



Third Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

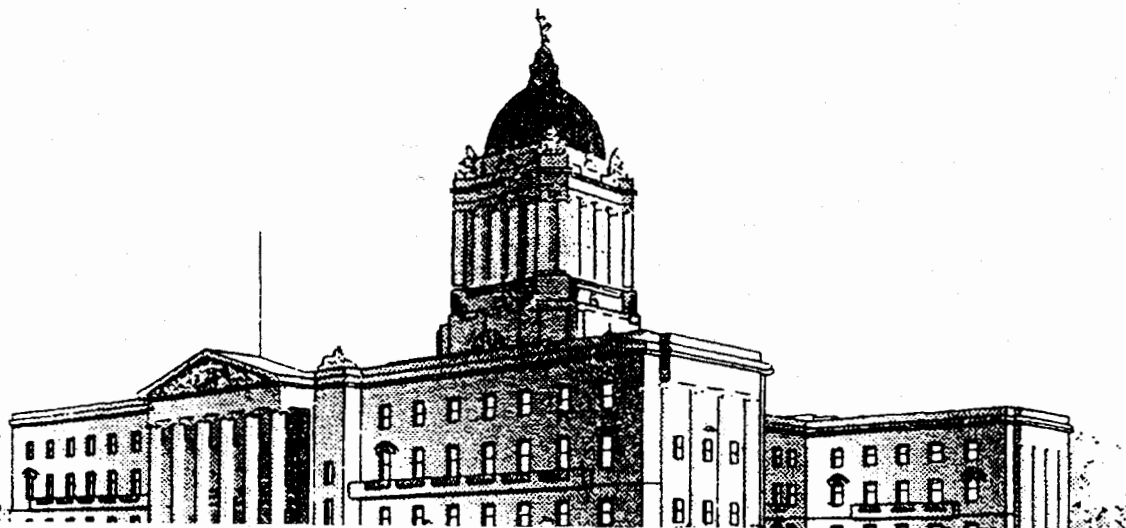
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 8, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Transcona-Springfield School Division

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

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Transcona-Springfield School Division

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

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Clerk, please read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY
STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

**Standing Committee on
Privileges and Elections
Second Report**

Mr. Conrad Santos (Chairperson): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the Second Report of the Committee on Privileges and Elections.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Your Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections presents the following as its Second Report.

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Meetings:

Your committee met on the following occasions:

Monday, July 24, 2000, at 10 a.m. in Room 254 of the Legislative Building

Tuesday, January 30, 2001, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building

Thursday, July 4, 2002, at 10 a.m. in Room 255 of the Legislative Building

Matters Under Consideration:

The Statutory Report on the April 1995 Provincial General Election

The 1995 Annual Report on The Elections Finances Act

The 1996 Annual Report on The Elections Finances Act

The 1997 Annual Report on The Elections Finances Act

The Statutory Report on the September 1997 Portage La Prairie by-election

The Statutory Report on the April 1998 Charleswood by-election

The 1998 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer

The 1999 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, including the September 1999 Provincial General Election

The 2000 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, including the November 2000 Kirkfield Park and Tuxedo by-elections

Committee Membership:

Substitutions received prior to commencement of July 4, 2002 meeting:

Mr. Murray for Mr. Faurschou

Mr. Laurendeau for Mrs. Smith (Fort Garry)

Hon. Mr. Doer for Hon. Mr. Selinger

Hon. Mr. Smith (Brandon West) for Hon. Mr. Mackintosh

Mr. Tweed for Mr. Laurendeau

Officials Speaking on Record:

Mr. Richard D. Balasko, Chief Electoral Officer

Reports Considered and Adopted:

Your committee considered:

The Statutory Report on the April 1995 Provincial General Election

The 1995 Annual Report on The Elections Finances Act

The 1996 Annual Report on The Elections Finances Act

The 1997 Annual Report on The Elections Finances Act

The Statutory Report on the September 1997 Portage La Prairie by-election

The Statutory Report on the April 1998 Charleswood by-election

The 1998 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer

The 1999 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, including the September 1999 Provincial General Election

The 2000 Annual Report of the Chief Electoral Officer, including the November 2000 Kirkfield Park and Tuxedo by-elections, and has adopted the same as presented.

Mr. Santos: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar), that the report of the committee be received.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**Bill 45—The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2002**

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), that leave be given to introduce Bill 45, The Budget Implementation and Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2002; Loi d'exécution du budget de 2002 et modifiant diverses dispositions législatives en matière de fiscalité (and that the same be now received and read a first time).

* (13:35)

His Honour the Administrator, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would like to table the Administrator's message, as well.

Motion presented.

Mr. Selinger: Mr. Speaker, this bill implements various measures announced in the 2002 Budget.

Motion agreed to.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today Caitlin and Ashton Smith, who are the daughters of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Smith), also the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Brandon West.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Flooding Agriculture Disaster Assistance

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, today in the gallery we have many farmers whose operations have been severely affected by the recent heavy rains and flooding. Millions of dollars in damage to crops, feed, farm buildings and equipment has been incurred by farmers in the municipalities of Rhineland, Montcalm, Franklin, Piney, Stuartburn, La Broquerie and in many other areas in southern Manitoba.

I have taken the opportunity to see the damage caused and the people affected first-hand and to listen to their concerns. Can the Premier tell this House and those farmers who are here today in the gallery when his Government will implement coverage for the crop losses farmers have suffered as a result of the flooding?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): We have amended the crop insurance provisions we had inherited from the previous administration. Crop insurance now covers, as of the 2002 crop year, for this current year the excessive moisture for purposes of reseeded based on flooding, that will cover about 500 farmers that would be affected. I know there are other producers who are not under that criteria.

The whole issue of the application of the so-called 50% income rule we think is a rule for farmers and against farmers by the federal government that is totally out of date. Our Minister of Government Services (Mr. Ashton) has pointed out because the income levels of

international subsidies have been so flattened by international conditions with the second income and other incomes for farm families, this provision is extremely unfair and does not deal with the real human cost of overland flooding that has provided such damage to so many individuals.

I have, as well, travelled through the area and our Minister responsible for Emergency Measures totally agrees that 50% provision is wrong. Our money is on the table and we want the federal government to change that condition.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table for the House some photographs that were taken from the areas I referred to earlier.

Will the Premier do the right thing and assure the people who have taken the time to come and sit in the gallery today, will he ensure their losses will be covered by a special program of compensation for on-the-farm flooding?

Mr. Doer: We cannot, as a province—the members opposite will know this—go it alone on disaster financial assistance. It is a national program. We cannot have a situation in Canada where Manitoba taxpayers pay up 100 percent of the cost on overland flooding of farms and the federal government picks up 90 percent of the cost for ice storms in Québec and Ontario. It is absolutely unfair that farmers are not covered by the federal government.

* (13:40)

We totally support their view that they should be compensated for the damages. Our provincial money is there and it remains there. We want to proceed with a federal-provincial funding package and the provincial money is there to do that.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier references the ice storm in Québec. I ask him on behalf of the gallery full of farmers and those who could not be here today: Will he do the right thing, as was done with flooding in the past and, as he referenced, the ice storm in Québec? Will he do the right thing and assure our farmers their losses will be covered?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Emergency Measures is absolutely prepared to meet

with the farm groups, farm individuals and farm families who are here. I have travelled through the areas, on a couple of occasions, that have been flooded and met with many people.

Obviously, we have coverage that was made for the residences that received overland flooding. We also have the business coverage; advances have been made. We have changed the criteria for requirements of reseeding land under crop insurance, a provision that was not there when we came into office. We have raised this with the federal government, including the federal minister, Mr. McCallum, as late as last week. We are absolutely committed to having our money, our provincial money is there to compensate farms that are damaged. We want the federal government to join us to waive those outdated criteria of 50% income and join us in dealing with damages fully with the costs.

Flooding Agriculture Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): In 1988, when the Swan River area got flooded, the province put its money on the table. It took eight years to collect the federal money but we paid it out. We made the decision. In 1989, when the fires in the Interlake took place, the provincial government put out the money. It took eight years to collect the money from the feds but we put it out. If your money is on the table, sir, please.

In 1997, during the Red River flood, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know the honourable member has an important question, which I think is even the greater reason he should abide by the rules and recognize that a question only has one preamble.

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

Mr. Jack Penner: On the same point of order, I find it very interesting that the honourable House Leader on the Government side is not willing to listen to what was done before and is not going to give the farmers in this gallery today an opportunity to hear the real story.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, he does have a point of order. I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members, *Beauchesne* Citation 409(2): A preamble should not exceed one carefully drawn sentence.

I would ask the honourable Member for Emerson to please put his question.

* * *

Mr. Jack Penner: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will attempt to do that.

Will the Government of Manitoba today tell the people, the farmers in this gallery this Government is willing to do exactly what was done in 1997? Are you going to include in the compensation a package for business losses, for agriculture losses, restoration programs, coverage for the cost of building temporary dikes, feed losses, evacuation costs and so on? Is this Government going to make the commitment, put the money on the table, pay the farmers their losses and go negotiate with the federal government after the fact?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I think it is important to put on the record I think everyone in this Legislature and everybody in Manitoba recognizes the hardship the events of June 9 had in southeast Manitoba.

We have tried our best as a government to get this damage dealt with as quickly as possible. I want to indicate we had payments out, advance cheques to some of the most needy people in the area in terms of damage within two weeks. That, by the way, compares to five weeks in 1997. We

have inspected 80 percent of the most severely affected homes.

* (13:45)

I want to indicate as recently as Friday I reiterated many of the issues the member has raised, particularly the unfairness of the current criteria in terms of part-time farmers. I want to say we are working extremely hard as a province to get assistance out. We have identified with the federal government, who are the partners in terms of disaster assistance, that there are indeed some real problems, particularly for part-time farmers. That is a real issue in southeast Manitoba.

I have been there, Mr. Speaker. The Premier (Mr. Doer) has been there. I know the member has, as well, as that is his constituency, and we are hoping the federal government will understand the need in that area.

Mr. Jack Penner: The farmers in this gallery, Mr. Speaker, are looking for co-operation and leadership from this Government, not pointing the finger and blaming some other level of government for their inadequacies.

I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture today: Is she willing to recognize that the damages incurred by farmers in southern Manitoba and the huge losses to the agricultural area that have been incurred should be treated exactly like we treated the farmers in the Swan River area, and is she going to provide spot-loss compensation to those farmers who have incurred these huge losses?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I hope the member is not implying that we do not recognize how serious the situation is in southeastern Manitoba. I can tell him I have had the opportunity to visit there. I have had the opportunity to talk to many producers in the area and the Department of Agriculture staff has been working very closely with the people in the region.

Issues of flooding and excess moisture are very important to us. That is why we made the changes to crop insurance when we became

government so that there would be an acreage payment when people were unable to seed. That is why we made the changes this year to ensure there was 100% coverage of the level of coverage selected by the producer so that the money could indeed flow to the producers. Under that change, between 500 and 700 producers are having their claims changed because of it.

We recognize very seriously the situation facing farmers. That is why we are working so closely with them.

Mr. Jack Penner: My final question: Will the minister and her Government recognize the damages, crop losses, hay losses, feed losses are huge in southern Manitoba? Will they recognize that crop insurance will not cover those losses under the current provision without spot-loss provision? Will she now tell this House and the farmers in this gallery she is willing to put in place a program that will cover and compensate on an individual field basis and cover those losses?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the member raises an important issue, one that has been around for a long time, where producers are asking for individual field coverage rather than having their whole crop covered. It is one that has been talked about a lot. It is one that there are concerns with about how you calculate only on one field and not include the other field, because the coverage is on the production of a crop per farm.

Those suggestions have been made in the past. I can tell the member, when they are raised with the federal government, because the federal government is the partner in our crop insurance, that is not the direction the federal government is looking at what kinds of changes we should make to crop insurance.

Flooding Agriculture Disaster Assistance

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, these recent continuing heavy rainfalls and the subsequent flooding in southeastern Manitoba have taken a severe toll on the feed supplies of that region. Many farmers are going to be unable to harvest their crops or to harvest their hay crops because measures taken to

alleviate flooding elsewhere, like diking and the lifting of planks from control structures, have backed up or held water on their hay and croplands.

* (13:50)

Will the minister responsible for this area assure these affected farmers and others that their losses will be fully covered?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, if the member is referring to the events around the Gardenton dike, I would urge the member to look at the situation, not to make assumptions about that one particular action that was taken by staff with the interest, I might add, that they had to do it to protect Vita and other communities in the area.

I think all Manitobans, including everyone in the southeast, understand when you are dealing with, in many cases, rainfalls that were historic, levels in the Roseau River which were 500-year levels, that the first action had to be to protect the communities in the area. I think we should give credit to the Conservation staff for making a very difficult decision, but making it on the technical basis and on that basis.

I want to say, and I want to put this on the record, we are far further ahead in dealing with this situation than any disaster in the past. We had a program declared and assistance out to Manitobans within two weeks. We will continue to talk to people in the area, people affected, as we have done since this disaster started, to determine what additional damage has happened. I am open to visit the area. I have done it before. I am open to visit with the farmers, because we do care about the people all throughout this province.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible assure these affected farmers? Because, on a similar basis, we do not have any problem with some of the issues that were done in regard to making sure some of those other communities were not flooded any more than they were either, but I believe the minister responsible should be able to tell this House whether or not he is going to be able to compensate those farmers or not.

Mr. Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I want to just put this on the record, because within two weeks we had assistance out to the most hard-pressed people in the area. That is a record. The changes in terms of crop insurance, Agriculture is estimating at least 500 people will be eligible under that. People would not have been eligible until the changes made in January.

I want to say to the member our first response has been to try and get out there as quickly as possible. I believe we have been able to do that. When I say "we," not just this Government, but every single employee, every municipal leader I have talked to said this is the way we should be dealing with it.

I want to say to the member and I want to reiterate the words of the Premier (Mr. Doer), I raised as recently as Friday with the minister responsible for Emergency Preparedness Canada some of the problems, with John McCallum. We will continue to advocate for improvements for DFAA, something that did not start last Friday, did not start with this disaster, but started when we came into office, because we identified this a long time ago and we agreed there are a lot of inadequacies in the DFAA program. We are fighting to change that.

Mr. Maguire: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the vociferations of the minister across the way do not deal with the feed issue I am talking about, can the minister responsible tell this House when farmers can expect an answer on compensation so they can plan to purchase the feed acquisitions they are going to need for this upcoming winter and fall needs?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, the member raises the issue of feed and the requirement for feed in that area. Those are serious issues. Those are issues the Department of Agriculture and Food staff are working on with people in the region. There are various ways you can ensure you have a crop. In other cases when there has been a shortage of feed, programs have been put together to ensure a feed supply can be brought into the area.

