



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 14, 2001

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Jerry Munch, J. Anderlic, B. Borokas and others, praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro (Mr. Selinger) consider alternative routes for the additional 230kV and 500kV lines proposed for the R.M. of East St. Paul.

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Mike Todosichuk, G. Dangerfield, Arlene McLaughlin and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

PTH 9 Upgrade

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Doug Hunter, Lisa McCausland, Bonnie Hiltz and others, praying that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) consider upgrading provincial trunk Highway No. 9 and the Selkirk Corridor thoroughfare immediately.

Kenaston Underpass

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Shirley Przybyl, Terry Mills, Don Carriere and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Kenaston Underpass

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

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

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest unseparated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

THAT vehicles which have to wait for trains at this intersection burn up approximately \$1.4 million in fuel, pollute the environment with over 8 tons of emissions and cause approximately \$7.3 million in motorist delays every year.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Manitoba Hydro Lines Routes

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

Madam Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

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

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

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

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

Kenaston Underpass

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

Madam Clerk: The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT the intersection at Wilkes and Kenaston has grown to become the largest unseparated crossing in Canada; and

THAT the volume of traffic for this railroad crossing is twelve times the acceptable limit as set out by Transport Canada; and

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WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Victor and Jean Murray and Clyde Murray from British Columbia who are the guests of and are also the parents and brother of the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Also in the public gallery we have, from Southwood School, 60 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Don Thiessen. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Steinbach (Mr. Jim Penner).

Also in the public gallery, from O'Kelly School, we have 36 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Karen Rone. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Minister of Health Accessibility

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, earlier today, a Kildonan constituent contacted his MLA, who happens to be the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), to raise his concerns about the deteriorating state of health care in Manitoba. This morning the constituent went to see his mother who has been in the hallway of Concordia Hospital for the last two nights,

despite the promise from the Premier that he would end hallway medicine in six months.

It has been over 20 months, and the Premier's promise remains broken. When this constituent went to the Health Minister, when he called the Health Minister's office, he was told: Do not call us at the Legislature, call the constituency office.

Can the Premier please explain to this constituent and all Manitobans why they are no longer allowed to raise issues of health with the Health Minister's office?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): We on this side would like to also welcome the Leader of the Opposition's parents to the gallery today, and his brother. Welcome to this Chamber.

The Minister of Health's door is always open to people in terms of their advice. Sometimes, dealing with all the challenges he has, it is not instant, but I know that he is a very inclusive individual in terms of health care. I understand there is one patient in the hallway in Concordia Hospital, and I think that is still a challenge for us, but it is still terrific progress over some of the situations we inherited.

* (13:35)

Health Care System Hallway Medicine

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): When the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) was in Opposition he was knocking on their doors and holding them and crying with them. Now he will not even meet with them.

When the Kildonan constituent then called the Health Minister's constituency office to voice his concern, as he was instructed to do, he was just given excuses. The Premier knows full well that when he made a clear promise in the election campaign, he said he would end hallway medicine in six months. When will the Premier start giving Manitobans the respect that they deserve and put forward meaningful solutions towards solving health care?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): On November 28, 1998, there were 45 patients in the hallways of

Concordia Hospital. We today have one. One is still one too many. When I had the occasion to visit a colleague in the hospital a couple of weeks ago, I noticed there were no patients in the hospital hallways. I think that from 48 to 1 is not perfect, but it is moving in the right direction.

Minister of Health Apology Request

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this constituent said that if his wife's family was not here, he would consider leaving the province to get health care where he gets a better future for his family. Considering his wife is an X-ray technologist, it is fortunate they have decided to remain here in Manitoba. The constituent said he is insulted, he is hurt and offended by the treatment he has received from the Doer government, and he wants an apology.

I ask: Will the Premier today ask the Health Minister to apologize to his constituent for the shabby treatment he has received from the Doer government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, there have been inaccuracies before in this House. We will take the individual allegation made by the Leader of the Opposition under notice. Moving from 45 or 46 to 1 is certainly moving in the right direction. A report dealing with hallway medicine, a national report, indicated Manitoba was the best in Canada.

I think the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) made an announcement a few weeks ago. There have been problems since we have been elected at one hospital, the Victoria Hospital. We are very concerned that the first year we were in office we were not able to make the same progress at that hospital as had been achieved at other facilities, 45 to 1 at the Concordia.

The Minister of Health has authorized the payment for a new CAT scan at Victoria Hospital. We have renovated the facility where the equipment will be located, and we have also authorized capital.

Mr. Speaker, three years ago there was a proposal to reduce hallway medicine by investing in capital in the Victoria Hospital. That was rejected by the previous government. In our first year in office, we recognized that that rejection was a mistake. This Minister of Health is proceeding with that capital investment to deal with Victoria Hospital which has too many patients in the hallways as we speak.

The Maples Surgical Centre Purchase

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): On a new question, Mr. Speaker. To the member's constituent, clearly, it is just tough luck.

It was reported today that The Maples Surgical Centre has approached the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority with an offer to sell its facility. According to a May 11 letter, the centre did so upon the direction from the Deputy Minister of Health.

First the Premier (Mr. Doer) wants to waste \$7.3 million of taxpayers money to buy the Pan Am Clinic. Mr. Speaker, why did he not just lift the cap on the Pan Am Clinic and enter into contracts with other facilities to improve health care in Manitoba?

* (13:40)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as is a very common pattern in this Chamber, the member is wrong in his facts as he presents them in the question, so I will try to correct them again with respect to what he provided.

First off, Mr. Speaker, Doctor Godley came in from Vancouver with a proposal to build the clinic and met with the WCB and MPI. We wrote to him at that time and told him existing law in Manitoba required certain standards that must be met. We wrote him a letter, saying: Give your proposal to the WRHA who make recommendations to us in health care. We accept the advice of the experts, people involved in this system with respect to health care. We told him to talk to the WRHA with respect to any

proposals he might have for a clinic that he brought in right out of the blue from B.C.

Private Health Care Clinics Surgery Accessibility

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Clearly, we should be spending our scarce tax dollars wisely on health care. We should make a point to improve patient care with that money. Patients have access to a first-class facility, but this Government is blocking them from having access to that facility.

Will the Premier (Mr. Doer) today commit to not following through on buying the Pan Am Clinic, not following through to buy The Maples Surgical Centre, and instead will the Premier consider a more logical, a more rational approach to increasing the number of surgeries in Manitoba?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, any prohibition on surgeries done at Maples clinic is under existing legislation that was put in place by the party opposite. It was their legislation under which the contract provisions are carried. This clinic came out of nowhere from Vancouver. They have higher rates for their surgery. They have no track record in Manitoba, they have no doctors, they have no nurses, and the member wants us to go holus-bolus and proceed with that clinic when we are dealing with a clinic that has been here for 22 years, that has a track record. We are going to expand surgery, provide faster throughput to the residents of Manitoba. I do not think there is a comparison.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Health are clearly all talk and no action. The Minister of Health has admitted he has no grand scheme for health care. The Premier during the election campaign said at that time: We will solve hallway medicine in six months. They have failed to keep their promises and now they are blocking access to opportunities to improve health care.

I will quote from an article. Doctor Godley quotes in his article. He says: As things are right now, we have been resisted by the Government

in every way. They are protecting their monopoly and preventing access to care.

Rather than deny access to health care, all Manitobans want better health care. That is what they are expecting from this Government. Why will the Doer government and this Premier not show leadership and provide better health care and access to Manitobans, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the rules under which Doctor Godley's clinic functions are the same rules put in place by members opposite. It is their rules that we are functioning under. The only change is we are proposing an amendment that says no overnight stays, which has always been government policy.

With regard to the plan that the member referenced, our plan is not to cut the Faculty of Medicine, as members opposite did. We are expanding it for the first time in a decade. Our plan is not to fire nurses by the thousands, but to train more nurses now than in any other time in the last decade. Our plan is not to cancel the medical technologists program and now we have a shortage, but we are expanding it and reintroducing the medical technologists program to train Manitobans. Our plan is to put in place a foreign graduate program that trains and permits doctors who are in Canada to work in rural and northern Manitoba, something members opposite do not seem to care about. And we are doing more surgeries and more diagnostic tests. In fact, we have been recognized as having the third lowest waiting list for hip and knee surgery in the country.

* (13:45)

The Maples Surgical Centre Workers Compensation Cases

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, for the record, there are 25 positions registered to work at The Maples Surgical Centre.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: It has come to my attention that about eight weeks ago several Workers Compensation Board patients were booked for surgery

for pain management at The Maples Surgical Centre, but once it became known that these patients were to be treated at The Maples Surgical Centre, the process was blocked. Can the Minister of Health tell this House why he ordered the unprecedented internal review of these patients' charts by the WCB, which has delayed pain treatment for these patients?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, given the record that we have seen from members opposite with respect to putting facts on the record, I do not accept that information provided by the member with respect to the information that she provided.

Since Doctor Godley came in from Vancouver earlier this year to open and wanting to put in place a private hospital, the members have been all over, all working with Doctor Godley. In fact, the rules dealing with the surgeries provided there have not changed from the time when the members were the Government, so Doctor Godley can do what he wants under the existing rules, which have not changed since we assumed office.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health tell us why he is allowing his ideology to prevent these patients from being allowed timely treatment for their pain?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, in 1998, when a number of private clinics opened up in Winnipeg, the former Minister of Health and the Government of Manitoba put in place some rules and regulations respecting providing surgery at the surgical centres. They required, if you wanted to do insured services, you could charge a facility fee, but you had to have a contract with the Government of Manitoba. They were the rules and regulations that were put in place by members opposite. Those are the existing rules and regulations that are in place right now.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health tell us why he is deliberately breaking a key principle of the Canada Health Act, the principle of accessibility, thereby forcing people to remain in pain weeks longer than needed?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that we are involved in negotiations to buy Pan

Am Clinic is to increase the volume of surgery that was capped at 50 percent by members opposite. We hope, instead of paying facility fees that are going to go to the profits and into the pockets of investors and doctors, that money is going to be invested back into the clinic for equipment, for services and for additional procedures.

The members seem to want to change their policy from when they were in government. They want to go back to private, for-profit hospitals. We do not think that is the way to go. We think going the way with the Pan Am Clinic, expanding service, keeping it in the public sector, providing more surgeries, and the members opposite just have to wait a little while and they will see the benefits of that. We will be providing that to the public through a public system, maintaining the integrity of the system and not being forced to go the private hospital route, for profit, that they seem to be urging day in and day out.

* (13:50)

The Maples Surgical Centre Workers Compensation Cases

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, but we know what the priorities of this Government are. It is making millionaires of their friends, rather than providing service to patients.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, we know that the pain—*[interjection]* This is a serious issue. I wish members of the Government would listen to the questions.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that the pain clinics at St. Boniface Hospital and the Health Sciences Centre have over a thousand new referrals that are waiting for treatment for their pain for seven

to thirteen months. How many Workers Compensation patients are sitting on these waiting lists in pain, for over a year, when they could receive treatment at The Maples Surgical Centre tomorrow?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, we are taking direction from the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and from medical experts in regard to this. The waiting lists have gone down since we have been government, firstly. Secondly, in fact, we are recognized in an article for the Canadian Orthopedic Association as being the third best on waiting lists in the entire country. Thirdly, one of the reasons that we are moving surgeries from the tertiary facilities in the other hospitals into a place like Pan Am Clinic is to provide more surgeries that are day surgeries in a day surgery centre and be able to provide more capacity and more complex surgeries in an acute care facility, which is why we are considering some shifting of surgeries, something that members opposite seem to oppose again in this Chamber.

So, finally, Mr. Speaker, we are also going to be doing more surgeries, and there have not been the cancellations that were rampant year after year after year as a result of the backlog in surgeries.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health why he is denying accessibility to the health care system for those in pain, and he is making them wait and wait and wait, when there is a facility that would be prepared to ease their pain today.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, that is why we are moving so quickly on the Pan Am situation, so that we can increase surgeries, increase volumes and provide it within the Canada Health Act and people will not have to pay a facility fee, as they did until 1998 from members opposite to get that kind of surgery, and so we can have one waiting list.

If members opposite would only consider the report that was undertaken by them, when they were in government, by the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, they will find that when they ran the private clinic

beside the public clinic, waiting lists went up. It has been recommended for us not to do that because waiting lists will go up rather than go down by our process that we are intending to do.

* (13:55)

Mrs. Mitchelson: A very simple question for the Minister of Health: Why is he deliberately breaking one of the principles of the Canada Health Act and denying accessibility to people who are suffering in pain as a result of injury at the workplace? Why is he denying them easy accessibility to the treatment that they deserve and letting them sit in pain for a year when that service could be provided today?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, I do not know if she is aware that the WCB is outside of the confines of the Canada Health Act with respect to providing surgery. WCB makes arrangements with various facilities to provide for their particular patients to provide their services. One of the reasons that we want to expand Pan Am Clinic is to provide more surgical slates. There will be more surgical slates, more surgeries provided, and we will be able to retain doctors here, which is also a crucial factor in order to keep highly skilled surgeons in Manitoba to reverse a trend that occurred over the last decade when highly skilled surgeons were forced to leave the province because of Tory policies.

Health Services Insurance Act Tray Fees

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Specialist doctors as well as family doctors all perform a variety of surgical procedures in the treatment rooms in their offices. Can the Minister of Health tell us how Bill 25, The Health Services Insurance Amendment Act, addresses the issue of payment of tray fees for these surgical procedures performed in a doctor's office?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): The existing rules and regulations that were in place under the previous government are continuing.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Will doctors who perform surgical

procedures in their office treatment rooms be prohibited from charging tray fees? A yes or a no would be a great answer.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we intend to continue the same processes, the same procedures and the same regulations that were in effect under the members opposite when they were government with respect to that.

One of the difficulties we have and one of the difficulties that you see throughout the system is when private clinics come in, private hospitals come in and cream off the best of the service and then force longer waiting lists in other areas. That has been shown in report after report after report. In some jurisdictions, like Ontario, they are going private and in Alberta they went to private hospitals.

In Manitoba we have a middle-of-the-road solution that will take an effective private clinic, the longest standing in the province, integrate it into our public health care system, provide more surgeries, retain doctors here and still maintain the universality of our system without having to go to charging medicare fees or facility fees, as the member opposite seemed to suggest.

Mrs. Driedger: I would like, just for clarity here, if the minister can confirm then that tray fees will still be allowed and that doctors will not be fined \$5,000 if they charge patients these tray fees.

Mr. Chomiak: For the third time I will say to the member what I said in my two questions. We are maintaining the existing rules and regulations that were in place under the previous government in this regard. Mr. Speaker, let me repeat it. We are continuing the same rules and regulations that were in place under the previous government.

But one thing we will do, and we have improved the system, we are going to do more surgeries. We are working on it every day. When there are problems, we deal with them. We continue to expand the system. With Victoria Hospital, we are doing a capital project that was denied by members opposite three years ago when they were to deal with the situation there, and we are going to be doing more surgeries,

more procedures to deal with the needs that we meet. I should indicate, we have been identified as having the third-lowest waiting list in the country with respect to hip and knee surgeries.

* (14:00)

Powerhouse Project Status

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): In the 2000-2001 fiscal year, the NDP government spent \$149,301.42 to support the operating budget for Powerhouse, a project which was designed to help squeegee or other street kids find entrepreneurial or other options to their lives on the street as squeegee kids.

Yet, today, as Nick Ternette reported in *Uptown Magazine*, there are as many squeegee kids as ever, though they are in different locations. My question to either the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) or the minister of child and family services who have provided these dollars, recognizing that innovative attempts at solutions do not always work perfectly but this one clearly needs rethinking, I ask the minister: What are his plans for squeegee kids and for the Powerhouse project?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): First of all, I thank the member for the question. Indeed, when the report was done by the Social Planning Council of Winnipeg committee which Dr. Sid Frankel was key in, the assumption was that the City of Winnipeg would make available the old Shea brewery on Osborne Street so that these young people would have some alternatives in terms of developing their own sources of income, developing arts, crafts, music, making their way into independence through that kind of centre.

The City of Winnipeg unfortunately concluded they would not in fact make that building available and Powerhouse has been without a long-term home since that time. The agency has also encountered some significant difficulties with its management and currently there are discussions underway between a couple of levels of government, the organization and similar organizations in the city.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister to explain why the large majority of dollars was spent on office operations and consultations

rather than on real programs to help squeegee kids.

Mr. Sale: Mr. Speaker, I think the Member for River Heights raises a valid concern. I think he should address it to the independent voluntary board of directors of the organization who have the accountability for overseeing the expenditures from the various levels of government, including the City of Winnipeg and the federal government. I share some of his concern in that regard, and that is one of the reasons why meetings are underway with our department and with departments from the provincial government involved and with a number of youth-serving agencies in this regard.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary to the minister: In view of the circumstances which the minister acknowledges, I ask the minister what is going to be his approach to restore the credibility and accountability to provincial expenditures made on behalf in an effort to help squeegee kids.

