but this is a full disaster that needs full assistance from the national government to start acting in a national way.

### **Manitoba Telecom Services Rate Increase Application**

**Mr. Scott Smith (Brandon West):** My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lemieux). I understand that MTS has requested to the CRTC to raise monthly residential rates by \$3, and, as well, it includes a request for an expedited process that only allows 30 days to send their comments to the CRTC. Will the minister write to the CRTC proposing—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. The Honourable Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

### **Point of Order**

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have seen abuse before, but this is starting to take the cake. We have had the legislative assistant to the Minister of Education asking questions. Now we have the Member for Brandon West, who sits in the caucus with the Member, after the Minister brings forward his minister's statement today, he asks the question again.

Mr. Speaker, how many more of these members are not getting informed by their ministers in caucus? We were always informed by our ministers.

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

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there was no rule cited there in the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader. There is the full right of individual members of this House to ask

questions of the Government, and that right was being taken advantage of, as is rightly his to do.

Mr. Speaker, what this says is that they do not like this question; they do not like the answers. I wonder if we can proceed now with the questions.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Under Manitoba precedents, there is nothing set that disallows a member from raising a question on ministerial statements, so I will allow the question.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the interests of my constituents in southwestern Manitoba, certainly in the rest of Manitoba, will the Minister write to the CRTC opposing this request and stating the expectations of Manitoba citizens, that there will be full public hearings prior to the decision being made, and that the CRTC will travel to Manitoba's rural and northern communities to give consumers an opportunity to speak directly on this costly prorated increase?

**Mr. Lemieux:** I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Member for Brandon West for his question. I would like to say that I do not believe the public and the people of Manitoba want an expedited process of 30 days to have to deal with such an important issue. I am currently writing and communicating with the CRTC to ask them to hold hearings throughout Manitoba, not only having those hearings held in Hull but also holding those hearings in the province of Manitoba, throughout the North and also throughout the south, so, yes, we will be communicating with the CRTC in writing and requesting this.

\* (14:40)

### **Pelican Lake Centre Public Consultations**

**Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood):** I would like to begin by saying that I am a strong supporter of community living. I am a strong believer in listening to families, unlike this Government's decision to close Pelican Lake without listening. I am in receipt of a petition

circulated by CUPE and signed by over 2500 Manitobans who are unhappy with this Government's lack of consultation. Can the Minister of Family Services please assure the families of the residents of Pelican Lake Centre that, unlike his decision to close the centre without any consultation, they will be involved in every step of the relocation of their loved ones?

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** I thank the Member for the question because I think it is a very important issue that she raises. Indeed, throughout the planning process, we have made every effort to contact and involve members of the families. For example, we have members of families that are not even in this province that we are working with to help them bring loved ones closer to home. We have people looking at moving to Ontario, people looking at moving to British Columbia where they can be with their families. We have, as a matter of policy, the requirement that people be involved.

Now, it is also true that many families have chosen over the years not to be involved with people who are there. We have still made the effort to contact them and to ask them if they wish to be involved in the planning process. I want to tell the Member that the process is going very well and that people are now engaged at the family level, at the community level, at the receiving home level, that exploratory visits are being made to see whether people are happy with the alternatives. New services are being opened in southwest Manitoba to accommodate both day programs and residential programs. I appreciate her asking the question because it is a very important policy matter she raises.

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

### **Speaker's Ruling**

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. I have a ruling for the House.

One of the members named in a ruling has left for a brief moment, so I will deliver the ruling in one more day.



## MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

## Fort Rouge School

## Hudson's Bay Company Gallery

**Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River):** Mr. Speaker, this morning I, along with the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon), had the honour of attending the opening ceremony of a Gift to the Nation at the Hudson's Bay Company Gallery at the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature. This was a momentous occasion. The Hudson's Bay Company Gallery tells the story of one of the oldest commercial enterprises still in existence and the incredible influence that it has had on our country's history during its 330 years in business.

The new gallery is a significant addition to the province's historic resources. The Hudson's Bay Company has had a major impact on this province's and indeed this nation's economic and social fabric. The gallery takes people back to another era and showcases the daily lives of not only the European fur traders but also the lives of the First Nations, Métis and the Inuit people. The display offers a look at both the hardships they endured and the triumphs they created.

\* (14:50)

In 1994, the Filmon government worked very diligently and determinedly with the Hudson's Bay Company to ensure that the artifacts, valued in excess of \$75 million, remained in Manitoba. It is heartening to see this tremendous collection of natural history specimens, human history artifacts and visual material on display. The province is significantly enriched by the presence of this collection which contains more than 10 000 pieces and is one of the world's most significant historic resources.

I would encourage all Manitobans to pay a visit to the gallery, a gallery whose presence has been made possible by the generous donation of the Hudson's Bay Company and the hard work of the Filmon government. I would also encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly to take time from their busy schedules to visit this extraordinary exhibit. By examining—

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing):** I rise today to pay tribute to a wonderful education project in a remarkable school. The Faculty of Education at the University of Winnipeg recently completed a unique project with the students and families of Fort Rouge School located in my riding. Not one student in this little inner city school lives in a single-family home. Children from many nations, ranging from Kosovo to China, Czechoslovakia to Eritrea, and Northern Manitoba to our own inner city, make this school their home.

During the past several months, Faculty of Education students joined with families and children to enable parents to share stories with their children about their homelands and their birth families. The children then retold the stories in their own words. Then the stories were illustrated and placed in this beautiful book, *Three Stars and a Wish*. Each story has opposite it a wish from the parents for their child's future. Let me read just a couple of them, Mr. Speaker:

"A Wish for Dennis: I wish that Dennis will become a medical doctor. One day he said he wanted to study at university. I can say that he is a capable young boy and he would make a good doctor. Love, Mother." From a Chinese mother.

"A Wish for Josh: My wish for Josh is that he succeeds in everything he attempts to do. I hope that Josh never lets anything or anyone keep him rising from the top." That is from Russia.

The book was presented by the children and their parents recently at a special evening at the University of Winnipeg attended by Faculty of Education students and teachers, the president of the university and family and friends. It was an evening of tears, laughter and affirmation for all those involved, a powerful reminder that good education integrates affirmation for children and families, the technical skills of reading and writing, artistic expression, and community building. I commend all those involved in this creative and life-affirming project of an inner city university with an inner city school.

### Small-Business Community

**Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa):** Mr. Speaker, the province of Manitoba owes much to small business. Fully 80 percent of companies in Manitoba are small businesses. They provide employment for more of this province's people than any other sector. In addition to being a major employer, the small-business community has been instrumental in diversifying the province's economy. Diversity has strengthened us immeasurably and will continue to do so.

That said, I want to also say that small business cannot do it all themselves. They need to be embraced by conditions that allow them to succeed and grow, an atmosphere that is friendly to their cause and seeks to lend them the assistance they might need. This House can and should take a leading role in creating those conditions. The previous administration started us on the road to creating the favourable climate I am talking about. The Conservative government froze all major tax rates; we reduced the small business corporate tax by 10 percent. Our fiscal policy sought to address the need to reduce profit and sensitive taxes and succeeded in significantly lowering workers compensation rates as well as increasing payroll tax exemptions. The significance of these steps is even greater when placed in the context of 1988 and the disastrous conditions for business that was the New Democrats' legacy.

I want to call on the New Democratic Government of the day to remain committed to small business development. In the competitive era we find ourselves in, it is vital that we continue to build a strong base of locally grown business. With the volume of jobs and revenue that they contribute to our economy, we cannot afford not to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Hudson's Bay Company Gallery

**Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk):** Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 330th anniversary of the Hudson's Bay Company. Earlier today the Hudson's Bay Company Gallery formally opened at the Manitoba Museum. The donation of the Hudson's Bay Company and the work of the Province in making the collection accessible deserves our appreciation, and I want to

commend the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Ms. McGifford) for her support.

The Hudson's Bay collection at the Manitoba Museum and Archives, along with the historic Lower Fort Garry, Selkirk, facilitates better appreciation of our collective heritage. The collection of artifacts of the Hudson's Bay Company, First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultures exceeds over 10 000 items that have been carefully preserved and are now owned by the museum for all Canadians. The staff at the museum deserve our appreciation for a very impressive and imaginative presentation of the artifacts in the gallery. Highlights include the restored York boat, originally built in Selkirk in 1920 and the last York boat to be used on Lake Winnipeg, artwork, maps, photos, relics and other trade goods spanning the entire history of the Hudson's Bay.

The Hudson's Bay Gallery is a valuable asset to the province and one that every Manitoban should try and visit. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### Thunderbird House

**Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition and I were very pleased to attend the opening of Thunderbird House on March 21 last. This stunning new building, the focal point of Neeginan, is a huge step towards the revitalization of Main Street in Winnipeg. Thunderbird House, part of the \$6-million North Main Street Agreement, is a healing centre where Winnipeg's aboriginal community can attend education and youth programs, hold powwows and wedding ceremonies.

Located at the corner of Higgins and Main, this new sacred place of respect showcases aboriginal culture and spirituality. With its distinctive round structure, Thunderbird House has already become a Winnipeg landmark. While this beautiful meeting place is a culmination of the dreams and aspirations of so many in Winnipeg's aboriginal community, it should also act as a catalyst for further improvement of the Main Street community.

\* (15:00)

Thunderbird House should signal a new beginning for Main Street. Along with my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative caucus, I congratulate Thunderbird House on its grand opening. Our congratulations also go out to all those responsible for making this new Winnipeg landmark a reality. I thank them for inviting me to share this special occasion with them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

**Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader):** Mr. Speaker, would you please call the debate on the Government motion, proposed by the Minister of Agriculture and Food (Ms. Wowchuk), standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner).

### GOVERNMENT MOTION

#### **Federal Reparation for 1999 Farmland Flooding**

**Mr. Speaker:** Debate on the Government motion, on the proposed motion of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Food, standing in the name of the Honourable Member for Emerson, who has 21 minutes remaining.

**Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson):** I am very pleased to add some additional comments to the ones I made yesterday on the resolution that the Honourable Minister of Agriculture put forward yesterday. She indicated in her resolution that there was a great need to work together, and I think that is exactly what we should have done all along, not only members of government but indeed everybody.

I believe that the organizations, including the provincial farm organizations, have clearly been an example of how that can work and how effective that can be. I want to repeat some of the things that I said yesterday, but when the organizations met in Brandon en masse supporting the farmers and businessmen that were affected by the flooding of 1999—although all across this province—it clearly made the case that a disaster had occurred and clearly made the case that it was absolutely essential that all levels of Government, including municipalities, become involved in remediating that disaster.

Then she makes the case in the resolution for working together to lobby the federal government, and that is where I think she makes the mistake, because not only have all of us been involved in the discussions with the federal Members of Parliament, all of us have been involved in discussions with our provincial ministers trying to impress upon them, on all of them, that they have a role to play and specific roles to play in the remediation of the damages caused by the disaster of 1999.

I think it is important then to recognize what the Minister started off with saying after she presented the resolution. She said that here in the House and that we have all-party support for this resolution. I think it is important that we have a debate here in this House and that we have an all-party resolution so we can send it off to the federal government.

I think that is where the problem is, that this provincial government has constantly pointed at Ottawa and said that Ottawa needed to resolve the dilemma. It clearly demonstrates to me that this Minister of Agriculture is at a loss, that this Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province is at a loss and the cabinet of this province is at a loss as to what to do and how to compensate those people that are suffering dearly.

I think the co-operation and co-operative spirit that the Minister talks about in her resolution can be no better demonstrated and what is needed can be no better demonstrated than what was on the front page of the *Free Press* yesterday in a headline article, where it says, a United Church choir went to visit their counterparts in Waskada at the United Church and they sang and they showed their support in song and the deliverance of sermon.

Basically, the people of the southwest need that. They need somebody to put their arms around them, and, secondly, they need a clear indication from this Premier of this province that we are indeed supportive as a provincial government in their dilemma.

I think the severity of the problem is further indicated in that same article, when it says: "I don't think it's gotten into their innards and into their souls what is happening," said the St.

Andrews minister Terry Hidichuk, "of Winnipeggers," he said.

A few families of the rural congregation have sold their farms and have found other work. Others have sold off chunks of their farms and found work to support what they are still doing, and the third group has either rented or left the farm permanently.

I think that indicates the lack of support by this province's Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Government of this province. Clearly, this Government has constantly pointed the finger at Ottawa and is saying Ottawa has the full responsibility to initiate it. It is not the responsibility of Ottawa entirely on its own. It is a co-operative effort that is needed and a clear conscious decision that is needed to be made in telling people in the province of Manitoba who suffered because of the '99 flood that this Government is willing to help, as did the previous Conservative administration in this province in the spring and summer of 1999, when our then-Minister of Agriculture stood tall before 3000 people in Melita who were demonstrating the need for assistance. Our Minister of Agriculture said we will be there, and we will support you. The current Premier, Mr. Doer, was there, and he said, yes, we will be there with you, and our Premier, Mr. Filmon, said we will do what is necessary to alleviate the hurt that you are experiencing today. Yet after the Conservatives were defeated in government, nothing has happened. *[interjection]*

The members opposite clap that they have done nothing, that their Government has done nothing. I think that is just a clear indication as to how heartless that group of people is on the other side. We need more people taking their chairs, more church members taking their chairs out to southwest Manitoba and putting their arms around them, instead of clapping in the House here when we are saying that nobody, nobody cares on the Government side here today—nobody cares.

It is, I think, also important to note that in a news release that the minister put out yesterday after she introduced the resolution, she said that the Government of Canada is very pleased that

through various programs, including DFA, substantial help for farmers will be provided as they prepare the planting of the spring crop. That is what the federal Minister of Agriculture said. In contrast to these earlier indications, Mr. Eggleton, the Minister of National Defence and Minister responsible for Emergency Preparedness, in a letter dated March 29, refused to provide assistance on the basis of weed control, loss of applied fertilizer, forage restorations, "which are not eligible under DFA."