Mr. Speaker, it is very early to be starting to talk about whether there is going to be enough

feed for this fall. Given some good weather, there is still a lot of crop that can be grown. Farmers make those decisions all the time as to whether they have to put in green feed, but our departmental staff is working very closely with the farmers of the region to ensure there is a feed supply in that area this fall.

Flooding Agriculture Disaster Assistance

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Speaker, last year in the Yukon, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) agreed in principle to a national action plan for agriculture. One of the principles for renewal included enhancing the capacity for farmers to earn off-farm income. Many producers have had to work off the farm in order to support their operations. Now these same part-time farmers are finding out they do not qualify for flood compensation and restoration funds because their off-farm income is higher than their on-farm income.

Also, Mr. Speaker, these same farmers are eligible for Farm Credit Corporation funding, Manitoba Agricultural Credit funding, bank funding and are respected as a business. Yet, when it comes to flood compensation, they are declined.

* (13:55)

So, given that in 1998 the federal Agriculture Minister agreed to assist part-time farmers in Québec who were affected by the ice storm, will the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) today commit to lobbying her federal counterpart to help for Manitoba's part-time farmers who were hit by flooding?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The member who was an ag rep prior to his election, a very respected agricultural rep, hits the nail on the head, Mr. Speaker. There is an absolute tragedy of policy when the federal government tells all western Canadian farmers they are going to have to diversify, they are going to have to have less farmers, they are going to have a change in policy in terms of protecting the family farm, and then when people legitimately have incomes beyond the family farm to keep their family going the federal government clobbers them with a disaster assistance package that was in place when the member was the minister of disaster

assistance, to deny people the damages from this flooding. It is absolutely unacceptable to this Government.

We raised it with other western Canadian premiers as late as a month ago. All the other premiers, Premier Klein, Premier Calvert, Premier Campbell, from western Canada agreed you cannot have a disaster assistance program that denies people on the basis of 50% income and some of the other criteria that are in place. It is unacceptable. We totally agree with the member. We are totally working with all members, I would hope, to tell the federal government that 50% income, less than that should not deny people damages under the federal program. We are absolutely committed to fighting for that. We did it as late as last week and I think this whole House should be united telling Ottawa they cannot deny farmers this coverage.

Mr. Pitura: I was wondering if the minister responsible for disaster assistance could tell us about his recent discussions with his federal counterpart and whether or not his federal counterpart is prepared to assist and give aid to part-time farmers.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I want to stress at the meeting I had on Friday with Minister McCallum it is not the first time we had raised this issue. The Premier has raised it. Western premiers have raised it. As Minister responsible for Emergency Measures, I have raised it. I assume the member, when he was minister, would have raised it as well.

I want to indicate the minister indicated his willingness to do a couple of things that have not been done in the past. One is to review the context of the review that is taking place right now. They have tried up until now, the federal government has tried to exclude municipalities and farmers from a direct role in the review. We think that is wrong. We have partnered with AMM in saying that is wrong, because municipalities in particular and farmers and other affected residents should be directly involved in a review. I raised this issue with him on Friday.

I want to put it on the record, by the way, because I take some offence to a comment that was made by members opposite a few minutes

ago saying "empty words." We have committed to a program within two weeks of the disaster to cover \$7.2 million worth of damage. We are saying right now that is not good enough, Mr. Speaker, based on their criteria, and want a criteria change, but we are working very closely, particularly with the affected municipalities, 21 of whom have declared a disaster area, to try and get the assistance out as quickly as possible, and we will take up the issue on an ongoing basis with DFAA.

Mr. Pitura: My final supplementary to the same minister is that on May 1, 1997, an MOU was signed with the federal government bringing in extra federal government funds for programs. Can we expect the same thing to be announced shortly from this Government?

Mr. Ashton: If the member opposite wants to use '97 as a benchmark, it took approximately five weeks to get the first advances out. I want to put on the record that I credit the then-minister, the member, for moving on this, but we have not waited five weeks, Mr. Speaker. We got the advances out within two weeks. In fact, if you were to use '97 as an example, this time within '97 people in southern Manitoba had received no assistance. We are ahead of the game this time. I have raised with the federal minister the weaknesses in the DFAA program, and we will continue to work for the people in the southeast as we do for all Manitobans when it comes to disaster assistance.

Flooding Agriculture Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Well, Mr. Speaker, it is almost unbelievable that the Premier of this province, the minister for disaster assistance, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk), will just stand in this House and give us rhetoric. The people, the farmers of southern Manitoba, eastern Manitoba and the business-people hurt by this flood came here for answers today. They wanted to know a yes or a no, and all we have heard is rhetoric. All we have heard is about some things they have not done.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier whether he is willing today to stand on his feet

and say, yes, we will compensate for the spot losses that have been incurred and the crop losses that have been incurred by the farmers of this province.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I think we should be very consistent in this House on this issue, because the federal government has used the definition of part-time farmers. No one in this House should acquiesce to the federal—

An Honourable Member: We set it aside in '97. We set it aside. Why will you not set it aside?

Some Honourable Members: No, you did not.

An Honourable Member: We helped out the First Nations peoples in '89. We helped out Swan River in '87 first and then negotiated.

Mr. Doer: And you were not even in office in '87, so if I could continue on, please, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. If members wish to have a conversation, there is lots of room in the loge, out in the hallway. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members for a little decorum in the House.

The honourable First Minister has the floor.

Mr. Doer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Most of the producers who have been damaged and are not being covered are not part-time farmers. They are full-time farmers with part-time coverage from the federal government. Most of them are full-time producers, and it is only under the definition, an outdated definition of the federal government and of the federal Disaster Financial Assistance program that they have become so-called part time.

I think we should say these are full-time producers who have been damaged dramatically. Their livelihoods are at stake. These are not under some kind of definition of part-time that is designed in Ottawa. We discussed this with other western Canadian premiers. Our financial resources are on the table and we want to join with the federal government which recognizes producers as full-time producers entitled to full-

time damages for the massive damages that were conducted.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Premier one last time: Are you willing to tell these farmers today that you are going to compensate them for the crop losses they have had? Simple yes or no.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I must say I am very disappointed in the questions from the member opposite, because the member has been in government and the member should know, for example, that in 1997 the DFAA did not cover part-time farmers. It was a simple federal-provincial agreement. He should also know the people in the southeast are responsible tax-paying citizens of this province and would not expect a Premier or a minister in Question Period to get up and give a yes or a no answer. The member, I think, does a disservice to the people in the southeast.

We have said we have put in place a quicker response to the disaster than was ever done before and we are working right now with the farmers and the affected people in the communities. That is the Manitoba way, not a quick, simplified yes or no. We have to be responsible and to recognize that the primary responsibility is with the federal government. In 1997, there was \$230 million that came from the federal government to help people out in the south, and when it comes to the southeast we would expect nothing less.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I recognize the honourable Member for Emerson, I would just like to remind all honourable members when putting a question or when answering a question, to please put it through the Chair, not directly to a member, and the ministers, not directly to the member who has asked the question, but through the Chair. I ask for your co-operation, please.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask one final question, and that is: Will the Premier of this province announce today that there will be a JERI-type program announced which will cover relocation costs for those people who had their homes flooded, had their properties flooded? Will we cover the cost of relocating, as we

did in 1997, and will some of the other costs these people have incurred, as we did through the special program that was designed for 1997, the JERI program, will you today announce and tell the farmers in this gallery today that you are going to initiate that kind of a program? Yes or no?

Mr. Ashton: I think it is very important to be responsible to everyone in this province and not to take a question like that, which supposes that a JERI program is strictly a provincial program. The member opposite should know any of the disaster assistance that occurred in 1997 was done in agreement with the federal government.

That is why we have said notwithstanding the fact we have approved a program which we estimate will cover up to \$6.9 million worth of damages, including residences, because that is covered under the DFAA, but we are saying the definition in terms of part-time farmers is inappropriate, particularly for southeast Manitoba. I took that message directly to the federal minister on Friday. We are going to continue to fight to get that change in DFAA. That is the responsible way. That is the Manitoba way.

Provincial Drainage System Impact on Crop Losses

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Even with the recent heavy rains in southeastern Manitoba, it is clear some of the damage to crops was preventable if there had been optimum maintenance of provincial drains and optimum preventive approaches to water management for the area.

I ask the Minister of Agriculture to tell this Legislature, from her analysis of the situation, what proportion of the recent damage to crops could have been prevented with optimally maintained provincial drains and an optimum water management strategy for southeastern Manitoba.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt the issue of drainage and drainage maintenance has been one that has been on farmers' minds for some time. I want the member to remember we have increased the drainage

budget by 20 percent. The member also has to remember that this is a one-in-500-year level rainfall. I do not think drainage ditches could have made a difference. When you have that exceptionally high level of water, some crops are going to be damaged.

The member should also realize it has become very difficult to improve drainages and do drainage work, given the steps taken by the federal government with putting 20 fisheries inspectors here who want to ensure ditches that never see a fish in them are built to a standard that will allow fish to swim in them. That is putting a tremendous amount of pressure on the Department of Conservation and on producers. I would ask that member to take that message to his colleagues who are in Ottawa and tell them the fisheries inspectors here in this province are causing a negative impact on the drainage work we want to do.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I table a letter from the R.M. of Franklin which speaks to some of the disorganization in terms of water managed provincially in the area. I ask my supplementary to the Minister of Agriculture. I ask the minister to acknowledge that arguments over drainage and the lack of adequate provincial planning and provincial maintenance of provincial drains have considerably exacerbated the adverse effects of recent rains on cropland in southeastern Manitoba.

Ms. Wowchuk: I do not think the member recognizes that this is a one-in-500-year rainfall and it is overland flooding. Drainage ditches could not have handled that amount of rain. When you have that amount of rain, five inches in a very short time, or eight inches in a very short time, it is impossible for the drainage ditches to handle all of that rain.

The issue of drainage is an important one. That is why we have been increasing the budget. It is very difficult to correct the mistakes of 10 years past when the drainage ditches were completely neglected. Some say much greater than that, but in the past 10 years the drainage budget was cut. The Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) himself indicated it was their fault. They were the ones who cut the budget and caused the drainage ditches to be so neglected

that now there is a serious problem. We are taking steps to correct it.

Mr. Gerrard: How convenient to blame others instead of addressing the problems you can do yourself.

* (14:10)

I ask the Minister of Agriculture, that, where there is provincial responsibility and shortfalls, surely the provincial government has the responsibility to compensate farmers where it is their own shortfalls which caused the problems or contributed to them.

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, part of the problem we are having now is the Liberal definition of a part-time farmer. If the Liberals dealt properly with farmers and recognized that farmers did earn income off farm, we would not be facing the challenges we are right now. We are trying to get compensation for part-time farmers who earn some of their income off the farm.

I can tell the member also that since we have taken office we have made changes to crop insurance. We recognize the excess moisture insurance is necessary for farmers. That is why we put it in place, and that is why we made exemptions to the excess moisture insurance this year to ensure farmers will be able to get compensated for their losses because of excess moisture.

The member's issue of drainage, I want to tell him we inherited an issue. We had to start where the previous government left off. We have put additional resources in place and we are working with producers and municipalities to address drainage issues.

Flooding Agriculture Disaster Assistance

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Well, Mr. Speaker, we have heard a lot of rhetoric. This is a government that has no track record in supporting rural Manitoba, particularly when it comes to crop loss caused by flooding.

Having been a member, an opposition member who has been to Ottawa with these all-party

delegations in 2000 with this Government to seek support from the federal government, and the farmers are still waiting for the first cent of that support to come, then I have to ask the Minister of Agriculture why these affected farmers whose, as I pointed out earlier, operations were damaged in order to protect people downstream, why they should have to bear the costs of damages caused by such flood protection measures.

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I am quite surprised the member would say he does not remember any support coming from our negotiations with the federal government. He seems to have forgotten CMAP1. He seems to have forgotten CMAP2, which flowed money into farmers' hands, which was negotiated by this Government and got 60% dollars from the federal government to help our farmers out.

Mr. Speaker, we have made changes to crop insurance, and this year we made an exception under the crop insurance to see some money would flow, but also the minister responsible for disaster assistance has made provision for money to flow very quickly, much quicker than it did under the previous administration, because under the previous administration, in the flood of 97, farmers would still be waiting for money. It is in their hands. Over 310 claims have been processed and under crop insurance between 500 to 700 farmers have benefited from the changes we have made to crop insurance.

Mr. Maguire: On a new question, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Arthur-Virden, on a new question.

Mr. Maguire: The rhetoric I talked about earlier has just been exacerbated over and over again. This minister knows full well they have brought forward no specific programs for disaster in Manitoba since this Government has come into power. They have done nothing, no particular program to help the farmers of any particular region. She knows full well my question is directed just at those who require feeding programs and feeding assistance to make sure they can feed their livestock through the coming winter.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister today, as we have been asking through the whole Question Period in this House of her, the Premier (Mr. Doer), the Minister of Government Services and disaster, can they assure Manitoba farmers there will be some support there for these specific disaster programs, particularly because they were involved in the flood measures that caused some of the flooding to take place to protect others?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, the member gave a long preamble there, but the part of the question I think he is looking for is feed assistance. I will tell the member again the Department of Agriculture is working very closely with producers in that area. There have been incidents in the past where there has been flooding and there has been need for hay in the area. Sometimes people seed green feed if they have to, to ensure to get the crop. There is a forage restoration program under crop insurance to help to restore the fields there.

It has happened in the past where there is hay listed within the Department of Agriculture. If it is necessary to move hay, then our department will work very closely with those producers to ensure there is a supply of hay in the region.

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, it is very apparent there have been programs put in place prior to this Government coming to power. There have been programs that covered as much as \$60 per cow in these kinds of disaster situations that have arisen in the past.

I would ask this minister today: If she has such a close working relationship with both the federal government and the farmers of that region, is she going to be able to assure them in this House today that they will not be out of pocket for these expenses that are being incurred upon them because of other departments, of their Government's decisions?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I take issue with the member's comments about this Government not having declared disaster programs. We have responded, Mr. Speaker, in numerous areas of the province, not just

southeast Manitoba recently but in fact areas represented by the Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Hawranik).