Mr. Sale: I have already outlined the approach. The approach is that, when the problems became evident with the organization, our staff met with them and continues to meet on a regular basis with that organization and several others that deal with street or homeless youth with a view to restoring effective services and meeting some of the needs of these young people in an accountable and appropriate way.

Housing Renewal Program Government Initiatives

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, residents of the inner city of Winnipeg and of Brandon are concerned about housing renewal, and they should be because after 1993, when the Filmon Conservative government cancelled funding for social housing, almost no new housing was built between '93 and '99 because they did not care about residents of the inner city or housing renewal or our declining property values.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne's* 409: A

question is not an expression of opinion and it must be one brief question.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Burrows, on the same point of order?

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, exactly, 409(2) says the preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence. Had the Opposition House Leader been listening carefully, he would have heard one craftily—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for Burrows, on the same point of order.

Mr. Martindale: He would have heard one carefully drawn grammatical sentence had he been listening.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the point of order, the honourable member does have a point of order. *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2): A preamble should not exceed one carefully drawn sentence. I would just like to remind all honourable members at this time of *Beauchesne's* 409(2).

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Burrows, please put your question.

Mr. Martindale: Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Family Services and Housing is: Can he tell us what new initiatives our Government has undertaken to renew hope in the inner city and to restore housing renewal programs?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): I would like to thank the member for his cleverly and carefully crafted question.

Mr. Speaker, when we formed Government, there were approximately six houses under renovation in the north end. There are today a total of over 135 units that have either been developed and occupied or are currently under construction. Perhaps even more significantly, today we will be opening tenders on a proposal call for the first construction of in-fill housing in the inner city of

Winnipeg in well over a decade. I am looking forward to that event this afternoon.

At noon today, I was present with the federal, provincial and municipal representatives to cut the ribbon at 777 Honeyman Street, a project with New Directions, the Westminster Housing Society and the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative, which I think will be a very exciting addition to that West Broadway neighbourhood. So things are getting better in the inner city as a result of these initiatives.

Health Services Insurance Act Tray Fees

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, if a man takes his wife to see her doctor and the doctor performs a surgical procedure in his office, a tray fee is often charged.

Can the Minister of Health tell us that if the doctor accepts payment from the husband for the tray fee, the husband who is a third party, is the doctor then in contravention of the act? My interpretation of Bill 25 says that that would be so.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, the member's interpretation of the act is inaccurate and wrong.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree that a tray fee is a payment made on behalf of an insured person to a doctor who has performed a surgical procedure?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated on three other occasions to the member opposite, the particular payments and the particular matter the member is referencing were considered very carefully by us when we were drafting our bill. In fact, the existing procedures, as they are in place—the existing laws apply, and when the bill is passed the existing laws will apply. The same regime that was utilized by members opposite, is going to be utilized with respect to these particular—what we wanted to do was to prevent all kinds of private-for-profit clinics coming in that members are so strongly advocating, in order to try to save medicare and maintain the integrity of the system.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health, if he supports the continuation of fees paid directly by the patient, is this not one of the forms of two-tier medicine that he has so often spoken against?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, the regime that we are continuing in place will be the same regime as under members opposite. In addition, two-tier definition is when the members have a system that they are advocating where you have to go and pay money to get your service and go to the front of the line, because you are rich and you have the money to pay for this service, and it is regardless of your condition. That is what members opposite want to put in place.

That is what we are trying to avoid in this province by trying to maintain the issue as universal and not-for-profit, not-profit like the members' friends and the members are advocating. It is a fundamental issue. We are trying to do what Manitobans, we believe, wanted to do, because the last time they tried to privatize the system with home care, Manitobans spoke long and hard about their attempt to privatize home care.

* (14:10)

Health Services Insurance Act Tray Fees

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Minister of Health in his last answer to questions say that patients should not have to pay for any service they receive under insured services in the health care system.

Is he saying that the tray fee that is presently paid today in doctors' offices will no longer be paid under his Government and his watch, or is he speaking out of both sides of his mouth?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, tray fees have been a part of the medicare system since its inception. The rules have not changed with respect to tray fees. Under our new bill, rules under tray fees will not change.

What will change is members' attempts to have their friends come in here, open for-profit

clinics, set up long waiting lists, having a two-tier system set up and having profits go into shareholders' pockets, pockets rather than being reinvested in the health care system. That is what we are trying to prevent. It is a fundamental issue for the system.

I know members opposite want to go to a profit system. When they were government they seemed to be speaking against it. In fact, the former Health Minister said he would never go to that system. But they seem to, now that they are in Opposition, take a totally different tack and want to go down the road to having a profit, two-tier health care system, something we think the majority of Manitobans are not in favour of, and they spoke long and hard during the home care debate in this regard.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Can the minister confirm that by that rambling, disjointed answer he just gave that he is supporting tray fees, which are user fees, which is a two-tiered system of health care?

Mr. Chomiak: Tray fees are fees paid for surgical devices and services like gauze, like bandages and things like that, that have always been a part and have always been an exclusion of the entire system when we were government, when they were government, when we were government and now that we are Government again.

However, what we are not going to allow is what members opposite want us to do and that is to have profit hospitals in here charging patients, having longer waiting lists, so that if you have the money you can get the service and if you do not have the money you will not get the service. That is what we are trying to fight. That is what they are supporting, and that is why we are taking the stand we are because, when they tried to do it under the home care, they brought in a home care company, Olsten Services, and it cost more for the system not less, and Manitobans rose up in opposition to that, and we are going to continue that practice of not doing that.

Pan Am Clinic Purchase-Justification

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): On a new question. We have just seen hypocrisy at its

best displayed by this minister. We have just heard this Minister of Health condemn profit in the health care system when he just paid a million dollars to his friends as a result of buying bricks and mortar at the Pan Am Clinic. Shame.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Member for River East, please put your question.

Mrs. Mitchelson: How can this Minister of Health justify putting millions of dollars into the pockets of his friends in the name of health care?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I will not lower myself to the member's level in terms of the accusations, but what I will discuss and have the member understand is the fact that we are putting in a capital purchase of a facility that has been recognized as premiere in Manitoba, a facility that members opposite entered into a contract with, half the procedures at 50 percent and spent millions and millions of dollars. We are taking the procedures into a facility; we are going to take the profits from the procedures, reinvest it back into the facility—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: —to expand service. We will be expanding service rather than going the way of for-profit, private hospitals that members opposite are urging us to do. We do not think Manitobans want to go that way, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

An Honourable Member: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

An Honourable Member: No.

Mr. Speaker: No leave.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DARE Program Graduates

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to

congratulate the Grades 5 and 6 classes at the Rorketon Collegiate Institute who participated and graduated from the DARE program. DARE stands for Drug Abuse Resistance Education. This is the first time the course has been offered in Manitoba and was taught by Constable Mitchell Parker of the Westlake RCMP detachment. The students worked for 17 weeks and learned the dangers of drugs, alcohol and violence and how to deal with and avoid situations that may lead to abuse. These students also made a promise to their parents, their families and their teachers to stay away from drugs, alcohol and violence.

At a ceremony on June 5, the students, along with their teacher-supervisor, Mrs. Anita Koski, were honoured. I would like all members of this House to join with me in congratulating Constable Parker and his students: Dillon Alksnis, Ethan Aller, Bradley Chuipka, Jordan Dowhanuik, Cory Huhtala, Kristie Huhtala, Severi Koski, Jennifer Kujanpaa, Travis O'Connor, Jared Croft, Natalie Bear, Ashley Korotash, Jessica Levi, Gregory Sanderson, Trevor Stykalo and Amanda Tymchuk. A job well done by the students and Constable Parker, and I wish to congratulate them, and thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this time in the House to do so.

* (14:20)

Roberta Cramer

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise before the House this afternoon to speak of an award that I had the privilege of presenting on behalf of the people of the Pembina constituency. Last night, it was my pleasure to congratulate Roberta Cramer for receiving the 2001 Community Service Award. This award, presented by the Morden Kinsmen and Kinette Club, is a testament to 50 years of volunteer service Roberta has so generously extended to our community.

Roberta Cramer has dedicated her life to improving the quality of life of her community through volunteering. Roberta's list of volunteering activities is truly impressive and deserving of such an award. We had a chance to celebrate and thank Mrs. Cramer for all she had done for the community of Morden. I am

tremendously pleased that the Morden Kinsmen and Kinette Club have recognized her lifelong efforts to community service with this award.

Also, Mr. Speaker, this morning I was at the grand reopening of Southland Honda. Owner Al Enns, Greg Enns and grandson Mac Enns did the ribbon cutting. They also received the prestigious award from Honda Canada for having seven consecutive years of sales and service and winning in that category. Also, the jazz band from Winkler Elementary School performed for us. It was a wonderful day, and I want to congratulate them for reopening their facility.

North End YM-YWCA

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to put on the record some more detailed information about what our Government is doing to replace the North End YM-YWCA, which sadly has been closed since 1995. Last October, our Government committed itself to reinvesting in a recreation facility in the north end.

The financial commitment of the provincial government to this project is in three parts. The first part of the reinvestment process will involve the Province aiding the north end community in developing a plan to meet the needs of the residents. The second phase will require the community to develop business and building plans for the facility, a process for which the Province has allocated up to \$100,000. The third phase of the plan is a commitment of up to \$1 million in capital funding for the community recreation facility when a final decision is made for the project.

The form which the new recreation facility will take will be left to the people of the community through a coalition of several community organizations working with various levels of government to see the project become a reality. The future facility may involve the restoration of the old YM-YWCA facility or the construction of a new one on the same site or at another location. Whatever its eventual design, a new recreation and community facility for the north end will be an exciting and welcome event.

I commend the residents of the North End and others who have worked so diligently to

bring the project to this point and wish them the best of luck in the future. At the same time, I would like to table a number of petitions containing hundreds of signatures of people who were urging our Government to act. I commend the cashiers at Safeway at Mountain and McGregor, who collected these petition signatures. Thank you.

Steinbach Credit Union

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): Mr. Speaker, this month marked an important anniversary for a Steinbach institution which has developed a national reputation. Sixty years ago in June a group of Steinbach area residents opened the Steinbach Credit Union.

In those early days, when entries were kept on a notepad in a drawer, it could hardly have been imagined that the institution would grow to become the largest in Manitoba, with nearly \$1 billion in assets. Today the Steinbach Credit Union has grown from 95 accounts its first year to more than 40 000 and is ranked in the top 10 in Canada.

Over the past 60 years a number of changes have occurred. Consistent growth has led to almost constant expansion of the Steinbach Credit Union operations. What has not changed is the Credit Union's place in the community and dedication to service.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to note that many original members still hold active memberships in the Steinbach Credit Union. These include: Vange Rempel, Katherine Penner, Elfrieda Neufeld, A. D. Penner, Dave K. Schellenberg, Dave R. and Elvina Loewen, George K. Schellenberg, Albert and Minna Goossen, Peter F. and Helen Kehler, Peter A. Rosenfeld, Helena Schellenberg, Katherine Wiebe, Helen Klassen, Mary Toews, and George T. and Evelyn Penner.

Mr. Speaker, the initiative and vision shown by the original members of the Steinbach Credit Union is still alive today. The Steinbach community continues to be home to residents who are willing to test new ideas on a local and international stage. Over the remainder of the year, the Steinbach Credit Union has plans to mark its anniversary and other achievements.

On behalf of all the members of the Legislature, I would like to extend congratulations to Board Chairman Ted Falk, board members, staff and members of the Steinbach Credit Union on their 60th anniversary and wish them continued success. Thank you.

Mr. Emile Ponchon

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct pleasure to rise in the House today to acknowledge Mr. Emile Ponchon of Fisher Branch for 30 years of volunteer service in the field of weather observation.

This past week a representative of Environment Canada visited the Ponchon farm and presented him with a Certificate of Merit as well as the Morley K. Thomas Award for Distinguished Service. Mr. Ponchon is one of four Manitoba climate observers who have received the award this year.

Mr. Ponchon's consistency in not having missed a single reading in over 30 years no doubt contributed to the recognition he has earned today. Twice daily, at 8 a.m. and 6 p.m., his general observations and recordings of temperature and precipitation levels have been input at the federal level and have contributed to the recognition of this particular site as a reference point. As well, Mr. Ponchon's wife, Grace, has played a role in that it is usually she who phones the data in to Environment Canada each month.

Mr. Ponchon's public service is of special significance to the agricultural community. Farmers, more than any other group in society, are at the mercy of the elements and thus rely on accurate and consistent information. Given the practical limitations of science and the expense inherent in constituting a comprehensive system that would compile all the information required, a system of reliable volunteers plays a vital role in gathering the data needed by the people.

On behalf of the people of the Interlake, I would like to thank Mr. Ponchon and his family for their service. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

* (14:30)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings of Bill 11?

I would like to make an announcement as well. The following bill will be transferred from the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, which is meeting on Monday, June 18, at 6:30, Bill 17, The Student Aid Act. This bill will now be considered on Monday at 6:30 by the Standing Committee on Economic Development.

In addition, the following bills will also be referred to the Standing Committee on Economic Development for the June 18, 6:30 meeting: Bill 19, The Crown Lands Amendment Act; Bill 39, The Archives and Recordkeeping Act; Bill 301 is a private bill, The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company Act.

Also, I am announcing that Bill 7, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act, will be considered by the Standing Committee on Law Amendments, which is meeting on Monday, June 18, at 6:30 p.m., to consider several other bills.

Motion agreed to.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 11—The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on second reading of Bill 11, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act (Loi modifiant le Code de la route et modifications corrélatives), standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Is there unanimous consent for the bill to stand in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed? There has been unanimous consent.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): It is indeed a pleasure today to put a few words on the record regarding this bill, the graduated drivers' licencing amendment act.

The concept and the principle of graduated drivers' licencing itself, I believe, is something that most people believe in. I believe there are not too many people in this House that would disagree with the concept and principle of it.

The purpose behind graduated drivers' licencing is to improve the safety on Manitoba highways. I do believe there are a few problems with this bill as it stands, and I would like to maybe address a couple of concerns that I have. As a woman, I feel that the safety of our children, the safety of our families and the safety of our communities is absolutely something that needs to be addressed, and in most cases, the graduated drivers' licencing would address these issues. However, the way that this bill has been presented, I do not believe it has been presented in such a way that it addresses all of the issues that need to be addressed.

I have listened to a number of people in my community and different communities around Manitoba since this bill was introduced, and particularly in the area of youth, youth in my community, and there are a couple of concerns that they have. First off, they have a concern with the process of how this is going forward, the fact that the main part of this bill has to do with regulation and not legislation, so that gives the power to a Cabinet to decide what happens here.

The young people are aware of this and are concerned because what can happen is we can pass a bill, but it then goes back to Cabinet, and they can change it in whatever way they wish to. So they are concerned about whether or not the principles in the bill are going to be upheld, or what will end up happening with that. So I think that is something that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, the youth are the future of our province, and I believe very strongly that the Government should at least listen to what they have to say. I question whether or not the Government has gone out and met with youth organizations or youth groups or been in the

schools across this province. I know that I have talked to a number of youth in our province and in my constituency, and I can tell you that this bill does concern them, because the purpose of graduated drivers' licencing is to make sure that we are addressing the issue of safety on our highways and safety on our roads in our cities. I believe that by looking at the bill as it stands, by changing the year to 17 and a half years of age before they can get a driver's licence is irrelevant. The age is irrelevant. What we are dealing with here is the matter of time that people are educated in this process.

So, when we are looking at the original task force report recommendations, clearly the bill has been watered down significantly, but it still very significantly misses the point. What we need to do is make sure that people are being educated properly, and they are getting enough experience in the area of driving. The experience in driving is what lowers the accidents and what not on our roads and on our highways, both in the city and in rural Manitoba. It has nothing to do with the age.

What I suggest is that drivers education should be absolutely mandatory in our province. What we need to do, though, before we go that step, is to make sure that it is accessible. I know some of my rural colleagues are here today, and I will address something on their behalf, and that is that the accessibility to drivers education in rural Manitoba is not there. We need to address that to make sure that our rural Manitoba young people and new drivers in rural Manitoba have the accessibility that they deserve and that they need in the rural areas.

As it stands right now, this bill the way it stands is that people with drivers education can get their learner's stage, that is the age of 15 and a half years, their intermediate stage at 16 and 3 months and the full driver's licence at 17 and a half years. But, if some of our young people in rural Manitoba cannot have accessibility to the kind of drivers education program that some people in the urban centres, Winnipeg and Brandon and what not, have accessibility to, they actually have to go without the drivers education, which means that they do not have access to the same kinds of privileges that the people in the city do, which means that they get

a driver's licence, a learner's stage, not until they are 16 years of age and an intermediate stage until 16 years and 9 months and a full driver's licence until they are 18.