Constantly, this Minister and their government have pointed the finger at DFA. DFA works well. DFA is very specific in what it should and should not cover. We recognized that. Our government recognized that during the 1997 flood. There were areas of damage that could not and would not be covered under DFA, and therefore the decision was made jointly with the federal government that we needed further extended assistance. So the JERI program was developed. Two other programs were developed, and between those four programs, DFA and other programs, that were kicked in amongst the many hundreds of millions of dollars that people contributed via donations out of the goodness of their heart, through that, the damages of the '97 flood were covered.

\* (15:10)

Yet this government in this House puts forward resolutions, talks the talk, but does not walk the walk. They refuse to go to the federal government and say: Here, this is a program; specifically, the JERI program was devised and should be put into place. I have not seen that from either the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) or the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) nor the Premier (Mr. Doer) of the province. Why has the Premier not taken the lead in this? He sits quietly by and he grins, and his backbenchers clap at the disaster, applaud the disaster in rural Manitoba. Rural Manitobans will not soon forget the applauding when we talked about the disaster in Manitoba.

Constantly, the government talks about the damages caused and how damages were compensated in the Saguenay, in the Red River Valley, and other parts of Canada, and constantly they referred to the DFA program.

Again, I say to the members opposite there were other programs that kicked in with provincial participation, and we must recognize that that provincial participation is also necessary here and that is beyond the DFA program.

So I stand fairly tall in having been a member of government who was involved in probably the largest disaster that this province has ever seen. I was very proud in how our members of the Legislature, even though they were not part of the Red River Valley or they did not live in the Red River Valley nor did they represent the Red River Valley, stood united in support of the people in the Red River Valley.

I respected today the question that the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) put forward and asking directly the Premier of the Province whether he would consider going to the feds and proposing that there be a 50-50 program initiated, as we did in the Red River Valley. Yet we did not receive a positive answer from that Premier today. He refused to answer the question, and that is, of course, the political sort of jousting that has gone on for far too long. The people in Manitoba and rural Manitoba are forced to sell their land. They are forced to sell parts of their farms or lease out their lands and take their families and move into towns and leave the farms.

I think the other part of the article that is probably more telling than anything else is they are not sure whether the school in southwest Manitoba will be able to have high school classes next year, because there are not going to be enough students left because they have had to move out of the area. That is the biggest fallout that we are losing the young people. We are losing the families who should stay in those regions to continue the agricultural community's efforts to provide food for the world, and yet this government is refusing to participate in an area of a programming that should have been there all along.

I want to indicate our willingness to support the resolution if the Government side of the House will accede to accepting a couple of amendments. I want to propose an amendment to the motion that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) put forward yesterday.

I would move that the motion of the Minister of Agriculture be amended by adding the following after the first clause BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

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

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

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

I move, seconded by the Honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed), that this amendment be adopted.

**Mr. Speaker:** I am satisfied that the amendment falls within the normal practices of the House respecting the relevancy of amendments, and I will be reading the amendment back to the House for the House to debate.

*Motion presented.*

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services)** I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the resolution, although I must say that I am not surprised, but I am very disappointed in the approach taken by the Agriculture critic for the Opposition. I could not have said it better if I said it myself. You will have to bear with me, Mr. Speaker, because when I read this editorial, and it is not often that I read editorials in this House, but I almost felt that someone was reading my mind. I do not think that any of this is unparliamentary, but I want to indicate initially, very clearly, that this is from *The Brandon Sun*, a very important media outlet in the southwest. It says: Partisan push

unfortunate. It is unfortunate Tory Agriculture critic Jack Penner—this is the Member for Emerson—has chosen to inject partisan rhetoric into the issue of flood aid for southwestern Manitoba.

*Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair*

It goes on to say: It is cheap politics. I am not sure if that is parliamentary. I do not have my Beauchesne's with me. We hope political leaders in this province were above that. On Wednesday, the Tory Agriculture critic used the rally at the Manitoba Legislature to blast the governing New Democrats for not putting up more cash for disaster assistance.

\* (15:20)

His position smacks of hypocrisy, and it is the last thing this province needs at the moment. The editorial, I will not read it in its entirety, concluded saying that the Agriculture critic knows better than to take this approach on the farm issue. Well, I could not have said it better if I said it myself. What amazes me is the contrast between the approach taken by the Agriculture critic and the Member opposite from Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), the constituency that is most affected by this disaster that took place last year. I know we talked about it in terms of the southwest. I think it is important to recognize there are a number of RMs outside of the southwest that are also in a similar situation, but the Member for Arthur-Virden has made an effort, on a regular basis, to keep abreast of what has been happening. He was in Ottawa with a delegation from the southwest. I recognize that there may be disagreements between us, but I think he has made a conscious effort to try and operate from a basis of fact and a basis that recognizes the importance when we are dealing with Ottawa, of having at least some semblance of a common front in this province.

I want to point out, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when it came to the Red River if one recalls what happened in '97 and even in '99, I thought it interesting by the way, in '97 there was an all-party approach. We put aside partisan politics. There were some disagreements back and forth at that time, but we focused in on that. In '99,

about the one time there was any real partisan edge in the debate, I think, was when the Leader of the Liberal Party, who was not an elected member at this time, had some concerns about proceeding on a debate. His party at the time, his representative, blocked that. I suspect in a way in retrospect that there were a lot of comments made. I noted at the time that, I think, apart from that one episode where there was some partisan disagreement, there was never any doubt in my mind that the Liberal Leader as well as the two other parties in this House had a clear position on the '99 flood situation, the disaster in the southwest, because I do consider it a flood. It really is equivalent to the '97 flood. We took a clear position in dealing with Ottawa.

Now, what surprises me with the former Minister across the way, the critic for Agriculture (Mr. Jack Penner), is I sometimes wonder if it is the same Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) that sat in this House just six months ago as part of the government, because the position taken by the previous government, the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) as the minister responsible for emergency measures, is exactly the same position that this government has taken.

I would point to a correspondence from the Member for Morris dated July 21, 1999, when he wrote to the federal minister responsible for DFAA, Mr. Eggleton, and requested a number of things. He stated there was no firm federal commitment. He referenced the Federal Agriculture Minister as saying there are a number of issues that clearly go beyond agriculture. He referenced requests to Minister Duhamel in regard to JERI and business restart and proposed the following under DFA: 90-10 funding, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We control loss of applied fertilizer, forage restoration, pasture and hay restoration, seepage and mould assistance. The position of the previous government as stated clearly on July 21 was essentially to say we are being told by Agriculture that agriculture programs are not applicable. We are seeking funding under DFA which is disaster assistance, which is 90-10 funding, and I assume by the references to the JERI that they are requesting what happened in '97 which is supplementary programming under JERI which is 50-50. That is interesting, because that was the position of the

government of which the Member for Emerson was a member back in July.

I want to put this in context, because the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) seems to have a very strange idea of how we should deal with the federal government. His approach is, forget about 90-10. He says: Go for 50-50 and, hey, let us tell the federal government that actually we will pay for the whole shot. Now that was not the position of the previous government, nor should it be the position of any responsible government. I mean, what a way to deal with the federal government, go to them and say: Hey, we do not care what you say, we think that we are prepared to put up 100 percent of the funding. Even the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has never suggested that. That is the essence of this particular amendment.

I want to go ahead, because once again the Opposition member who refers to our position on this also distorts what happened in the '97 flood, because in '97, and I want to quote the numbers on the record. I think it is important to keep a balanced sense of what happened, so members opposite know why we continue to say, on behalf of the farmers in the southwest and, on behalf of the communities in the southwest, that there should be assistance under DFA that goes beyond a simple coverage of property, but reflects the 90-10 principle of disaster assistance.

The DFA, the Manitoba program, the 1997 program resulted in \$215.3 million from the federal government, \$26.4 million from the province. There was also a First Nations component, 100 percent federal government, \$6.9 million, so that—and this is not including anything to do with flood-proofing—the total amount under DFA in '97 was \$222.2 million; it was a federal contribution. The provincial contribution was \$34.2 million.

Now what was the JERI component? The JERI component, the members opposite will go back and I know the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), former minister, will be aware of this, involved \$11.6 million from the federal government, \$11.6 million from the provincial government, a total of \$23.2 million. The JERI program included a number of supplementary

items, not covered under DFA or supplements to DFA, supplements to areas covered under DFA but providing additional coverage.

I want to put that in context, because that was the position of the previous government, and that was the '97 situation. It was their position in '99. In July of 1999 when the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) sat in that caucus and said not a word. I did not hear the Member for Emerson, who can be quite vocal at times in this House. It is funny when we had criticism earlier about our members asking questions. You know, the Member was never one to back away from asking questions of his own government members, but the Member for Emerson never once got up and said no to the provincial government position. He never once got up and said no to the request of the government of the day for 90-10 as being the primary mechanism of delivery, and for good reason.

Let us look at what this province has done in terms of the southwest to get some indication why the previous government and this government have called for 90-10 funding. It is important to recognize here, by the way, for the Member for Emerson, that one of the areas that I thought was the most unfortunate in this entire debate, particularly given the all-party approach that we have seen on this, is when he says: Well, what the province has put in already, that was the previous government. Where is the new government?

You know, in the end there is one province; there is one set of taxpayers. No matter how you try and window-dress it, whoever is in government at the time has to take the responsible course of action.

I want to put on the record what has happened in 1999, in southwest Manitoba, to make the case why the federal government should be responsible for providing far more significant assistance than it has. Under the DFA program, currently there has been a total of \$16.2 million, \$16.3 million in gross program costs. The 90-10 sharing of the portion under which DFA is applicable is \$10.28 million. Essentially, DFA has covered the minor part of the disaster, which is damage to property. Let us

reflect on the fact the biggest difference between '97 and '99: in '97 there was far more significant damage to property, and that is clearly covered under DFA. In '97 there was far less damage to property, far greater damage to the productive capacity of the land itself. Ironically, in '97, many, if not most, farmers—the former Minister of Agriculture can, I am sure, testify to this—in '97 got a crop in and, in many cases, got good yields.

There was a totally different situation in that sense. So when the DFA is applied on a narrow base in the southwest, it does not deal with the issue of damage to land. The position that was put forward by the previous government and this Government is that we need interpretation under the DFA or a similar concept, because, quite frankly, it has never been an issue of which federal budget it comes out of. It comes from the federal responsibility to recognize the magnitude of the disaster that took place in southwest Manitoba.

Well, let us look at what the Province has put forward, because I want to put in context what our position has been, the same position, again, of the previous government. The Province has approved \$71 million, and in terms of expenditures there has been an unseeded acreage payment of \$50 an acre, which is a summary of expenditure, \$56.7 million as of March of this year; forage restoration, \$3.6 million; custom seeding, \$5.8 million; hay shortfall, which is at \$3.08 million, and other items—totalling \$69,610,400 to be exact. So the Province of Manitoba—and you know, this is the Province, this is the taxpayers of Manitoba who have put in, in addition to their share of the DFA, which, as I indicated before, was \$3.8 million out of that \$60-million total. The Province of Manitoba has put in \$69.6 million.

\* (15:30)

Now what is the federal commitment under that? The federal commitment is essentially the degree to which we can get AIDA credits, as the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) would know. No specific program. There is no JERI program. There is no DFA under those expenditures. That money was put up. I will give you an example of what I have said to the

Minister. I have talked to Minister Duhamel, who by the way has been very accessible. Art Eggleton, in contrast, we made six requests for a meeting with him and not once has he responded to that request for a meeting. This is the same Minister who came into our province and flew into Shilo, not that far away from the affected areas, to inspect a military base, but would not go down to southwest Manitoba to see what was really going on. Let us put some of that on the record as well.

But the Province has already spent \$7.1 million under forage restoration and hay shortfalls, already spent the custom seeding, already spent the unseeded acreage. What we have said to the federal government in writing in November is exactly what the former minister said, and that is, we believe it is the responsibility of the federal government to come to the table with 90-10 funding, equivalent to DFA. We also said at that time—and I have the correspondence here, and I know the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) has copies. We have shared this correspondence with people in the southwest. We made it very clear. In fact, I wrote to Art Eggleton, and I stressed the need for funding under DFA. I also pointed to the JERI program, and I can quote that I believe in an agreement and the use of such program models as to Western Economic Diversification, Canada's Jobs and Economic Recovery Initiative, which helped in the '97 flood, would provide an effective means of delivering the assistance that the western Manitoba region so desperately needs.

So, when the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) gets up and says, oh, but you are always talking about 90-10, he never once has stopped to recognize we have said the same thing his Government said and that is, yes, we want to get 90-10 funding from the federal government. That only makes sense that, if we get for every dollar that the Province has put in, nine dollars back for southwest Manitoba; 50-50 is one dollar for one dollar. But, even when we argued for 90-10, we acknowledged '97 and said there is a role for supplementary funding under JERI or some initiative of the same magnitude.

I want to stress again that the Province—going back to the previous government who that



had the same position, and that the Province has committed \$69.6 million under the Manitoba Farm Disaster Assistance Program. Now what has the response from the federal government been? I have talked to Mr. Duhamel. I want to commend Mr. Duhamel for being open and accessible. I met with him when I was in Ottawa. I have talked to him numerous times on the phone. I want to commend him. I have met with other federal members. John Harvard has been very accessible; Reg Alcock has been very accessible. I talked a number of times to Lloyd Axworthy, senior minister for Manitoba. They have all said the same thing. The answer has been: We are sympathetic. But, when it came to DFAA, the answer was no, even though they designated Manitoba under the Disaster Assistance Program as eligible, even though Lloyd Axworthy personally delivered the letter to my office and indicated there would be additional money coming—this was a media statement—to the southwest this year. Even though that was stated, the bottom line is the federal government has taken a very restrictive view with DFAA and only seen it as applying to property damage which does not deal with the southwest situation.