We have tried to move very quickly in dealing with this particular disaster to make sure we ended what has become a bit of a paradox, because the irony of 1997 is that, even though a significant amount of assistance went to people in the end, one of the concerns was with the speed with which it went. We have brought into place in this disaster speedier response in terms of declaring a disaster and getting money out than we ever have before. I want to indicate that has been our priority.

Our staff at EMO has been out in every area that has been affected. We have been handing out the disaster assistance payments initially and we are now working on the second stage of response, which will identify not only the kind of situation the member has talked about but where we can improve in the future in terms of mitigation, because that has to be the next response, to see what we can do. We cannot prevent every situation in a 500-year rainfall and a 500-year level of the Roseau River, but we are going to try and do our darndest to help the people in that area as much as we can and as quickly as we can.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Canada Millennium Scholarships

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of 41 Manitoba high school students who have recently been awarded Canada Millennium Scholarships to attend a Canadian post-secondary institution this fall. These are awards of excellence that are granted each year by the Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation to Canadian students who demonstrate high levels of academic achievement, community service, innovation and leadership.

This year, under the excellence award program, 100 students from across Canada have been awarded national scholarships of \$4,800 a year for four years.

The national awards are distributed to students solely on the basis of merit. Since Manitoba represents about 4 percent of Canada's population, it could be assumed that 4 percent of national award winners would be Manitoba students. However, I am pleased to announce that this year 6 percent of the national award winners are Manitoba students from urban and rural schools. This represents an increase of 2 percent at this highest level for Manitoba as compared to last year. This is a remarkable and highly commendable achievement.

Mr. Speaker, 200 high school students from across Canada were awarded provincial and territorial Canada Millennium Scholarships for this year. These scholarships are for \$4,000 a year over four years. I am pleased to announce that there are nine Manitoba high school students who are award winners in this category.

In addition, 600 students across Canada will receive a one-time \$4,000 local scholarship. I am very pleased to announce that a total of 26 Manitoba high school students will receive Canada Millennium Scholarship local awards.

I believe that the excellent achievement of all these students is a strong indication of the high quality of education that is evident in Manitoba's school system. I am very proud of the accomplishments that our students have made. I ask that you join me in expressing congratulations.

* (14:20)

Agriculture Disaster Assistance

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a sad heart and a heavy heart. I rise today and I make a member's statement and voice my disappointment at the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province, the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and the minister of disaster assistance, who refuse to recognize the emotional difficulties that young families face trying to do business in rural Manitoba.

When a disaster hits them, there is a government that constantly points the finger at somebody else and blames the federal government. We have to wonder sometimes, Mr. Speaker,

how or why this Premier even wants to be the Premier of this province when all he can do is point the finger eastward. This Premier was the person who, right after being elected, said to the media: We are going to have a great relationship with the federal government. Yet he has not been able to convince the federal government one time to change any policies.

So I wonder, Mr. Speaker, why this Premier and his Government still want to govern. Why can they not make a decision, as we did in 1988 when the Swan River area where the Minister of Agriculture's family had their farm destroyed and the province made the decision, right in Swan River. We did not even go back to the city of Winnipeg. I was the minister, and we made the decision to compensate her, restoration of her farm, her family's farm. We did not wait two days, and all I ask, Mr. Speaker, is that this—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Scouts

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize a group of young people who have just had a real adventure while learning a valuable lesson. These young people, the 20th Scout group from Winnipeg, are from my constituency of St. Vital. Their misadventures occurred in June when a canoe and camping trip turned dangerous due to extreme weather.

Head Scout leader, Patrick Boender, had taken 23 co-ed Scouts, aged 11 to 17, and 8 other leaders to Caddy Lake. This group exhibited exemplary behaviour in the situation because of their commitment to the Scouts' motto: Be prepared.

When the Scouts realized they were stranded out in the wilderness and were facing unruly waters, they immediately contacted the authorities with a request for assistance. The rescuers took only three hours to reach them, despite the extreme weather, and arrived with three boats and twelve officers.

I am happy to report that all the Scouts and their leaders were transported safely back to warm fires and trucks. Three of the Scouts were taken to the hospital as a precaution for

hypothermia, and they were released that night and returned home.

Mr. Speaker, it was the Scouts' prudent measures of being prepared that ensured their safety and efficient rescue. Before departing on their canoe trip, they equipped themselves with weather forecasts, route maps, a phone tree, cell phones, radios, a risk-management plan and experienced leaders. These steps prevented the trip from having a tragic outcome. Too often, we hear of boating or camping trips gone wrong due to poor planning and not paying attention to potential risks.

I want to commend the Scouts for their diligence and preparedness. I commend, too, the Scout leaders for their great work in teaching these youth such a valuable lesson.

I would also like to thank Manitoba Conservation officers, the RCMP, the Natural Resources officers and the ambulance staff who assisted the Scouts. It is another reminder of the vital role that regulatory and emergency personnel play in keeping our communities safe.

Youth in Philanthropy

Mr. David Faurshou (Portage la Prairie): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today to recognize the efforts and contributions of 12 Portage la Prairie high school students to their community.

The Youth in Philanthropy programs at the Arthur Meighen High School and the Portage Collegiate Institute created student committees at each school to oversee the awarding of grants to deserving charities.

Recently, students from the two schools announced the recipients of \$5,000 in grants. Arthur Meighen High School donated \$2,500 to seven organizations, including the Portage District Hospital Foundation, the Portage Women's Shelter and the Child and Family Services of Central Manitoba. At the same time, the Portage Collegiate students handed out \$2,500 to Youth for Christ, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Portage and the Children's Wish Foundation.

I would also like to thank the Community Foundation of Portage and District Incorporated

and the Thomas Sill Foundation in Winnipeg for providing the funding for this project and making these miracles happen.

Grade 12 Arthur Meighen student, Nathan Thiessen, explains: I felt very happy because of the fact that we could actually help people. It is this feeling of accomplishment and self-worth that accompanies efforts towards making positive changes in someone's life that these students find to be so rewarding.

I would also like to thank Miss Ruth Muligan for being instrumental in starting the Youth in Philanthropy program. She explained that her experiences with these programs was so rewarding because students had the opportunity to give out money. However, the most applause must go to the 12 students who dedicated themselves to researching local charities, having meetings and making arrangements to make all this possible. They had a strong desire to make a difference and their perseverance, effort and belief in themselves allowed them to do just that.

It is because of this that I, on behalf of the members of this Chamber, would like to commend them for making such a wonderful and noteworthy contribution to this community.

North End Housing Project

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, approximately seven years ago, you and I attended meetings of a small advocacy organization, the North End Housing Project. Those were the dark days of the Tory administration. There were no social housing programs, no renovation programs other than RRAP. There were more and more boarded up houses and a serious arson problem. Since we took office, there have been major changes. Last year the staff of the North End Housing Project increased from two and a half to eight. Currently, they have 25 houses in their portfolio. In the first three years, they acquired and renovated 20 houses. In 2001, they received funding from the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative to rehabilitate another 25 houses in the William Whyte area and have built seven units of infill housing.

The North End Housing Project will receive \$480,000 from the Intergovernmental Affairs

Department and \$100,000 from the City of Winnipeg to renovate houses over the next four years. The significance is they are restoring hope. They are increasing property values and they are providing employment to North End residents. I want to congratulate the North End Housing Project and wish them success in renovating 55 houses this year in the North End.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, before calling report stage on Bill 14, would you canvass the House to determine if there is leave to sit tonight from 6:30 to 10 if Bill 14 has not been dealt with by that time.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to sit from 6:30 till 10 tonight?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Not agreed to. Leave is denied.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, would you please call report stage—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear a thing. In order to announce House business, we have to be able to hear, so I would ask the co-operation of all honourable members please.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, would you please call report stage of Bill 14?

REPORT STAGE

Bill 14—The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended)

Mr. Speaker: Report stage, Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended). We will now deal with the amendment to Bill 14, in the name of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler),

THAT Bill 14 be amended by replacing the proposed clause 17(8)1(b), as set out in Section 17 of the Bill, with the following:

(b) presented its proposed budget in the form and containing the information required by subsection (2), at an open meeting of the board and heard from persons present wishing to make submissions regarding it.

Motion presented.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment is in order.

* (14:30)

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the essence of this amendment is to respond to concerns which were raised at committee stage from the Manitoba Teachers' Society and from a number of teachers including, for example, Glenn Anderson. I would quote from the words of Glenn Anderson at committee.

He says: "The one aspect of Bill 14 that does concern me is section 178, part 1, which deals with budget consultations. The requirement for each Manitoba school board to present its proposed budget at an open meeting is a very positive and transparent step, and I applaud the Government for this initiative. However, I would also suggest one amendment in that the presentation of the proposed budget should be in the same format as the FRAME budget. This would be a much clearer and consistent process that would allow the public to compare the proposed allocation to those from previous final budgets which have to be in the FRAME format. One can appreciate the difficulty in interpreting budget proposal formats that may vary from division to division or, in fact, from year to year. A consistent practice, and one that is already a department requirement for final budgets, is most certainly more transparent and clearer than one in which variation can exist."

In essence, Mr. Speaker, the amendment calls for when there is a public meeting for the budget to be presented in the FRAME format. Already, there are a fair number of school divisions which have open public meetings. All this does is to provide an additional circumstance that the budget must be presented in a consistent format, so it is easier for people to understand

and more consistent from one division to another.

I would quote also from the presentation of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. In the presentation which was given by Brian Ardern, the vice-president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society at the committee hearings, he adds: I would like to offer one amendment to this section. All school divisions should be required to present their proposed budget in FRAME format. If each division uses the same format, Manitobans could compare how each school board manages our money.

I think this is a needed amendment, that it is a sensible amendment. Not only that, I would suggest that this amendment falls into line with one of the presentations which was made by Diane Duma, who is the co-chair of the Manitoba Association of Parent Councils. Diane Duma, at committee stage, mentioned that good legislation takes time, discussion and fair input from stakeholders.

Clearly, we have received the input from the Manitoba Teachers' Society and the input from a number of teachers that this would be a smart thing to do. So today I table the amendment to provide for this change to standardize presenting of budgets at the open meeting by the school boards. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I rise on this particular amendment. I want to address the amendment itself, and what it does. I also want to address some of the things that the Government is trying to do.

I do not know of many school divisions that do not have public consultation meetings. I think it is strange that the Government would actually have even put this into legislation. I think the school boards have done a very good job. I know from my years as a school trustee in the River East School Division, we had public consultation meetings every year. What I found odd when we had them, we publicized them, we put them in all the newspapers, and often, well, in every case, the school trustees and administration far outnumbered the public that was in attendance.

I think one has to be very careful when one legislates these kinds of things. There is also

where the public stands. Is the public really that interested in the budgetary process? I think, if that is going to be included in legislation, it is important to have some kind of a standard format. I think the FRAME report is something that all school boards adhere to anyway, and certainly I do not think it should be an added extra cost, not that they have indicated to us. So I think going with this amendment, something that the Teachers' Society asked for, that way you have a better comparative mechanism for individuals coming forward. So, certainly, I, as one member, do not have a problem with the amendment.

I think the bill has been poorly thought out, the whole amalgamation has been terribly bungled by this Government, and what members on this side are trying to do is trying to help the Government soften the blow somewhat of what this particular legislation is going to do to a lot of quarters and a lot of communities.

So, Mr. Speaker, with those few comments, I certainly hope the House will support this particular amendment.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the amendment to Bill 14

THAT Bill 14 be amended by replacing the proposed clause 178(1)(b), as set out in section 17 of the Bill, with the following:

(b) presented as proposed budget, in the form and contain the information required by subsection (2), at an open meeting of the board and heard from persons present wishing to make submissions regarding it.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

An Honourable Member: Yeas and Nays.

Mr. Speaker: Yeas and Nays. A recorded vote, having been—[interjection] Order. For clarification of the House, I was recognizing the honourable Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), who was on his feet at his desk, and I heard him very clearly. He said Yeas and Nays. So the recorded vote, in my opinion, has been requested by the honourable Member for Russell. Is that the case, yes or no?

The honourable Member for Russell, have you requested a recorded vote?

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. The recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

Order. The question before the House is the proposed amendment to Bill 14

THAT Bill 14 be amended by replacing the proposed—

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

* (15:30)

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

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

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 25, Nays 28.

Mr. Speaker: The amendment has been defeated.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Now we will move on to the proposed amendment to Bill 14 in the name of the honourable Minister of Education, Training and Youth (Mr. Caldwell).

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Advanced Education): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Lemieux),

THAT Bill 14 be amended by adding the following as section 24.1:

Continuity in education

24.1(1) *Despite the formation of The River East Transcona School Division,*

(a) until June 30, 2005, a child who was or would have been a resident pupil of the former Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 continues to have the same rights of access to schools which were located in that division as they had on June 30, 2002; and

(b) after June 30, 2005, a resident pupil of The Sunrise School Division who was enrolled in a school in the River East Transcona School Division under clause (a) will be deemed to have been enrolled in that school under the schools of choice policy, and the schools of choice policy applies in respect of that pupil.

Definitions

24.1(2) *For the purposes of subsection (1),*

"The River East Transcona School Division" means The River East Transcona School Division formed under the School Division and School District Amalgamation (2002) Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 61/02; ("Division scolaire River East Transcona")

"schools of choice" means the schools of choice policy established under sections 58.3 and 58.4; (politique sur le choix d'une école)

"The Sunrise School Division" means The Sunrise School Division formed under the School Division and School District Amalgamation (2002) Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 61/02; ("Division scolaire Sunrise")

"Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12" means The Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 under the School Divisions and Districts Establishment Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 109/93. ("Division scolaire de Transcona-Springfield no 12")

Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: You still have the floor.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I do believe, seeing as the amendment is in the honourable Minister of Education's (Mr. Caldwell) name on the Order Paper, that the minister would have had to have moved it on behalf of the minister.

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Yes, just to clarify. The minister is the Acting Minister of Education and is moving it on behalf of the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: For clarification of the House, the honourable Minister of Advanced Education

(Ms. McGifford) is the Acting Minister of Education, Training and Youth and had moved the amendment on behalf of the Minister of—
[interjection] Well, I am just clarifying it from the Government House Leader. For clarification from the Government House Leader.

I would ask the honourable Minister of Advanced Education to state on record that she was moving it on behalf of the Minister of Education, Training and Youth.

* * *

Ms. McGifford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for all the advice. Yes, I do move it on behalf of the Minister of Education, Training and Youth.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Laurendeau: It seems when some of the microphones are on, we are not hearing very clearly over here. I do not know if other members are having trouble, but I am having trouble hearing members, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, when you are speaking, if you could check out the sound system.