This definitely favours those that have access to drivers education. This is something that absolutely has to be addressed to make sure that our friends in rural Manitoba have access to this, and then beyond that if we want to make sure that we are addressing the issues of safety on our highways and safety in our streets in Winnipeg and in Brandon and some of the urban centres, we absolutely need to make sure that we make drivers education mandatory. In making drivers education mandatory, the education process, which is key to the graduated drivers' licencing, we will then, I believe, be able to see the benefits of a type of graduated drivers' licencing program which we will then see in both our highways and in our streets in Winnipeg a decline in accidents and what not and will definitely improve the safety in our streets in Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, the point of what I am getting at is that, while I agree wholeheartedly with the concept and the principle of graduated drivers' licencing, I do not believe that this bill actually gets to the point in what we need to do, and that is to improve the safety on our highways and our roads in the cities. I believe that this Government has once again missed the boat on yet another bill here that, quite frankly, could have been something that we all could have supported in this House if it was just done the proper way and actually was able to get at the issue at hand, and that is to just make sure that people are educated properly.

* (14:40)

The importance here, Mr. Speaker, is making sure that we are educating people. There is no point in the regulation process. What we need to do is emphasize education, not regulation. I think that is really the point of what I am getting at here today.

We need mandatory drivers education that has equal access to all Manitobans, both rural and urban, and that is where we should be going with this graduated drivers' licencing program. Regardless of whether or not they start when

they are 15 and a half—I mean, why do we not just start it at 15 years of age, so that we are not disrupting young people and where they are at today? They expect to get their driver's licence when they are 16 years old. Why do we not allow them not to disrupt when they are currently expecting to get their drivers' licences, and why do we not start it a little bit earlier? There should not be any problem with doing that.

As the minister stated in his news release, which again is a bit of smoke and mirrors as with this bill, Manitoba's graduated drivers' licencing program is designed to support all novice drivers regardless of age, in becoming safer drivers. So what is the problem with starting the process a little bit earlier so we are not disrupting what teenagers and when teenagers are expected to get at least an intermediate driver's licence, which will allow them to drive on their own with a front-seat passenger, plus passengers, as long as there are seat belts for those passengers.

I see no problem with starting the process a little earlier. I would be in favour of that, starting it at 15, so that at least they could get an intermediate stage driver's licence by the time they were 16 and perhaps a full driver's licence by the time they were 17. The minister has stated in his press release, novice drivers, regardless of age, age does not matter here. We are not talking about age, so just start it a little bit earlier so we can at least address the issues that are of concern to our young Manitobans.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say, and I will just mention once again, that absolutely I am fully in favour of the concept and the principle behind a graduated drivers' licencing program. As a soon-to-be mother myself, I am concerned about my children growing up and being able to be properly educated on the roads of our province, and their friends. I am concerned about the safety of all family and the safety of our community, and that is what a graduated drivers' licencing program is supposed to do. I just do not see that this necessarily does that.

I just do have some concerns with it as it stands today, and I know that the young people

in our province who I have spoken to have some concerns with it, as well. These people are a part of our community. They are the future of our province, and I think that they deserve to be listened to by this Government. I would hope that this Government would at least go out and listen to some of these groups and see what they have to say, because I do not see what the problem—I mean, regardless of age, it does not matter. It is about being properly trained to drive on our streets and on our highways. That is what the point of it all is. So let us start it early. Let us do what the youth of our province want. Let us give them another reason to stay in Manitoba, to get a driver's licence earlier, get them so that they are mobile and they can go out and find jobs and do things to stay here in Manitoba.

The other thing that I have to say, too, today, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a serious problem with this bill the way it stands with the incentive for taking drivers education, which is fine. I am all in favour of incentives for young Manitobans and for all Manitobans, indeed, to go back and take drivers education. As a matter of fact, I think we should all go back at times in our lives, some of us, I mean, older, younger, wherever we are in stages of our lives, it is not such a bad thing to just voluntarily go back, come on, voluntarily go back and take some drivers education and training courses. It was not mandatory for me to have to take drivers education training, but I did take drivers training courses, and I absolutely did do that. I believe that should be accessible not only for me as a member of our community from Winnipeg, but that should be accessible in all of our communities across Manitoba. It should not only be accessible to those in our urban centres.

That is the problem with this bill. It does give that incentive to those in Winnipeg, which is fine, to go out and get the drivers education training, but it is not accessible for those in some of our rural areas, which is indeed a problem. I do share and sympathize with some of my rural colleagues who are talking to some of their youth members who have serious problems with this bill. Without having the accessibility, you are automatically penalizing these people because of the lack of accessibility. So accessibility has to be dealt with, and then what we need to do is make sure that education is absolutely mandatory.

The other problem with this bill that some of the youth from my area have brought up is the fact that regulation, the way that the process of this bill is being introduced, the fact that it is regulation, not legislation, Mr. Speaker, and that absolutely has to be addressed. I believe it would even be a bit of a problem for us to introduce amendments, could be a problem for us to introduce amendments to this bill because of the way it is worded. I think that is just wrong because, clearly, we are not getting at the point of what we are trying to do, and that is to improve safety on our highways and our road systems in Manitoba.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I believe in the concept and the principle of the graduated drivers' licencing program, but I do not believe that this bill gets to the point of what we need to do to improve the safety on our highways and our road systems in Manitoba. I will leave it almost at that, but I do challenge perhaps the Government to go out and listen to some of the young people in our province, to listen to what they have to say. Again, regardless of age, we should not be disrupting their lives, and they should be able to at least get an intermediate stage driver's licence at age 16.

That is all I want to say today, and I appreciate being able to put a few words on the record. In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): I also appreciate the opportunity to put a few comments on the record. When it comes to graduated licencing, I am more familiar with the European model, something that I have had a chance to look at and study. I have actually been fairly concerned, particularly being a trustee for four years, on how very easy it is for people to get a licence in our province, in fact, in Canada.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

If you look at the European model, for instance, you have to be 18 before you can even apply for a licence. They are very strict in the kinds of education, the kind of driving school that you go to, very standardized, very exact kind of course that you take.

Again, the difficulty with the 18-plus is the fact that within Canada we have long distances in our rural areas. Not all areas are covered by public transportation, so that one in particular probably is not as poignant. I think one of the things we have to look at for graduated licensing, and certainly the concept of which I agree with, is education. First of all, I think it has to be universal. It must be accessible no matter where you are in the province. I believe it has to be standardized. There has to be a standard at which you are being tested, at which you are being trained. I think there has to be a very clear direction on why it is that you are taking your driver training. I would go so far as to say I would like to see it as part of the curriculum that it not be that you necessarily get a beginners and then go for driver training, but that the theory could already be taught at 15 or 14. At an earlier age, we could start talking about what it means to drive a vehicle and then a beginners be given. Then, the second part of it taking place, and that is the on-road training.

* (14:50)

Certainly I was one who was not allowed to drive until I went through driving school, driver training. Even today, I can remember some of the movies they showed, and they were very serious. They showed scenes of accidents, actual scenes, and they showed medical personnel treating individuals, and it was very sobering. Certainly, all the jokes and the wisecracks stopped during that point in time in the driver training because it was very, very graphic. They warned us that this was not something that would be easy to take, but it really brought home what it was that we were being taught in theory. To this day, I cannot get into a vehicle without having a seat belt on. I just do not like it. I refuse to be able to drive or be in a vehicle without a seat belt on because of the kinds of things that they showed us in driver training.

The individual who taught us, I do not remember his name anymore, but I remember one instance. He was very soft spoken. He was very mild, was very patient with us. We asked a lot of questions, and he basically lost it when he was telling a story. He said you know when he drives down Henderson Highway, and I know this is even appalling to think that people used to

do this, but he would see a mother driving a car, with a baby in her lap between her and the steering wheel, or for that matter a father. I actually remember seeing that still when I was younger, that we used to drive with a child on our laps, not myself, but people used to. Then he got really angry and he just absolutely screamed at the class, and he said, and I could stop them and I could tell them you are better off throwing the baby out of the window. You know, his point was very, very well taken because if the child is not in its own seat, if you even have a mild accident, the impact of an adult hitting a child against the steering wheel meant almost certain death.

There was a time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I remember my mom and dad used to drive with us six kids and not one of us was ever buckled in. We were all in the backseat, and you would fight and you would play in the backseat. If that car would have ever rolled or if there would have been an accident, if ever there would have been an accident, chances are there would have been a lot of death even at a small impact. Most accidents occur within a very short distance from home and are not necessarily at a high speed, but even at a low speed, 30, 40, 60 kilometres an hour, at that speed, the injury to life and limb is significant.

So I think those kinds of things, I believe now we have new challenges, for instance, all children have to be in car seats. Certainly, the way we have raised ours, there is no question. I remember my older siblings had to still fight with their kids because that was the time when the car seats were coming in. I mean now you cannot even leave the hospital after birth has been given. The hospital will not allow the parents to take the child out if there is not a bucket present. The baby goes into the bucket. It is called the bucket. It is a children's seat, but it is for babies. It is called the baby bucket. You cannot leave the hospital without the child being put into the children's bucket, and they make sure that you are strapping in the child correctly.

Even with child seats, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they have to be put in very carefully, and that should be part of driver training because you as a driver should be responsible with how child

seats are secured in your vehicle. Children should not be in the front seat, should have never been in the front seats. I mean that should have been a rule. In fact, that is something that should be taught in driver training.

I know we like to have a little bit of jovial atmosphere here at times, but there is one story that just so haunts me when I think back about it. It was in the newspaper about a year ago. The mother had a child seat in the front seat of the car. The child was about eight or nine, six months old—and the child should have never been there. It was not anchored, and child seats have to be properly anchored, not just buckled in. Anyway, she had a low impact accident and the air bag went off at the same time as the car seat flipped forward. The mother got out of her vehicle, walked around and picked her child's head up off the ground and put it back in the vehicle.

Without education, these kinds of things happen, and it must be part of the education process. When you are the driver, I say it is absolutely out of the question that a child sits in the front seat whether there is a seat belt, whether the air bag has been disabled or not, whether the child is in a car seat or not. They do not belong in the front seat, and that is an education process. We must make that part of our education. That poor mother will never, never live that down. Do you know what? That was an education process that did not take place.

So I believe that we must make education universal. It has got to be standardized, and we have got to talk about the responsibilities of the driver. Those individuals in your vehicle are your responsibility and how you drive. You get into my vehicle, I ask you, please put on the seat belt. If your answer is, I do not wear a seat belt, my answer is, then I do not drive you. Get out; take the bus. If there is no bus, ride a bicycle. In my vehicle, you wear a seat belt. That is the kind of education we need. You as a driver have responsibilities, and we have to raise our young people to respect that.

I do have concerns about this bill. I have to say it is focused a little bit too much on ageism. I do not believe the issue is the age. I believe the issue is education, and I believe there is far too much focus on regulation. I would like to see the

bill very clearly stating what it is that is going to be done, what is allowed and is not allowed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will go back and conclude with my original point in that I believe if we are going to have safer streets, if we are going to have fewer fatalities in our vehicles, it is going to be by raising a generation that has been educated on what it means to drive, what the responsibilities are, what the pitfalls are, that we have a standard that they come out with, that they understand that basically they have a lot of responsibility when they put that key in the ignition and they turn it.

I agree with the concept, but, as this goes to committee, I will be taking the opportunity, if not there than back in the House, talking about—I have difficulty with all the regulation that is built into that.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I did want to speak to this bill prior to its moving on to committee, and partially I wanted to speak to it because I have to confess that I have not come to a final conclusion in my own mind yet whether I will be voting for this bill or against this bill. I do not take that lightly, particularly due to the fact that of our four children three of them are teenagers. One has been driving for close to two years and one is just learning how to drive and the third of our four children will be progressing, and it is a worrisome time.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

It is a worrisome time for all parents when their children are learning how to drive. I am particularly worried because I can still remember back when I was first starting to drive, my friends and some of the antics we pulled. It was a different time and a different era and, thank goodness, as a society we have made tremendous progress in terms of educating the young people of today, particularly with regard to safety issues, seat belts, care when driving, the perils of drinking and driving. These are very serious concerns to all parents. It is not something that we just deal with for a couple of months. I think all of us, as parents, as long as our children are at home and they are out driving, particularly at night, it is a time of concern and, in some cases, a time of worry.

* (15:00)

Philosophically, I do have problems with this type of legislation which, I believe, in a lot of ways, sends a wrong message to the young people that are just about to embark on their driving careers. In effect, what we are saying to them is that you are not ready. We do not think you can handle it. We do not think you can be successful under the same rules that everybody else has operated for a long, long time. I have problems with sending that message to young people, because I think, more than ever, young people today are ready to take on some of the responsibilities that they are faced with at the age of 16 when they are looking forward to getting their driver's licence.

Philosophically, the message that I think, as legislators, we should be sending to the young people is that, yes, we do have faith in you, yes, we understand, and we are concerned, but we do fundamentally believe that you are capable of acting within the proper bounds and bringing the correct due diligence to the process and thinking rationally about it and understanding the risks and the perils in dealing with it. That is the message that I want to send to my children and that I hope we, as legislators, want to send to the children of Manitoba. That is a positive message that says, yes, we do have faith in you. We do believe in you, and we do take the responsibility of educating you seriously, but given that that is our responsibility, we will pass on to you the responsibility of acting appropriately.

So, in terms of the message, I would much rather send a message of our concern for their future, for their safety and our attempt to deal with it through education. I think we have seen that transform in a number of instances in our educational system. Certainly, children, our young people are given a much broader depth of education with regard to the issues that will face them outside of school in today's education system than we ever were. Particularly when it comes to drivers education, there is opportunities for all children within the city of Winnipeg and, to a limited extent, to those outside the city of Winnipeg to take advantage of driver education.

But we are not doing enough, Mr. Speaker, and I think that is the first principle that we need

to recognize. We need to do more to educate our children to the benefits, the responsibilities, the dangers and the perils that they are about to embark on when they make that decision, along with input from their family on when is the right time for them to go and get a driver's licence. I should point out that, because of that education, there are a number of young people who decide on their own and with the assistance of their family, that 16 is not necessarily the right time for them as individuals to pursue a driver's licence.

So today, we have, I think, quite a considerable number of young people who make a decision on their own that they will wait and that, for a number of reasons, maybe they will not go and begin their driver education and begin pursuing their driver's licence until they are 17 or until maybe they are closer to 18, and that is a matter of individual choice. If those people, those young people make that decision, I do not think we should automatically say to them, well, it is fine now that you have made this decision, but by the way, we do not think you are quite ready yet, so we are going to impose very stringent regulations on you with regard to the time frame that it will take you to get your licence. Yes, we should be imposing educational requirements; we should be saying, regardless of age, you need to take some driver education. You need to have some proper training. You need to have professional, skilled advice on how you will operate a motor vehicle. I think that needs to be the area that we focus on.

When I was getting my licence, as I am sure with most members in this Legislature, our education was limited to parents and friends. If we could find a friend who would agree to sit beside us in the car and take us out while we learned to drive or we could somehow convince our parents to come along and drive with us, it was merely a matter of having a breathing body in that seat beside you so you could say you fell within the legal parameters. I know, in my case, and with all due respect to my father, who was the only one in the family who had a licence when I was going to get mine, there was not a lot of education involved. As a matter of fact, until the day I went for my driver's licence, I used my right foot to press against the gas and my left foot to push the brake. Fortunately it was an

automatic car. I did not have to worry about the third one.

That was not a safe way to drive. I did not learn that until I went to take my first road test and the instructor pointed out that he did not think it was safe for us to proceed until I understood that I should be using one foot to control both peddles, otherwise, I would run the risk of pressing down on both at the same time and putting him in danger as well. So, I think, just the fact that the education that we are providing our young people has progressed, is a statement on where we need to go, but we have not gone far enough, and particularly, as it pertains to rural Manitobans. Those young people in rural Manitoba do not have the availability to the same level of driver education training, at this point, that is provided within the city of Winnipeg.

I think it is mandatory that we focus on the education side of it. I do not like to break this down into an urban/rural issue, because it is not. I think my constituency is a prime example of that. Fort Whyte, as I have mentioned before in this Legislature, is the only constituency in the province of Manitoba that does not have a high school within its boundary. What that means is that our children, once they get into Grade 9 and above, into senior high school, have to travel, some a considerable distance, to get to school. It is not always easy.

The public transportation system in that area of the city is not conducive to transporting children and young people to their senior high school, and particularly, the children in Lindenwoods who attend, primarily, Shaftesbury and Oak Park High School, and who are going against the grain. So many of those children are faced with the dilemma of driving 5 to 10 miles to get to their school. A good deal of that driving is done on gravel roads. A good deal of it is parallel to a train track and, believe you me, when the trains are steaming down that train track and the young people are rushing to get to class on time, we may be naïve to think that there are not children there, young people there, driving their cars on gravel roads trying to get ahead of that train so they could make their class on time.