So Ron Duhamel has said to me directly, and he said on the public record: There is no money. He has said there is no money under Western Diversification, period. Art Eggleton has said: No money under DFAA. Not the Province. No one from the Province has gone to the table and walked away. The federal government on both DFAA and JERI on 90-10 and on 50-50 has said that, when it comes to DFAA or agriculture, the answer is no. When I talked to Minister Duhamel last week, he indicated that, if there was any chance left, it would have to be a direct program through Finance. He does not have money under the Western Diversification. He said that publicly, and Art Eggleton has said no to the costs that we have put forward as being legitimate costs. So it would have to come under a separate program.

We said at the time that our position has been clear again, that the primary funding mechanism, whether you want it under DFAA or under whatever you want to call it—I mean, let us not kid around here, when we got an agricultural package for Saskatchewan and Manitoba, it was

described as being related to the Crow rate. Now I suspect that had something to do with the need in Ottawa to justify why Saskatchewan and Manitoba should be receiving supplemental farm assistance. Whether it is called a Crow rate or whether it is called a Friday the 13th program or whatever name they want to come up with, the key thing is that where there was a political will in Ottawa, there was a way found to help.

By the way, and I just note this, that it seems to me at times that the Conservative Agriculture critic in his approach on this issue, a very personalized approach with our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), seems more determined at times to try and take away from the very real accomplishments of our Minister of Agriculture in dealing with the federal government in the context of the southwest. I note his comments yesterday which, I would say, were very uncalled for in terms of referencing her brothers' integrity. I can tell you that that Member will have a long way to go before he has anywhere near the credibility in the agricultural community that our Minister of Agriculture has earned in only six months.

But, putting aside the personal agendas, I said to Minister Duhamel last week: The Province of Manitoba has already put forward \$69 million. Our money has been on the table now since the Member for Lakeside, the former Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), put it on the table. I commend the minister, and we supported that. The federal government has basically got to understand there are two choices ahead for them, because I have heard various references in media reports that, well, there is money out there. Actually, what amazes me is the Tory Agriculture critic sounds more like an apologist for the federal government when he stands up and repeats statements that he has heard outside of the House that are patently untrue. The Province of Manitoba, the previous government and this Government, has put its money on the table. The Province of Manitoba has always been open to discussion. It has been the federal government that has said no. It said no to JERI under Western Diversification; it said no to DFAA. It has said no, period.

But, when we announced that to the public of Manitoba, the Minister of Agriculture and

myself, I stated once again that there is absolutely a clear commitment, I believe, from the Manitoba members of Parliament. I think they really do care about this situation. I have talked to many of them, both on a formal basis and an informal basis, and I understand what they need is to try and get their own colleagues to take a different view of the southwest.

That is why last week, we committed again, in meetings with federal Members of Parliament for Manitoba, including Mr. Duhamel, who speaks for the Manitoba caucus, and we have in fact drafted a response that specifically makes it clear once again, as we did in November, that we want to sit down with the federal government, not based on their saying no, but if there is any willingness on their part, we want to sit down and see what can be done.

The prime focus is still 90-10. We are not going to give that up. It would be irresponsible to do so, but we have also said, in terms of JERI-type programs, that there are expenditures that we believe could fall under that JERI program. If they do not accept 90-10 funding, the 50-50 funding would be appropriate. I point, for example, to forage restoration and hay shortfalls. There was a similar component in the JERI program in the '97 flood in the Red River. So the bottom line here is we have said for six months, and I am going back and I have all the correspondence, in case members opposite doubt my version of events, letters from the Member for Morris to Minister Duhamel, July 21; the Member for Morris to Art Eggleton; from Don Leitch to Mel Cappe, July 21; from the Premier at the time to Jean Chretien, asking for a meeting at the Games; the responses from Duhamel to Pitura.

\*(15:40)

I can just run through it to show that they had the same problem that we did. This sort of argument that, oh, you know, we have done such a terrible job of negotiating with the feds—they got the same response that we got. You never hear that from the members opposite. Duhamel to the former minister, the answer was responsibility designated to Vanclief. Okay. So Ron Duhamel, in response to July 21, that government said go talk to the Minister of

Agriculture. Art Eggleton, he said, basically, go talk to the Minister of Agriculture.

Do you know what the Minister of Agriculture said? The Minister of Agriculture, when he did finally respond, said go talk to Western Diversification; go talk to Disaster Financial Assistance. It has been a little triangle. Every one of the ministers involved has said, no, not me, I have not got any money, go talk to my colleagues. Every one of them. all three of them, have said no.

If there was one glimmer of hope, it was I think the fact that when I talked to Minister Duhamel last week, he said clearly they are not, you know, the DFAA door is closed. We do not accept that, but when you are dealing with negotiations, obviously, if he is saying that, we have to take him at his word. Agriculture has been closed in a direct sense although, quite frankly, even then we have committed to see if there are some creative ways of looking at AIDA, an enhanced AIDA program. So we are faced with the government now possibly, maybe, maybe it is a long shot, willing to look at a program through the federal treasury, a direct program.

So do you know what we have done? We have drafted a response. A response is going off to the federal government. It says what we have always said, that we want to sit down at the table. We want to see what we can do over and above the \$69 million that has been put in by the Province for the southwest and over and above the \$16 million under the DFAA program which, once again, is 90-10 cost-shared. That is the responsible thing to do here.

That is I think what I would have expected the Tory Agriculture critic to suggest because, I can tell you, every day he gets up and repeats statements that are not true in this House and takes a position that, to my mind, I tell you, if I was the federal minister sitting there, I would be saying the best ally they have got in Manitoba is the Tory Agriculture critic, who says: Do not worry about 90-10. Hey, we do not need 50-50 even. We will pay the entire shot.

That is irresponsible. I would suggest to members opposite it is not what their policy was

and it is not going to be the policy of this government either. We are not going to delegate the responsibility for disasters away from the federal government.

I say, and I say this on the record with some frustration: What does it take before the southwest will get the same treatment that the Red River got? Does it take a federal election and the Prime Minister putting sandbags up? Is that what it takes? Because when the need was there to be flexible in '97, and as the Minister responsible for emergency measures would know, he did not know what to do with the sandbag.

When there was a will, there was a way in '97. I am saying to the federal government there is a will on our part. There always has been. I say to the federal government let us find a way like we did in '97, and let us not have to have it rely on TV cameras and federal elections to happen.

So I want to say to members opposite, because they can choose the partisan route, and there is nothing wrong with partisanship in this House on appropriate issues. But, you know, I will say one thing, when it came to the Red River flood, as a northern member that did not affect northern Manitoba, but you know what? People in my area know something about flooding. They know about permanent flooding. I represent three communities that were permanently flooded because of hydro development. You know what I found in those communities, York Landing, Split Lake and Nelson House? They were the first ones to say we can understand what it is like to be flooded. We support helping people in a time of need.

Let us not forget that in '97 the floodwaters receded, okay? The floodwaters receded. It was a one-year window. What I find ironic is it is now two northern ministers, the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) and myself, along with our colleagues, who have been leading the way about the Red River, of trying to accelerate the process of floodproofing because, believe you me, we do not want to see the Red River face the same kinds of risks time and time again, the Red River valley. We have done that already this year, and we will be announcing a number

of other projects within the next week or so that are directly related to that.

You know, that is what the province of Manitoba is really all about. It should not be whether you are from the north or the south or the southwest or the southeast, you stick together. When it came to that flood, I had family members directly affected evacuated from their homes. The one thing that I remember is that my sister-in-law said, you know, it is too bad we could not operate under the same spirit in similar situations at other times, when people pull together and they put aside their differences.

That was the approach that we took as a responsible opposition party in 1997. We were not on our feet every day criticizing the provincial government, undercutting their dealings with Ottawa. We supported it in an all-party way, and one of the reasons I believe we were able to get the deal we got for Manitoba is because all three political parties in this House spoke with one voice.

We did that in '99. Our Leader, as Leader of the Opposition, did not go out to the southwest and say the political thing. It would have been very easy for him to get up in the southwest and say, you know, the provincial government has put in \$69 million but it is not enough. The provincial government is trying to get money from Ottawa, but they do not have more than the sharing of the \$16 million. They do not have a cent from the \$69 million. Did you ever hear of that from the Leader of the Opposition? You know what? I would suggest that one of the reasons I believe that the Leader of the Opposition is currently the Premier (Mr. Doer) is because of the statesperson-like approach he has taken on issues like that because when it comes to partisan issues, Manitobans expect you to fight 110 percent.

I certainly believe in that. I have never shied away from expressing the views of our party on important issues of public debate, but I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it came to the southwest in 1999, our Leader, the Leader of the Opposition, stood there shoulder to shoulder with the Premier of the day, with the Minister of Agriculture, went down to southwest Manitoba and said we are all together on this.

The Liberal Leader, apart from that one procedural disagreement, did the same thing, too, and I know how difficult that must be, given the similarity and being a former member as well, but in a way he never once diverged from that particular approach. All three Leaders, all three parties, the same script, the same message to Ottawa, which is we want a fair deal for southwest Manitoba.

I hope the Liberal Leader who I know is going to be speaking fairly soon on this will at least stay with us on this, not that we cannot be subject to criticism. I think that is fair ball. That is part of what this Legislature is all about, but that criticism should not be based on the deliberate attempt that I have seen the Tory Agriculture critic do, and once again I look to your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I thought the phrase "cheap politics" that *The Brandon Sun* used summed up the inconsistency of now six months after the election not only trying to politicize this but saying one thing today and another thing six months ago.

Now, I do not know if they gagged the Member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) when he sat in the Government caucus, but, you know, the bottom line is I did not hear him saying the same thing then.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader):** On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member keeps referring to the editorial in *The Brandon Sun*.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the information of the House, I would like to table a newspaper article from *The Brandon Sun* from April 19 on page 3. It says: Our error. Tories kicked in aid. An editorial that appeared in an April 15 edition of *The Brandon Sun*: Partisan push unfortunate. Contained inaccurate information. It stated the Filmon Government did not provide assistance for flood aid in western Manitoba. In fact, it created a \$50-per-acre program before the federal government agreed to participate. *The Sun* regrets the error and any confusion it may have caused.

Just so that the Honourable Member does not mislead the House, I would like to table that.

I would also like to table the correct format the editorial should come in, and it said: Editorial on full farm aid assistance was misleading.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Honourable Member has no point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** The Minister of Highways can continue.

**Mr. Ashton:** I will table the entire editorial, because I think if the Member opposite reads the editorial, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will see—in fact, I acknowledged before the full expenditures of the Province. But the real point of *The Brandon Sun* and the point of many Manitobans we talked to is when it comes to disasters, you do not politicize disasters. You work together as parties in this Legislature, something that the Tory Minister of Agriculture refuses to do because of some personal agenda he has with the Minister of Agriculture. I would like to table that.

\* (15:50)

I want to suggest to members opposite that this amendment that they brought in has got to be about the most irresponsible amendment I could imagine. At the point when we have tried desperately to get the federal government at the table—and I hope the Member opposite, the Tory Agriculture critic—you know, if he wants to read the letters, if he wants to look at the facts as raised by the previous minister and myself and the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), he will recognize that the bottom line here is that it is the federal government that will not come to table on 90-10 or 50-50 or anything.

The way to get them at the table is for all three parties in this House to say treat the southwest the way you treated the '97 flood of the Red River, the way you treated the Saguenay, the way you treated the ice storms. It will not happen when you have an Agriculture critic who was as irresponsible as to stand up and move an amendment. You know, I can tell you, he should fax this straight to Art Eggleton because his amendment is not only irresponsible, I would say it is unprecedented. Instead of

getting up and demanding the best deal for southwest Manitoba, he wants to give it all away. He wants to get the federal government entirely off the hook, and I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is irresponsible of that Member.

### Point of Order

**Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the risk of stalling the speaker and his great oration to the public, I would just advise him that as a young person I learned just because I could yell louder than everyone else it did not necessarily make me right.

**Mr. Deputy Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

\* \* \*

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Deputy Speaker, I make no apologies for being outspoken when it comes to defending the interests of Manitoba and fighting for a good deal for southwest Manitoba. I hope that Member who professes to represent people in Turtle Mountain will do the same thing and say categorically he does not agree with the position of his Agriculture critic, who is I believe undermining the position of the Province of Manitoba in any ability to get assistance from the federal government.

That, I think, is the bottom line here. We have a choice ahead of us on this issue, and I believe the Tory Agriculture critic has chosen the partisan course, and I believe that is his right. I would like to see from the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and other members opposite whether indeed it is their position.

You know, I have met with farmers from the southwest, and I would suggest to the members opposite, including the Agriculture critic, we have talked to them, and you know what? They have said—*[interjection]* To the Member for Turtle Mountain, I was down in Ottawa, and even though I was not informed about the delegation, I made a point of going and finding the delegation from the southwest. I did not see the Member for Turtle Mountain in Ottawa. I saw the Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr.

Maguire). So the Member for Turtle Mountain does not want to talk about meeting with farmers from the southwest. We have met with the farmers. We met with them not just on the steps, we met with them on numerous occasions and I—*[interjection]*

I do not know why it was good enough for the Member from Arthur-Virden to go down to Ottawa but not the Member for Turtle Mountain. He was there. I was there. The Member for Turtle Mountain did not seem to think it was important enough to go and lobby with the federal government. So I do not think the Member wants to go there.

But I want to suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they talk to people as we have. The farmers from the southwest have presented to the federal government. You know what they have said? Basically what we have said. It is a disaster. And I have talked to farmers who have said that as well. And I have talked to KAP. And they know what is going on. The Member for Arthur-Virden knows what is going on. He was in Ottawa; he has kept in touch on this particular issue. What the Tory Agriculture critic has tried to do is basically put aside all the facts, get up—*[interjection]* Well, I guess oppositions do this on occasion. I guess his script basically is Tories good, NDP bad. It does not matter if our position is their position.

I do not know how the Member from Emerson (Mr. Penner) can look himself in the mirror. Does he get up in the morning and say it is a different Member for Emerson than was six months ago. How about the Member for Turtle Mountain? Where was he six months ago? You know, his seatmate took the responsible position. Did you not hear the Member for Turtle Mountain saying that the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) was wrong when he argued for exactly what we have argued for?