Mr. Speaker: If I could ask the recorder at the back just to do a quick test, whatever means they have, just to make sure that all the mikes are working, and that the members can hear the member who has the floor.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: It has been moved by the honourable Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) for the Minister of Education, Training and Youth (Mr. Caldwell), seconded by the honourable Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism (Mr. Lemieux),

THAT Bill 14 be amended by adding the following section 24.1:

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

Mr. Speaker: Dispense.

Continuity in education

24.1(1) *Despite the formation of The River East Transcona School Division,*

(a) until June 30, 2005, a child who was or would have been a resident pupil of the former Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 continues to have the same rights of access to schools which were located in that division as they had on June 30, 2002; and

(b) after June 30, 2005, a resident pupil of The Sunrise School Division who was enrolled in a school in the River East Transcona School Division under clause (a) will be deemed to have been enrolled in that school under the schools of choice policy, and the schools of choice policy applies in respect of that pupil.

Definitions

24.1(2) *For the purposes of subsection (1),*

"The River East Transcona School Division" means The River East Transcona School Division formed under the School Division and School District Amalgamation (2002) Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 61/02; ("Division scolaire River East Transcona")

"schools of choice" means the schools of choice policy established under sections 58.3 and 58.4; (politique sur le choix d'une école)

"The Sunrise School Division" means The Sunrise School Division formed under the School Division and School District Amalgamation (2002) Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 61/02; ("Division scolaire Sunrise")

"Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12" means The Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 under the School Divisions and Districts Establishment Regulation, Manitoba Regulation 109/93. ("Division scolaire de Transcona-Springfield no 12")

Ms. McGifford: Mr. Speaker, I think the problem might have been that my mike was turned, and now that we have corrected that I hope that everyone can hear clearly.

I am pleased to be here this afternoon and to address the amendment proposed on behalf of

the Minister of Education, Training and Youth. I am pleased to say that amalgamation is proceeding well everywhere. Having said that, I do want to add that, in the case of Springfield, a number of residents have expressed some concern about the continuity of education for their children in some Transcona schools. However, the minister has taken steps to address their concerns.

We have initiated the development of a shared services agreement among River East, Transcona-Springfield and Agassiz school divisions to guarantee continued access for Springfield students to high school programs in a Transcona school. Also guaranteed has been access to Grades 7 and 8 students for practical arts and home economics, Mr. Speaker.

As part of this agreement, the Province has agreed to cover the costs of transportation for these students; I am sure, welcoming news. In order to give further reassurance to students and parents, this amendment gives the shared services agreement legislative authority.

Furthermore, this agreement also extends to access programs at the early and middle levels as well as allowing future students who are currently resident in Springfield access to Transcona schools until June 2005.

* (15:40)

While I am on my feet, I would just like to take the opportunity to express our thanks on behalf of this side of the House to the member from Minnedosa. The member from Minnedosa raised the issue of providing reassurance for the parents and children of Springfield, and, hence, because of the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer), the former minister, we introduced this amendment. Because of his measured and reasonable approach to this side of the House, we did move this amendment. I suppose the member's reasonableness and his measured approach are probably signs of his experience in the House. I do want to thank him on behalf of Government for this behavior.

While I am on my feet, as well, I would like to point out that every day that the passage of this bill is delayed, this means more and more

problems for school divisions, for school boards and for schoolchildren.

Because of this delay, boards are beginning the new fiscal year under their old arrangements. This is creating problems with staff, it is creating problems with accounting, with purchasing and all the very complex issues involved in school management and governance. These delays are really sowing the seeds of confusion and introducing unnecessary problems.

I do implore members opposite to think of the children in the province of Manitoba. Let us just get on with the passage of this legislation. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schuler: This amendment to Bill 14 is quite strange. The Government has pushed its Bill 14 and has done the Chicken Little approach on this bill. Here we are, well into July, they cried and thumped their chests about how this bill had to be through on the first, and yet it is the minister amending his own legislation today. The minister is the one who has been crying foul, that this has to go through, has to go through, yet he is the one who is stalling his own legislation and putting amendments through, Mr. Speaker.

It is unfortunate that the minister did not listen to reasoned, well-thought-out advice that was given back in January, on January 7, by the residents of Springfield, when the minister showed up when it was pointed out to him the concerns and the problems of this amalgamation to the students of Springfield.

When you look at the article in the *Free Press* of Saturday, July 6, you can see that the parents feel again that this is one of those stopgap measures, it is more of a spin measure than anything else, because it will grandfather those grades that are currently involved in the education system, and does not lay out a plan or any ideas of what will happen to the French immersion program in École Dugald once this grandfathering runs out.

Mr. Speaker, this kind of issue should have been dealt with back in January. I am glad to see the Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) giving one of the members in the Opposition the credit for it, but probably the

credit is more due to the parents who took this Government to task, who took this Government to court and bitterly, bitterly had to defend their position in regard to what was going to happen with their students. This is, in small part, a victims compensation package that has been put forward by the minister. It compensates, in a very small way, the victims of amalgamation. I think we will, in the next months and years, talk about the victims of Bill 14. In fact, Bill 14 should be renamed the victimization-of-parents bill. We will see a lot more parents coming forward when they find out what this Government has done to them, the students and the education system.

The amendment itself deals with, in small part, the things that were being said by myself and by the parents. It was spoken by the reeve and the council and the trustees. It is unfortunate that it took this long before the Government actually acted and did something in regard to it. I wonder also, if you read in the article: Meanwhile, River East trustee Rod Giesbrecht raised alarms yesterday over the cost of educating Springfield students in the new River East School Division. You are looking at a 1.5% tax increase solely to fund students from Springfield if the Doer government does not cover all the costs of sending the rural children into amalgamated division.

He also claimed that trustees in River East and Transcona only agreed to sign a shared services agreement because they feared the minister would dissolve their boards and appoint an official trustee if they did not follow his wishes. A lot of this has been done under duress. A lot of this has been done, again, the whole punishment politics issue comes forward, and the Government, I believe, is backpedalling, in a very small way, with their victims compensation amendment.

Again, they have not looked at the bigger picture of what is going to happen with the whole French immersion program. I think it is strange, by far, that the Government has been crying for Bill 14; here we are heading right into July, and the minister is starting to amend his bill. Perhaps the wise thing to do for this House is to hold the bill for another couple of weeks to allow the minister to reconsider more of his errors. Perhaps he will consider some more

amendments, some proper amendments that would make amalgamation what it should be. That should be a positive and not the negative that it is right now. With that, I will defer to my next colleague.

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): The calamity of this bill just keeps getting larger and larger. For weeks we have heard the members opposite talk about a drop-dead date of July 1. In fact, members opposite, members in the back bench with their lob questions to the Minister of Education every day saying that the harm and the despair that would be created by not passing this bill by July 1 would just be unbearable on the school divisions in Manitoba that are being amalgamated.

What do we have? After the fact, after the July 1 deadline, a minister bringing an amendment forward that basically addresses part of the issue of the amalgamation but certainly not all of it. This minister, who had the ability to enforce amalgamation in school divisions across Manitoba with the previous legislation, the legislation that was already a part of this Legislature, a part of The Public Schools Act of Manitoba, he chooses instead to rewrite an act that we have referred to several times from this side as strictly an act that covers off against the minister's mistakes and faux pas that he has created along this process. In fact, there has been no process. The process has been that a group of people got together in a dimly lit room with a crayon and drew boundaries and decided that they would come out to the public after the fact. What they did was, they heard from the people.

It is interesting that the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg), talking from his chair, and yet, in the weekend paper, it talked about the thousands of people that he said were happy about this amalgamation legislation. I mean, if you read the paper, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, we all know when it comes from somebody within the communities, it is usually heartfelt and well thought out. It is certainly not anything near what the Member for Rossmere would suggest about this bill.

* (15:50)

So not only do we have a Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) that, unfortunately, for some reason, just cannot get it right. Try as he

might or try as he might not, he just does not get it. He does not understand. The Acting Minister of Education can make a million excuses for the minister's newness to the Legislature and his difficulty in understanding how the Legislature works and his inability to perhaps go out and follow a process that was set up, a process that was designed to actually enhance amalgamation.

What we see today is a process that is so flawed that it is dividing communities, not only in Transcona-Springfield, in school divisions, but, if you look out into rural Manitoba, the article in this week's *Brandon Sun* talks about the difficulties that other school divisions are having. They are not even speaking. They are not even talking to each other anymore. That is what this type of legislation has created in our school divisions across rural Manitoba. That is a shame, because you do have an opportunity to do something like this and you have an opportunity to do it right.

Unfortunately, the Minister of Education chose to do it all the wrong way. He has spent the last several weeks in this Legislature and in the public domain trying to explain his reasons for doing things and trying to cover up what he did in this legislation with an act that basically exempts the minister from any responsibilities for any wrongdoings, which we know has happened. We have pointed it out in this Legislature several times.

We have pointed out the fact that the minister under the old act has the ability to enact amalgamation, he does not need this bill, and the fact that after the July 1 deadline—I am going to look around, it is July what today? July 8 today. So eight days after the minister said that this deadline had to be met or it was going to incur all kinds of problems across amalgamated school divisions in Manitoba, who comes forward with an amendment? The Minister of Education. Absolutely unbelievable.

I would like him to stand in his chair or stand on the floor beside his chair today and apologize for the way he misled Manitobans in his statements in this House, saying that it was a drop-dead date of July 1 and that the sky would fall if July 1 passed. Now the minister comes forward with an amendment to his own must-

pass bill. It is actually beyond belief in this House.

I would hope that the crow that the Minister of Education is eating today tastes very well, because he certainly lost any and all credibility in the education fields in Manitoba and with families and with parents of children, and, I suspect, with the children, Mr. Speaker.

He brings forward an amendment, and, to the acting minister's understanding of it, it was something that was brought forward at the committee stage of this when we went out. Although we listened to the people, I think they felt that the Government certainly was not listening. It was, I think, through the strength of the lobbying done by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) that the minister, albeit very late in the process, saw the light.

There are certain conditions and concerns with the amendment that he is bringing forward. The funding runs out on June 30, 2005. The families and the parents are saying, well, where do we go from there? What happens after this fact? Does the minister come in with another amendment?

Well, actually I will tell you what will happen is that there will be a new government in Manitoba, and this will be dealt with in an outward, upward, straightforward process so the people of Manitoba know what they are getting before it is foisted upon them by a government that really has no concern about their concerns, does not want to listen, does not want to follow a process, merely wants to design boundaries based on political motivation.

The action of the Government is actually being seen by the people across Manitoba as being a government that does not understand and also, I suspect, does not care. They have the ability through legislation to say to people that if you disagree with this bill, if you do not like what we are doing, you can challenge it in court, but, when you do, by the passing of this legislation that will no longer exist. In fact, that type of intimidation is referred to in this newspaper article. The guy, one of the gentlemen involved in the amalgamation, claimed that trustees in River East and Transcona only agreed to

sign a shared-service agreement because they feared the minister would dissolve their boards and appoint an official trustee if they did not follow his wishes. Is that not an odd statement?

There is not one member on the member's side that could deny that minister would not do that because he has already done it in this province. He has denied the people of Morris-Macdonald their elected representatives on a school board to represent them in amalgamation process and in a budget process that is taking place right now. What we have is a minister-appointed person to act as his spokesperson on behalf of the Government, and the people of Morris-Macdonald are feeling very left out of this process, too.

Again, you understand some of the background of this issue when you read in the paper that people in this province, elected officials, and I suspect it goes deeper than school boards. I am starting to challenge whether it is going out into the R.M.s and into the municipal where they are afraid to make decisions that impact their constituents in the best way because they are afraid of the heavy hand of this Government coming down and forcing them out, throwing them out of office and taking over the management, which they have displayed that they are willing and able to do. Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, not necessarily able, but willing to do.

They are willing to take the elected officials in Manitoba and discard them, throw them away, throw them out if they do not agree with the directives of the government of the day. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the crux of this entire bill. It speaks to this entire Government and the way that they deal with the people and they way they deal with the issues that affect the people in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

The other things, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the people are concerned about; they are concerned about a tax increase. They are talking about a 1.5% tax increase, and that is solely to fund students from Springfield if the Government does not cover all the costs of sending rural children into the amalgamated division. So what

they are doing is they are saying, yes, we are going to give you an amendment into this law that allows you to do that, but we are not going to pay the bill for it. We are going to pay a percentage of it. We are going to pay the busing costs, but we are not paying any other additional costs that will be incurred. And the members of the school division on both sides are suggesting that there are going to be plenty more costs than what is being talked about at this point in time.

So, again, what we have is we have the heavy hand of government, a pleading, bleating group of people that in the past several weeks have decried the stalling tactics in this Legislature. Now today they can be charged with the same as stalling their own bill, as delaying their own bill, as not having been prepared or not having followed a process that would have eliminated all of the turmoil, all of the discontent that is out there in these school divisions that are being forced to amalgamate.

But then again, we have heard today and we hear it from time to time, the Government will stand up and very proudly state to the public of Manitoba we will not do that, it is not the Manitoba way. Then what do we find out they do? Well they just ignore what they said to the public and they come back and they do whatever they want, and they threaten the very people that they are dealing with. They threaten them and say if you do not do it our way, be very, very afraid. We have shown that we can be the heavy hand of government. We have shown that we can fire school boards that are duly elected by the people they represent. We are not afraid to take these people on.

This is a government that talks about being for the people, being for the little guy, being for the people that need the most help, and then they go out and do this to a school division, to school divisions across the province.

As I said earlier, there are school divisions in southwest Manitoba that have worked together for the last 15 years. Today they are not speaking to each other because of this minister's bungling of this bill. I hate to use the word "bungle," because we already have one minister on that side of the Government that bungles everything she touches. We will come up, I

think, with maybe mangle or the mangler or something like that. Something that is as appropriate, but it will help you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in your job in identifying who we are speaking about when we refer to the bungler or the mangler. I am sure there will be others that come forward.

In closing, I want to suggest to the Government, and this is not my words, these are words from people who are being impacted by this type of legislation, this heavy-handed, I am right, you are wrong, and I will legislate that. One of the people involved, whose families are involved, termed this bill as the victims' compensation amendment. Basically, her comment was they are treating an amputation with a Band-Aid. What they have done is, you know, they have said, we have listened to you and we are really hearing what you are saying, and we understand what you are saying. But, you know what, here is a temporary fix, go away, do not come back and bother us. In a couple of years, we hope that, well, perhaps, they will not be there.