Quite frankly, that is one of the reasons why we are pushing the Premier (Mr. Doer) so hard

to reverse his position and use the infrastructure funds to build that underpass. It is for the worry we have of the safety and the care of the young people in our community who have to drive parallel to that track day in and day out, every day of the school year, sometimes twice a day, sometimes as much as four times a day, if they are involved in extra curricular activities.

Now, these are not just children out for a joy ride. They are getting to school. I am sure many of us, too, can remember back to our youth, and right now, the situation, as it stands, is to take public transport to get them to their senior school. They have to leave their houses probably at about 20 to 8 in the morning to get to the bus stop to catch a bus that comes by at 15 to 8 or 10 to 8 and that takes them to their schools to arrive at about 8:30.

The option for a lot of them is to drive by car, and in that case, they can leave, probably, 10 after 8 or 15 after 8 and still make it to class on time. I do not think I have to explain to anybody in this House what 20 minutes of sleep in the morning means to a 16- or 17-year-old in terms of getting them out of bed and getting them going.

That, in itself, is an incentive for them to organize themselves in car pools for those that have cars and to fit as many as they see fit into that car to get them to school. That is a concern to the parents in my constituency. It is not only Lindenwoods, by the way. Whyte Ridge has the problem to a little lesser degree, where their students are heading over to Vincent Massey and public transport is also not easily available to them. They are forced to take the one bus to and from school that runs through the neighbourhood and picks them up and drops them off. That time is very, very restrictive. It is not a matter of taking a bus at 10 to 8, or if you miss that, you take the one at 5 to 8. You either take the one at 10 to 8 or you are out of luck; you have to find a different way to get there.

So I do not think it is fair to these children to put them in a situation where they are not going to be able to organize themselves to get to school. Many of these families have both parents working, and quite frankly, it is a great relief when the children are old enough and

responsible enough to help transport themselves around. So I have concerns with this bill in terms of what it will do in regard to the ability of some of those young people, not only to get to school but in particular to participate in school events and in particular in extracurricular activities, because another facet of the school system that has changed dramatically and, I think, the most glaring example is the phys ed classes.

* (15:10)

Phys ed classes used to be in the gym or on the field, and you threw a ball out or you played some football or whatever you had, and that was phys ed. Well, these days phys ed is much more focussed on lifetime sports, and that involves a lot of movement of young people. They go to the bowling alley to learn how to bowl. They go to the tennis facilities to learn how to play tennis. They go to the curling facilities to learn how to curl. They go to the hockey rinks to take instruction in hockey. In their mandatory classes, they are being required to move around the city to these various activities. Quite often, the only means they have of getting there is through transportation by one of their fellow students. That is their only method. Otherwise, they are faced with, in some cases, a long bus ride, and in many cases, they would not get there. They would not get to those classes. They would miss out that class unless they can car-pool.

So some of the restrictions that say, because you are a new driver, you cannot have other people in your vehicle, I think, are going to be very, very restrictive and unfair, not only to youth in rural Manitoba but also to youth in Winnipeg. Quite frankly, one of the greatest benefits of the school system is the fact that it allows young people to broaden their experience, to learn more about life through participation in extracurricular events. I think, again, everybody in this House would agree that it is of benefit to young people and to students to be able to participate in extracurricular events.

Well, once again, in my constituency, in order to participate in an extracurricular event, students would not be able to use the public transportation system in a convenient fashion, because the buses simply do not run through these newer neighbourhoods in a convenient

manner, so they again rely on their classmates. In many cases, you have—well, I speak of my son's own example. When he was in Grade 10, he was playing on the varsity basketball team. When he was in Grade 10, he was 15 years old, and the only way he could get to a lot of events was to allow some of the older children who had licences, to car-pool with them. That gave him the freedom to get around. If we are bringing in regulations with this bill that say many of those young people will be restricted, and they cannot have other young individuals in the car with them, then there will be losers. I think that will be unfortunate.

So, again, I have concerns with some of the broad strokes that are being painted by this legislation, and quite frankly one of the biggest problems I have with it is the fact that we do not really know from the legislation what we are going to end up with. That is why I have not made my final decision on whether I am going to support this bill or vote against it. It is very, very difficult, and it will be very difficult for me to come to a final decision without seeing all of the regulations. There may be regulations in there that I agree with; there may be regulations that I do not agree with. I do not know. I have not seen them. If those regulations were enacted in legislation, at least we would have the opportunity at the committee stage to examine the legislation, examine all the rules clause by clause to make a reasoned judgment on the validity of each and every one of those rules. What we agreed to, we could pass; what we did not agree to, we could have an opportunity to amend. I think that will also present a big challenge for people coming to committee. What are they going to speak for or against when they have not had the opportunity to see the final drafting of the regulations?

This Government has taken this opportunity and I think it is unfortunate, particularly, that the minister of highways approached it in the way he did, in the way I see this Government approaching a lot of bills. That is, trying to wrap themselves in this issue of motherhood. This is a safety issue. How could anyone not be for graduated licencing? It is going to save lives.

Quite frankly, we do not know it is going to save lives. We hope it is going to save lives. We trust that within the regulations it will be

managed so that it will save lives, so that we will reduce accidents, will reduce the pain and hardship that is put upon families who have young ones who are injured in vehicle accidents, but I am concerned. I am concerned that we do not know whether the message that the regulations will be sending to young people of today—I think if we really want to do something, if we are really serious about reducing the number of accidents that young people are involved in, particularly those young people in senior school, then I think as a body we should come together and perhaps strike a committee, an all-party committee perhaps, maybe to look at the drinking age.

It has been proven statistically that the majority of traffic accidents involve some use and/or abuse of alcohol. So I think for us as legislators to stand up and say we are going to pass graduated licensing legislation, we are going to bring in regulations and are we not wonderful because that is going to mean fewer accidents, well, let us look at the true cause. Let us look at what effect having alcohol available to youth where over half of the graduating class has access to, just on the basis of age, not to mention, as my colleagues point out, the fact that if the legislation passes soon, it will be available on Sunday.

That is not the issue today. The issue today is: How are we going to make the roads, vehicle traffic, safer for young people in our communities? How are we going to help them to make sure that as they are gaining experience behind the wheel they are at minimum risk? Let us not kid ourselves. We could never, no one can ever, take away all the risk, because there will always be those who, for one reason or another, do something silly or, in a moment of haste, maybe break a regulation and put more people in a car than it suggests and maybe because they have missed a few classes at school, or because they have been late a couple of days in a row, try and race to beat that train or do something else silly. We can never eliminate that.

But I believe through education that we can certainly do our best to minimize it. And so what I will be looking for, not only in the regulations, is a commitment from this Government to ensure that education in terms of driver training is not only mandatory but is at the forefront at a very, very early age.

We are seeing that happen. We are seeing it happen across the country with boating regulations. We have seen the federal government take, I think, a very positive step. Again, like a lot of Winnipeggers, we spend our weekends at the lake, and our children from a very young age—our 10-year-old drives a boat. Our children from a very young age have had access to boats. They are not large boats, they are small boats with small motors, but still we are concerned.

I believe it was a very, very progressive step the federal government took to make sure that, before those young people got into a boat with the purpose of driving a boat, they passed an education program that educated them on the requirements of navigating a boat and also spent a great deal of time on instructing them on safety issues. I think we should bring the same type of mandatory education into driver vehicle training. Again, regardless of the age. The federal government also insists and also stipulates that within a certain time frame, not just new drivers, but every person who is going to get on our waterways and drive a boat, must go through a safety training and licensing course. We can even be so progressive as to look at that and say, well, you know, maybe everybody in Manitoba should be required to take some type of driver education, some type of driver training, driver safety course before they get behind the wheel, or if they have their driver's licence and they have got accident records that are outstanding, and heaven knows, I might qualify for that myself, that where the requirement was to take further driver education, to make sure that they had a thorough understanding.

* (15:20)

So, Mr. Speaker, with that, I will be looking forward to seeing this bill reach committee stage. I will be looking forward to listening to what presentations we do have at committee. I do hope there are a number of them. I do hope that young people show up and give us their thoughts, because I know that they have a lot to say about this.

In some ways, I think it is unfortunate that, as legislators, we are moving on this bill at a time when it is probably the most inconvenient for young people to come down and share their

thoughts with us. Most senior students are either writing exams or have just finished exams. The last thing they probably want to turn their attention to is a bill like this, to come down to the Legislature and talk to us about it, but I do look forward to this bill moving on to committee. We will be listening intently to what takes place at committee. I am sure I will want to speak to this bill again on third reading after we have had the benefit of listening to those presentations at committee, and possibly dealing in more detail with regulations and dealing with possible amendments to the bill.

In closing, I would just like to thank the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid), who chaired—is it Transcona? *[interjection]* No, Transcona. I got it right; what do you know—for his effort, as well as members from both sides of House who took the time to tour throughout Manitoba and listen to many presentations and give much time and thought to this issue. I would like to congratulate them for that. I would also urge them to keep an open mind until the process is through and hopefully, prior to presenting, bring the legislation back for third reading. I do hope that, as elected members, we will have a full opportunity to review all of the regulations that Cabinet plans to put in place. Thank you.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Well, Mr. Speaker, let me start by congratulating the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) for the work that he put into the graduated licences, but, as some members who have spoken before me have stated, it is difficult to put our support behind a bill which has been changing on a regular basis. From the word get-go, we knew where we were going at the beginning, and then the minister made announcements that the regulations were changing and then they changed again. I do not know where they are today. I am looking forward to when we get this bill to committee to seeing exactly what level the minister is at.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

One of the areas that this bill lacks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is on the education side. I have got an example within my own family where my daughter wanted to take the driver training when she was 15 and a half years old, which was a

year and a half or two years ago. The classes were full so I told her she had to wait the other year till she was 16 and a half. She applied to take the driver training again when she was 16 and a half, and the same thing. The classes were all full. So my daughter did not have that opportunity of taking those classes, because each class—and we tried a couple of different schools, as a matter of fact, to try and sign her up—those classes were full. So we ended up having to pay for private lessons. I did not mind, but we paid for the private lessons and had it done. We had that benefit. Some parents do not have that benefit or that availability of having the private schools or the lessons, just as some rural members do not have the ability to have the education, the driver training program in place within their areas of the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that is key. I think out of all the recommendations that came forward, the driver education portion is probably one of the most important. Young children, not only the young children, but new drivers, because it is not just young drivers, it is all new drivers that are affected by this bill. All new drivers have to have accessibility to taking the education portion of driver training.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we see a lot of different formulas coming out saying this is what causes accidents, that is what causes accidents. I do not know what causes them all. I know when I was growing up, we did not have driver training. We learned, out on the farm, how to drive the truck out in the field first, and if you did not roll it there, you were sent out on the road. If you did not roll it there, then you were sent out onto the main road to the towns to see if you could make it through one or two stop signs. Once you passed that, you came to Winnipeg and you got your driver's licence. That was the way we were taught how to drive. We started with the tractors, moved to the trucks, into the cars, and then into town.

I was lucky. After graduating from the tractors to the cars to the trucks to the town, I actually had my MLA's mother teach me how to drive. That was Marge's Driving School. That goes way back. *[interjection]* You know there are some people who are comedians, and this member has failed dramatically.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important when we look at the education on driving within the bill. That is something I think the bill is lacking. I do not agree that everything should be in regulation so that at the whim of government they can make the changes either. That seems to be one of the problems and concerns that some of the students have within my community, as well as some of the parents. At first, there were concerns about how many people were going to be in the car. I understand the minister changed that. He has moved it to the number of seat belts, I understand. There were concerns about having to have only one person in the vehicle when they are driving, and some of the parents said, well, how about if we are going on a Sunday drive and we want to have our daughter with us in the car? Does that mean the two parents cannot go along? I do not know if they have corrected that inaccuracy within the legislation yet.

I was talking to one driver instructor who said that, when he takes out the students, he has three students with him at a time—one student in the front, two students in the back, and they rotate. He was not sure if this bill was going to affect that because according to what he had read the first time out, it did affect it. He said he would not be allowed to have the other drivers. Not only was he uncomfortable with not being able to take out the three, he was uncomfortable at having to go out with only one driver because, being a male, he did not want to have to take out any female students on his own. So that was one of his concerns.

I understand the minister has looked at that. *[interjection]* It is going to be exempted? *[interjection]* Okay. But it was not exempted in the bill. *[interjection]*

But, anyway, it is difficult to vote in favour of a bill when you do not know what is in it. At this time, we do not know because the regulations have been drafted and redrafted and redrafted. Until such time that we see the final draft, I cannot support a bill blindly, as the people within my community have said.

Mr. Speaker, I support graduated drivers' licences. That is what we have had in this

province for many years. We have had a graduated licence system. I support the system we have. I think, yes, there should be some changes made—education No. 1—but I only hope this Government looks to improving the education system that we have now on the driver training and putting more programs in place, not only in the city, so that all the students, all of them, take the necessary courses, but also in the rural areas that do not have those courses available to them today. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: Any other speakers? As previously agreed, this bill will remain standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer).

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), that the House resolve into the Committee of Supply.

Motion agreed to.

* (15:30)

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

Concurrence Motion

Mr. Chairperson (Conrad Santos): The Committee of Supply has before it for our consideration the motion concurring in all Supply resolutions relating to the Estimates of Expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2002. The floor is now open for questions.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): My question to the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) concerns the report of the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and the task force on education funding that was done jointly with AMM and the MAST organization.

There has been a lot of talk and a lot of collaboration between MAST and AMM on this issue. They have consulted with partners on the concerns they have about the funding for schools and school divisions. They got together to talk about rethinking the education funding. The AMM task force on education funding, as you know, was created in response to Manitobans'

concerns about increasing property taxes to fund public education in this province. The mandate of the task force was to examine ways to reduce education's \$600-million reliance on property tax and to shift expenditures into provincial general revenue.

The task force has invited written submissions from the public, had several meetings with officials from the Province of Manitoba, has collaborated with the Minister of Education in this area as well. The task force has put a lot of work in a collaborative manner to address the funding issues that are prevalent in the public school system.

We are in concurrence right now, and I would appreciate very much if the Minister of Education could perhaps stop the conversation. These are critical questions, and I do not want him to miss any aspect. I understand he is talking with another minister now, but if I could draw his attention to my questions, I would appreciate it, thank you very much, if that is possible, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chairperson: Is there a question there?

Mrs. Smith: The question is I am trying to address a very important question to the Minister of Education concerning the rethinking of the education funding and the AMM and MAST, report of the Association of the Manitoba Municipalities and task force on education funding, the one that was done in collaboration with MAST and with AMM. I understand that the minister has met with the shareholders as well and talked about the funding and the kind of funding formula re-evaluation that is taking place right now in the minister's office. Having gone through that, I would suppose the minister is very familiar with this rethinking education document. Is that the case?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): Mr. Chair, yes.

Mrs. Smith: Then, quite obviously, the Minister of Education is quite aware that one of the recommendations that was very, very important was to get together a working group to be able to come forth with some ideas and recommendations. Now, because the task force is very understanding of the challenges confronting school boards in the province in funding Manitoba's public education system and does

acknowledge that this report is the beginning, and I think all of us in this House understand the challenges that the Minister of Education does have in rethinking the funding formula and in rethinking what should be done in terms of the funding aspect of the public school education system here in Manitoba.

He, of course, Mr. Chair, will be fully aware that this task force has collaborated with many shareholders and that the recommendations have come up to the minister on a joint basis. So the task force recommended that the Government of Manitoba establish a working group to explore in greater detail the suggestions and alternatives outlined particularly in the *Rethinking Education Funding: Challenges and Opportunities* report put forth by the Association of Manitoba Municipalities and MAST.

The task force recommended that a policy or framework based upon the actual costs of education program and service delivery in all regions of the province, the establishment of "a stable and sustainable funding ratio of 80% provincial general revenues and 20% property taxes levied by local school boards to support public schools" in Manitoba, "a sufficient net reduction in property taxation for property owners across the province," and "an implementation period for restructuring education funding not to exceed five years." So this is the strategy that the task force has recommended to the Minister of Education.

Now, above and beyond these recommendations, the task force, again, I will repeat, recommends that the Government of Manitoba and the Minister of Education establish a working group to explore these ideas and this vision in greater detail and, using the suggestions and alternatives outlined in the task force paper, would ask that the minister take a very, very close look at what the task force has brought forward and explore all these details greater.

My question to the minister: Has the minister established the working group recommended by the task force at this present time?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Chair, as the member may know, I was on the board of directors of the

Association of Manitoba Municipalities as a city councillor in Brandon, indeed, was on the board of directors of the Manitoba Association of Urban Municipalities, as well as the Union of Manitoba Municipalities in the past, and am friends with the principals involved with this task force from my days as a municipal councillor.