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have chosen, at least the Agriculture critic has chosen the partisan course. We have an opportunity with this resolution to chart a different course. We brought in a resolution that we felt was surer to receive support from all members of this House. Read the resolution. It is about as clear as you can get in terms of a non-partisan approach. And

we will not undercut our position with Ottawa by supporting an amendment similar to what the Member opposite has brought in, saying: Well, it does not matter. We are just ready to throw in the cards, we give up, we are going to blame the Province of Manitoba. It is the same province, both governments, same position that has put in that money, \$69.6 million. That was the appropriate thing to do. It is the same province that has cost-shared under DFAA the remaining \$16 million. I want to know how far the Member wants to go.

I notice he throws out the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. I find that really ironic because the previous budget that the Members brought in, and the Minister of Finance will know this—they raided the Fiscal Stabilization Fund at the top of the business cycle. It is now substantially below the target they set for their own legislation in 1989. So they raided the coffers, they raided on this pre-election spending binge; now their solution to the southwest is to say to the federal government: Hey, don't worry about what the one or the two parties are saying, we just think the Province should write another cheque—100 percent provincial dollars.

Well, you know what, I will say this to the Agriculture critic on the opposition. It would have been irresponsible for the previous government to do the same thing. It is irresponsible for any government to do that. We will not take that course, and quite frankly, I would suggest to members opposite that they are really setting a new precedent, not just financially, but a new precedent in terms of politics in this House. I mention '97 because nobody on our side got up and criticized what happened. We stood with the members opposite when it came to '97 as we did with '99. And once you start putting in the kind of clear partisan rhetoric that we have seen from the Member opposite, once you start putting in an approach, onerous attempt—I know the Member opposite does not even want to ask me questions about what is happening; it is always the Minister of Agriculture, even though I am responsible for Emergency Measures, the DFAA, because he does not like the answers he is going to get. He is going to get the answers—we have the same approach opposite. The Member opposite may

have a political or a personal vendetta with the Minister of Agriculture. That is his problem.

I talked to a lot of people in rural Manitoba, the Member for Swan River, Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). She knows how to get results from the feds. When she had to walk out, she walked out, and she got a hundred-million-dollar agreement. That is a hundred million dollars more than the Member opposite's government got. So that is why he is upset.

I say to him: Talk to the former Minister of Agriculture, who knows—a man of great experience in this House. Talk to the former minister of emergency measures. We have enough of a problem right now with the federal government threatening to move away from 90-10 funding of disasters, and the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) knows that.

If we turn around now and say to the federal government that we give up and from now on we have full responsibility for disasters, the real disaster will be to the people of Manitoba because we will not be able to help people in need in the future. That is our bottom line. We are standing up for southwest Manitoba, and I say to members opposite that they can choose the political course, but I urge them to reconsider and once again have an all-party approach in trying to get the money from Ottawa we need for the southwest. Thank you.

**Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been a lot of rhetoric on both sides, but I think that what is important today is that we advance the cause of farmers in southwestern Manitoba and in other areas where they were hit by disastrous flooding and wet weather last year. My support in this effort of the agricultural community of farmers and of people who live and work in small communities like Melita, Minnedosa, and others in southwestern Manitoba, is strong.

I believe that this area of Manitoba suffered a major disaster last year, and that we need to continue our efforts to be able to provide the assistance which is important if we are going to help them to get through the current year, to rebuild and support the economy into the future,

and to provide opportunities for the future for people in southwestern Manitoba.

\* (16:00)

I have been involved in many meetings with farmers over the period of the last year. I have been involved with many meetings with representatives of the federal government, joined the all-party task force which went to Ottawa, have been in contact with members of the federal government on many occasions since, and with farmers.

The extent of the disaster in 1999 has become clearer as time has passed. We are not only dealing with a situation where more than a million acres in Manitoba were not possible to cultivate because of the rain and the wet weather. We are dealing with a situation in much of southwestern Manitoba where, because of the rain and wet weather, the production on the land was very much below average. Indeed, for southwestern Manitoba, there were some forty-nine municipalities where more than 10 percent of the land could not be seeded. This is on the order of one-third of Manitoba's crop land. This is an area which is approximately half the size of Nova Scotia. It is huge.

The fact that not only was there a problem in seeding but that the productivity last year was low, was, of course, compounded by the fact that commodity prices were also low. For example, in figures compiled by members of the Minnedosa focus group and others, which suggest that on a thousand-acre grain farm in southwestern Manitoba—on an average grain farm—that there was, whether those acres were seeded or whether they were not seeded, a loss on the order of sixty thousand dollars.

It is noteworthy that that loss on the order of sixty thousand dollars on a thousand-acre farm occurred after taking into consideration the \$50-an-acre payment for unseeded acres, and so it is considerable. It takes into account those funds for unseeded acres which were provided. It is important, I think, to recognize that there have been other supports.

The hundred million dollars, when it is distributed all over Manitoba, will provide some

five to ten thousand dollars for an average farm in the area of a thousand acres. That money would then bring down the loss, but it would still be in the order of fifty thousand dollars or so for an average farm, a very significant loss, an effect on not only the farm community but indeed on the business communities throughout southwestern Manitoba.

It is, I think, important to recognize that the AIDA program has made and is making a difference, that the AIDA program has provided support not only toward coverage of the \$25 an acre of the \$50 an acre support for unseeded acres, but of course the AIDA program is and will be assisting those who seeded acres and whose productivity was low, whose income as a result was low.

It is within the context that the AIDA program, though not the answer or the overall answer, has made a contribution, that it is rather surprising that the Government has decided not to provide the provincial component of support for the negative margins.

What is most surprising indeed is that on occasion after occasion after occasion the members of the NDP Government have spoken about wanting to target the funds to those in need. Indeed, those who are in a position of having negative margins are those who are in need more than any other.

It is in this context that I had a conversation with a farmer from southwestern Manitoba. His comment on the activities of the NDP and the decision of the NDP not to support the negative margins was that it was totally bizarre that the NDP Government would not support the provincial component of the negative margins—sad.

One wonders what happened to the focus on those most in need, what happened to this Government that they, in this instance, do not recognize how critical and how important this kind of support is for farmers in southwestern Manitoba. Surely an overall component of a program to help people in southwestern Manitoba covering the provincial component of the negative margins is an essential part of that.

I think it is worthwhile making a comment about the package of a hundred million dollars, certainly an important support to farmers throughout Manitoba. But there is a "but," and that is that the NDP Government, in forging that program with the federal government, had a choice. They had a choice to target some part of that to southwestern Manitoba and did not. The result of making that choice has been that people in southwestern Manitoba have not received sufficient help and support. The result has been that there were dollars available but they were not targeted. They were not provided once again to those who had the critical need.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have heard from other parts of Manitoba, from farmers who benefited from the hundred million dollars, and they were very thankful for it and very grateful but, in accepting it, some of them said, you know, we know, and we feel very badly that there is not more going to southwestern Manitoba, and we feel that in making this gesture the Province was indeed helping all farmers but indeed forgot that there needs to be some targeting, some extra help for southwestern Manitoba.

So the result then of the task force going to Ottawa, the result of a lot of work to get federal government support, was that indeed there was federal government support but that it was put all over Manitoba instead of focused in southwestern Manitoba. So the provincial government must again take some blame for not being able to take advantage of an opportunity that was there, an opportunity where there was a choice to target those in need.

That being said, what we need to do here is not to try and blame or find fault about what has happened but to recognize that there is a job that needs to be done today. That job that needs to be done is to get some additional support to the farmers in southwestern Manitoba.

I believe, in putting forward the resolution urging support and programs which were similar to the 1997 Red River Valley flood, that the Government should be strongly supporting and pushing for a JERI-type program funded at a 50-50 level. It was encouraging last November 29, I believe, when the NDP government wrote

requesting funding through the JERI program to the government in Ottawa. It was disappointing that the Conservative government had not specifically requested before that funding through the JERI program, but at least that has gone. But what has not happened yet is that the provincial government of the NDP has not made it clear that they want a 50-50 cost-shared JERI program. In response to my question earlier today, the Premier (Mr. Doer) waffled back and forth rather than providing a clear answer.

\* (16:10)

So I would say implementation of a JERI program similar to what was provided in 1997 is what is needed now for southwestern Manitoba, and it would fill a major gap in existing support. The JERI program in '97 was implemented in a fair and businesslike manner, good accountability, sensitivity to individual circumstances. It is an excellent model for a program that could be used and is badly needed in southwestern Manitoba.

As was described at the time, the JERI initiative was designed to be a series of separate components that were complementary to the direct assistance provided by the DFAA. Farm businesses were covered in a number of ways under the JERI program. As described in the documentation, the business recovery component was designed to help restore economic activity to pre-flood levels and to prevent permanent job loss in flood-affected areas, a component which is badly needed today.

The business resumption loan component was to provide assistance to eligible small or medium-sized business with immediate cash flow needs that cannot be postponed if the entity is to remain viable and continue to operate. It is too bad we did not have that in place last June and July, but even now it would be important to do it, because even now there are businesses which are hovering on the brink.

The criteria for accessing assistance through a JERI program for southwestern Manitoba could be very similar to 1997 with, I suggest, some important exceptions. The 1997 criteria included businesses which were directly affected "by the 1997 flood through either direct water



damage or cessation of operation due to being located in an evacuated area or in an area made inaccessible by road closure."

I would suggest that for southwestern Manitoba, those criteria would not be broad enough to target those who are in critical need.

I would suggest, for example, in the 1999 flood-affected area that for farms, the eligible criteria might read something like this: Those who were directly affected by the 1999 flood and wet weather and thereby unable to seed a significant portion of farm acreage to an extent perhaps greater than 10 percent of their farm acreage, of their cultivated acres. I would suggest that it should be before the usual and not that artificially extended crop insurance deadline, thereby the JERI program might be able to provide assistance to those who were pushed or seeded late after the crop insurance deadline. Many of those had great difficulties, because the crops did not mature. In fact, many of those who seeded as a result of the Government program which was put in place to extend the crop insurance, many of those who seeded late had some big losses. So, let us recognize that those individuals should be included. When we talk about those unable to cultivate their farm, it should be up until the usual crop insurance deadline. Those numbers and areas are verifiable so that we could indeed target those who are in need of assistance.

The JERI program, in 1997, provided support for the costs to restore the farmland to workable condition where there had been considerable erosion. It provided 50 percent of the costs to replace the fall, that was in that case 1996, applied fertilizer and herbicides and included 100 percent of the application costs for the actual flooded areas. In some instances, there was provision for costs for Roundup to control weeds and other plants prior to reseeded. The JERI program for the 1999 flooding and wet weather area in southwestern Manitoba could use similar approaches to provide support to those who had farm chemicals applied and lost in the flood, or fertilizer, or those efforts which were needed to control the weeds on the land to make sure that it could be restored to the circumstances before the flood.

I was, of course, involved last fall in the effort of all parties going to Ottawa. At the time, I specifically spoke and emphasized the importance of implementing a JERI program. I had written and proposed and pushed for one much earlier. I think it is very important that the Government, in making its choices now, not only focus on getting all-party unanimity but focus on what is an achievable objective. I think that what is achievable is indeed a 50-50 cost-shared JERI program similar to what was put in place in 1997. I have had discussions with Ron Duhamel. Yes, there may not be money now in the Western Diversification program, but in 1997 what happened was indeed those funds were provided centrally and that they came through the Western Diversification program to be delivered through the JERI program. The procedure is the same now and that is that Ron Duhamel has to make a request. Effort has to be there and the case has to be made so that Ron can go to Treasury Board and to provide the funding which will allow a 50-50 cost-shared JERI program.

We come now, I suggest, to what is a real critical issue, that is, where is the roadblock? Where is the roadblock right now stopping the assistance that farmers desperately need?

While the federal government has not been as fast or as quick as it might have been or should have been, a careful and fair reading at the moment supports that the present impasse is a result of the inaction and lack of clarity of the provincial government. Since the questions of last week, I have made inquiries of the status of the provincial effort, and although there was a request for a JERI program made last November, there was not a specific letter requesting a 50-50 cost-shared program with clear evidence that the NDP Government was ready to put its own dollars on the table.

Where has the follow-up been? It may all be very well for the Premier (Mr. Doer) to be talking on CJOB about ready-to-go 50-50. It may all be very well for the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) to say we have tried to get a 50-50 agreement, as she did yesterday. It may all be very well for the Minister of Agriculture to say we have asked the federal government to consider a program that will be

50-50 funding, but unless you actually send the letter and make the request, I mean let us face it, you are not going to get help or aid or assistance or a joint program.

The Government instead of dodging answers needs to make very clear that it is behind an effort to get a 50-50 cost-shared program. The Government, after all, has had some extra, about \$300 million, in equalization transfers already this year. There is some money in the provincial treasury that can be used for matching in a 50-50 fashion and to provide for people in southwestern Manitoba the kind of shared program which was provided in 1997 and which should be provided now.

In a sense it is like a locked door and there are two keys. Key A fits the lock and opens the door, and Key B does not fit the lock and it does not open the door, and, sadly, the NDP has seemingly come to a locked door where they are not able to build a partnership. They have been trying to open this with the wrong key, trying to get a 90-10 JERI program, when, in fact, the precedent is for a 50-50 JERI program. It is time that the NDP Government made clear that they really want a 50-50 JERI program to give equivalence to people in the Red River Valley, for those in southwestern Manitoba.

\* (16:20)

Let us come clean. Let us make the request that the government should be making. I stand here today to support this resolution and indeed to support the amendment, quite frankly, because I think that both are trying to do the same thing; that is, get the support to people in southwestern Manitoba. Let us face it, the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) has experience in a previous circumstance where the provincial government put its dollars on the table to start with and then got the federal dollars and the cost-sharing later on. There is no reason, given the urgency of the circumstance, that the provincial government should not be ready to make sure the support is there. We will be there in an all-party effort to get the additional share from the federal government, but, clearly, one must work within what is doable, within what is possible.