We know that the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) will probably be taking a move shortly after this session ends. Where that will be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are not sure, but certainly the people of Manitoba are not going to tolerate an Education Minister that acts in such a heavy-handed way, coerces, forces, drags his backbenchers into the fray by forcing them to ask simplistic questions about amalgamation and the time frame around it.

** (16:00)*

I would suggest to the backbenchers across the floor, maybe they would want to get up and ask their Minister of Education today: What is with the amalgamation? This was supposed to happen July 1, and now you are amalgamating your own bill.

Maybe one of them would like to stand up and ask that question. They have been good at spitting out the minister's written words for them and reading their scripts very well. Maybe the minister could draft a question for them. We might even give them, we would not have to give them, they could ask for it, they could ask for their supplement, because we probably really

would like to know. I am sure that on this side of the House if we were to ask the minister that question we would not get an answer. We do not get an answer for any of the questions that we ask of the Minister of Education.

But perhaps we could invite one of our colleagues on the back bench to step up and ask a question of the minister and quite simply just say, you know, Mr. Minister, can you tell me what happened to this July 1 deadline? We were right there with you. In fact, the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers) went out and I am sure that he asked them to write a letter. Would you please write a letter to the minister and ask him, you know, can we get this done by July 1? I mean, it is life or death. The world will fall on July 1 if the Minister of Education does not get his bill.

The Minister of Education stood every day and said, yes, this legislation must pass on July 1. It must be there for the people, for the children. Actually, the Acting Minister of Education said this bill was all about the children. We are doing it for the children. July 1, we need it for the children, and, yet, today, eight days after that drop-dead date, we have the very same Minister of Education bringing forward amendments to his legislation. Now, how comfortable is he with his legislation when he is changing it in third reading?

I guess people out in my part of the country would start to look at you in a different point of view if you could not bring something forward to the House as straight as that. What they really understand is that he did not need that legislation to do what he wanted to do. He did not need it at all. So, in order to complicate the lives of the many organizations and the many school divisions that are working on amalgamation, he has created nothing but problems for himself.

Again, I would encourage all the backbenchers on the other side to ask their minister, and, you know, even if you do not want to do it in Question Period, I understand there is a little sensitivity around. You know, you do not want to embarrass yourself because you had to get up and ask all those other questions that the minister wrote for you. But, even if you could take him aside in the caucus or down the hallway or

somewhere, I know the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) is listening intently to this. I would ask him directly to just spend a little time with the minister, take his hand, ask him very quietly, you know, did we ask you the wrong questions? Did we misread the questions that you gave us in the last couple of weeks about amalgamation, because, if we did, we are sorry, we would like to make it up to you? We will ask you the right question tomorrow if we have to help the minister out and help him get his message across.

We have talked about the debate in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact that, as I said earlier, this bill is a calamity. It is a joke across Manitoba now. It is almost like the jokes that nobody tells publicly any more. They just tell within the confines of a very quiet room in the way that this Government has mismanaged this bill, mismanaged the amalgamation of school divisions, created the frustrations that did not have to be there. It is a very sad thing because people in Manitoba truly do care about their children's education. Unfortunately, I do not think the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) does.

* (16:10)

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Once again, I rise to speak on this legislation that keeps dragging through this process despite the fact that the Government has now attempted to put a form of closure on this bill. They underestimated the resolve of the Opposition to ensure that Manitobans are heard on this legislation, but something interesting has happened. That is that now the minister has sort of awakened to some of the errors of his ways and has decided to come forth with an amendment of his own. This amendment is somewhat interesting because it arises out of the opposition that was put forth by the people out of Transcona, the member from Springfield and the people from that part of the world who are going to be impacted quite negatively by this piece of legislation.

Let us understand that this is not the only part of the province that is going to be adversely affected through amalgamation, because there are other areas in the province where there are some significant unknowns about what this

legislation will do and specifically at the cost that is going to be incurred by the taxpayers of the various divisions.

We have just heard from my colleagues, the Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and also the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) with respect to the objections to this legislation. It was curious that the Minister of Education when he introduced this promised school divisions and teachers and parents out there that this legislation would be passed by the first of July, and that they had to have this by the first of July in order to be able to get ready for the elections in the fall. July 1 passed us by, and even the minister, who was supposedly in charge of this legislation, did not come forth with an amendment until this date which is well after the first of July.

One has to question how serious the minister really was in his promises that he made to school divisions and to parents and teachers out there. Secondly, how sincere was the minister in the House here at the July 1 date when, in fact, he brings forward an amendment that is long after July 1?

The other thing that is curious is that members of the Government have not talked about this legislation. They have not stood up in their places to put any comments with respect to this legislation. This is going to impact on a lot of people across this province, not just the school divisions, the taxpayer is going to be impacted. The teachers are going to be impacted. The non-teaching staff are going to be impacted. Students are going to be impacted. Transportation is going to be impacted. Yet we see a lack of participation in putting comments on this bill from the Government.

They have already made up their minds. Their mind is to force this legislation through at any cost. They do not care. They do not have any responsibility, accountability, to their taxpayers and to the people they represent because if they did they would be standing in their places and putting their comments, their views on Bill 14 on the record. I daresay some of them are afraid to put their own comments on the record because those comments are going to be read back to them by their taxpayers. They are going to be

read back to them by the people in the various school divisions.

The most curious of all is the member from Dauphin-Roblin who was a part of this amalgamation charade. When he was out there supporting the minister for the great job he did on amalgamation, he forgot that a very significant part of his own constituency was left out of the amalgamation process. The Intermountain School Division then said: Why have we been left out? What was the reason for it? No reasons were provided. The minister could not provide any reasons. The member from Dauphin-Roblin could not provide any reasons. At the end of the day, the superintendent and the board of that division said, if we are going to have amalgamation, let us make it make some sense. So they decided that they would join the Dauphin-Ochre school division, Mr. Speaker, but this was at the initiative of the school division, not this Government, not the MLA for the area who was running around the province saying how great this amalgamation initiative was for the Government. It was a disaster, and that is an example of this kind of disaster that we see repeating itself throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, it was with curiosity that I picked up the *Brandon Sun*, who were doing features on various school amalgamations. This whole initiative and the debate we are having here in this Legislature is not about us being opposed to amalgamation, because amalgamation can do some very good things across this province in a very positive way, but let us have amalgamation throughout the entire province, not just selected school divisions based on the political aspirations of the government of the day. That is what is very shameful about the action that was taken by the minister.

In my own area, Russell, the Pelly Trail and Birdtail school divisions are amalgamating, probably a sensible way to go in terms of taking two geographic areas and putting them into one, although, if you had consulted with the people in that that area, you would have found that it would have been valuable to consolidate the Intermountain School Division with the Pelly Trail and Birdtail School Division as well. But the shortsightedness of this Government, the fact that they did not consult with anyone, has caused

them some embarrassment and caused them to have a very chaotic situation across the province.

When you talk to the people of Agassiz School Division, the people of Springfield, the people of River East, the people of Transcona, there is some real serious concern about the quality of education that is going to emerge as a result of the amalgamation. The people who are going to be most affected are the people who have the most difficult time raising those scarce taxpayer dollars to fund education.

Under the combined school division of Transcona and Springfield, over the last 20 years, those people have concentrated on ensuring that the services that their children need are provided within that division. By splitting that division, Mr. Speaker, into two components, one going to River East, the other going to Agassiz, we all of a sudden are going to be losing the services that those people have invested in, invested their own taxpayer dollars in, and the people have done that through their own initiative by ensuring that their focus was on quality education for their children. That is not to say that the education in River East is inferior. Not at all; the River East education program is excellent, but what you are doing is you are splitting a school division. I would daresay that the students who are going to go to River East will probably have as good as or enhanced services than they have had in the previous school division.

What about those students who are now going to be merged with Agassiz? Agassiz has said very clearly, because of their geographic area, the demographics in that region, the tax base in that region, there is no way that they can come close to providing the same quality of education that students were privileged to in Transcona-Springfield. So now the minister brings in an amendment, and he says that we will grandfather the programs in this catchment area for a period of three years, and we will provide busing for three years.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is fine for that period of time, but what happens after that? Where do these children go? What do these parents do? What does the school division do? How can they become prepared for that

eventuality where those services are going to be declined and are going to be denied them by the now River East School Division? Do I blame River East School Division? Not in the least. Their responsibility is to the students that they serve, to the taxpayers that they serve, to the parents that have children in their catchment area. That is their priority, and it is set out quite clearly in the act who they are responsible to. They cannot ask their taxpayers to start raising tax dollars for students that do not live in that division and go to a school in another school division. That is just creating further chaos.

I daresay that this amendment to this bill has been poorly thought out, it has not been given scrutiny by any consultation process with people who are impacted by it, and we will have at the end of a day a situation where the minister is going to be forced to do patchwork kinds of problem-solving issues with regard to the people who live in that old Transcona-Springfield School Division. That is not the way to run an education program. That is not showing any vision.

* (16:20)

The minister has not put forth a vision of what he expects this province to look like in terms of school divisions. He has not indicated with any clarity whether, in fact, there will be further school amalgamations a year from now, two years from now, and what our province should look like in terms of school divisions so that there is some equity throughout the divisions, so that a student who is attending school, whether it is in Agassiz, Neepawa, or wherever it might be, might be assured of the same quality of education that a student who is receiving an education program in Brandon, in Winnipeg, in Winkler or Killarney is receiving.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister has not put that vision forward. He has not put his plan forward. We have asked the minister repeatedly to show us where his savings are. The Leader of the Liberal Party (Mr. Gerrard) has put forward an amendment which would ask the minister to place before this Legislature and before the people of Manitoba his analysis and his assurance that, in fact, the \$10 million of savings is

real and that that \$10 million can be then reallocated to classrooms.

The minister made vague promises about, well, we will save \$3.5 million by merging the school divisions on things like trustees and another \$7 million on other things. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are vague. There is no clarity to them. The minister has not provided that evidence to this Legislature or to the people of Manitoba about the specific savings that are going to occur as a result of amalgamation. So does it make us skeptical? Does it make Manitobans skeptical? Of course, it does. But, more importantly, it raises legitimate questions in our minds about the cost of amalgamation.

I think we will find at the end of the process that divisions are going to have higher costs than they have today, and those higher costs are going to come as a result of some school divisions having to increase the salaries for their teachers because the salary contracts between different divisions are different. We cannot expect the salaries of teachers to go down to the lower denominator. In fact, they will go to the higher denominator, and one would expect that. So there is going to be a cost to that school division.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what about non-teaching staff? Again, we have different non-teaching staff salaries throughout the province. So should we be thinking about provincial bargaining, provincial bargaining for teachers and non-teachers if we are talking about amalgamation? That would show vision. That would show some direction in how the Government was proceeding. But to do it in this way, it is a very chaotic approach to amalgamation in the province of Manitoba.

What about school transportation? Now, this is a very important issue. School transportation in this province is made up of some school divisions providing it for their students and other school divisions contracting it out with private contractors for their divisions. Some school divisions have school division offices; others do not. How do we make sense of any of this? The minister has not provided any clarity on any of these issues, and he has been asked repeatedly to do that.

Now, in speaking to trustees, they see no problem with working through the amalgamation process, but they want it to be transparent. They want it to be up front. They tell me no matter which school division I go to that they see no savings. I think the newspapers today substantiate that because there is not a school division in this province that I have seen come forward to tell us that there are going to be savings. As a matter of fact, they all tell us that there are going to be costs, and in some divisions, there are going to be significant costs.

So let us become realistic about this amalgamation process. Let us be honest with the people of Manitoba about the amalgamation process. Let us tell them up front that this is going to have a cost to it. Amalgamation is going to have a cost to it. Instead, the Government is running about telling people that there are going to be cost savings, and yet they cannot identify them. They cannot substantiate what those cost savings are. They will not table that evidence in the House. They will not table that evidence before the people of Manitoba, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now, I think the Minister of Education is being less than truthful with the people of this province and, by extension, so is the Government. The Government is not being truthful with the taxpayers of the province of Manitoba on the issue of amalgamation. So, in an attempt to try to appease some of the furor out there, the minister brings forward an amendment to his legislation, an amendment that I might say is going to create greater heartache for the minister than what he has today because it only diffuses the situation for a short period of time. As people from Springfield have said time and again, the minister is only buying himself a little bit of time because indeed this is going to become an issue long after the next election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, why did the minister not go out and consult with Manitobans before he came forward with this plan? He says he used the Norrie report. Now, the Norrie report has some very good things in it, but if the minister was going to extrapolate from the Norrie report certain things that he was going to implement, why did he not come forward and say these are the elements of the Norrie report that we are

going to implement? We are rejecting these others. Then Manitobans know exactly where the Government is going.

The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), when approached with the concept of amalgamation between two municipalities, decided, in her good wisdom, that there should be a public hearing on the process. I support that. The Municipal Board will hear the issue of amalgamation between the R.M. and the town of Gimli. Well, that is a prudent way to proceed, because the people then have an opportunity to express their concerns, to express their support, to ask questions, to expect answers, and then they can leave from that process knowing either that they are supporting the process of amalgamation or in fact knowing what the consequences of that amalgamation will be for them, for their tax dollars and for the future of their communities. That is a good way to proceed.

So my question is: Where was the Minister of Education? Why did he not use the same approach that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has used? When questioned about it, the Government said that the reason they were going to the process of consultation was because the public deserved to have the opportunity to express their views on the concept of amalgamation. Now here we have two willing partners, the R.M. of Gimli, the Town of Gimli, who willingly have made a decision that they are going to merge.

One would have thought that is a no-brainer. They have decided to merge. They obviously have done their work. They represent their people. We will simply move ahead. But the minister said, no, just a minute. Because I have some responsibility in this area, I think it would be prudent to have the board of reference or, in this case, the Municipal Board conduct hearings so that in fact the public can be heard. So I applaud her for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to turn to the Minister of Education and ask him where he is on the concept of consultation. Now you square that off, his approach off with what the Premier (Mr. Doer) said. The Premier said that forcing amalgamation in the province of Manitoba is not

the Manitoba way. It is not the way Manitobans do business, and it would never happen under his watch. Well, before he turned around, his Minister of Education had done the very thing that this Premier spoke against. So there is some chaos over there in terms of leadership, in terms of following a direction, following a path. It seems that the right hand does not know what the left hand is doing.

This Minister of Education is probably nearing his tenure as Minister of Education because, as soon as this House adjourns, I would suspect that this minister will find his way to other places, but that does not matter. The problem here is that Manitobans have been denied the right to have consultation, meaningful consultation on a process that is going to impact on them directly. Whether it is on their children or whether it is on their pocketbook, this is an issue that is going to impact on them directly. Manitobans should have the respect of the Government to show clearly what the savings are going to be, what the costs are going to be, or what the situation is going to be in real terms.