I have met with Grant Buchanan, the chair of the task force, as well as principals of the task force, to discuss the brief that they prepared for my perusal. Indeed, staff from the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs, staff from the Department of Finance, and staff from the Department of Education and Training all collaborated and provided research support to the AMM task force in terms of assisting the task force in their deliberations and understanding some of the technical nuances of education funding.

The member is quite correct to point out that this is an issue of substantial importance to Manitobans. It is certainly of substantial importance to this Government. When we came into office as Government, there was some \$135-million worth of cuts that had taken place to the public education system in terms of the cutting of provincial support to the public school system by members opposite when they were in government. Of course, that \$135 million that was cut from the provincial support went onto the property tax bill of every Manitoban in their local school division. The great transfer of support from this Legislature to the property taxpayers of the province of Manitoba was one that in fact spurred, in no small way, the desire for municipal officials to undertake a study of education taxation. Their rate holders were subjected to a barrage of tax increases to offset the absence of support from the previous provincial government.

* (15:40)

Mr. Chair, in the last 20 months, this Government has provided over \$250 million of new support to the public school system through capital increases, operating increases in the educational property tax credit. So we are very cognizant on this side of the House of the impact of the cutbacks of the last decade on local

property taxpayers in school divisions around the province, and we are very conscious of the great need to invest in the public education system in a fiscally responsible way and an educationally responsible way. That is, indeed, what we are doing in government.

I have, as I mentioned earlier, met with Grant Buchanan, the chair of the task force, and the principals involved in the AMM report, as well as the Manitoba Association of School Trustees executive on this particular matter. We are analyzing the suggestions made in the report. It is a fairly thorough document. I think, as a former municipal councillor, and understanding the level of knowledge of school property tax issues I had as a municipal councillor and as many municipal councillors do—they have a passing understanding of the education property taxation issue—the AMM task force report, I believe, gave municipal officials a far greater appreciation and understanding of the significant challenges faced by trustees in making decisions around property tax issues. I think that was very, very useful.

I know in my time as a municipal councillor it was quite easy for my colleagues to take shots at trustees for ongoing property tax increases year after year. I believe that the collaboration between the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, in preparing the report, broadened in a significant way the understanding of municipal officials vis-à-vis the difficulties that trustees face in providing support to local school divisions.

So I have been meeting, as I said, with MAST and the AMM on this particular matter. We will continue to do so, as well as meeting with other organizations, groups and individuals toward resolving and having a better understanding about how to proceed vis-à-vis support for the public school system.

Mrs. Smith: We have tried to make, as we did in Estimates, the concurrence clean, concise and to the point. As eagerly as the minister's colleagues are listening to the political rhetoric about the past and his career and who he was, Mr. Chair, what we wish to do is just answer questions. I am not interested in the political

rhetoric. What I want is answers to my question. My question is this: The task force recommended that a work group be put together. Is that group now put together, and when will they start analyzing the fundamental recommendations put forth by this task force?

Mr. Caldwell: I will continue to work with the AMM and MAST as well as all educational stakeholders to renew support for the public school system in this province after the appalling legacy of ruin left by members opposite.

Mrs. Smith: My question to the minister: Is the workforce, recommended by the AMM and MAST task force, put together, and when will the workforce begin its work?

Mr. Caldwell: I am unsure what the member means by "workforce," but I can say in Manitoba I believe we have one of the lowest rates of unemployment for youth in Canada, the highest disposable income growth in Canada, and the record of this Government in terms of workforce in this province is unequalled in decades. We have the lowest rates of unemployment, at historical levels. We have the highest levels of disposable income. Almost daily we have economic announcements being made by business and government. I know my colleague, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), is very, very busy working with business to continue economic growth in the province. So, on workforce issues, I am very, very pleased to discuss the real progress that this Government has made in developing and enhancing the workforce in Manitoba.

I know that in my own sector, Education and Training, we are supporting the aerospace industry very, very aggressively, supporting the aerospace industry in Manitoba to create new opportunities for young Manitobans in high-paid engineering jobs. I know that the decision to expand Red River College in the core area of the city of Winnipeg in the Exchange District, as well as the recent True North arena announcement in Winnipeg, are very, very positive developments for this city and for the future prosperity of this province.

On workforce issues, I should not speak to them too much because I think perhaps that is

not what the member was alluding to in her statement, but as she did highlight workforce issues I thought I would touch on that. I would leave it to the Minister of Industry and Trade to maybe expand upon that more when she comes into concurrence, because I know she has some very, very proud achievements to underscore in her comments.

With regard to the AMM task force report, we will continue to work with the AMM and the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, as well as communities, parents, teachers, business, labour and other interested parties, around rebuilding a public school system that was left with considerable deficits after the last decade of misguided policy making.

Mrs. Smith: Has the minister established a working group that was recommended by the task force to explore in greater detail the suggestions and alternatives outlined in the AMM and MAST report?

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Chair, we have been working on this issue for 20 months since coming to office and will continue to work on this issue until a resolution or some real progress is made. Suffice it to say, it is an issue of considerable concern to Manitobans. The explosion in property taxation that has taken place over the last 12 years is something we are very concerned about on this side of the House. We are committed to making real steps to begin to remedy the deficits left to us in the public education system by members opposite.

* (15:50)

The AMM task force report was a very useful exercise. The recommendations in the report are being analyzed by department officials, Finance, Intergovernmental Affairs and Education. All three departments are assessing some of the recommendations made. I think we will see, in the future, some real progress made on these issues surrounding educational finance. The commission suggested in the AMM task force is being considered. The recommendations that were made by the task force are being considered. The task force itself recognized that many of those recommendations require considerable work to both further understand and to

move forward on, and we are as a government working towards solutions that reflect the concerns that have been expressed, not only by the AMM task force, but have been expressed to each and every one of us as MLAs by our constituents.

Mrs. Smith: Has the minister established the working group recommended by the task force to explore in greater detail the suggestions and alternatives outlined in the report? Is that working group established today?

Mr. Caldwell: No, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Smith: When will the minister establish the working group? This working group was recommended it should include all stakeholders, with representation from staff as well as elected officials. The report also recommended that this working group be appropriately resourced to fulfill its responsibilities in an efficient and timely manner.

I am wondering, Mr. Chairperson, would the minister please let us know when that working group will be established?

Mr. Caldwell: In the fullness of time, with due diligence, with appropriate reflection, we will assess and reflect upon the AMM report and make decisions accordingly.

Mrs. Smith: Manitobans would like a more concise answer. Fullness of time could take a century. Could the minister be more explicit? Does the minister expect that this working group will be established, let us say, by September or October of 2001?

Mr. Caldwell: As I mentioned in an earlier reply, we will, in the department, with my colleagues in Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs, review and assess the recommendations of the task force report and make decisions accordingly.

Mrs. Smith: Does the minister intend to establish a working group at all as recommended by this report?

Mr. Caldwell: I intend to act responsibly and with thoughtfulness in every issue that appears

before me as Minister of Education and Training. In this matter, I am working with my colleagues in Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs to review the AMM task force report and to place into context the recommendations offered by that task force, to continue to discuss those recommendations with my colleagues and the Association of Manitoba Municipalities, the Manitoba Association of School Trustees and other interested parties.

Mrs. Smith: The other interested parties, being AMM and MAST, have clearly taken a lot of time and effort at putting a report together. My question to the minister: Has this minister decided that he will actually put a working group together to explore in greater detail the suggestions and alternatives outlined in this report?

Mr. Caldwell: No, I have not had any decision. I have not made any decision on the task force recommendation vis-à-vis a non-governmental working group. I have had a working group comprised of officials from three departments since coming into office. We have been discussing the issue of property taxation, school finances. As I said, I think in no small measure, at least in my own community in Brandon East and Brandon West, the massive scale of provincial offloading onto local ratepayers was a major issue in the 1999 election.

The \$135 million-odd that was cut out of provincial support to the public school system and subsequently transferred onto the tax bills of every property taxpayer in the province of Manitoba, that abrogation of responsibility from the provincial level, and the acquisition of that responsibility by local property taxpayers, was a major issue in the last election. There is a direct correlation between the offloading from here and the take-up from local ratepayers on their property tax bill. That is a concern that all of us on this side of the House have, and I expect members opposite would have that same concern in reflecting upon the decisions they made in terms of offloading those provincial tax responsibilities or provincial revenue responsibilities.

So it is something that I think both parties in this House, I daresay three parties in this House, but all parties in this House, Mr. Chair, share a concern for. Maybe from different perspectives,

but nonetheless, we are concerned about it, and we will continue to work towards (a) rebuilding provincial supports for the public education system, something this Government is very active in, in terms of the education and property tax credit; (b) the increased support to capital infrastructure needs of the public school system; (c) the increased support to operating funding for the public school system, as I said, somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$250 million over the last 20 months. I think you will see, in fact the public of Manitoba will see, continued support for our public education system, as well as our post-secondary education system from this Government.

So it is a concern, obviously, of the member opposite. It is a concern of this Government, and that concern from the Government side has been translated into historic levels of support for capital, operating and property tax relief in the 20 months since we have been in office.

Mrs. Smith: We have an answer from the minister. He said, no, he has not established this working group. The minister has also stated that he is working with all stakeholders. There are two very important stakeholders that have put together a report and they have asked this minister to establish a working group. When, Mr. Chair, will this minister make the decision to establish the working group, get it up and running, and resource it, so it could assist him in this very important funding initiative from all the stakeholders in the province?

* (16:00)

Mr. Caldwell: I am very appreciative, Mr. Chair, very, very appreciative of the advice that my colleagues in municipal government have to offer me on this issue, as well as on many others. I am also very fortunate to have good advice offered to me on a regular basis from the Manitoba Association of School Trustees, as well as the Manitoba Teachers' Society, as well as the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents and other provincial organizations that have an interest in the public school system.

Indeed, every citizen in the province of Manitoba has an interest in the public school

system. I believe that is why this particular portfolio, as well as Health, has such a high level of public scrutiny and a high level of public interest. I think that will continue because we do believe on this side of the House that a sound educational policy is a sound economic development policy, it is a sound policy to stimulate healthier communities, to stimulate social justice, to stimulate self-actualization and the full opportunity to reach human potential for individuals. So I am very, very pleased and thankful for my municipal friends, my trustee friends and my friends in parent councils in the offices of superintendents, the offices of teachers and teacher associations for the very good advice that they do have to offer. In terms of the specific commission that the member wants me to act upon in terms of resourcing and so forth, we will make that decision after careful consideration of the AMM report, after considerable discussion with the principals, both of the task force report as well as other interested parties in the public school system, and we will continue to have meaningful and thoughtful discussion on the issue of property taxation and levels of support for the public school system with our colleagues in the AMM, MAST, MTS, MAPC, MASS, and so forth. In terms of setting up a commission that would develop policy vis-à-vis school funding, that decision will be made in the fullness of time, after careful consideration and discussion with all parties who have an interest in the public school system. I do apologize to the member if this is not the answer that she wants, but it is the responsible thing to do.

Mrs. Smith: No, this is not the answer I wanted. I, too, examined the report very carefully and thought it had a lot of really good ideas. The task force is not asking the minister to implement all their recommendations. What the report is asking is that a working group be established from the working group from all stakeholders, with representation from staff as well as elected officials—from MTS, MASS, all the stakeholders—to take a look together, in partnership, at the funding.

Education funding in Manitoba has evolved over many decades, and, having said this, everyone is in agreement that in the year 2001, the reform of the existing model needs to be

looked at. We have municipal and school board authorities committed to working together and with the current provincial government to give a hand, to help, to assist. I think, clearly, the Minister of Education now has opportunity to put his money where his mouth is, so to speak. Get away from political rhetoric. Get away from the political podium and sit down all the stakeholders. Take the recommendation of the task force and establish a working group to take a look at the public funding. The fullness of time can mean anything. It is a political answer. Obviously, the working group, according to this minister, has not been established. According to his answers, he is not sure whether he is, or when he is, going to establish this working group. From this side of the House, I am saying quite clearly, that it is highly recommended that this very clear-sighted, insightful recommendation to establish a working group from all stakeholders, from his staff as well as elected officials, is a very prudent recommendation.

The minister has stated clearly that he appreciates good advice from all stakeholders. These two stakeholders, indeed, have given this minister very good advice: Get a working group together. Resource the working group. Make sure all the stakeholders are included so no one is left out. Put it together in such a way that they can examine the educational funding in the year 2000 and bring back more recommendations. Is the minister going to be doing this and establishing this working group, let us say, even by early fall 2001?

Mr. Caldwell: We will assess the recommendations put forward by AMM. We will continue to discuss with AMM, MAST, MAPC, MASS, MTS, and so forth, issues that were raised in the task force report, recommendations that were made in the task force report, other issues that may be raised around educational funding that were missed by the report, and we will make decisions accordingly.

I am not prepared to make a statement, one way or the other, on a commission to address the issue of public school funding, at this time. We were presented with the AMM report a few weeks ago. It was a very good document. It was a little over a year in coming. I think there was good process that took place between MAST and AMM to put the task force together. Certainly,

as I said, as a former municipal official, it did provide a perspective that municipal officials previously did not have on the issue of school finance. I think that was very, very useful.

In terms of saying we are going to, as a government, strike a commission that is recommended in a report or not, it is frankly too soon to say. The analysis that is taking place on the AMM report is going to be thorough. It is under way. The task force operated, as I said, for somewhat over a year. We have had the report for about six weeks. It is a very useful document. We will be considering the recommendations contained within it very seriously.

Mr. Chairperson, the member may know, or she may not, that there are literally dozens of recommendations that flow into any minister's office on any given day from any number of groups. All of them, at least for this Government, are taken seriously, and they are all reviewed and reflected upon in a thoughtful and serious manner. That is the process I will continue to follow on advice that comes in from the field, to consider it seriously, to review it, to seek further advice, to be thankful for constructive criticism and thankful for the advice that comes in from the field, because it is very useful to me, as the Minister of Education. It is very useful to have the views of teachers, trustees, parents, children, expressed in a meaningful way to me, and it does provide me and my staff, the department staff, with perspectives on the public education system that are valuable, that are gleaned from those who are on the front lines, trustees, teachers, parents and children, and we will continue to value that advice.

We also, Mr. Chairperson, will act with due diligence on these issues, and on every issue frankly, with due diligence and with the best interest of children placed first and foremost in the best interest of the public education system within the context of available resources being the context within which we do address the best interests of children.

** (16:10)*

So, in terms of the commission recommended in the AMM task force, it is being

considered, and there is no other thing to say about it right now. It has not been rejected. It has not been accepted. It is being considered in the context of the other recommendations, and in the fullness of time we will have a decision.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Chair, my question to the minister: The task force did not recommend a commission. The task force recommended a working group. The minister has stated that he really appreciates good advice, and this report has advised this minister. It has advised this minister of its recommendations, but clearly the strongest recommendation was that a working group, including all stakeholders with representation from staff, as well as elected officials, be established as a working group, not a commission, to explore in greater detail the suggestions and alternatives outlined in the report, and more.

I would give advice to this minister and recommend that he get this working group from all stakeholders up and running. The minister has stated quite clearly he enjoys listening to people from all areas, from all organizations, and that goes in line with what the task force is recommending, that this Government of Manitoba establish a working group with people from all organizations, all groups, all stakeholders, and then, instead of talking to them individually, get them all together. So this working group can go and explore a strategy for restructuring education funding in Manitoba and bring those recommendations back to the minister. It is beyond me, Mr. Chair, why this minister, if he is so "open" to speaking to all the stakeholders and appreciating all the good advice, will not get all this group together as a working group, as recommended by the AMM and MAST report, to explore the suggestions and alternatives and to look at a such strategy for restructuring education funding in Manitoba.

Clearly, my question to the minister is: Will you reconsider this phrase "in the fullness of time," which could be somewhere in the next century? In a timely manner, which, to my way of speaking, would be within the next six months at least—at the very least, I would highly recommend from this side of the House, for it to be done in September and get this group together from all stakeholders. Get the working group

together—not the commission, but the working group—to talk and work together in partnership, Manitoba Association of Parent Councils, MASS, MAST, AMM, parents, teachers, MTS, everybody together to get input from all these very important stakeholders, so this working group can extend to this Minister of Education who tells us all that he wants to hear from every single person. But working together is different from going from stakeholder to stakeholder. I have to point out that AMM and MAST have worked together as stakeholders to make this report happen, a very clear, concise, well-written report. Now all they are recommending is that the working group be extended and make sure that everybody is a part of this report.

My question to the Minister of Education is: Why is he so hesitant to establish this working group, and why is this minister so hesitant to give some sort of a time line other than "in a timely manner"? Could this minister, Mr. Chair, commit to, within the next four months, taking this one recommendation and establishing a working group that would work together in partnership to look at the restructuring and the strategizing of educational funding for this province of Manitoba, one of the most serious questions that we have right now? I would volunteer to be a part of this working group, if he would so allow me to do that.