Let us work together here. Let us support farmers. I believe one of the very important things that we can do now is to make sure in a co-ordinated effort that we support the putting in place as fast as possible a 50-50 cost-shared JERI program along the lines of that which was placed in '97 but tailored in a number of ways specifically to the unique circumstances of southwestern Manitoba. So I speak not with a lot of fiery accusations and rhetoric like the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), but I speak in a manner of conciliation. Let us work together, let us find a solution. Let us think first of the farmers and not about the political needs of his constituency.

**Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden):** Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is with great pleasure, I guess, that I rise in the House to speak to this motion and to these amendments, to this resolution and to these amendments. It is unfortunate that we have to do this at this time. However, I think it needs a bit of a recourse of the situation in the country, and I would like to talk for a few moments today about the transactions that have taken place today and the efforts that have been made on behalf of these farmers in southwest Manitoba and the businesspeople in those communities as well.

As the resolution from the Minister indicates, this whole process began some time back in the fall of 1998. It was not even a situation that at all occurred in 1999. Many of the areas just east of the farm, where I have spent all of my life and business in the farming community within the 10 miles of me, received 9 inches of rain on the 4th of August in 1998 that literally washed out their whole crop from that year as well.

As they proceeded into the 1999 crop year, they were able to get, to add insult to injury, some farm inputs in the ground in the spring of 1999 in regard to some fertilizer and chemical that was put on in anticipation of a good 1999 crop in areas where they could proceed. Things were moving along rather well until one year ago tomorrow, May 3, 1999, when between four and six, four in our own operation and six in many areas of southwest Manitoba, it was the first big dump, if you will, of rain that occurred that began this whole crisis. We have had four-

to six-inch rainfalls before and farmers would deal with that as best they could. But subsequent to that, there was another six and another six and another six to the point of in May of 1999, there were over five times the normal rainfall. The heaviest rainfall that that month has ever seen in the history of farming in southwest Manitoba, which I must remind this House is traditionally no one has the drier area of Manitoba.

The situation was bad enough but the constituency that I represent has 11 municipalities in it, and 5 of those municipalities represent over a quarter of the 1.1 million acres that were hit by this disaster. That is why I have spent over half of my time dealing with phone calls and urgent matters on behalf of the constituents of Arthur-Virden to try to deal with the shortfall of income and the devastation that has cropped up on not just the farmers and their families in this region but also the business communities and the families that have been impacted within the communities in that whole area, and of course it goes much beyond just Arthur-Virden. It takes in everything virtually from Riding Mountain south to the U.S. border, Neepawa, even up around the east side of Riding Mountain. There are farmers impacted by this in the Emerson and east area as well. So when our critic for Agriculture speaks on this matter, I appreciate the efforts that he has put forward to speak on behalf of the farmers of southwest Manitoba and the western region, but it does impact farmers in other areas of the province as well.

Many of these farmers, as I will outline later, to deal with this situation have had to drastically reduce their inventories and in most cases completely eliminate the sale of their inventories, sometimes at more depressed prices, as we have seen Canola drop from the fall of '98. It was in the fall of '99 when it was still in the \$9 or \$8 range. In the fall of '98, I guess, you could have contracted some of the '99 crop in that area down to \$5 a bushel today. That is a tremendous hit on the low-pricing side of our equation as well. When farmers have had to have been selling and releasing their inventory into these depressed prices for the grains and the commodities, of course, that exacerbates the problem that they have had in being able to find credit to put a crop in the ground for the year

2000, never mind the difficulties that they were going through in 1999 as well.

So that is why I have taken a few moments to talk about the situation in the country. I guess I should give you an update as to where we are at right now. In the last few days I have spoken with farmers. While we are able to get on the land and seed our own crop, many of the farmers in our region, just the ones that I spoke of earlier that had all the rainfall in 1998, are still in a situation where they cannot work the land and then go back to seed it even in the spring of 2000. Some of that ground is still too mucky underneath, if you will, to allow them to get on the land in a proper manner, to work it, till it, and to be able to go in and seed it other than going directly over top in a one-pass operation that some of them are doing now in conservation tillage.

In the driest southwest area, in the Pearson to Lyleton and west of Waskada region, when they received about eleven inches of snow three and a half to four weeks ago, just two days before many of them took the opportunity to rally on the Legislature steps to bring to the attention of the Government the seriousness of the situation, there was an 11-inch snowfall that in that region has made a tremendous dent in their ability to proceed this spring as well. Some of them are just getting on the land now while others in the region are over half seeded.

\* (16:30)

So it is a very variable situation. It is one where each individual operation is faced with many difficulties and changes in their own structure. That is the same, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when it comes to arranging financing and getting credit for the coming year as well.

Last October, I will say that I did have the opportunity to travel to Ottawa with the party in power today. My caucus members, and I thank them for that opportunity, sent me as a representative of this all-party delegation that was to go at that time. I was somewhat skeptical about doing that but, being a new MLA and of course my region being the most seriously hit by this particular disaster, I felt compelled to go to make the presentation on behalf of the farmers

and the people of that region. But I was not convinced that there was a direct plan, a solid plan that would put money in these farmers' hands when we went to Ottawa.

I commend the Government for their effort to try to get \$300 million out of the federal government, but I think it was based on more of the fact that we were a third of the size of Saskatchewan, who was asking for a billion dollars, than it was that we had actually done some analysis to come up with how Manitoba would pay out the \$300 million that they were seeking.

The previous speaker from the Government, ahead of the Member for River Heights, spoke today about how our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) got results out of that trip to Ottawa. I will back up just a moment. As we went down for the \$300-million program, I kept asking the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture at that time, as I believe the Honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) did as well: How much of these dollars will be targeted to southwest Manitoba and the western region that has been severely hit by this disaster? Of course, it kept coming back to me that, oh, do not worry, we will target some money into that region of the province. We know there has been a disaster. We will target some funds in that area, but we have to make sure that we get the commitment for the \$300 million first.

So I went along with that plan hoping that we could actually convince the federal government to put \$300 million on the table. Of course, the Member that I referred to earlier just said that the Minister of Agriculture went to Ottawa and got results. Well, four or five months later she agreed to a hundred-million-dollar program that has come out across generally available to all the farmers of Manitoba and they have not targeted one cent of that hundred million dollars to the disaster-stricken farmers in communities in the western region of this province. I do not call that results.

I want to say as well that I was a bit thunderstruck or appalled by the, I guess, lack of understanding that the two premiers from the Prairie Provinces had when we were addressing

the Prime Minister on this trip to Ottawa. They went into a private meeting with him the first morning we were there, and, as everyone knows now, came out with virtually nothing. In fact, the Prime Minister was able to tell them that, well, things are not as bad as you people say they are. Here are the latest numbers from Statistics Canada, and it shows that the situation is much better than what you are letting it out to be.

Not knowing the severity of the situation or how the commodity price changes and the increased crop that was projected to be grown in other areas of Manitoba in the fall of '99 impacted, not having that grassroots knowledge of what is going on out there in the country, the impact, it hurt both of those Premiers in dealing with the Prime Minister and a Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa, who, I have to commend, played some pretty smart political games on their behalf, basically got the headlines, stole them from the delegation that were going down to Ottawa to seek support for these farmers and basically put the tail between the legs of the leaders and sent them back home with virtually nothing.

However, I will say that we did continue to meet with delegations in Ottawa over the next day and a half. I had the opportunity to meet with several of the federal members. At that time in Ottawa, many of the members from Manitoba, in the Manitoba caucus, were some of the most hard-nosed members in all of the meetings we had in Ottawa on the delegation from Manitoba when we appeared before them. I would have to say that, having come out to the agriculture meetings that have been held across western Canada, particularly Brandon and Estevan, that came out at the request of Mr. Borotsik, the Member for Brandon-Souris federally, and held hearings in those cities and those towns, along with others in western Canada, that the delegation led by a member from Winnipeg, Mr. Harvard from Winnipeg, who chairs the Agriculture Committee, and they learned first-hand at that committee how severe and how hard-struck and how hard-hit that region is, and they have changed their tune somewhat.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say that they now know the severity of the situation in that

region. Some of them have driven it. Some of them have definitely heard the concern from the 200 farmers and family members that were in attendance at a jam-packed session in Brandon, and as well in Estevan, I understand, where you could have heard a pin drop. I have been at many, many agriculture meetings over my 30 years in farming, and I have never been at one where I could sense the—I guess you would say—disgust from the farm community in the lack of response from both levels of government, particularly at that time the federal government, for not understanding their situation.

I think that sincerity is what led the federal government to at least acknowledge publicly later on in the spring here, Mr. Axworthy's comments and others, about how they would be prepared to start to look at some of the kinds of dollars that are required for that region. I still have to commend them for doing that. But, at the same time, as I said earlier, this is a federal government that is coming into this kicking and screaming and dragging—we have to drag them in—as the Government knows, but we are playing the same game with the Manitoba Government today as well. I commend them for trying to get the dollars that we did in Ottawa, but to say that we are doing fine with a hundred million that was made generally available through a transportation adjustment payment throughout all of the province and say that this is dealing with the situation in southwest Manitoba is not my idea of leadership, as was talked about by our minister here of emergency preparedness just a few moments ago.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we met in Melita in December with Mr. Alcock from Winnipeg, the federal Member. The Honourable Member here from Carman (Mr. Rocan) and myself had the opportunity of being in Melita and having him become exposed to the farmers in that region. He heard from many of them privately about their own disastrous situations on their own farms. We have also had meetings with Minister Duhamel; they have met with many of the farmers from that region. In fact, Mr. Alcock was back out in that region again last week, trying to learn first-hand more about what has happened this spring.

I think, having met with our Minister of emergency preparedness since then, he knows

full well that if there was a sincerity to come forward with a 50-50 basis of some kind of program, as the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard) just mentioned, with a sincere plan in that area, that it would be heard seriously in Ottawa and get some serious attention. I would also like to say that there are still ongoing discussions in Ottawa, even today, in regard to looking at how disaster programs can be addressed, and how this situation can be dealt with.

I would like to also say that I have had the opportunity of meeting in Melita with groups from all faiths and all ecumenical denominations in regard to trying to come together with a package of information to send forward. I would like to just refer to a document that I have just received from an ecumenical working group on the farm crisis signed by the ecumenical working group from Brandon, Mr. Nesbitt [*phonetic*], Mr. Reddick [*phonetic*] and Mr. Woods—Reverend Woods—as well. They are a group made up of people from churches, farmers, men and women from local affected communities, personnel from the regional health authorities and other aid organizations involved in the flood disaster area of southwestern Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, these people continue to express the degree of concern to the federal government in regard to this situation to the point where they are saying: Prime Minister, do you hear what the young farmers, in this case, from Saskatchewan are trying to tell you and your colleagues? Do you feel that there is a loss of faith in this country? If this does not move us, the country is a worse place for it.

\* (16:40)

I believe that we should, at both levels of government, listen to these kinds of concerted efforts on behalf of the local communities and the farmers and their families in this whole entire region. This spring I had the opportunity to go to Ottawa in February with a southwest rally group. This group received support from most of the municipalities in our region, received financial support actually, for themselves to make this trip, to help defer the costs of flights, hotel rooms and their meals, and many of them used their own out-of-pocket

money as well. They spent over four months going through crop insurance records with Crop Insurance in Manitoba. These are down-to-earth, everyday farmers who are not members of farm organizations normally, who are not used to digging up the kinds of information on a daily basis that they took seriously and made the effort to go ahead and do. They put together crop insurance data, rainfall data, acreages impacted in every municipality by the flood and the excess of rainfall, when it came and how it impacted them. They ended up with over 35 meetings in Ottawa.

There again the federal members that I have lobbied with through other farm organizations for over 15 years, to a person, all came up to us afterwards and indicated that they understood the disaster at least now, and would work on their government—through their rural caucuses, and through the Cabinet—to try to bring some sense of impact on the need for funding this disaster in southwest Manitoba.

Of course, shortly after we were there, the hundred million dollars was announced, and I think they felt they could get away with the general population, saying: Well, we have really helped out these farmers now. We have given them some more money in regard to another program, and clearly we are here today because that program was generally available to every farmer, whether they were hit by the disaster or not, and no targeting has been done, even as we speak. That is why this resolution has come forward, and that is why the amendments have been put forward as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this group asked for \$85 million. Quite simply, they asked for 3.4 million acres at \$25 an acre. They asked for that on cultivated acres, as opposed to the impact of some dollars that were made available through the provincial government a year ago for just unseeded acres, because they recognized that many of the farmers who, as was said earlier, seeded crops very late, seeded crops after the extension for crop insurance deadline, did not get any crop out of it either. Many of those crops were washed out, or the disease from the excess of rainfall was so great that their crop was completely lost.

The other group, the Minnedosa rally group, which has made presentations to the ministers here in Manitoba and to our caucus, as well, came about the whole process in a different manner. They chose to calculate the impact on the whole region, and it was found to be over two billion dollars. When they removed the government's share of AIDA and NISA, the Net Income Stabilization Account dollars that were available, and perhaps the \$30 million, the third of the impacted areas, about a third of the acreage in Manitoba so they would take off the \$33 million from that as well, they still came up, in a totally separate means of determining how much the shortfall would be, with \$90 million which is very, very close to what the southwest rally group had determined in the first place. That 3.4 million acres, Mr. Deputy Speaker, covered the whole area from Riding Mountain, as I said earlier, around from Neepawa north and around to the U.S. border and everything west of that.

We have heard that we have to be GATT compliant with many of these mechanisms and trade agreements, but when it is declared a disaster, as the province and the federal government have both recognized, then we do not need to worry about the trade compliance in the GATT agreement and the NAFTA agreement because disasters are not impacted. Dollars can be paid through disaster under any mechanism that is chosen by the governments to distribute these funds when these kinds of situations arise.