To date, we have not had this. It is for that reason that we continue to ask the Government questions about it. We continue to express our opposition to this process.

* (16:30)

Mr. Gerrard: I rise to put a few comments on the record on the amendment put forward by the Minister of Education, in fact by the minister of post-secondary education on behalf of her colleague the Minister of Education.

I am in general support of this amendment, as it goes in the right direction. On the other hand, I think that the minister could have done a much better job in addressing this problem. The reality here is that in correcting the problem or addressing the problem for three years, the NDP have been quite manipulative and underhanded, using kind of a political ploy to defer the problems until after the next provincial election. It would have been better to have a resolution of this which would last for some longer time.

I would make a couple of comments about the remarks from the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach). I think he said something about the

right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing. I would agree with the member from Russell that the right hand in this Legislature does not seem to know what the left hand in this Legislature is doing across on the Government benches. That may be because the left hand in the Government is kind of clouding the issue a little bit here and trying to pull some wool over people's eyes. I think the member from Russell was trying to imply not that the right hand did not know what the left hand was doing, but the NDP's right leg did not know what their right hand was doing and that they were looking a little bit discoordinated, if I am not mistaken.

I would, in addressing this amendment, want to bring forward a few important issues that came forward at committee. The reason or the necessity for this amendment arises out of the fact that the Government decided to split Transcona-Springfield School Division in two, and then merge the separate pieces with other school divisions, in the one case with Agassiz and the other case with River East. The fundamental problem here was the initial splitting or splicing and dicing or cutting and chopping of Transcona-Springfield School Division. Depending on which way one wants to look at this, it was a poor move to try and slice and dice a long-standing school division. It has resulted in a lot of problems, which this amendment, with a bit of a kind of a Band-Aid after the fact, tries to address, but in fact falls short of what really needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Marijka Spytkowski, the president of Transcona-Springfield Teachers' Association, and when this bill passes, if it passes, the new president of the Sunrise Teachers' Association, puts it well. She says: "I must admit that the splitting of our school division and the subsequent amalgamations have been most difficult. The effects of these amalgamations will be felt for a long time."

I think it is too bad that this has had an unfortunate impact on the teachers in Transcona-Springfield School Division, particularly those who were in the Springfield component. Marijka Spytkowski says quite clearly in her presentations that school divisions should stay intact

when merging. To do otherwise creates turmoil, frustration and anger. She goes on to say: Working with colleagues since November 8 has been very emotionally draining. Many in the rural area of the Transcona-Springfield School Division are still very bitter. Teacher morale in the division is low. Low morale impacts on the quality of education, as teachers are the direct providers of the educational programs in the school division.

I think this makes a clear statement of an aspect of this legislation and the subsequent Band-Aid, which is this amendment, have had; that if we want things to go well and to be in good hands for our children, who are the students in school, then we need to do things which will enhance future morale, not to undermine it; that we should advance the morale in the classroom and the working conditions, rather than putting in place measures which will create low morale and undermine the efforts that teachers are making, as indeed Bill 14 has done.

Marijka Spytowsky goes on to say, and I will quote: "There should be a review of the amalgamation procedure in the next year. It is important to know how the merged divisions are functioning in order to alleviate any future difficulties. The metro group of amalgamating presidents has decided that it is important to meet on a regular basis in the next year to review and share information."

Clearly what the president of the Transcona-Springfield Teachers' Association is saying is that instead of doing Band-Aids, we should be looking at measures which will make sure that not only this but future amalgamations proceed much more smoothly.

This Band-Aid amendment by the minister for post-secondary education, on behalf of the Minister for Education (Mr. Caldwell), deals specifically with Transcona-Springfield and Sunrise and does not attempt to provide kind of a generic response that can be the basis for future amalgamations.

Is the Minister of Education trying to suggest that every time there are amalgamations, we are going to have to have these sorts of amendments to legislation? It seems to me that this is

not a good operating procedure, that indeed it would have been much better to provide within the bill a framework for when divisions are split asunder by the minister, that there should be some recourse, some guarantee that students will have access to the same quality and the same types of services, if they so desire, that they had before the school division was split asunder by the minister.

So there is a problem with this in that it tries to address a specific situation instead of providing a generic response, a generic basis for action that can be used into the future in handling school divisions and in handling school division splits and amalgamation. Hopefully, in the future, we will not have ministers taking the axe or the saw or the hunting knife and carving up school divisions as this minister has done. Hopefully, in the future, we will have a situation where ministers will understand the problems that arose from taking out the carving knife and cutting asunder the school division of Transcona-Springfield, and in the future will we have a basis for proceeding with changes which do not cause the same low morale problems and devastation.

So I support this amendment as a positive step. I think that it really falls short of what could be done, what should be done appropriately for the people in Transcona-Springfield, but more important to make sure that future changes to school division boundaries occur in a more democratic and responsible and appropriate fashion.

The parent who spoke up at the committee meeting and said, let me quote: Springfield taxpayers feel betrayed by a government that would callously choose a path that undeniably jeopardizes the education of their students, both present and future. Springfield feels there exists a prejudice against our children that puts them into a minority position. Every other amalgamation puts students into a larger school division. Springfield goes from a school division with over 8000 students in Transcona-Springfield to approximately 5500 students in the new Sunrise School Division.

* (16:40)

So, clearly, a fundamental problem with the approach that the minister has taken has been

this approach to cutting and chopping school divisions, in this case, Transcona-Springfield, and having then, because the job was not done properly, to have this sort of Band-Aid amendment which provides some assistance but which really does not address the fundamental problem and the fundamental issue.

I would mention, as well, the words of Kathy Andersson who says: There are currently no provisions protecting students in this bill for whom the entire system exists, only provisions protecting staff and their rights and benefits. It would have been better, instead of having this sort of an amendment, to have a more fundamental change that would have provided where a division was chopped in two, as the minister has done, that there be protection of the students involved.

It would not only have provided an important measure, this time for Transcona-Springfield, but I suggest that it would also have provided an important break on actions of ministers in the future in chopping school divisions and dividing school divisions, because it would mean that ministers would need to look much more carefully at circumstances where they are tempted to chop up school divisions in order to achieve some perceived advantage. I cannot really think what advantage there is in this circumstance, and perhaps the minister has some political agenda.

Certainly, the students are the bottom line here. We need to think of what is happening in the classroom, the quality in the classroom, and that is what we do not want to undermine. That is what we want to guarantee. It would have been better to have an amendment which would have provided that sort of approach.

It does provide some temporary alleviation for the situation which came up not very long ago, when the board of the River East School Division unanimously denied the request of 11 kindergarten children whose parents wanted to enrol them in the German bilingual program. Now, I think that there is a little bit of a concern here in terms of where students who are in kindergarten or preschool will stand with this legislation. I hope that the minister at some point in this debate will get up and clarify this, because it is not clear to me whether, in fact, a

child in preschool or kindergarten is guaranteed access to Grade 1, 2 or 3 in the new division, or not.

Does this guarantee only start with Grade 1, or where does it start? I think that this is an important point that should be clarified both for parents as well as for the trustees of the two new school divisions that are being created. The minister has brought forward a bill which was, I think, rather hasty and which clearly already has some loopholes and concerns in terms of how it is put together.

Where does this start? What is going to happen? Are we going to see students in Grade 1 going through programs from Springfield in going to River East Transcona, the new school division, or are we going to find that the Grade 1 students currently are going to be split from their siblings who are in preschool or kindergarten who may or may not have access?

I certainly hope that we get some clarification as to what the situation is going to be and who is considered a resident pupil. Does this include preschool and kindergarten or does this start at Grade 1? I am sure that the parents and the teachers and the school trustees would all like clarification on this point.

As one of the presenters, it was Mary Kantyluk, had mentioned at the committee stage, this Bill 14, as it was originally presented, has some aspects of democracy at its worst, and the concerns of parents and students were not adequately addressed. Clearly, there is a step forward in terms of listening to parents and children, but it really does not get at the basic problem here, and it does not provide a long-term solution. It just provides a solution that will get the NDP through the next election before some of these problems begin to come out in greater detail.

I want to talk for a moment about a presentation by Karen Carey at committee stage. She went to considerable lengths, along with a number of others, to look at the costs, and when I asked to be able to provide additional questions and clarification at committee stage, the NDP immediately said, no, no, we do not want to look into this; it might be disturbing.

What is clear in Karen Carey's presentation is estimated costs for this one change around of Transcona-Springfield, River East and Agassiz to go from three school divisions to two school divisions, that there are an estimated one-time cost of \$1.84 million and total costs per year of \$8.78 million. That is an extraordinary level of cost, and it would be very important to get better understanding and clarification of what the costs will really be. Are these accurate? There seems to be a lot of careful research that has been done here.

Clearly, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), one hopes, will speak on his amendment to provide some basis for his conclusion that he will be saving lots of money, I think it was \$10 million in all these amalgamations, and one presumes that having an extra expenditure in total of more than \$10 million over this one school division, they must be saving an extraordinary amount in the other school divisions in order to make up the difference.

The extra expenditures in River East are something like \$2.1 million per year in salary costs, an amalgamation subsidy of \$540,000, shared services in the high school of \$370,000 and, one presumes with this amendment, some additional costs. It would be nice, in fact, to have a breakdown of what the costs will be of this particular amendment. It is time that we moved to a situation when we present legislation here that we have a much better cost-benefit analysis.

The analysis that was provided by Karen Carey for the Agassiz-Springfield merger is \$500,000 per year in salary equalization, \$660,000 in mill rate harmonization, \$300,000 in amalgamation subsidy, \$52,179 in high school transportation per year, \$10,000 per year for transportation in industrial arts, \$930,000 per year in shared services in the high school, \$158,000 per year in shared services in industrial arts, \$2.5 million a year in replacement of divisional consultants, and \$2.5 million one-time costs in replacement of divisional, exceptional expenditures related to the changes in the school divisions.

It would be most helpful if the Minister of Education would provide more details and more basis for his estimates and be able to provide a

breakdown in terms of how he anticipates, and a view of how he anticipates his new school division will operate. There are concerns about the number of spots. There are concerns about having adequate access to spaces. Given the changes that will occur for people from Springfield, all told, there are a lot of unanswered questions that it would be nice for the minister to come forward and provide some answers when he speaks, as we hope he will, to this amendment.

As Diane Duma indicated in her—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable member's time has expired.

* (16:50)

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I cannot really say it gives me a lot of pleasure to speak to an amendment that has been brought in by the Minister of Education, Training and Youth (Mr. Caldwell) some eight days after the D-day, or the deadline that he had indicated was the do-or-die date for this piece of legislation to be passed. We see a Minister of Education that certainly has bungled and mismanaged this whole process, not only around the legislation but around the whole forced amalgamation of school divisions.

I note with great interest that only 11 members on the Government side of the House chose to stand and support the Minister of Education in the introduction of this bill. Some 4 ministers of the Government had the courage to stand in their place and speak in support of this forced amalgamation that has made very little sense to all Manitobans. I note with interest that the Premier's (Mr. Doer) comments on this legislation have been absent, the Premier who stood before the Manitoba Association of School Trustees in March of one year and indicated there would be no forced amalgamation because it was not the Manitoba way. Yet just a few short months later, his Minister of Education announces forced amalgamations of school divisions.

I would like to hear the Premier stand up and speak on what his definition of the Manitoba way might be today, since he did a complete

flip-flop and reversal of his position from March to November within the same year. I also did not hear the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen) stand in her place and speak in support of this legislation, when in opposition she indicated there would be no cost savings as a result of amalgamations in the province of Manitoba. To date, she has not stood in her place and defended her Minister of Education or her Government's decision.

Also, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk), who was a very vocal opponent in opposition of school board amalgamations, has not taken the opportunity to put her thoughts on the record today and explain to Manitobans her complete flip-flop and reversal of position, Mr. Speaker.

So it is interesting, to say the least, that we have not heard a lot of comment from members of the Government side of the House on this legislation, but we have heard, Mr. Speaker, from the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg), the Member for Rossmere who has stated very vocally that the people in River East School Division want this amalgamation and they are saying just get on with it. They can hardly wait for this amalgamation. They can hardly wait to open their chequebooks and pay higher school taxes as a result of this forced amalgamation. But the Member for Rossmere thinks this is great.

The Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) thinks that this is a wonderful piece of legislation. I am not sure that he knew of the implications of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, and I am not sure that he was aware that the taxpayers in his constituency were going to have to open their chequebooks and pay more school taxes as a result of this amalgamation when several other divisions within the province will get away scot-free. They will not have to open their chequebooks and they will not have to pay higher taxes, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to read into the record some comments that were made in a letter to the editor in the *Winnipeg Free Press* last Friday. It says, although I cannot use names of individual MLAs, I will transfer the MLA's name to the Member for Rossmere, on June 1 told the Legislature that, and I quote: The people of

River East love amalgamation and want it. It says: Who was the member from Rossmere talking to? They did a survey of 10 000 homes in River East and the respondents were overwhelmingly opposed. And why should they not be?

There will be a need for additional millions of dollars in costs to blend the two divisions. As of June 18, River East School Division was told by Education Minister Drew Caldwell that he is unwilling to offset the additional costs.

Mr. Speaker, the editorial goes on to say: So the member for Rossmere, have you spoken with anyone who pays property taxes recently? This amalgamation is the taxpayers' nightmare.

Well, those are not my words. Those are the words of someone who understands the implications to the taxpayers, to the ratepayers. River East, Transcona school divisions are going to be the victims of this Government's forced amalgamation, without any thought, without any symmetry to the decisions that were made.

We know that when boundaries are set for the Legislature there is a process that is followed. There is an independent commission that takes a look at drawing the boundaries, does a complete analysis. There is a plus or a minus 10 percent below the 59th parallel for the size of electoral divisions for the province of Manitoba. There is a process to set the boundaries for the city of Winnipeg. We will get to debate the changes in legislation to The City of Winnipeg Act in the not-too-distant future in this session of the Legislature. We will have the opportunity to speak for or against some pieces or parts of that Legislation.

There was no rhyme or reason to the decisions around the boundaries that were chosen and the divisions that were ripped apart unceremoniously by this Government with pieces put into different school divisions without any rationale or justification or proper process followed by the Minister of Education.