Mr. Caldwell: I do appreciate the Member for Fort Garry's (Mrs. Smith) enthusiasm for the establishment of a working group and her enthusiasm for consultation and dialogue in this matter, because it is something that I share, and obviously she does feel quite passionate about this particular recommendation. It may indeed come to pass that that is what occurs, but we are not going to make decisions on the fly in concurrence. We are not going to make decisions without considering and having discussions with other stakeholders about the best way with which to proceed.

I will talk about my time as a municipal councillor again for a moment, because when I was a municipal councillor one of the single most vexing concerns during my last term as a councillor was the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System. The UMM and the AMM, because there was an amalgamation that took

place in provincial municipal organizations during that period, but one of the major concerns of AMM and municipal councillors was having input on decisions around the Manitoba Telephone System. Of course, Mr. Chairperson, that debate took place without any public consultation. It took place without any mandate through an election, and the result of that is every single Manitoban who has a telephone today is paying substantially more in rates. In fact, the rates seem to increase on a regular basis. It is no longer a public asset. You know, it is a real contrast.

While public consultation is very important, and I think we all recognize that, we cannot have it both ways, I suppose: no public consultation on the sell-off of MTS versus very extensive and meaningful consultation around the issue of education funding and property taxation. Now whether it takes the form of the working group that is recommended by AMM or whether it takes some other form remains to be seen. The AMM report took a little over a year to prepare. We have had it for a number of weeks now. We are doing an analysis of the recommendations contained within that report. Upon the conclusion of the analysis within government, we will make some decisions, but we are not going to sit in this Chamber and make decisions on the fly.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Chair, this Minister of Education said he already made a decision to collaborate with all the stakeholders. All this recommendation is doing, with all due respect, is asking the minister to be proactive in getting all the stakeholders together in a working group situation, so they can problem solve and come up with recommendations for this minister, to recommend to this minister to effect the funding of the strategy, thinking strategy of the funding to the education in this province. Manitoba students, taxpayers, the public school system, would be well served to be a part of this working group. I must say that I am extremely disappointed that the minister is so vague in his answer, because clearly he has gone off on all sorts of political trails to sort of fill in the time. We wanted concurrence to be clear and concise. Concurrence can take till August, September,

whatever we needed to take, but we need some answers from this minister.

So it seems to me this minister is speaking out of both sides of his mouth. This minister is saying that I want to collaborate with all stakeholders, and the strong recommendation to put a working group together that includes all the stakeholders seems to me to be a very reasonable request. When asked about a time line, this minister goes into political rhetoric, with some help from some of his colleagues, to say in the fullness of time we will look at establishing a working group, maybe we will, maybe we will not.

Mr. Chair, the members on this side of the House are not asking the minister here in concurrence to make a decision. What we are asking him is to make a commitment to taking a look at this recommendation and to commit to establishing a working group, not a commission, to explore not only the suggestions and alternatives, but also to work together with the provincial government and all the stakeholders to examine the strategy to put in place for the province of Manitoba for the funding of the education in the province of Manitoba.

My question to the minister: Can he, this day in concurrence, at least, at the very least and in a respectful manner, give at least a four-month, six-month time line to when he will make a decision as to whether he even will establish a working group as recommended by this task force?

Mr. Caldwell: No, Mr. Chairperson.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Chairperson, it is regrettable, and, as I say, members on this side of the House are in full agreement that all stakeholders should be included. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that everybody working together, problem solving together, usually come up with some very good solutions. Members from this side of the House will state on record that we do recommend a working group be established with all stakeholders, MTS, students, parents, MAST, AMM, principals, superintendents, everybody, to make sure that this educational-funding issue is one that is not a political decision but made

from a very constructive strategy by all these stakeholders.

So having said that, Mr. Chair, clearly this minister is not committed to establishing the working group, is not committed to even making a decision about getting all the stakeholders together, because whatever his reasons are, and they cannot be as open and as open to problem solving as this minister is open to political rhetoric, empty political promises. We want to get a working group together to assist the minister and give him recommendations, and clearly on this side of the House it seems to me to be a very credible recommendation and one that should not take six months or even four months to decide.

Having said that, I will go on to my second question. Mr. Chair, I would like to speak and ask some questions to the minister, questions that have come from rural Manitoba and questions that have been particularly of great concern to rural Manitobans and school buses. As you know, on the morning of Friday, March 16, a large tanker truck struck from behind one of the school buses in the Fort La Bosse School Division No. 41. It was a wheelchair-equipped school bus. Just as the school bus driver finished loading students on to deliver them to schools in the town of Virden, the bus was impacted by another vehicle, and there was very serious damage to both vehicles. There were injuries of a minor nature, fortunately, with only two of the children sustaining fractures. Clearly, it was a miracle that the injuries were not more serious or that there were no fatalities.

It was found out on examination of this accident that visibility played a major role in this accident as the conditions at this time, Mr. Chair, were very foggy, and, therefore, driver vision was very limited. The red flashing lights on this particular school bus could be seen to some degree on this foggy morning, but as the car that was travelling west on Highway 257 and towards the school bus had stopped until the students had loaded and the red flashing lights were cancelled, the truck driver in another vehicle travelling in the same direction as the school bus had not seen the bus's parked lights before slamming into the back of it.

I remember this day particularly well, Mr. Chair, because I was at the MAST convention when this was announced.

Over the past number of years the issue of strobe lights on Manitoba school buses as a safety device in inclement weather has been raised with government departments, and, to date, there has been no favourable response to this particular concern. Now, the Saskatchewan Highway Traffic Board allows school divisions in that province to equip their buses with strobe lights, and a number there have done that.

Strobe lights can be found on school buses in as many as 20 states to the south of us. In most of these states, strobe lights on school buses are mandatory. Law enforcement personnel at various departmental levels have written or have spoken in favour of strobe lights as a safety device on school buses, not only in Saskatchewan and the USA, Mr. Chair, but also here in Manitoba as well. Judge Charles Rubin supports strobe lights on school buses as a means of enhancing school bus safety.

The school division of Fort La Bosse No. 41 feels strongly that had there been a strobe light on that school bus at the time of the accident on March 16, 2001, this accident would never have happened.

Today, there are four school divisions—Evergreen, Interlake, Lord Selkirk and Swan Valley—that are involved in a two-year pilot project regarding the use of white strobe lights on school buses, Mr. Chair. This pilot project began at the start of the 2000-2001 school year. However, response to the strobe lights has been so overwhelming that on January 23, 2001, the three Interlake area school divisions involved in the school bus strobe light pilot project wrote to Pupil Transportation requesting that the white strobe lights be allowed to be installed on all school buses in their school divisions and that this pilot project should end.

Now, Mr. Chair, the Fort La Bosse School Division No. 41 is requesting that the Manitoba government approve the use of strobe lights on, particularly, and I say this very strongly, particularly in rural areas, that this be allowed to happen and to be able to authorize school

divisions in the province to equip school buses with white strobe lights as a safety device.

* (16:30)

Mr. Chair, we do not want any more children hurt. We do not want any more accidents to happen. I know that on May 24, 2001, the department of Manitoba highways and transportation had decided to expand the two-year strobe light pilot project to all school divisions within Manitoba. School divisions would be allowed to place strobe lights on a maximum of six school buses in each school division fleet prior to the commencement of classes for the 2001-2002 school year. The board of trustees for the Fort La Bosse School Division is extremely disappointed with this announcement and is requesting that school divisions be allowed to place strobe lights on all of their school buses.

How does any school division determine which buses should get the six strobe lights when school divisions know without a doubt that a much larger number of school bus routes with the same degree and severity of accident potential do not have those strobe lights? Should not all students be entitled to the same degree of ridership safety? How will the next accident in adverse weather be explained to parents and public? Can this still be called a pilot project when over 20 percent of the public school buses in the province, only 20 percent, will be equipped with strobe lights? How many vehicles are there in the province today that are equipped with strobe lights?

How many commercial truck drivers or motoring public have reported being distracted by one of the thousand or more strobe lights on vehicles in past years? Has one of the four provinces or thirty-four American states that allows for the use of strobe lights on school buses repealed their decision? To our knowledge, there has never been a case of one person in North America having an epileptic seizure that was caused by a strobe light on a school bus or anything of that sort. So, Mr. Chair, the Vehicle Standards and Inspections branch of the highways and transportation department has been aware of this, and the Minister of Education in this House has been aware of the

degree of hazard to students riding on rural roadways.

Mr. Chair, this is something that needs to be looked at very diligently, and the other aspect that needs to be looked at is that the minister has to reconsider the application of strobe lights on only six school buses within each school division and allow divisions to place strobe lights on all school buses before the next school year begins and also to place funds in place that will help these strobe lights be put on these school buses before the next school year begins.

My question to the Minister of Education is: Will this Minister of Education take this question seriously and advise this House whether this minister and this Government will be putting more strobe lights, and funding more strobe lights, on buses, particularly in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Caldwell: I think it is instructive that in the 12 years members opposite were in government, this issue was not addressed at all. The pilot project for strobe lights began last year. It will conclude in June 2002. That is in response to requests from school divisions across the province, and as I said, I think it is instructive that the 12 years the members opposite were in power, this issue was not addressed at all.

This Government is working with divisions, with the transportation authorities in the department of highways and transportation. We have initiated a pilot project, something that members opposite did not do in 12 years in power. That pilot is midway through its course. It concludes next year. We have broadened the pilot, or an announcement will be made shortly on the broadening of that pilot, to allow other school divisions who may wish to participate to do so. There has been more action in the last 20 months on this issue than there has been in the last 15 years.

Mrs. Smith: As I said at the beginning of concurrence, it is not my desire to get into any political rhetoric, and this minister takes every opportunity to talk about some political aspect of any educational issue I care to bring up. That is regrettable.

My question to the minister is: Due to the fact that the Fort La Bosse School Division No. 41 and due to the fact that educators, particularly in rural Manitoba, are very interested and very concerned in the year 2001 about the safety of—we have always considered safety, but clearly this has come to mind because, Mr. Chair, there has been an accident, a very unfortunate accident where, fortunately, there were no serious injuries or deaths—but from his past answer it seems to me that the minister has not answered the question. Is this minister willing, particularly in rural Manitoba, to take a very close look at this situation and to install strobe lights on all school buses in rural Manitoba? Will he put some funding behind it from his office to ensure this happens so no other students will be hurt or at risk when the weather is inclement on the roads in rural Manitoba?

Mr. Caldwell: I appreciate that all of us in this House are concerned about safety issues in the public school system, whether that be for security of e-mail addresses—at least on this side of the House that is certainly a concern of ours—or whether it be safety on the roadways vis-à-vis school buses and safe transport of students. That is why, indeed, Mr. Chair, within the first weeks and months of coming to office, this Government initiated a pilot project on strobe lights. It is instructive to note that there are provinces in Canada that prohibit the use of strobe lights on school buses. It is also instructive to note that there are many jurisdictions that allow the optional use, at a local level, of strobe lights. There is a mixed response in North America on the issue of strobe lights. We are interested, as a government, in ensuring that the greatest safety levels possible follow students to school, are with them in school, and follow the students back home again after the school day is over.

That is why, Mr. Chair, this Government began a pilot project a year ago on the use of strobe lights. We are in the process of expanding that pilot project so that other school divisions can participate in the pilot project. There has been some interest in the field. We will assess the results of the pilot when it concludes. We will continue to engage school divisions, trustees on this issue. We will continue to assess data, as it becomes available, both from Manitoba and other jurisdictions in North America on this particular matter. It is instructive—I want to

underscore again. It is not political rhetoric; it is fact that it took a change in government to permit strobe lights to be utilized on buses on the roadways of this province. We are one year through that pilot project.

* (16:40)

Members opposite did nothing in the decade-and-change that they were in office. This Government took action immediately after coming to office. We realize that safety is a major concern of parents, children, trustees, teachers, indeed, all Manitobans. That is why we implemented the pilot project. That is why we are interested in ensuring that due diligence is done in this matter so that the safety of Manitobans, the safety of children, is ensured to and from school. I appreciate the member's concern. I share the concern for the safety of children. We all do in this House, but I think it is important, and very instructive, that there was no action on this issue until a little over a year ago.

We are proceeding in a responsible fashion on this matter, cognizant that there are jurisdictions that prohibit strobe lights, cognizant that there are jurisdictions that permit strobe lights on school buses. So we are continuing to proceed along that tack.

As I said, we are in the process of opening up the pilot to a broader array of school divisions, Mr. Chair. I think that there has been some interest in that in the province, and that is something that I am interested in pursuing, along with the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton). We are interested in hearing advice from school divisions and responding to that advice, but this pilot project, which has been in existence for a year, which is the first time any government in Manitoba has taken the initiative to advance the cause of strobe lights in the province, something I am very proud of, frankly, because nothing was occurring before this Government came into office on this particular matter. Something is occurring now, and we are headed in the right direction. I think that is a responsible course to take.

I should say, as we go through concurrence, we have discussed only two questions, I guess,

in the last couple of hours in the Chamber here. On the issue of strobe lights, we are moving forward. There is a pilot in place. We are midway through it. We are in the process of expanding the pilot. That is a course of action that is 100 percent better than the course of action that was taken by the previous government in terms of the AMM report, which was the first question we spent about an hour on earlier.

We are working with all stakeholders to continue a dialogue on the issue of educational finance and support for the public education system. We will continue to do that. I note on both these issues, Mr. Chair, the member opposite is calling for more money to be spent, and I welcome that, because it certainly was not the view of our colleagues when they were in government over the last 11 years. Members opposite did everything they could to take investment out of the public school system. That is something that is in stark contrast to this Government, which believes in supporting our public school system.

Mrs. Smith: Mr. Chair, I have to draw to your attention the reason why this has taken so long, and it will take longer, because this Minister of Education will not answer direct questions. The Minister of Education has spent so long with political speeches. There has been much improvement. There was improvement on the arm on buses. There was improvement in the ridership programs. I do not even want to go into that, because I know what people on this side of the House have done in years past.

What I want to talk about is strobe lights. The minister made a statement that there was objection to strobe lights being put on school buses. To my knowledge, there has never been a case of a person in North America having an epileptic seizure that was caused by a strobe light with a 1-2 flash-per-second frequency and a light intensity of less than 16 joules. This is the kind of strobe light that would be put on a school bus.

I would request that the Minister of Education table in the House his documentation on where strobe lights have been objected to in rural Manitoba. If it is based on epileptic seizures caused by strobe lights on school buses,

I would like this minister to bring this forward. I do not have this information. I would be very pleased if the minister could put that before this House.

We continue to be very concerned for the safety of the students who ride on school buses here in Manitoba. We know that at least 11 other Manitoba school divisions, MAST, MASS, MASBO, RCMP detachments, and provincial judges share our concerns, the concerns for safety, and have written in support, Mr. Chair, of the request for strobe lights on all school buses. Even private companies such as Louis Dreyfus Canada Limited is offering to help fund the placement of strobe lights on school divisions' school buses in their area.

I would ask the minister to take under advisement the request for strobe lights on rural school buses in what he considers to be a timely manner, what I would consider is maybe at least before students enter school in September. I think it is very important that the elected members on the opposite side of the House curtail the political rhetoric and talk about what members on the opposite side of the House are going to do in their time in government and actually make it happen.

Mr. Caldwell: It will be instructive to read Hansard tomorrow and just find out how many paragraphs are spoken by each of us over this last two-hour period, Mr. Chairperson.

We will continue to work with school divisions, and I will continue to work with my colleague the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) on this particular issue.

As I said, Mr. Chair, at the outset, it has only been in the last year that there has been any action taken on this issue. I am very proud of that because members opposite certainly had 12 years to take action on it, and they determined not to.

Mr. Chairperson: The Member for Arthur.

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Arthur. Virden would not want to be left out here. So thank you.

I would like to ask the Member for Brandon East, the Minister of Education, you guys have had quite a discussion here over strobe lights, and I would just like to let the minister know that I certainly concur with our critic for Education, the Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith), not only because of the position she has put forward but because of Mr. Russell's point, the chairman of the Fort La Bosse School Division, and others who have experienced this situation, and as has been pointed out, had to leave the Manitoba Association of School Trustees' annual meeting this year on very short notice to tend to this accident that took place just west of Virden. It was very unfortunate. Fortunately, the students are fine. They have come through it with some difficulties, some hospitalization on behalf of two of them at least.

I would like to concur or just to express to the minister that I feel that these lights would be of benefit; strobe lights would be of benefit, albeit maybe there was nothing done in the previous 20 years in regards to this particular issue. I commend the minister to not wait to the particular end of the period of time that he has for a pilot project that is ongoing. I would put in an appeal to the minister to at least allow this school division, because of the fact that they were very much inconvenienced by this particular accident, and the citizens feel very concerned about it.