The situation is that the only support that farmers out there today have received in southwest Manitoba who are not eligible for AIDA that is different from what everybody else has been eligible for is the \$50 an acre that was presented last summer by the Progressive Conservative Government of this province after only eight weeks from the time that the rainfall started, not even from the time that it was recognized as a disaster. That was only three or four weeks. We have got a situation now where the Government has been in power for seven and a half months, well over seven months, and they wonder why we are not in all-party agreement all of the time with all of their issues in trying to get money out of the federal government.

I have said I applaud them where they can get money on a 90-10 basis, as we have done under DFAA through the emergency measures Minister in Ottawa, who happens to be Mr. Eggleton, the Defence Minister. That has been done this spring and over this winter for that area of southwest Manitoba as it was done in the '97 flood in southwest Manitoba.

I believe from reports in the paper and the Premier's (Mr. Doer) comments on the radio and others that they do recognize that a subsequential agreement is what is required, similar to the JERI program, to come up with an agreement for a 50-50 program to help pay for the lost farm inputs which are not covered under DFAA. The federal minister has very clearly stated that, and this Government believes that.

I have talked to both ministers. They know that lost farm inputs are not covered under the DFAA and that there has to be a willingness by both sides to put a new program in place to recognize that a JERI-style program, whether it is the Jobs and Economic Recovery Initiative that was used in 1997 or a new-style program that can be put in place to deal with the situation similar to the way it was done in the Saguenay or in the ice storm in Québec and in Ontario, or here in the Red River Valley.

That \$50 is still the only money that those farmers have received, the third \$75 for the forage re-establishment and the \$10 for the reseeding. We have great concern that we know that the province is even paying a portion. The only way we were ever able to get the federal government to put any money into this program in the first place was to send them a bill for their share of the \$50. They said they would pay that through AIDA, which they have, and which the province as well puts up another 40 percent of, but we knew that, and so does the Government of the day.

They agreed last summer to take the \$70 million that was going to be required for this program out of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund that we had in this province. As of today they have not taken that money out of there. They have used it to increase the expenses of the province and to try to make the deficit still appear, which, even in spite of that, is still a \$4-million surplus

by their own account today. I think it is time to say that with all of the transfer payments they have received since the beginning of the year, and with the funds that they would still have in the Fiscal Stabilization account, they cannot say that they will not come to the table with their share of the 50-50 program.

I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if they were to make the same commitment as they were asking the federal government to do, we would come much closer to receiving the \$85 million that that region is asking for. Their own support that they asked for under DFAA or under the lost inputs through DFAA, I believe, correct me if I am wrong, was \$43 million. I would offer today that that support is only about half of what is truly required out there, as done in independent mechanisms by both of these groups. Trying to do that on a 90-10 basis would mean that the Manitoba Government is committed to \$4 million in this program.

\* (16:50)

I would always say that \$4 million is a lot of money, but to deal with this disaster it is a pittance. There needs to be a greater commitment, and that commitment needs to be on a 50-50 basis. If the federal government's 50 percent amounted to \$39 million, and the province was being asked to match that and only came up with their \$4 million, I would contend that they have not gone to the federal government with the idea that some of the funds that have already been used, and there are ways of calculating that. Some of the funds that the Conservative Government already put into southwest Manitoba could become their share of a \$39-million package from the province's side that they have not used to date.

If that is the case, then I believe that they should put the money out on the table and let us see what kind of numbers they have offered the federal government in regard to those discussions and jurisdictions, instead of saying that Mr. Eggleton is not willing to talk at all. I have been there and talked to Mr. Eggleton myself, and I know that he was saying it was an agricultural problem, and he would like to see it go away from the Defence Department.

However, it is his responsibility in regard to emergency preparedness in Canada to deal with disasters of this nature. I think that, even he would acknowledge, given the funds that have been paid out in some other areas of Canada, if we could get him to sit down with some of his own members of the agriculture Committee who are from Manitoba, particularly given that the chairman is here and comes from the province that has been hardest hit, and that he has only one rural member in all of western Canada, from Provencher, who at least has any recognition of any rural constituents, if you want to put it that way, that the majority of their members coming from urban ridings, he would listen to the kinds of options that are being put forward by the farmers in that area, and particularly as well by the group of us that have been there and chatted with him and talked to him to make sure that he knows why we are coming on as strongly as we are in regard to need for support in this region.

*Mr. Speaker in the Chair*

Mr. Speaker, throughout the election last year, the provincial Government of the day, then the Opposition, trying to become elected, reminded us many, many times that they had a great relationship with the federal government in Ottawa or would have a much better relationship than what the previous Conservative Government had.

I do not believe that relationship exists now, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, if you have been in negotiation on a disaster for over seven months and you do not even have something to put on the plate yet, you do not have a very good relationship. I think it comes from the fact that they have not been able to express clearly the efforts that are required on behalf of the farmers out there to come to the common ground of explaining the different programs more clearly so that they can be understood by Ottawa as to what they are asking for.

Clarity is needed in regard to these issues, and if they could decipher, put aside this rhetoric of the 90-10 basis that we need—and everybody realizes that the 90-10 issue for culverts and fences and washouts in fields and roads have been paid for. The federal government has done

their responsibility in regard to that level of funding.

So, Mr. Speaker, that is why it is a priority for myself, and that, as I said earlier in my opening remarks, is why I have spent over 50 percent of my time dealing with the phone calls from individuals in not just my constituency but several of the others. In fact, I have dealt with calls from farmers in Saskatchewan who, when negative margins were not being applied, felt that they were really being cheated, as well, in that disaster-hit area because, of course, whether we all like negative margins or not, negative margins would have gone mainly to the area where the most AIDA payments would have gone to, Ag Income Disaster Assistance payments, which, of course, would have been in the area where the disaster is, which is southwest Manitoba and southeastern Saskatchewan. So they were phoning me to make sure that our Government would not back out of negative margins as well, and I had to tell them that that was already the case, that we were not going to participate in negative margins.

I would also say that the farmers of southwest Manitoba had their share of some of the funds that the provincial government in Manitoba used to come up with their 40% to 60% share. Their \$40 million for the Transportation Adjustment Fund program came right out of the pockets of the farmers of southwest Manitoba who were most hard-hit by the requirement and the good that negative margins would have done if those payments had been added to their AIDA payments.

Many of those young farmers have indicated to me that the loss they suffered from that was far greater than the funds that they will get out of the Transportation Adjustment payment. I think that that is an anomaly that needs to be corrected and needs to be recognized by this provincial government.

They can blame the federal government all they like, but if they were coerced into saying the only way you are going to get this money is through this kind of a means, then, Mr. Speaker, they took the money clearly out of the hands of the farmers of southwest Manitoba and used it to



pay their share of the premium to spread those dollars over all the farmers in the province.

As I have said many times in this House, those funds are required by all the farmers of Manitoba because of the low commodity prices. That is what we went to Ottawa to get last fall, even though we ended up, as I have said earlier, with only a third of what we went to seek, and it is called success. I believe that totally we need to get back to reality and sit down with the federal government, call a summit for getting together with the Members here in Manitoba, the federal Members here in Manitoba, sit down with them right in Winnipeg and deal with them in a very public means in regard to how they are going to come to the table in regard to getting—I mean, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about \$85 million by a federal government that has about a \$10-billion surplus and by a provincial government that does not know how big the surplus that they are going to have is, but they will have a surplus.

The dollars that we were asking for when we were in Ottawa by many of the federal Members—and I know that the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the minister of emergency preparedness in Manitoba whom I met there as well, at the same time, know that federal members have referred to the dollars that are being required out here as being very minimal. I am being kind by not using the word "pittance" which was reiterated at least once while we were in Ottawa.

While we were in Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, I acknowledged with one of the farmers in that region, the chairman of the West Souris River Conservation District, Mr. Fotheringham, who is a young farmer who was very hard hit by this whole disaster, we know that through attrition that there is attrition in every business and that some farmers, as with grocery store owners and others, will leave a business for whatever circumstances. The point we were trying to make by being in Ottawa was to differentiate between the low commodity prices and the natural disaster that occurred in that region and that nobody should be forced to leave their farming operation due to the fact that they have been struck by a natural disaster and no compensation has been forthcoming.

We believe clearly that the \$85 million should be negotiated by the Manitoba Government in regard with the federal government and that both of them could come up with a formula on a 50-50 basis. If they truly have put forth a mechanism asking for 50-50 to be paid on a JERI-style program, then perhaps they could table the details for us and we could have a look at the kind of proposal that was put forward. I do not believe there is one, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that with a little ingenuity, I would offer my own services to sit down with the two members opposite, ministers opposite, to try to design this kind of a program for them. Many of the farmers in that region have already put pencil to paper and designed mechanisms for these kinds of dollars to be paid out and clearly outline where these dollars have come from.

I would like to finalize by saying that it is very easy to call for all-party support, and they may feel that the Conservatives are not onside, our party is not onside with them in regard to getting the program that we think is needed today.

Last year, as I said earlier, our Party, after some four weeks from recognizing there was a disaster, made some seventy million dollars available. When there are dollars on the table, it is very easy to be onside, but why would we be onside with a government who we believe has not negotiated a 50-50 deal in good faith at this particular time with—

\* (17:00)

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. When this matter is again before the House, the Honourable Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) will have three minutes remaining.

The hour being five o'clock, it is time for private members' hour.

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

### PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

#### Res. 4—Nurses Recruitment and Retention

**Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East):** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), that

WHEREAS the previous Progressive Conservative administration worked aggressively to recruit, train and retain health care staff; and

WHEREAS \$32.5 million was allocated in the April 1999 Budget to fund 650 new and existing nursing positions; and

WHEREAS a \$7-million fund was created in 1999 to recruit, train and retain nurses in Manitoba utilizing the exchange of information in the nursing community both locally, through a toll-free telephone number and as part of the Progressive Conservative Government's website; and

WHEREAS Manitoba Health, in partnership with Manitoba Education and Training, has more than doubled enrolment in the Licenced Practical Nursing program for 1999-2000; and

WHEREAS a "fast-track" nursing degree program was implemented to provide nursing students with the option of graduating from the baccalaureate program one year earlier, a program that has already benefited approximately one hundred students; and

WHEREAS the Faculty of Nursing has begun to offer a joint bachelor of nursing program with Red River College in Winnipeg and Keewatin Community College in The Pas and Thompson; and

WHEREAS there is on-site distance education at Brandon and Norway House Cree Nations, along with discussions for further efforts with other First Nations and Métis leaders to increase enrolment of nursing students; and

WHEREAS enrolment for the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) nursing program has increased, and the program expects to graduate 45 more ICU nurses in 1999-2000; and

WHEREAS Manitoba compares very well to the rest of Canada in terms of nursing supply, particularly in comparison to other western provinces.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge Today's New Democratic Government to consider

continuing with these proactive measures for the recruitment and retention of nurses for the benefit of the people in the province of Manitoba.

*Motion presented.*

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** I am pleased to stand and move this resolution and speak to it in this House today. Just by looking over the WHEREASes in the resolution, as I begin to speak, it clearly can be said to all Manitobans that a process and a plan had been put in place to try to deal with the issue of the shortage of nursing in the province of Manitoba. Just as I read it through again, I realized and recognized that many of the things that were put in place by our government when we were in power have been continued by the present administration. All of those things that were happening are indeed still happening today.

It was much to my dismay when I looked at the new Minister of Health's (Mr. Chomiak) five-point plan on his nursing strategy to note that four of the five points were already in place under our government. There was one new program, I must admit, and that was the two-year nursing program that was announced by the Minister of Health and the new Government.

So let it not be said that there was not a plan started under the former administration. It is important that Manitobans do remember that because many that I am talking to, whether it be in the medical profession, those that are involved in the physician organizations, have indicated to me that, yes, things seem to be a little bit better, and it is directly as a result of the initiatives that we started when we were in government, and the new Government is seeing the fruits of those initiatives.

So I would encourage them to continue. Well, we know the Minister of Health during the election campaign said that we got 85 percent of things right when we were in government, so I would like him from time to time, especially when he begins to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremonies for all the personal care home beds that will be opened in the not-too-distant future and some that have opened already, that he will

indeed give some credit to those that put the plans in place and started the process.

The one thing that concerns me somewhat with this new administration and this new Government is the way they have dealt with the nursing profession in total. I mean, we look to the Manitoba Association of Licensed Practical Nurses, we look to the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses, we look to the Registered Psychiatric Nurses' Association, and when we were in government we, on several occasions, met together with all of those organizations collectively along with the Nurses' Union, and it was very important for us to try to ensure that everyone was on side, that we consulted in a meaningful way with all of the players, all of the nursing educators, all of the regulating bodies, to try to ensure that everyone was on side, and we were working together as a team, trying to find the right solutions, knowing that there was no easy quick fix, but it would take everyone around the table collectively providing some options and some suggestions and some solutions.

I find it very difficult to understand why, when the regulating bodies approach the new Minister and the new Government and ask for a collective meeting to sit down and discuss nursing issues, the Minister has put them off and to date has never met together with them collectively. That seems to be a genuine concern of theirs. Fine, he may want to pick one organization off and pit them one against the other, and maybe that is their way of doing business. That is fine, but he should let them know. My sense is that we need all of those organizations. We need all nurses working together, and when you create a rift within the profession and within the professional bodies and the organizations and nurses against nurses, it does nothing for the morale within our health care system, and it does nothing for patient care.

So, I would recommend strongly to the Minister that he take the opportunity to sit down with all of the players and try to find the very best solutions for the right reasons. It seems to me that the only organization that has been around the table, and I sense they might even be sitting around the Cabinet table, would be the nurses' union. They are obviously the decision

makers and the only organization within the nursing profession that the new Government values in any way. I think that is rather unfortunate. We think the nurses' union plays a role and a significant role, but we think they are one partner in the whole process. It is those that are in the profession, those that are looking to go into the profession, that are the ones that are going to suffer. It is going to ultimately be the patients when you have nurses sort of debating among themselves who is best to care for patients, rather than having nurses saying collectively, we all have a role to play and let us pool our forces and our resources and get on with the job.