One can only suspect that it was because the Minister of Education, the Premier possibly and a few of his cohorts or close associates sat down behind closed doors, as one of my colleagues has

described it, with a crayon and drew some boundaries that suited their political purposes. Well, many Manitobans that are going to see, as a result of this amalgamation, their having to dig deeper into their pockets to pay their school taxes are going to know who created the problem and the issue.

Where was the fairness when they looked at Springfield and Transcona and took Springfield and amalgamated it with Agassiz School Division? We have seen one of the strongest common sense protests that we have seen in a long time in this Legislature. Parents who genuinely were concerned about the quality of education and the accessibility of education were up in arms. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because they were not consulted. Because they were not told. They were not given any opportunity for input into any sort of a process before the decree came down on high from the Minister of Education. They legitimately, and rightly so, were opposed to the process and the decisions that this Government and this Minister of Education made.

We are now seeing an amendment before us in this Legislature, an amendment brought in by the Minister of Education eight days after he indicated this bill had to be passed. Where is he? I am hoping that he will be here at some point to comment on this amendment and to explain to us and to all Manitobans why after his artificial deadline had passed he decided to bring in an amendment. It bears some considerable debate and discussion in this Legislature.

I believe that the Minister of Education should also provide us with his comments and his rationale on why, after his deadline has passed and many, many of his colleagues in the back benches over there have stood up and asked questions, he has condemned this Legislature for not getting on with the business of passing this bill that was needed.

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

* (17:00)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. Speaker: The hour being 5 p.m., we will now move to Private Members' Business, on the

proposed resolution by the honourable Member for River East.

PROPOSED RESOLUTIONS

Res. 21—Women's Health Issues

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): I move, seconded by the Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay), that

WHEREAS one woman in nine will develop breast cancer by age 85, which is the leading cause of cancer death among women aged 40 to 55; and although there is no certain way to prevent breast cancer, researchers are investigating the use of low-fat, high-fibre diets to help prevent the disease; and

WHEREAS because cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of Canadian women with statistics revealing that one in nine women over 45 has some form of heart disease and one in three women over 65 has some form of heart disease, women need to be better educated about the symptoms of heart disease because they tend not to report symptoms to their doctors; and

WHEREAS although about one in four women over age 50 will be affected by osteoporosis, it can be treated and, in most cases, prevented through proper nutrition, regular physical activity and healthy lifestyle; and

WHEREAS according to the Canadian Psychiatric Association one in four women will experience depression in their lifetime, a treatable condition that is the fourth most common cause of disability worldwide and has surpassed accidents as a cause of lost work time; and

WHEREAS the United States National Institute of Mental Health estimates that approximately 5 percent of adolescent and adult women suffer from an eating disorder, which are curable if they are identified early and treated by trained therapists and if treatment is supplemented by support from family, friends and support/self-help groups; and

WHEREAS midwifery has broadened the care options available to women and their families by offering specialized education and

support to those who want an enhanced level of care before, during and after the birth of their child; and

WHEREAS over the past two decades a variety of provincial programs have been developed to promote family health and illness prevention, including initiatives aimed at curbing fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effect, enhancing prenatal and infant nutrition and emphasizing the importance of healthy child development during the early years. These are all programs through which women have been able to benefit and obtain information and resources for their children.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider emphasizing the importance of women educating themselves about the variety of illnesses which present the greatest risk to women; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider continuing to promote and enhance the province's long-standing child and parent health and development programs.

Motion presented.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Thank you very much. It gives me great pleasure to introduce this resolution for debate in our Legislature today and indicate at the outset I think the issues of women's health certainly cross party lines. I think all members of this Legislature, regardless of political stripe, have an interest in ensuring that women throughout the province of Manitoba lead as healthy and active a lifestyle as possible, and when it is identified there are certain risk factors associated with women's health issues, that it is important and incumbent upon all of us to look at a resolution like this.

I would ask that there might be unanimous support of this Legislature to pass this resolution. It is not one that is condemning of the provincial government. It is one that has said over the last two decades we have made some significant strides in understanding the issues around women and health and that we need to continue to press forward, knowing that two decades ago

there was a New Democratic government in power that made the first steps, made some steps and moved in the right direction.

When we were in government I know there were a lot of programs that were introduced, the beginning of programs around fetal alcohol syndrome, certainly early intervention for children. I know the Government today and the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) have continued to expand upon those programs. I think it is important that what we have learned continues to be utilized and added to in order to ensure that women throughout the province of Manitoba are educated on the various health issues that affect women.

So I would urge very strongly, after some debate on this resolution today, that we have the opportunity to pass it to continue to ensure that women's health issues are a top priority, and that we recognize and realize that education, early intervention and promotion of healthy lifestyles certainly can have a significant impact, especially as we come to understand and as more research is done on issues of health that effect women.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

I know there are many health issues that do affect women more often than men. We know women make up 51 percent of the population of Manitoba. We also know women very generally take a lead role or a responsibility in keeping an eye on the health of their families. Women also make up the largest number of health care providers and information givers in the province of Manitoba.

In addition to the obvious issues that are related to reproductive health, women also face an increased rate of chronic illnesses as they age, as well as higher rates of mental illness, such as depression. Women experience diseases and illnesses such as heart disease and stroke differently from men. Women also experience different and more prevalent forms of cancer than men.

As I could not really highlight in the resolution every women's health issue, I chose to focus on six different areas.

I do not want to detract away from the importance of being aware of all of the health issues that do impact women, the various forms of cancer of which women are at risk, including ovarian cancer and cervical cancer, but breast cancer is the most common cancer among women, other than skin cancer. One woman in nine will develop breast cancer by age 85. It is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in women, after lung cancer, and it is the leading cause of cancer death among women age 40 to 55.

The National Cancer Institute of Canada estimates in 2001, 19 500 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 5500 will die of the disease. No one knows what causes breast cancer, but we do know that certain risk factors, things that increase a person's chance of getting a disease are linked to breast cancer. Risk factors change depending on the type of cancer. There are a number of risk factors, both controllable and uncontrollable, which may increase the chances of developing breast cancer.

*(17:10)

For instance, the risk factors associated with diet can be controlled, but the risk factors such as a person's age or family history cannot be changed. All women are at risk of breast cancer. The factors listed below are associated with an increased chance of developing the disease: gender, age, genetics, strong family history, previous breast cancer, early irradiation treatment, reproductive factors, menstrual history, obesity and alcohol consumption are all risk factors for breast cancer. I would encourage all women to continue their monthly breast exams and to be aware of all of the symptoms and these factors, because early detection is one of the best ways to combat breast cancer.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, cardiovascular disease, once considered a man's disease, is the number one killer of Canadian women. Just consider this: six times as many women will die from heart disease than from breast cancer. One in nine women over 45 lives with some form of heart disease; one in three women over 65 lives with some form of heart disease. Women's cardiovascular risk factors—the symptoms differ from those of men.

Women need to be educated about the symptoms of heart disease because they tend not to report their symptoms to their doctors. I hope that the Health Minister (Mr. Chomiak), along with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. McGifford), will draw attention to detection and prevention of cardiovascular disease as they continue to develop their women's health policy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, osteoporosis is a silent, bone-depleting disease. More than one million Canadians are affected by osteoporosis according to current estimates. About one in four women over the age of 50 will be affected by this disease. Osteoporosis steals calcium from the bone, making it weaker. Until there is a fracture or an obvious loss of height, the diagnosis is made by assessing risk and by taking a bone mineral density test. That is why prevention is so important. It is up to us as women to help identify the risk factors in ourselves and our loved ones.

Some of the risk factors that we can control are lifestyle factors such as making sure we have enough calcium in our diets, getting enough vitamin D, increasing exercise, quitting smoking and reducing caffeine intake. I would encourage all post-menopausal women over 50 to talk to their doctors about getting a bone-density test to determine whether they are at risk of or already have osteoporosis. I am sure that members on the Government side of the House would agree with me that increasing osteoporosis awareness should be a fundamental component of the Government's women's health strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a woman is at least twice as likely as a man to experience depression during her lifetime. The reasons for this are still unknown. What is more, depression in women typically starts earlier, recurs more often, lasts longer, has a lower rate of recovery without treatment. Depression is so common it is sometimes called the common cold of psychiatric disturbances.

Depression is not just feeling down when things do not go your way. It is an incapacitating condition that can keep you from sleeping and can make food taste like cardboard, can leave your body feeling heavy and make previously

pleasurable activities burdensome tasks. If untreated, an average episode of major depression lasts six to eighteen months. Eighty percent of suicides are committed by people who have depressive disorders. Women make three to four times more suicide attempts than men, but men complete suicide more often, probably because they choose more lethal methods.

There is no single cause for depression. Experts think a genetic vulnerability combined with environmental factors such as stress or physical illness may trigger depression. At high risk for depression are people with chronic illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes or cancer. Social isolation can also trigger depression. It is a quick slide from sadness to depression, and there is no one to catch you on your downward descent.

Depression rates are higher among divorced people and those who live alone and lower among married people and those in long-term intimate relationships. While depression rates are very low for married men, married women who work outside the home while shouldering the bulk of parenting and household chores are vulnerable to depression. Also, women who stay home with the kids can be at risk if they feel isolated and lack support.

As much as we have to ensure that our mental health programs are geared towards women, we also have to help break down the stigma some still attach to mental health disorders such as depression.

The term "eating disorder" has become common currency in our language over the past two decades. Although it is virtually impossible to generate accurate statistics on the number of people who suffer from eating disorders, the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health estimates that approximately 5 percent of adolescent and adult women and 1 percent of men have anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa or binge eating disorder.

Anorexia is a form of self-starvation characterized by drastic weight loss resulting from dieting or intense exercise, poor body image, a drive for thinness and an intense fear of weight gain. Regardless of actual weight, an individual

suffering from anorexia is convinced they are fat and usually denies that they have a problem.

Bulimia nervosa is a syndrome characterized by binge eating during which there is a feeling of lack of control followed by purging in order to prevent weight gain. Purging methods include self-induced vomiting, fasting, excessive exercise, abuse of laxatives, diuretics and diet pills. Individuals with bulimia may display frequent changes in weight and are often plagued with feelings of guilt, failure and low self-esteem.

Binge eating disorder, sometimes referred to as compulsive overeating, is characterized by uncontrollable binge eating not followed by purging, which results in a weight gain. Through binge eating, an individual can use food to block out feelings associated with stress, emotional conflicts and daily problems.

Despite the prevalence of these illnesses, popular understanding of eating disorders is clouded by misconception. What does seem clear, though, is that 90 to 95 percent of those with eating disorders are women.

Some of the most prevalent misconceptions assume a disorder stems from a narcissistic desire to be model thin. In fact, vanity has very little to do with eating disorders. The origins of eating disorders are multidimensional and are linked to many different kinds of trauma.

Alberta's Eating Disorder Education Organization observes that all of the following have been linked to the onset of eating disorders: witnessing or experiencing sexual or physical abuse, family problems, major life transitions, social and relationship issues, pressures and failures at work, school or in a competitive event, and discrimination and body-based harassment.

I know that many people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have become aware of the dangers over the last two decades, but it is important that we continue our education process to help those affected to overcome their disease.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know my time is running out. I wanted to speak a bit about midwifery and how it has enhanced women's ability to make informed choices about pre and

postnatal care associated with pregnancy, and I am pleased to see that it is moving on. I would like to see the program up and running, as was promised by the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) right throughout the province.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that we can all take comfort in knowing that governments over the last two decades have moved forward and are continuing to move forward in a significant way. I hope that all members of the Legislature will support this resolution and that we can continue to take steps forward in the education and understanding of women's health issues in order to decrease the risk factors significantly as the years progress.

Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (17:20)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion. I know that many members of our caucus, as well, are anxious to have the opportunity to discuss these issues.

I thank the member for bringing forward this motion. I know members on this side of the House are very supportive, obviously, of women's health issues. In fact, I know that the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. McGifford) is also going to comment and, during the course of her comments, will discuss, I am quite certain, some of the results of her consultations that have taken place throughout the province with women, by women and for women as a result of our strategy and our approach to prioritizing and making women's health issues very much a priority of the Government and indeed a priority of all Manitobans.

As the member indicated in her discussion, it is hard to deal specifically in a short period of time with each of the very significant issues outlined in each of the WHEREAS clauses and the WHEREAS provisions outlined in the member's resolution. Rather than attempt to cover them all or to deal specifically with one or two, I am going to canvass some of the significant issues that are raised by the member as well as outline some of the Government's responses and indeed that of the public to deal with some of these issues.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a mere 12 years ago, when I first came to this Chamber, a number of these issues were only beginning to be discussed. I look upon it with a good deal of satisfaction that, over the decade-plus since I have been here, a number of these issues have come to the fore, both by the previous administration and by our administration. They are now accepted as commonplace issues and matters that we must deal with respecting women's health. I think that is a very positive step forward.

Osteoporosis is an example that was not very much on the forefront of discussions, but we know, with access to treatment and to the bone-density clinic, for example, recently expanded, that we now have, not only a greater awareness of the issues, but a greater ability to prevent deterioration through preventative measures, through recognition, through understanding. We know that we have dramatically expanded the number of tests that we are doing in this area. We have dramatically enhanced the equipment provided in this area. Oh so often we hear that not enough is done in the preventative field. Frankly, that is an issue that one can never do enough prevention. I mean, just by nature of its definition, but certainly, in this area, we have put in substantial resources to detect and to deal with bone density and osteoporosis as it affects women. In that, we have and we must continue to prevent further deterioration.

The member talked about the increased risk of cardiovascular problems amongst women. I, too, agree and concur with the fact that it was not that long ago that it was strictly confined to be a men's disease. We know in fact that that is not the case.

One of the things that I think is very significant in this area is that we have undertaken to significantly expand our cardiac services at both Health Sciences and St. Boniface Hospital in the tens of millions of dollars for all Manitobans.

Research into heart physiology is important to women's health because women present differently than men when having a heart attack. That will be one of the aspects and components of our enhanced programming and our more

comprehensive approach to cardiovascular difficulties.

While I wish it could take place yesterday, it is in the stages now where we have developed some significant capacity and we will continue to develop capacity in our enhanced cardiac services area.

I want to comment briefly on obviously some of the other issues that were and are highlighted. Fetal alcohol syndrome, fetal alcohol effect are not political issues. It is not a partisan issue. It is a human issue. There have been significant strides that have been made. Enhancing nutrition, recognition, and promotion and prevention have been some specific initiatives that we have undertaken, particularly through some of the initiatives undertaken through our Healthy Child Initiative.