I know you have extended the opportunity for six more buses to be done in each division. The comment to me by them was who is going to be the one that chooses the six buses, because we have a number of others and we would like to do them all.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Chairperson, in the Chair

I would also like to express to the minister in case he is not aware—I am sure he is, but this may not have been contained in a letter—that a particular company there who has won an award for \$1,500 because of having gone a full year with a completely sound safety record is willing to put up the \$1,500 to pay for the costs of some of the strobe lights in Fort La Bosse School Division, if the minister would okay them to put strobe lights on all the buses at this particular

time. So would the minister be amenable to that kind of a process?

* (16:50)

Mr. Caldwell: I do concur with both the Member for Fort Garry and the Member for Arthur-Virden that the issue of safety is very important. I do not have the same information as the Member for Arthur-Virden that he is discussing right now, at least I have not seen it as of yet, but I would be interested in receiving that. Indeed, I will take under advisement the request that he has just made in this regard and convene a meeting, if the member would like, with myself and the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) to discuss this issue more thoroughly. I think this would be a good discussion to have.

This issue does fall primarily under the Minister of Transportation's purview as it is a road safety issue but I will, if the member likes, arrange for a meeting to be held with the minister and himself and someone else if he would like to bring the Member for Fort Garry, if the Member for Fort Garry would like to come as well. I think that we could do that.

Mr. Maguire: I would like to thank the minister for that then. Just for the record then, if I could just go back and say, I imagine the reason that the school board has not approached the minister on this is because, of course, they would like some financial help to put the lights on the buses. But I think more importantly, because of the fact that these strobe lights are not, how shall I say, overly expensive that the safety of the children that he talks about is certainly—and I appreciate the minister's concern for the children. That is why our critic and myself are also raising these questions.

This may be new information to the minister, but I do believe that the school division is in possession of some documentation in regard to some support for funding these strobe lights in their own division, and they would very clearly like to have all of the buses done in their division. I believe it would take I want to say the okay from the minister to have that happen in

one school division as basically a little bit of an extension of the pilot project that he has going.

I do not have any problem with him continuing with the pilot project to its finality. I just request the minister to allow Fort La Bosse School Division to put strobe lights on all of their buses, and would he allow them to do that at the beginning of the coming school year, whether or not some of the costs were covered by these other sources?

Mr. Chairperson in the Chair

Mr. Caldwell: I appreciate the comments from the Member for Arthur-Virden. I know that, in the last few days, I have had a number of discussions with the Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) on a local constituency issue, that being the Mountbatten School, the Member for Southdale (Mr. Reimer) on another constituency issue and now from the Member for Arthur-Virden on a constituency issue in Fort La Bosse, which I appreciate very well, as I said, being a constituency politician myself. These are very important to us in our own constituencies.

I will, as I mentioned in my last comment, arrange a meeting with myself and the Minister of Transportation, the Member for Fort Garry and the Member for Arthur-Virden to discuss this issue more fully, and we will see where it progresses from there. As it stands today, we have expanded the pilot project. One year has been undertaken on this pilot. The pilot is set to conclude a year from now. It is a two-year pilot, but there is some wider interest out there, and I am interested in facilitating a solution that is responsible on both ends to help facilitate this issue. I will, as I said, arrange for a meeting probably shortly after the House adjourns for the session here.

Mr. Maguire: Thank you for that concurrence that there will be a meeting held between our party, his party and the parties involved in Fort La Bosse, and so I thank you for that opportunity.

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): The interest of this topic has got my attention because I happened to be in Alberta one early morning

driving to Red Deer, as a matter of fact. It was a foggy morning, and I came over a rise. I could not see the vehicle, but I did see the strobe light. As I slowed down towards the strobe light, I realized that it was a school bus. This was even before we had the pilot program here. That morning I passed several buses on the road because it was early in the morning, picking up students, who had the active strobe lights on their vehicles. I thought to myself that for anyone who is driving in a fog, one of the most important elements is to be able to identify a vehicle so that you do not run into the back of it, and because school buses stop at intersections to pick up students, to me it seemed like it was just good common sense to put a strobe light on a vehicle where you have fog conditions. Manitoba is subject to that. In our province, in the rural part and even in the cities, we oftentimes have fairly dense fogs in the spring and in the fall.

Now I can understand the minister wants to make sure he is doing the right thing by putting a pilot on, but I would encourage him to reduce this time from, you said a two-year period, down to a six-month period. I spend a lot of time on the highway, Mr. Chair. I think I put about 120 000 kilometres a year on my vehicle driving around the province. I oftentimes come across school buses that are stopped along the side of the road picking up students. My neighbour's child was being picked up when a car hit the bus from the back on a foggy day because they could not see the bus, and there was a major injury to the person driving the vehicle. The students were fine. So I encourage the minister, if there is anything that we can do to safety, for him to move on this more quickly than slowly.

I happened to meet a school bus near Gladstone, I believe it is. I do not know where the pilot is, but I am sure there was a school bus near Gladstone, between Gladstone and Neepawa, that had a strobe light. It was easy to see from a distance. I think it is the way to go. It is not an expensive item on the bus but certainly is one that once it is identified throughout the province, I think it could save a lot of unnecessary accidents in our province because we have weather conditions that lend themselves to visibility restrictions.

If there is anything I can encourage the minister to do is to move more swiftly with this rather than more slowly, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Caldwell: I appreciate the member's comments and will make him aware of the meeting date and perhaps he could participate with us in this discussion.

Mr. Derkach: I thank the minister for that, but I think in terms of safety on school buses this would probably be the No. 1 item that would certainly pique my attention because I think that we, for too long, have been operating our school buses in this province in a way which we think is safe, and we have done a lot of things with school buses to make them safer, but to me it seems when you are talking about weather conditions, when you are talking about whether it is a blizzard or whether it is a fog condition, nothing catches your eye more quickly than a flashing light or a strobe light on a vehicle.

* (17:00)

Mr. Caldwell: I do appreciate those comments. As an MLA that represents a constituency outside of the city of Winnipeg, I have a similar experience as the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach) in terms of seeing school buses in foggy conditions and the challenges that are involved with that. So I do appreciate the comments that were made here today in concurrence by all three members opposite who have discussed this matter with me. I certainly take their views seriously on this matter and look forward to our discussion with the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): My question is for the Minister responsible for Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. I wonder if the minister could give me a fast update on where we are with the five Aboriginal casinos.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I believe that answer could be better directed to the Minister responsible for Gaming (Mr. Ashton).

As I understand it, Mr. Chair, good progress has been made with the proponents of the casino initiative throughout the province of Manitoba.

To the best of my knowledge, discussions have been frank and the work is ongoing, but other than that I am not in a position to report anything further.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs. One of the issues which has been important to communities along the east side of Lake Winnipeg, is economic development in terms of getting food in at a cheaper cost than having to fly in and access year round, the question of a road into a number of the communities. I wonder if the minister could provide me with an update on what the situation is.

Mr. Robinson: Certainly I think that we all are of the opinion that an all-weather road system into that region of Manitoba is much needed. It certainly would bring down the cost of living that currently exists, and we are all very familiar. In addition to that, there is work that has to be done, to the best of my knowledge with other ministries and government, including Conservation, Industry, Trade and Mines and other departments that have a direct interest in some economic opportunities that may exist within that region, I believe that the dialogue is ongoing. We would hope that in our time in office that we will be in a position to announce at some point that, in fact, we are going to proceed with the development or the construction of a road in that part of the province.

I think that on our side of the House, certainly in opposition and on to Government we always advocated that the people in that region have to have an opportunity to perhaps have an all-weather road system, given the change in climate which the elders describe to me as inevitable, and that in the years ahead of us that this problem will continue and it will persist. Over the last few years, we have seen a decline in the life span of the winter-road systems that we have in Manitoba. I believe the number right now is 37 communities, and the winter road systems simply provide a break in certain parts of the year for many communities.

Obviously, there are other considerations, as well, prior to proceeding with the construction of an all-weather road, those being environmental concerns and environmental assessments that

need to be done. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) is in a better position to bring the member up-to-date on what is happening with respect to that part of it.

I could report to the member that certainly we on this side of the House are committed to ensuring that the people have the opportunities of a proper transportation system, and we are committed to continuing our work with them. I know that when you live in one of those communities, you would think that government is taking forever.

The other important element in this is that the federal government, obviously, has indicated an interest in partnering with Government, this provincial government, in a team approach on how we do this. Certainly, my discussions with the federal Minister of Indian Affairs has been to try and determine the best way we can proceed with this initiative. We are absolutely committed to seeing this become a reality at some point in the not-too-distant future.

Mr. Gerrard: I thank the minister. It seems to me that this was a key commitment and also rather important in terms of what happens to a whole lot of communities on the east side of Lake Winnipeg. I am a little disappointed that there is not a little bit more specific time line.

I would ask perhaps once more to see if the minister could provide some indication of what are the steps, item-by-item, that would need to occur, and what sort of time line he envisages in progress in this initiative.

* (17:10)

Mr. Robinson: I wish I could give a time line. I wish I could say that by July we will put a shovel to the ground and begin work, but I cannot. I am not in a position to do that, nor is any other minister of this Government in a position to do that. Our Government is committed to doing the work that needs to be done in working with the First Nations communities in partnership in that region of the province. As the member knows, it is primarily First Nations communities.

On the other hand, we do have some communities that are under The Northern Affairs Act. We want to involve the communities. To

the best of my knowledge, I am told that most of the communities are in favour. As the honourable Member for River Heights knows, as well, this is going to be a very costly initiative, a costly endeavour with respect to how much we as a provincial government are expected to contribute to an initiative. I would, on a personal level, see it as being done in a staged approach. I am not in a position simply because of the discussions that are occurring at the current time, not only with the federal government but also with the communities themselves and also to cover off the other issues on environmental impacts, the assessments that are required in that regard have to be completed.

I would hope that, in the next few months, the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) and other ministers that have a direct interest in this, who are as committed as I am to ensuring that there is an all-weather road built, will be in a position to give some indication as to what time lines we may be looking at to beginning the initiative or taking the initiative a step forward. Certainly that does not answer, and certainly I receive calls every day from communities on the southeast side not only because I represent the communities in the Manitoba Legislature but to address issues and questions that they have with respect to whether or not they will have opportunities on a construction phase or any economic spin-offs that may result.

I am telling the member I cannot be specific because there is a lot of work to be done. If I had my way and if we were not restricted by certain laws, certain regulations, I think that the road would have begun maybe 25 years ago and even before that to those areas that are underserved I suppose is a term that I could use with respect to a proper transportation system and bring them up to standards and also to bring about equality with the rest of Canada because the way the system is now, the tremendous cost of transportation, particularly when the winter road system is not operating, is obscene and the cost of living in those communities is also obscene. We are making every effort to address that as quickly as we can.

Mr. Gerrard: The minister hints at the fact that there are many different departments involved

and that the minister would like to see this move a lot more quickly than it is. I would ask the minister: Is it in fact a problem with conflict among departments in competing interests which are causing a problem in the ability of the minister to move this forward?

Mr. Robinson: I think the best way to answer that question is that as members of this Government, we are committed to the road. Let me make that very clear. We are, however, having to address on the conservation side the environmental impacts and addressing that part of it the economic opportunities that may result from the development of a road project, as an example, and that would certainly affect my colleague the Minister responsible for Tourism. We want to maximize tourism opportunities for the people who live in that region.

As far as other economic initiatives are concerned, there are mining opportunities, as the member knows, in the area of that part of the province and those have to be covered off. If anything, I believe that we as a government have been working in partnership, and certainly we here have taken a team approach to addressing the outstanding issues that exist, and we want to proceed in a proactive way. I believe that the dialogue we have had with members of the communities in that region of the province have been positive ones. We have been very honest in what we have to do first and foremost.

As an Aboriginal person and one who has experienced life in being involved in Aboriginal organizations, I have felt that sometimes governments do not work as fast as I would like them to work, or in my previous life as an Aboriginal leader in the Aboriginal community.

Having said that, we are doing everything I believe that is responsible, and we are trying to address these issues as quickly and as responsibly as possible. I would say that the ministers that are in this department have been working in good faith with each other in trying to achieve this. Perhaps for some of us it is not moving quickly enough, but nevertheless I think that we have been working to the best of our ability in ensuring that this becomes a reality and certainly in our lifetime here as members.

Mr. Gerrard: My next question to the minister deals with one of the commitments made by his Government during the election campaign, and that was for dialysis in northern communities to allow people to be served close to home. I wonder if the minister could provide an update on the current situation.

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Chairperson, as the member knows, we had the occasion of attending the grand opening of the dialysis unit at Norway House. The unfortunate thing that occurred there was the staff that was placed to man the units in that hospital at Norway House were not available. However, they had to shut it down for a period of time in order to get personnel. To the best of my understanding, there are two people that now operate the dialysis unit in Norway House, at the Norway House Hospital. I understand that some people have moved back from Winnipeg.

The situation, as my colleague knows, is not acceptable where we have literally had to move hundreds of people from northern communities and have had to relocate them to urban communities like Winnipeg, leaving them in a situation where they have had to leave their loved ones, their grandchildren, their children, in some case, their spouses, Mr. Chair, in order for them to receive dialysis treatment in the city of Winnipeg.

During the 1999 campaign and before that, we certainly advocated that we must partner with the federal government in addressing this much-needed service, Mr. Chair, this health service. We, therefore, embarked upon a commitment to the Island Lake region, Garden Hill specifically, Garden Hill First Nation. Work has been ongoing in that community. When the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and I were there in the early spring of 2000, we committed our Government to work in partnership with the federal government in ensuring that we have to stop this practice of having Indian people relocated to the city of Winnipeg, as an example, and receive their treatment closer to home. That work has been ongoing since that time.

The dialogue between the leadership and the health authority, people from that community and that region of Island Lake, including St.

Theresa Point, Wasagamack and Red Sucker Lake has been ongoing together with officials from our Government, from the Department of Health and from the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, has representatives on this working group. I understand that by fall, we will have an announcement as to how that work has proceeded, but certainly that is a much-needed health requirement again in the Aboriginal community and certainly that part of Manitoba.

* (17:20)

Although the issue of dialysis treatment requirements are not restricted to that area of Manitoba, certainly I believe every Aboriginal community experiences that in Manitoba. I hope that we will begin perhaps modelling for other communities something that is workable because I think in the long run it is a saving not only for the provincial government but indeed the federal government, because if we allow the situation to continue as it is, then obviously it will be the airlines who have to medivac people, that will benefit financially. We do not want to dislocate families any more than we have already, and we must make every effort.

As a provincial government, I believe we have taken bold measures, a bold step to walking into an area that has been traditionally the responsibility of the federal government. I believe that the initiative that we have shown is something to be commended. I would hope within the next several months we will be able to announce what progress has been made and dialogue between the province, the federal government and the First Nations community in the Island Lake region so that people will no longer have to leave their community in order for them to get dialysis treatment facilities within their own communities.

Mr. Gerrard: Did I understand the minister correctly that the facility in Norway House is not at this point operating fully, Mr. Chair, and that patients who need dialysis are still having to come to Thompson or to Winnipeg?

Mr. Robinson: For a period of time, shortly after the opening of the Norway House Dialysis Treatment Unit at the Norway House Hospital, staff, unfortunately, left, to the best of my

understanding. It is also my understanding they have recently recruited two individuals who are able to operate the equipment there and has afforded the opportunity for, I believe, four patients to return home to their community to be close to their families. To the best of my understanding, at this point in time the dialysis treatment unit is functional and is working. In fact, it is open at this time to treat those patients who require that treatment.

Mr. Gerrard: I would ask, in follow up, to the minister: There is considerable potential to intervene early on in patients with kidney problems before it gets to dialysis so that people can go for much longer before needing dialysis. I would ask the minister what efforts are being made to intervene early on and to delay the time at which patients will leave dialysis and have more preventive measures occurring to help this situation, which is clearly a continuing and urgent medical problem in the North?

Mr. Robinson: I certainly agree that intervention is probably one of the best methods to address the problem prior to having us resort to people requiring dialysis treatment and ultimately death, unfortunately, in many cases. The member knows that the alteration of life style in northern communities has taken its toll on Aboriginal people. The diet is one example where the traditional livelihood of Aboriginal people is no longer there. Fishing, hunting and trapping, which was the staple in the upbringing of many of us to the current situation that we find ourselves in, is no longer readily available as it once was.

The growing population of Aboriginal people as well adds to the stress. The shortage of houses in many First Nations communities throughout the province of Manitoba is also a challenge that all governments, no matter what jurisdiction they are responsible for must begin addressing. The overcrowded conditions in some of these housing units, as an example, is also an added stress to the problem already.