I think a rift has been created within the nursing profession that is going to be very hard to bridge. That is unfortunate, as I said, Mr. Speaker, for both patients and for those professionals that we count on so desperately to provide the nursing services that are required.

I have to chuckle a bit to think of the promises that the former Health critic, now the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), made during the election campaign when he said some eight months ago, or maybe nine months I guess it was, during the campaign. He indicated very strongly: We are going to hire a hundred more nurses immediately upon election. We are going to hire 100 more nurses, and we are going to fix the problems in health care immediately. *[interjection]* Well, yes, he indicated he was going to open 100 more beds and hire 100 more nurses—*[interjection]* Absolutely, and that was going to fix our health care system. He was just going to pull them out of thin air as soon as he became the Minister of Health, and they would be there. They would just come crawling towards the Minister of Health and say: Here we are, we are ready to provide that service. Well, in reality, we know that he was not able to deliver upon that promise. We know that there is a shortage within our health care system of professionals, and it is going to be there for a long time to come.

\* (17:10)

I look to the one new initiative in his five-point plan announcement, and it is looking at graduating 90 nurses probably three years from

now. Well, I guess, I want to ask the question whether this is the full plan. Is this a complete plan that has been announced by the Minister of Health? I question whether 90 nurses three years from now is going to fill the shortage of what he says is 700 vacancies within our health care system today—

**An Honourable Member:** Seven hundred when you left office, six hundred now.

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** —well, 600 positions within our health care system. I am not sure what 90 nurses three years from now is going to do to fix that problem today. What is this Government's overall plan?

Mr. Speaker, I have had a chance to meet with licensed practical nurses, and they have indicated that they have received no response from the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). In fact, we increased the number of spaces in the licensed practical nurses program from 90 to 190, and those nurses will be graduating this year, but there are 200 people on the wait list to get into the LPN program. We heard nothing in the Minister's strategy that would indicate that he was going to increase the number of spaces in the LPN program so that there could be more—  
[interjection]

Well, it is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that when the Health Minister was the Opposition critic, he blamed Government for the LPN situation, and now that he is in government, he is saying Government does not make that decision; hospitals make those decisions. Well, it is amazing how they can change their tune. When they are in opposition, they can have it all ways. They can say whatever they want, and they do not have to be held accountable, but Manitobans are going to hold this Minister and this Government accountable for the decisions that they make.

They are going to know, as we move through the next few years, that the promises that the New Democrats made when they were in opposition leading into an election and through an election are promises that they are not going to be able to fulfil. We are going to see over the next number of years the nursing shortages that have not been addressed with the

one new point in the plan that the Minister announced just recently.

Unless he can come up with an overall plan to address the nursing shortage, we are going to see nurses continue to be overworked. We are going to see nurses continue to have to work double shift. We are going to see nurses continue to have to give up their holidays to try to manage the crisis in the health care system.

We never advocated or indicated that we had the quick-fix solutions, Mr. Speaker, when we were in government. We were working with the whole profession to try to find the solutions and the answers. What we have seen to date from this new Government—[interjection]

### Point of Order

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I would ask if the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) would try to control himself while I am making my comments and putting my comments on the record. I am sure that he will have every opportunity to stand up and speak to this resolution within a few moments, should he desire.

**Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services):** Mr. Speaker, I was probably participating rather enthusiastically from my seat, having spoken a little bit earlier and having received a lot of assistance from opposition members in my speech. So if I was somehow disrupting the member, I will try and be a little less vocal.

Indeed, if we do have time on this, I would love to speak about health care, believe you me.

**Mr. Speaker:** On the point of order raised by the Honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), she does have a point of order. It was getting very difficult to hear the comments, and I would ask all members to keep it down a bit. The members will have a chance to speak to the resolution.

\* \* \*

**Mrs. Mitchelson:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for your ruling, and I thank the Member opposite for

his apology. It is not often we hear that from the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton), so I want to thank him for that apology.

As I wrap up my comments, I just want to indicate that I think it is a sad day in Manitoba when we do not have the consultation, the co-operation and the working together with all of the nursing educators, with all of the professional bodies and the organizations, those that are working in the field today and those who have the real suggestions, ideas and solutions to solving the problem. It seems like there has been a very heavy-handed approach from the new Minister and the new Government. I think that does nothing toward furthering our opportunities to develop and to graduate and retain the brightest and the best, and those who want to make a contribution to our health care system and to supporting the patients who need their care. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the resolution with the Member opposite. I thought it was very, very curious and very typical of the practice adopted by the comments of the Member that the Member not once talked about the nurses in the field and talking to the nurses in the field, the ones who put in the long hours on a day-to-day basis, on a week-to-week basis, and the Member talked about talking to the professional bodies and talked about the education. I think that was part of the problem of the previous government. You never talked to people. You never talked to people. For that reason, you missed a large percentage of the reality of health care. That was part of the problem.

Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that the Member should talk about LPNs. When former ministers stood up and said there was no future for LPNs in this province, did not attend public meetings with LPNs, we fought on behalf of the LPNs. The former government was forced, at the end of the day, because of the shortage, to augment—and we supported it—the resources to LPNs, and we are continuing that. We are expanding, and we are doing what they talked about with respect to the LPNs. With respect to meeting with organizations, I would imagine that I have met with those organizations more in the

past six or seven months than the Member has in her entire tenure in this Chamber. So to make the argument that we are not meeting with those organizations is fallacious and wrong.

Now the Member talked about meeting with them as a group, as a collective. In fact, I had occasion to address them as a collective, but for the Member—*[interjection]*

\* (17:20)

No, and I made that point. I met with them and I asked for their comments before the nursing announcement. I wanted to make that point. I did not want to be inappropriate. But, you know, to fine-pick little things that they would have done—but I digress.

You know, if the Member wants to take credit and have the former government take credit for everything that has happened in this province, that is fine. They might want to do that. We have built on some of the initiatives launched by the former government, and we have augmented them, and we have earmarked, and we have improved some. I do not care where the credit goes. The fact is the Member acknowledged that things are better. They are better today. I hope they are better tomorrow, and I hope they are better down the road. That is what our goal is in the province and in the health care system. I think we can agree on that.

Now, the Member talked about the nursing strategy. I attended the announcement of nursing strategy outside the former Health minister's office in the spring of 1999. After three years of standing up in the Legislature and over and over again saying to members opposite what are you going to do about the nursing shortage, and the cry we heard from this side of the House was there is no nursing shortage, and when are you going to have a nursing plan? And: the spring.

Now what was coincidental with the spring announcement of a nursing strategy by the former minister of Health? What was coincidental? Was there talk about perhaps a political vent in the air? So you can forgive me if I was a bit incredulous in terms of that announcement. In fact, the entire media corps were when the

announcement came in the spring where they were saying here comes an election.

But, having said that, a lot of the initiatives were precisely what was necessary, and which we had been arguing for, for a long time. Now there are just so many areas that I wish to discuss that I will have to be short in some areas, but I want to turn to the five-point nursing plan that we announced in which the Member indicated four of the five points were nothing new. The only thing that was new was a diploma program.

I want to ask the Member whether or not there were \$3 million in funds that were expended to the regional health authorities when they were in office to provide upgrading for nurses. No. I want to ask the Member if there was a fast track for foreign-trained nurses when they were in office. The answer is no. I want to ask if there was a province-wide international recruitment campaign when they were in office. The answer is no. I want to ask if there was a study of improving working conditions when they were in office. The answer is, no. I want to ask if there was an establishment of a nursing advisory council in their office. The answer was no.

You know, Mr. Speaker, the Member can go on and on and on, and if she wants to take credit for it, that is fine. Credit is not what is in order. What is in order is the results. I think the results have been fairly positive in the first few months, and I am hoping they will improve with the months as we go ahead.

Now I want to talk about the diploma baccalaureate program. What I really resent about the arguments of the Member, and I do resent them, is that they are intellectually dishonest. To argue that we are not supporting the BN program is dishonest. We did not take one cent or one initiative from the BN program. We advised the BNs they should expand, and they should continue to expand, but we could not, as a government in good conscience, rely on the output from the BN program.

They met in my office. I believe it was January 19, and they said to me: Well, we will do the fast-track diploma program. I said: Great,

how many students can you do? They said: Well, you know, they tried it in Saskatchewan, and they only had one student that took the option. I said: Okay, but can you do a bunch of students? They said: Yes, we can get students out fast tracked. I said: Great. What will that do to the pool of nurses available at the end of the program? Well, that would decrease it. I said: You mean net. We are not going to have any increase in nurses as a result? They said: Yes. I said: You know, that is a bit of a problem because already you are only graduating, and they told me something like 150 next year, something like 150 the following year, and the subsequent statistics were not good. We are sitting on a shortage of 600 positions, 1500 retirees. I am using the same criteria that the former Health department used, because I wanted to be consistent, 1500 retirements, and we are going to rely on the program that is graduating 150 nurses a year. Do the arithmetic.

So we said: Why can we not do some flexibility and have a diploma program in conjunction, a laddering program—ladder in the LPNs, ladder in the diplomas, ladder between the BNs and the diplomas? It is a win-win situation.

Now I recognize the professional difficulties and what women particularly in the profession have tried to do with nursing for some time, and we were conscious of that. We tried to move it forward in a way that did not detract from the BN program and would augment it, so we put the program in place and, what happened? We had over a thousand people, fifteen hundred people applied for that program and 300 applications have been sent out for that program, which increased the pool of available nurses.

Are we taking away from the BN program? No, we are not. Are we adding to the pool? Yes, we are. Do we have another option of flexibility, the people that maybe want to take a program over a shorter period of time? Yes, we do. Is that wrong, Mr. Speaker? Well, the only people that think it is wrong are the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) and the Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard), and both of them are kind of jumping on the fringe of that argument.

I might add in conclusion on this point that, if you were to go out and talk to the 80 percent-

plus of diploma-trained nurses, and when we did that, the vast majority by all counts at every level said the first thing any government should do to provide some hope and some assistance to the nursing profession is to bring back a diploma program, and we did that.

The second thing they told us to do was get us more money for upgrading in education in order to allow us to move up in our profession and receive the kind of training. We did that, and neither of those initiatives was even hinted at by the former administration, so there is a bit of a difference I would think with respect to the issue.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it is far broader. It is interesting that members opposite only like to focus on the diploma program. They simply avoid the discussion of the other issues, because I do not think they can criticize them quite frankly. We have attempted to expand the number of LPNs that are actually of active practice. We said that in opposition. We have said that in government. We have gone to the institutions. We have gone to the health authorities and said we want LPNs employed in the acute care sector, and that has happened. Not as fast as I would like, but it has happened. It is going to continue to happen because we think and believe and know there is a role for LPNs in the acute care institutions.

I keep returning, Mr. Speaker, and I should review this resolution with respect to the comments of the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). I think that a lot of the initiatives were announced, and I have said this publicly on many occasions. A lot of them were unfunded, and I mean that is the other frustration. The number of initiatives that were announced and unfunded is staggering, absolutely staggering, and that begs the question as to not only the intention of the former government but their real commitment. Most of these initiatives occurred in the spring of last year, or in the summer of last year, leading up to a particular event that occurred in the late summer of 1999. I am thankful that some of the initiatives were started. The \$7-million initiative that came out of 1988 and 1999 money and was flipped into last year and announced in the spring of last year at a very late date, I had called for such a strategy three

years previous in this Chamber, and the former minister said there is no nursing problem.

\*(17:30)

So, Mr. Speaker, did we support it at the time? I supported it at the time. Should the former government take credit? The former government can take credit for a number of initiatives, I am prepared to give them that credit. It is interesting though that the former government only discovered nurses in the last few months leading up to the campaign. We are trying to include nurses in discussions. In all of our initiatives, we have met with every organization on many, many occasions. We have met with the university on several occasions and continuing discussions with the university. I also resent the fact that the Member said that we started the division between the professions. I believe the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger) attended the MARN's specially called meeting on Sunday. One of the conclusions they made was the rift in the nursing profession did not start with our government. It started when the diploma program was decommissioned previously. That was the conclusion of the general consensus of the body there, I am advised. I was not in attendance, but that is what I am advised.

So this rewriting of history, you know, all of a sudden we are causing a rift because we are raising an issue that had been so obvious out there for so many years. The Member for River East must have heard it—she is educated as a nurse—on many, many occasions. But it was sort of swept under the rug until we raised the issue of the diploma program, and all of a sudden a rift was created? Frankly, Mr. Speaker, even the MARN meeting on Sunday concluded that the rift and the dissension had started much, much earlier than that.

Walk into any institution, and what are we short of? Not just nurses. Technologists, X-ray technicians, lab techs, right across the board. I ask members opposite: What did you do about any of that? Virtually nothing. You set up a \$7-million nurses fund in the spring of last year with some good ideas, which we continued and which we have expanded to include a whole series of other initiatives, but you did nothing

else about the human resource crises facing us in health care, the single biggest issue we face. Nothing. We are short X-ray technicians. We are short lab technicians. We are short radio technologists. We are short doctors. We are short nurses. We are short nurses aides. Nothing was done about the human component, which by the way is the single biggest component of health care. We as a government have to take on this initiative.

Now, can we do that overnight? Can you deal with 11 years of neglect overnight? I think not, but we did say we would be an active government, that we would come in with initiatives, and we are taking action in virtually every, single neglected Tory area. The Tory nursing shortage, the Tory health aide shortage, the Tory shortage of complete professionals, the Tory lack of action on every front, we are taking action.