Our Government has been proactive in trying to engage with the federal government and certainly the Minister of Family Services and Housing has been in dialogue with his federal counterparts, and he would be better able

to describe what work is going on there. I understand, and again this question may be directed to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), that there in fact has been dialogue with the federal government in instituting programs at the school level, elementary and high school level where high school is available in some communities to bring about an awareness, an educational awareness, about this dreaded disease of diabetes. Personally, I have witnessed. It is unacceptable in a day and age where we often hear Canada to be the best place to live in the world. Well, that is not the case for many Aboriginal people, Mr. Chairperson. Many Aboriginal people, unfortunately, live in Third World conditions in our own backyard, and as Manitobans I do not think we often recognize that reality.

There are 18 people who live in a two-bedroom dwelling in many of our communities, and we do not even have to go to northern Manitoba to realize that or see that. The community of Garden Hill is an example where there is a shortage right now of 300 housing units alone. In the MKO territory where we have a requirement of 4500 housing units today, it is something that is a challenge to all governments—the federal government, the provincial government, the local governments as represented by the First Nations elected leadership.

Those are the issues that are before us. If we are to say that these issues that we generally term as Aboriginal issues are to be addressed, we obviously have to get serious. Our Government has been proactive in trying to address these much needed services for Aboriginal people in our province. We need to afford Aboriginal people, who are regarded to be Manitobans and Canadians, the same opportunities that are afforded to other Canadians and give them an opportunity to realize that, in fact, this is a good place to live, one of the best places to live in the world, this country we know as Canada.

So that is the challenge that is before us and the work, as the member realizes through his contacts with the Aboriginal community. Those are the things that we must address. Sometimes it does get frustrating to be faced with these realities each and every day when some homes, some families, do not have the opportunity to

feed their children a proper breakfast, as an example, prior to going to school, in some communities where gasoline sniffing is the norm for children as young as five years old and upward, where suicides appear to be the only way out in order to escape that reality that Aboriginal people live under. That is unacceptable, and we are trying to address those issues to the best of our ability. Those are the things that we are trying to address.

I must tell the member and all members in this Legislature that those challenges are not only my challenges, Mr. Chair, nor the Premier's (Mr. Doer), nor this Cabinet's, but indeed all of ours as Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: That, I say to the minister, is one of the reasons why I am asking these questions, because I am concerned. I think that this is an area where we need as a province to move forward and be very concerned about.

I have heard of some innovative approaches to housing, which would involve traditional housing construction from logs or stone houses and various other options in which First Nations people be even more involved in building not only in their own community but potentially marketing them elsewhere.

I just wonder what the minister's view of this approach is and what the answer is except to find some new and creative approaches, as well as funding, for the housing situation.

Mr. Robinson: I have not had the opportunity, as one example, to address one issue that is before us right now, and that is one of the bills—and I cannot remember the number of it, its number rather—with respect to the Hydro equalization rates that are drastically needed in Manitoba.

* (17:30)

Hydro rates, as an example, in some of the substandard housing units that exist in northern Manitoba communities, I have seen constituents present me with bills that range up to \$900 a month because of the substandard housing units that they live in, and that is not acceptable in this day and age. That is why our Government has

moved toward equalizing rates across this province. There is work to be done beyond that, I am quite sure.

As for new and innovative housing initiatives, the Minister responsible for Housing and Government Services has been proactive in trying to find new ways of addressing the shortages that exist in Aboriginal communities in northern Manitoba.

At the same time, as an example, in the community of Churchill, together with Mayor Michael Spence, we are looking at ways of addressing the needs that exist in that one community as an example. We all know here the climate in Churchill would require a pretty decent house in order to preserve heat for any family that may want to endure a winter in that one community. So there is a composite housing initiative that is occurring in the community of Churchill, and I will be in further dialogue with my colleague the Minister responsible for Housing (Mr. Sale) because we have to be open to these ideas.

The housing initiative that was undertaken by our colleague Grand Chief Margaret Swan in her own community using straw materials, as an example, too is something that we have to examine, so I think for Aboriginal people we have to be innovative. We have to look at different alternatives and allow local people to determine what is best for them. We are open to that obviously and we support that. We are looking at different methods of addressing the needs of northern Manitoba Aboriginal people in many of these communities. There is a group of people coming from Costa Rica to work with Mayor Michael Spence and his council members in Churchill. Certainly the Minister of Housing and I want to monitor what is going on there, because I think that presents itself some unique approaches to dealing with the housing needs of northern people, northern and Aboriginal people.

The North is not only occupied by Aboriginal people, as the member knows, but northern people have been there all their lives as well, so we have to address those. There are some women I met in Grand Rapids who want to pursue a log building initiative, and I think that should be supported as well. They are looking at

ways right now to market their product, and one of the areas in government that I am responsible for is the Communities Economic Development Fund. I have instructed staff to work with these women on this innovative approach, because I do think it will not only be beneficial for the community of Grand Rapids, but indeed it could serve as a model for other communities in other northern communities.

I think that we have to be open-minded about these things. We have to be open as a government and as lawmakers in this province to work with people in their aspirations, whatever that may be. Certainly I think there are opportunities and government has to be receptive to those even if at the end of the day we are unable to support it fully, but I think that we have to be open because quite often decisions are made in Ottawa or made in Winnipeg, and we feel that these will serve well in northern Manitoba communities and often they do not.

So I think that we have to, if we are going to work in a spirit of partnership with Aboriginal people as an example, be open to suggestions on how best to deal with these much-needed requirements that are most predominant, I would say, in the Aboriginal community.

Mr. Gerrard: My next question, continuing the concerns about health: We have talked about housing. One of the measures that has been quite important in improving health in other jurisdictions has been measures which will help to reduce the rates of smoking. I have pointed out in this Legislature several times recently that the rate of smoking has gone up in Manitoba from 23 percent to 26 percent under the minister's government.

I would ask the minister what his approach is to smoking and anti-smoking efforts in the northern communities.

Mr. Robinson: I think it is our responsibility as legislators, and not only myself as Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, to promote healthy lifestyles for all people in this province. Not only the challenge of smoking is there. The challenge of alcohol abuse is there. The challenge of drug abuse, Mr. Chair, is there, unfortunately. [*interjection*]

Mr. Chairperson: Order, please.

Mr. Robinson: As I said, if I can carry on, the issue of solvent abuse is also very serious. It is not acceptable in some communities where we have children as young as five years old, who are trying to escape from their reality, gone for periods of up to two days at a sniff party with an open bonfire. So those are the issues that I have been addressing for several years now as a member of this Legislature, and as a member of the Government now, trying to instil and work in partnership with the federal government on how we improve these.

The problem goes much beyond smoking, but it is solvent abuse being used by children as young as five years, drug abuse, alcohol abuse. The issue of incest is unfortunately something I am not very proud to speak of as a Manitoban but furthermore as an Aboriginal person. Those are the realities, it would appear, that Aboriginal people are trying to escape from and unfortunately the end result has been the taking of their own lives in many instances, and that is unacceptable in this day and age. That is not only in the 62 First Nations communities in this province, it is also in the other Aboriginal communities that are often regarded as such, otherwise known as communities that fall under the responsibility of The Northern Affairs Act but also extend into the city of Winnipeg where we have young girls, as young as 12, 14 years of age, who are prostituting their bodies in order to feed a habit of drug abuse or whatever the issue may be.

It is no laughing matter. These issues are challenging. These issues are the things, Mr. Chairperson, that we have to confront, and we are doing our best to try and promote a healthier lifestyle, not only ourselves as a provincial government but in partnership with the federal government, and there is a lot of work to be done.

* (17:40)

A lot of times I am sure all of us have thought about it. I certainly worry about it when I am talking to a young person that could be my own child, whether it is a young girl or a young boy, about the situation that they are trying to

escape from, the reality they are trying to escape from. Their education suffers. But having said that, there are also other positive things that have been resulting as well with respect to promoting economic opportunities in many communities in this province. But before we can talk about the many wonderful things that governments have done, perhaps we will never get them done, but I hope that we will be in a position to make a dent in the problems that do exist in the Aboriginal community in our lifetime and certainly in our time of service in this Legislature.

I as a member, an individual member in this House, would sooner avail myself to working on those issues together with the leadership of those communities than doing things that are Hollywood in nature, I will say, because it was pointed out to me by some of the elders that I speak with on a regular basis, that provide guidance to myself, it all boils down to Aboriginal people losing their sense of pride, their sense of understanding who they really are, the loss of cultural identity, the loss of cultural pride, the loss of pride that we once had as individuals.

There are many things that have contributed to that. The residential school experience, which was a process by governments of years gone by that tried to de-Indianize many Aboriginal people. Many Aboriginal people went through that system of being abused, sexually and physically and emotionally and every other way, by people who ran these institutions, only to be faced with the problem that we have today. So I think that we cannot attribute the problem to either drinking or smoking or one thing or the other; it has to be all encompassing. I believe that Aboriginal leaders have been quite responsible in trying to address those issues in a proper way.

We are working in that fashion, I believe. In my experience, this is the first time that I have been involved or I have heard any government talk about an all-encompassing approach in how we deal with the situation and how we make Aboriginal people feel a part of society as opposed to being outside of society and a burden to society, if I may add. It is unacceptable further, Mr. Chairperson, that we see in the federal institution 60 percent of our people being

locked up. It is unacceptable to see 80 percent of our provincial penal institutions occupied by Aboriginal people. It is unacceptable to see upwards of 90 percent of the women's jail in Portage la Prairie occupied by Aboriginal women. It is unacceptable to see the Manitoba Youth Centre, the majority of the inmates there being Aboriginal. It is unacceptable that we must bear another generation of suffering for the Aboriginal youth coming up.

So I believe that our government has been responsible. We are trying to address these issues in the most effective way we know and the means available to us. I know we are not doing enough. Allow me to say that; we are not. We perhaps will never get it all done, but we have to make that start. I think that we are making advances in spite of the two steps we have to go backward every once in a while as we try to make a positive step forward.

Mr. Gerrard: My next question: I concur with the minister in terms of the seriousness of the concerns which the minister raises. Clearly, one of the important initiatives is to have much more substantial and improved programming and activities for young people in the Aboriginal and northern communities in general. I know on a number of occasions I have talked to and been approached by people from northern communities about community facilities for youth. Whether it is recreational areas and activities and support for these as an important way of helping young people to develop skills which are very important to life from teamwork, working together, communication, learning to do new things together with other young people, learning and participating in activities, sports, for example, which can be very helpful, as many young people have found, in building teamwork and self-discipline and all sorts of things, characteristics which can be important for doing well in life and being able to overcome those difficulties which do occur.

So I would ask the minister: What is his approach in terms of youth programming and initiatives and activities for young people?

Mr. Robinson: I do not have the current figures of the youth under age 25 before me, Mr. Chairperson, but certainly I believe that the member is right.

The emphasis, I believe, that we have been trying to place in all our efforts, and it is totally consistent with the Aboriginal traditional beliefs, that is that we concentrate on youth. By not concentrating on youth, we will not have a future is how the elders describe it to me. It is also described to me by the traditional people that the two most important elements of society are the old people and the youth: the elders because they possess a knowledge of the past and the pride that we should have as Aboriginal people; and the youth because they will be the leaders of tomorrow so we must ensure that they get a good start, as they do in all other parts of society.

We must concentrate our efforts in ensuring that our young people are afforded the opportunity of a good education. We must offer opportunities of employment when they are done with their education. That is the emphasis of our Government's approach in dealing with this issue, and I believe that we have made gains by some of the things that I have described with respect to the dialysis treatment unit at Garden Hill.

* (17:50)

The Hydro agreements we are currently negotiating right now with First Nations communities in northern Manitoba, they will not simply be living with the after-effects of hydro development, but they in fact will reap the benefits in the long run and give them a sense of pride that they do have a future to look forward to. Unlike my generation, where hydro development occurred in my home community and also the community of which I am a member of the First Nation, are communities that are in situations where we are unable to pursue our traditional livelihood as trappers as our forefathers once were, as being able to live off the land so to speak. We do not have that ability anymore. So it is important, as the member points out, that we have to concentrate on the youth because without them we will not have a future as Aboriginal people, and it is very dangerous.

Let me describe for you one other example, and that is the example about the loss of languages among Aboriginal people. It is estimated that there will only be two or three

languages that will be able to be maintained in the next several years, that being Inuit, Ojibway and Cree. We are seeing evidence of languages being lost now in other areas of Canada, including British Columbia. We must ensure that the languages of Aboriginal people are protected because it was once told to me that without a language you do not have a culture. So that will be the final step in the de-Indianizing process of Aboriginal people. I think that Aboriginal leaders, chiefs, grand chiefs and others have been advocating that.

I think that we have to, in addition to that, allow our Aboriginal youth a good, healthy start in life through many initiatives that the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) has announced, including the Healthy Child Initiative and others. Those will go a long way in addressing those issues and giving our youth a proper start in life. I do not think it is acceptable to see our young people born with FAE or FAS, so we must make every effort to allow our Aboriginal population in this province—and we can no longer, Mr. Chairperson, just simply say that it is a federal responsibility, it is a provincial responsibility, or it is a municipal responsibility. I am talking, of course, about Aboriginal people, but they indeed are members of this province, as well, and we have to work with them collectively to address these many outstanding issues that do exist in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Gerrard: One of the things which is important in terms of making progress economically and in employment is being able to have accurate measurements of employment and unemployment in northern communities. I know that in opposition the members of the Government, who were then in opposition, spoke out and pushed for better reporting. I know that many of the First Nations communities keep good statistics, but the Statistics Canada data for northern communities have been remarkably weak.

I wonder what efforts the minister is making to improve the collection of data, Mr. Chair, and the reporting of data, so that there can be more accurate indicators of how we are doing in northern communities.

Mr. Robinson: Well, certainly, we have been asking our staff to be proactive, and the member is referring to the recent census of last month. We have been encouraging people to ensure that they send the questions that were contained in the Census Canada survey. To the best of my knowledge, in this province I believe that we have had a 92% return which is on the higher end among the prairie provinces, so we are of the understanding that we are a jurisdiction that has come up on the high end with respect to the returns of those census forms that were sent to all Manitobans. Certainly, that is one way I believe that we can get an accurate number, and it is quite deceiving.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) I believe, every time he has given out the employment figures in the province of Manitoba, always mentions the fact that that is not counting or factoring in the Aboriginal population in our province. It is not uncommon to see Aboriginal communities with unemployment rates of 85 to 90 percent and sometimes—I hate to say this—but more than that, but that is the reality and that is the challenge that all of us are faced with.

I hope that I have been able to, in the last hour or so, describe to the member the reality and the challenges that lay before us and that we are trying to address in a way that we can make some substantial changes in the lives of Aboriginal Manitobans.

Mr. Gerrard: *[interjection]* It is important that I be recognized by the Chairperson.

Mr. Chairperson: The honourable Member for River Heights.

Mr. Gerrard: I think that it is not just the recent Canada-wide census but the monthly statistics which is particularly important, because they report on a regular basis. I think it is time that they be inclusive and much more accurate than they have been in the last while.

I would now move and ask the minister, since his portfolio deals with Aboriginal people who are in urban environments, as well as in the North, what his approach is in terms of an urban Aboriginal strategy.

Mr. Robinson: As the member knows, there is currently an urban Aboriginal strategy that our Government is part of—we inherited it from the previous government—and that is an agreement with the federal government and the Aboriginal organization that represents the interests of urban Aboriginal people. I believe that that strategy requires renegotiation in the next year or so, maybe the next couple of years, pardon me. Certainly what I have done since I was appointed to this portfolio is I have called upon the heads of the Southern Chiefs Organization, the MKO, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Manitoba Métis Federation to become a part of any urban Aboriginal strategy and discussions we may have with the federal government.

I believe it is important we do that, given the fact that Aboriginal people and specifically First Nations people have always declared that they represent their people regardless of their residency, whether it is on reserve or off reserve. I think it is important that we do that, and any renegotiating of any further urban Aboriginal strategy will require those people. Our people, I believe, will co-operate with that.

The Manitoba Métis Federation has shown an interest in working with us, and we are glad

of that. The MKO, in my discussions with Grand Chief Flett, has indicated an interest in working with us because there are many First Nations people who live in the city of Winnipeg who are from the MKO region and, equally, with the SCO, as represented by Grand Chief Margaret Swan, and, of course, Grand Chief Dennis Whitebird of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs.

The urban Aboriginal strategy is something that we must address, Mr. Chair. We will continue addressing the many, as the member knows over half, and I cannot give him the precise figures, but it is often said that the 60 000 number of Aboriginal people is probably underestimated at this point in time, because I believe that there are more now in the city of Winnipeg who are resident here. I am told that in the next several years that one in five people will be of Aboriginal descent in Manitoba.

Mr. Chairperson: The hour being 6 p.m., committee rise.

IN SESSION

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. on Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 14, 2001

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