So I welcome the opportunity of setting the record straight on some of the comments made by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). I am convinced and I know that there is a general consensus, a huge consensus of support for the initiatives we are taking with regard to nurses. Do we get everything right? No, Mr. Speaker. Have we done a lot of the right initiatives? I think so, and I think in the last few months and in the coming months we will see that these initiatives will result in an improved health care condition, which I think is something that all of us in this Chamber look forward to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege and an honour to rise and say a few remarks on the recruitment and retention of nurses in our hospitals. However, I would like to limit my remarks to the concerns of the Seven Oaks Hospital, which happens to be located in my constituency. Mr. Mark Nusgart is the Chief Executive Officer of the hospital. I have had a couple of contacts with him. During the campaign he offered me a tour at the hospital and then after the election I phoned him again and he offered me again the same thing, to have a tour at the hospital, and I have yet to take up his offer.

At the hospital, nursing recruitment and retention is one of Seven Oaks' major issues.

They have been wrestling with this shortage of registered nurses for quite some time. They are eager to begin to work with government to implement any strategies which will alleviate this problem. The hospital is very concerned about providing a high level of service to their patients. They are committed to dealing with staff issues which impede the quality of care. At present the biggest issue for nurses in the hospital is that there will not be enough respite for nurses. This is what the Member opposite has mentioned in her remarks as well. Who is to take some form of summer vacation? Without the introduction of more nurses in the system they will have to close beds, and this will greatly influence the level of care that patients will receive.

The hospital has had a great deal of strain put on its resources. In many cases nurses have been imposed upon by asking them to work double shifts and overtime.

Seven Oaks Hospital is looking for work to co-operate with the current Government and also hopes to address issues raised by the unions and each of their individual employees. Mr. Nusgart has also raised the concerns that there is the potential for shortage in other health care professions. That was also echoed by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) in his remarks. The hospital is only now beginning to see shortages in pharmacists, occupational therapists, laboratory and radiology technicians. At this point it appears that there are not sufficient trained personnel in many of these areas. The Seven Oaks Hospital hopes to introduce a better staffing mix using licensed practical nurses, nursing assistants, registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses to their advantage and alleviate the current situation. Indeed, on March 1, 2000, when the five-point plan was announced by the Minister, Seven Oaks Hospital currently employed LPNs in its acute care department.

By introducing the five-point plan, as my colleagues have outlined, it is hoped that there will be an increase in the number of nurses practising at Seven Oaks Hospital, and in the future the quality of care received by patients who rely on this hospital for services will no longer be hampered. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.



**Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James):** Mr. Speaker, I am quite happy to be standing here today, because as a clinical social worker for the last 20 years I am appreciating the opportunity to express the frustration of my fellow workers, the nurses that I worked with on the frontline.

I have to admire the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) for being able to stand there—that was very brave of you, I think—and speak to this issue. I am really glad you referred to rereading the resolution, because I was reading it over, too. It quite impressed me the things that jumped out at me. The only thing here, well, in the first resolution about working aggressively to train and retrain health care staff, I guess that must be when you fired the thousand nurses. Any—

**An Honourable Member:** That was advancing the status of women.

**Ms. Korzeniowski:** Oh, sorry about that. I guess most of the other WHEREASes make reference to the budget of 1999, so I am wondering—I am not sure if it is before September 21 or not, but we will give the benefit of the doubt. But it is nice to know that the thought was there, but I can tell you that it fooled no one. It was too little, too late. The nurses I worked with did not believe it. They had lost faith long ago. They knew it was a trick. They are not idiots. *[interjection]* Well, I want to tell you, it served me well at the door. The voters did not believe it either, and I am surprised at the number of nurses that I came across who were pretty glad to see some hope for the future. *[interjection]* Well, they knew we were going to win.

\* (17:40)

I think one of the things that really bothered me with the nurses that did not seem to be appreciated by the Government—and I did mention it in my speech in response to the throne speech—was the lack of understanding—and Dave mentioned it, as well. I think the Member of the opposition made reference to parties a lot and not really knowing what the people were talking about. I had said—and you can look in the Hansard—one of the problems that I felt, the frustration I felt—and I know that my fellow nurses felt—was that the Government was so out of touch. I also read where one of the previous

members had made reference to the health care that it was so complicated, and we are not doctors and we needed to look up for answers. I think that was critical through the whole thing that people were always looking up to the parties, to the physicians—who most people know very little about the system—and not enough looking out, not enough checking in with our colleagues, not enough checking in with the caregivers to find out what the problems were.

Actually, I was at a supper the other night, and, again, that was reinforced. I must say I do not think it is intentional. I think it is a lack of understanding, a lack of sensitivity, not a malice, but this person I was speaking to who identified himself as a Tory was trying to explain to somebody sitting beside him that, you know, our health care system has not changed that much, for starters. Well, we straightened that one out pretty quickly. But he said, you know, it never was that bad, that once you got past the people in the hallways, and once they got up onto the wards there was no problem. You know—the care, my mother-in-law, blah, blah, yada, yada.

I said, you know, the biggest part of the problem is that nurses are their own worst enemies, in that nurses—and you know this—are naturally compassionate, dedicated, professional people who will not, never did, compromise the level of service until they burnt out. Well, people did not see that. All they saw was that they were still getting that good service, and the next time they came up maybe it was a different nurse giving them good service. Maybe it was the nurse's day off, but in reality, maybe she had just had it.

The other problem that I feel is going to be addressed with some of the changes that our Minister is bringing in, it makes reference to their—well, we are talking about morale. The nurses that I spoke to felt devalued constantly. The firings, the lack of recognition of the need, of the numbers, the wage freeze, well, all the health care professionals felt that same thing. But a lot of it was attitude, that people did not care, that they did not recognize that as long as there was a nurse there to give them a needle or a medication or turn them over, there was a lot of their skill level that was undervalued.

I would like to address education as well. The strategies that our Minister is putting in place for education, they are not only excellent, they are absolutely necessary, and not in terms of providing a better service in the future but of prevention. The biggest thing in nursing care, the nursing problem, is management of people by nurses who are not necessarily given the education they need. They are creating problems, not intentionally but by a lack of understanding, perhaps, of a certain disease that an in-service might have alleviated. We need to put more time and money into educating the people we do have. It is not that they are unable. It is that they do not have the opportunity to be taught. That is what our Minister is providing, an opportunity for ongoing increasing of the level of skill, the level of knowledge, as people are ready and able to go back.

While we are on that, it is a simple lack of understanding frequently that leads to mismanagement of people which leads to a need for perhaps restraints that would not have been otherwise necessary, which can lead to the abuse, which can lead to—but we are not going to talk about the act today for protection.

I really appreciate the fact that the legislation is going to enable nurses to become boards of health care facilities. Finally, we are addressing the lack of respect, the lack of being felt valued, but, most importantly, this is where they are going to have an input that they would not otherwise have with the people who are looking after the people in care, with the professional and the caregivers living at home. They are going to have a direct contact with them.

I think I also appreciate the fact that the current Government has been consulting with the various nursing associations. Consultation has been happening with the various parties. You would not know that there was a problem with MARN. The fact that the provincial government is committed to attracting both students and staff for all three nursing professions, including diploma, degree and prepared registered nurses and degree-prepared registered nurses. Registered psychiatric nurses are finally getting their recognition, given the increasing numbers of people with cognitive

impairment. I think the Government has been forced to recognize what the previous government neglected sadly. Having worked in the psychogeriatric field, I know well the value of those nurses.

I think, as regards the Minister's five-point plan increasing the supply of nurses in Manitoba to match current and anticipated labour demand, again it is not just the numbers, it is the ratio of the levels of nursing that can be manipulated to accommodate some of the problems that we have had in the past. I do not think we need to look at what skill level is the best level for a patient. I think we need to have all levels of that.

Improving the working conditions. Now there is a big one. Working conditions for nurses. Oh, my goodness, has anybody ever thought of that before? Quality of life? A life at all? Nurses have a tough, tough role. They have to work part-time; they have to work shift work. They are not always happy people. If they are not happy, how are they going to keep the patients happy? I have heard caregivers say to me: What are you talking about? That is their job. They have got to keep the people happy. That is not our business.

Well, it is our business because if they are not happy and they are not able to keep the patients happy, I can assure you that the families are not going to be happy, that the taxpayers are not going to be happy. The quality of health care is critical. It is our business, and it is critical to the quality of life of the people providing it.

\* (17:50)

A nursing advisory council. Oh, my goodness, are we consulting again? A council of labour, management and educators—do you think we can all talk in the same room?—from across the province will advise the Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak) on issues and concerns related to the role of nursing in the health care system.

Our Government, in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, remains committed to taking steps to increase the supply of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and registered psychiatric nurses in Manitoba, in addition to the other five points that I have not necessarily addressed. I

have picked ones that I have experienced personally. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Ashton:** Mr. Speaker, I had not anticipated speaking today, but it was something about the Member for River East's (Mrs. Mitchelson) speech. It just got me going, and I did apologize for being a little bit vocal from my seat, so I decided to participate in the debate because we are seeing a pattern from the Conservative Party here.

This is the party that was in government for 11 years, and their new strategy—and this is really interesting—when it comes to health is basically to sort of gloss over the disastrous record they had in health care for 11 years and get up and, when they have anything to say about health, criticize us for not fixing the problems they created faster. I mean, Mr. Speaker, talk about the gall of members opposite.

I have news for the Member for River East, by the way. Their years are not seen as the golden age of health care in this province. I mean, if there was one issue that defeated them in the election, it was health care. I went door to door. I talked to people in my constituency—and, by the way, I want to thank my constituents for receiving the highest share of the vote I have ever received, that any candidate has ever received. I talked to many of them, and, you know, I talked to people who were lifelong Tories that voted for the NDP because they were sick and tired of the Conservative record on health care.

Now, in my constituency, that reflected on the poor condition of the hospital, a challenge we are going to be looking at in terms of the capital needs, the fact that there was no personal care home in the facility and the cuts that took place. Do you know where those cuts took place? On the nursing side. It was nurses that were cut time and time again. I was amazed earlier, and I am particularly amazed at both the Conservatives and the Liberal Member as well. You know, when the Conservative Government was in office, they took on LPNs. They were trying to get rid of LPNs. They got rid of hundreds of nurses from the system, in fact a

thousand nurses. They were the ones who did that. It was previous ministers of Health that put that in place.

Now, what we have done, as the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) pointed out, is there is no cut to the BN program. What we have done is we faced reality. We have a huge shortage of nurses. It is going to get worse because many nurses are going to be retiring in the next number of years, and what we have done is come up with a program that is supported. I can say to the Member for River East, by the way, she should talk to some of the front-line nurses as I have in my constituency, and they are ecstatic that there is finally a government that is going to put in place a diploma program to give them the help they need at the bedside to provide patient care.

What I love is the Conservative Party criticizing us for not consulting enough. I mean, you know, if there was a second reason that killed that party in the election, it was things like, remember—oh, I should not get into this one, MTS. Talk about consultation. I get a real kick out of the former Premier. He is not exactly a poster boy for consultation, I can tell you that. When he got up and criticized us for not consulting on this and that and the other issue and then goes out of the House—he was asked by the media, not by us, about MTS, and he said, well, that was different; it was economic. But they did not consult on MTS; they did not consult on health care. Their strategy, if there was one, was to go from one crisis to another crisis to another crisis.

You know what I was amazed at is that the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) even referenced personal care homes—personal care homes, that we are attending the ribbon cuttings for those personal care homes. You know, one of the root problems in health care over the last number of years is because that party in 1995, after the election, went and froze the capital program that would have constructed the personal care home beds that would have been in place and would have prevented the disastrous situation of hallway medicine that we inherited from the party opposite.

I mean, I love it. They got up on hallway medicine. Our Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak)

did more in six months than they did in 11 years. Our Minister of Health put in an action plan, and all they can do is say, well, you said you were going to open a hundred beds. Did the Member for River East compare the hallway medicine situation a year ago with the situation under our Government? No. The reason she would not do that is because within six months, basically, we have gotten marks nationally. We have had attention within this province. To the people of Manitoba we promised to deal with hallway medicine, and that is exactly what we have done.

I would suggest to members opposite—and I have been through this. I have been encouraged to talk about frozen food. What a mess. How about SmartHealth? Talk about boondoggles. It is not over yet. We are going to, I assume, find out eventually about the mess with Lotteries, et cetera. This is a government that did not have money for patient care but came up with SmartHealth, which has proved to be an unmitigated financial disaster, a system that does not work, but they do not talk about it.

If there is a little bit of advice I could give to members opposite, because I have been there, one thing that happens that, when you lose an election, it is very natural for people to turn around and say: Well, it really did not happen, and if it did, oh, that other party, you know, they said this, they said that. I have some advice for members opposite. They lost the election in 1999 based on a number of issues, and, yes, to the member opposite, I have been in a government that was defeated.

The first thing you should do is listen to the people. In health care, the people spoke loud and clear. Not only did I receive a huge vote of confidence, if you look at the support we received. We received a larger number of seats than the Conservatives did in the entire 11 years they were in government. We had one of the highest popular votes. The message was clear on health care. People fundamentally rejected the

Conservative record on health care. They rejected the kind of confrontation we saw from members opposite. They rejected the kind of crisis management. I mean, crisis management, of course, they were managing crises. They created most of them through their disastrous policies.

I have a suggestion to the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). When you get up and move a motion—and I notice, by the way, that not a single Conservative member opposite spoke in support of the motion, that is a pretty unusual situation. Not even the seconder of the motion got up to talk about it. But, when you get up and you sort of reference WHEREAS the previous Conservative government, I have a bit of advice for the Member for River East. I would not do that on health care. I mean, please, politically for us, it is great. But, if you are going to recognize what happened in 1999, the people of Manitoba sent a resounding vote of confidence in our policies on health care and sent a resounding no to 11 years of neglect of our health care system.

Instead of getting up and doing this previous Conservative government, I would suggest a couple of things. One is a little bit of humility. Believe you me, when you get defeated from government, humility is not always easy, but it is where you start. I have been there in 1988, and I tell you that sent a clear message to our political party. The day we started our rebuilding—and within 11 years our recovery to forming government is when we recognized in 1988 that the people sent us a message and it is important to get that message. I suggest you do the same thing on health care.

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

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

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, May 2, 2000

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