I was very pleased that we had the occasion to open a community clinic to deal with eating disorders. Recently we were able to put in place a comprehensive clinic that deals with eating disorders, not just on an institutional sense, but on a comprehensive clinic that spans the spectrum and includes the community.

The member made particular mention as well in terms of mental health. I am going to focus somewhat in my comments on this particular area, because I suggest that it is an area where we can always do more, as I have said recently in public statements, but that there has been some significant progress in this regard over the past several years.

In the mental health area, we have asked that it be prioritized amongst a whole series of other priorities as it relates to health. I might suggest that there has been significant progress in this area, be it the PACT program for the first time in the history of Manitoba, Program of Assertive Community Treatment in place; or be it the program of mental health education, the resource centre that is housed on Notre Dame that is accessible across the province; or the new housing initiative that will see the training of individuals to assist individuals who have mental health difficulty in finding appropriate housing; or be it the training program itself that will deal with many people who themselves are afflicted with mental health difficulties; or be it the various education programs and modems that are

available in the school system and otherwise that are available now dealing with mental health.

The training program is significant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the training of professionals dealing with mental health. The entering into the mental health system has to be inverted. The system that saw entry only perhaps through the institution obviously has to change. Part of our initiatives to train mental health providers, specifically doctors, is to provide them with enhanced capacity to deal with programs in a co-ordinated sense as concerns mental health.

I was very pleased to have occasion, together with the Minister responsible for the Status of Women (Ms. McGifford), to write to the RHAs and ask them to prioritize women's health and women's health initiatives. It is always a difficult process because so many things are prioritized, but I was very pleased that there was a positive response and follow-up to our desire to prioritize women and women's health issues.

* (17:30)

Part of it was, I think, an awareness as a result of funding, programs and studies that indicated there is a gender gap and there is difficulty. We have to recognize and acknowledge it across, not just the health care system, but across the entire government system as a whole. The response from the regions who now operate programs was positive. I look forward to their continued support as we proceed to develop and enhance capacity and programming throughout our health care system.

Midwifery, first proclaimed and passed in this Legislature, the establishment and funding of midwife positions across the province, the creation of the College of Midwives, all designed and geared towards the needs and requirements of women including, obviously, childbirth and postpartum care, the recent developments of modern and comfortable labour and delivery rooms, such as the one recently opened at St. Boniface Hospital or at the Health Sciences Centre, are all examples of programming and sensitivity towards the needs and the requirements of women in the province of Manitoba.

I know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my colleagues will be discussing some of the specifics

of each of these matters outlined by the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson). Clearly, breast cancer, no one in this Chamber is untouched. Cardiovascular, no one in this Chamber is untouched. Mental health, no one in this Chamber is untouched. None of us are untouched by any of those issues.

There has been significant programming, and I think there has been significant acknowledgement on the part of the Government of the need to continue to develop, co-ordinate and enhance capacity in the health care system across the spectrum of dealing with these issues.

I notice that my time is quickly flashing to a close. I had hoped to talk more specifically about several issues, but I do know that my colleagues and other individuals on this side of the House are most anxious to discuss various aspects of this resolution. So I look forward to their comments.

I thank the member for bringing forward this resolution. I think it shows a couple of things. It shows we do prioritize. We are all working together. I think it also acknowledges some of the significant strides that have taken place over the last few years, and it also acknowledges that there is more to do and that we are going to undertake together collaboratively to work on putting aside our differences and working to the benefit of all Manitobans, which is something I think that we all in this Chamber strive to do.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): I would like to join the Minister of Health in thanking the member opposite for bringing this resolution and the concerns that are part of this resolution to the House today and for recognizing the importance of women's health. I know my colleagues want to speak as well, but as the Minister for the Status of Women there are a few remarks I want to make about the link between the status of women and good health.

I would like to begin by saying I think the first step in good health for women is the creation of a society that values women, the creation of a society that celebrates the lives and rights of women, a society that is free from domestic abuse, that is free from the various

kinds of abuse that have targeted women throughout the centuries. Health is not only physical well-being. I am sure we all agree. I know the member opposite recognized that when she cited mental health. I think the first vital step is a society that values women and celebrates their lives and rights.

Another important recognition is I think it is important we recognize what constitutes good health or what is important in healthy men is not necessarily identical for women. I am not speaking simply about anatomical issues, but that, too, of course. I think it is important we recognize the holistic nature of good health and that we recognize the links between emotional health, physical well-being and spiritual well-being.

Having said this, I think it is important we recognize the links between education and health. I am happy to say this because, of course, I am the Minister of Advanced Education. If we analyze the link between income and good health, we do find that women who are in higher income brackets tend to lead healthier lives. The link between income and education is one we are all aware of. Again, good health depends to some degree on well-educated women being able to command reasonable incomes so they can look after their needs, so they can look after the needs of their children.

Of course, when I say this I do not want to suggest responsibility for good health merely rests with women. It certainly is the responsibility of government to make these things possible and I am very proud of the work our Government has done towards that end. I could cite the work we have done in post-secondary education, but I think I have done that before, so I will not do it today. I know the work done by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale) as far as providing women with child care services, for example, is extremely important in the holistic picture of good health, but also the work that is done through his Family Violence Prevention Branch is extremely important.

I am also pleased to say under our Government we have made great efforts in bringing more and more women to positions on the regional health authority boards. I think now 40

percent of regional health authority positions are occupied by women. I know my department of the Women's Directorate has tried very hard here. Last fall we had an article urging women to allow their names to stand, to put forth their names as possible candidates for regional health authority boards, because it is extremely important when health policy is decided, when issues related to women's health are discussed, that women be there to discuss them. I think that is self-evident. I am not sure I need to explore that in any detail, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I know that the members have cited issues like breast cancer, cervical and ovarian cancers, osteoporosis. I had a very interesting meeting with the Osteoporosis Society. It is very interesting, and I know that the member opposite, as a nurse, probably knows this, that men are very susceptible to osteoporosis as well and need to take care of that issue, but there are also menopausal issues as well as menstrual issues. Speaking of which, we were very glad to remove the tax on sanitary napkins and tampons and women's hygiene products, therefore easing the burden on poor women. Having said that, of course, I think we all recognize the link between poverty and ill health. In fact, poverty is one of the most important determinants of ill health. I guess I should say that economic well-being is a determinant of good health, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Some of the other issues, of course, are reproductive issues, midwifery and mental health issues. They have all been mentioned.

* (17:40)

You know, I would like to cite as an example of an organization that is doing splendid work when it comes to women and health, the Women's Health Clinic. The Women's Health Clinic recognizes the importance of education and prevention, along with treatment. I would like to congratulate them on 20 years of service to the community. They have had a community-based board. They recently had their AGM and celebrated 20 years. Their work is not merely doctors and nurses. They have provided all kinds of help with reproductive matters. They have a smoking cessation group. They have an endometriosis support group. Gee, I cannot quite remember all their programs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but the point that I want to make is that they recognize that there are more issues to

women's good health than merely getting your blood pressure taken and a pap smear, that it is a very complicated affair. So I would like to congratulate the director and her staff and, of course, all the volunteers who make that work possible.

One of the things that really concerns me, and it has been mentioned in passing, is smoking. I am aware that smoking is now replacing breast cancer as the leading cause of premature death among women. This is, of course, a fairly preventable cancer, so it is a very sad set of circumstances. Even sadder is I believe that the statistics show that teenaged girls are beginning to smoke at alarming rates and in fact are superseding their male counterparts. So I think it is important for us to do whatever we can when it comes to reducing the use of tobacco. I think that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has some very good ideas on that matter.

I have spoken about the link between—well, maybe I have not. I know that people have talked about mental health, and I do want to point out again the link between childhood abuse, between sexual assault and mental health, as well as the link between abuse, whether it be child abuse or subsequent assault and addictions and eating disorders. The Minister of Health spoke about the eating disorder clinic, and I just want to make the point that there is a relationship between assault and eating disorders. So the more we can work on that front, on the front of reducing violence against women in our society, perhaps the more we can contribute to women's health, undoubtedly, the more we can contribute to women's health.

I also want, in passing, to point out the difficulty that rural women sometimes have in accessing all the services that they need. I think it is important for government to be sensitive to rural women, and particularly Aboriginal women who are isolated in their communities. Those are things that concern us all.

Now, I do want to mention the outreach work that I have been doing on behalf of the Minister of Health, as well as for myself and for the women of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, We think it is important that we have a Women's Health Strategy in

this province. As I said a few minutes ago, the way that we treat women's health is not necessarily the same, in fact is not the same as the way, should not be the same as the way we address health issues for men. This Government is very convinced of the importance of consultation and approaching grassroots people, speaking with them, hearing directly from them. To this end I have been traveling around the province and hearing women speak about their health issues.

The process began in January 2001, when we had two groups of meetings in Winnipeg, and women made presentations on issues of health. I was accompanied that day by the member from Riel. She chaired part of it and I chaired part of it. Women presented the issues that we would expect, breast screening, osteoporosis. One person did a very interesting paper on the difficulties of nursing and the need for nursing supports. It was a very important learning experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Shortly after that I went to Thompson and met with the community of women. Many of the concerns were the same. I believe I was again accompanied by the Member for Riel (Ms. Asper). She came up to Thompson too. The issues presented there were in many ways the same but they were somewhat different. We had issues like the difficulty of obtaining milk for one's children—I know that this issue is being addressed, so I am very pleased with that—the difficulties of obtaining nutritious food, the difficulties of having recipes that use traditional food, for example wild rice, so that women really can prepare this kind of nutritious food for their children.

It was a very interesting meeting at Thompson, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because although I was there to speak about women's health issues, we heard about many other not directly related issues but peripherally related, because, as I keep saying, women's health is a very large issue and is more than one's physical well-being.

As well as having the two meetings in Winnipeg and the one in Thompson, last summer I travelled to Brandon and was accompanied by the member from Riel and several people from

the Department of Health and from my department of the Women's Directorate and again heard the issues presented. I think that there was much more in common between the Winnipeg and Brandon women than there was between the urban women and the women in northern Manitoba, which is not surprising, since the settings are both urban. Interestingly, in Brandon the women presented time after time the importance of a society that is free from violence, the importance of having services for sexual assault, sexual abuse, et cetera. They were very concerned about these issues.

I see that my light is flashing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do want to say that I have also been in Lac du Bonnet and had a very interesting meeting there and then this spring in May travelled to Dauphin. Again it was quite fascinating. There were a number of women who had come from Aboriginal communities to express their health concerns. Diabetes was one them. It does not surprise all of us.

Perhaps I can conclude by saying, because I see my light is flashing, that I intend to be in The Pas sometime this fall. That will be the last of the meetings. Then we will be preparing a report that I will certainly share with the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak). This will be extremely important in the development of our Women's Health Strategy.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few words I thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the member for presenting this resolution on Women's Health Issues, something that is very dear to my heart.

I had a recent experience, of course, with my husband being in the cardiac surgery ward for a good nine days in the month of May. It certainly was revealing to me in terms of this issue, the issue of cardiovascular disease among women, because I did not expect to see the number of women that I did on the second floor at St. Boniface Hospital, the number of women who have had a very similar bypass operation that my husband did. So, in talking to the personnel on that ward, it certainly raised my level of

awareness in terms of the area of cardiovascular disease among women.

* (17:50)

In terms of my constituents, I must say that I do receive a number of calls in the area of diabetes, which I understand is on the rise among women. Fortunately we do have a very good diabetes program at Youville Centre, located on Marion Street.

Also in terms of my constituents, the concern among young women, teenage girls who have taken up smoking that the minister referred to certainly was another awareness raising for me. I had the fortune of attending 15 graduations in the last two weeks of June at the different levels. It really struck me on the underweight status of a lot of the young women. When I discussed that with my husband, he told me I was a bit jealous probably.

At any rate, seeing the number of young women who in my view were underweight was out of the ordinary compared to when I was a high school principal in the late eighties. So I think there is that issue among young women today of undernourishment or deliberately, if you want, holding down the weight for cosmetic reasons.

So in terms of the resolution, then, in looking at what our Government has done, the Department of Health has provided \$20 million to expand the existing cardiac services at Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface Hospital. Research into heart physiology is very important, I have concluded, to women's health, because women presently are quite different from men when having a heart attack.

The issue I have referred to about young women that I noticed at graduations this year, eating disorders, I have discovered these are fairly common in young women, statistics showing that 11 000 women in Manitoba between 14 and 64 suffer from eating disorders. Women are five times more likely than men to be underweight, I have found.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Intervention improves, however. To address this our Government has launched, as the minis-

ter referred to, a \$750,000 eating disorders program and treatment centre last spring.

I would like to refer to one other government program, knowing that more of my colleagues wish to speak. That is the renewed support for the Healthy Start program during pregnancy and throughout early childhood, the best times to focus on women's health. Our Healthy Child program does so by providing mothers and expecting mothers with nutritional information, parenting skills and emotional support.

I was very pleased, for example, in our area of St. Vital that we were able to launch the young parent centre this year to help young mothers with their babies, teenage mothers. The new milk incentive program was also announced this spring, meaning that participants of the Healthy Baby program will receive either coupons for food or boxed UHT milk that does not need refrigeration.

I could go on in terms of initiatives that we are taking as a government, but, in order to allow one of my other colleagues to speak, I would just like to conclude by saying that I believe it is very important for us to continue to emphasize the importance of women educating themselves about the variety of illnesses that face us as women that are a great risk to us. It is important for our Government to continue to promote and enhance the long-standing child and parent health and development programs. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Thank you for the opportunity of speaking to this issue. I do compliment the member from River East for a very comprehensive view of the magnitude of the subject she has chosen here. I very much appreciate her eloquent speech after.

I have a grandmother who died of cancer at my age. I have a mother who had a heart attack at my age. I am, as you can quite appreciate, very conscious of and appreciative of any research done in just those two limited areas. As you well know, I have also worked in the health field for a number of years, so I have seen many, many types of issues. The last few years I was

dealing mostly in geriatrics, where I think we will find a lot of issues, as our Minister of Advanced Education (Ms. McGifford) spoke about, the holistic things that sometimes people do not talk about in terms of abuse.

Before I talk about that, the one thing that did seem to be missing in any depth in here and was touched on by our Minister of Advanced Education is the domestic violence. When I was reading what our Government had done, I was very pleased, because I had not actually been that aware of it myself. Besides the Family Violence Prevention Branch providing resources to each of the 10 provincially funded shelters, Manitoba Family Services and Housing also adopted a more flexible and sensitive policy on the length of stay for women seeking protection. I have certainly, in my days as a social worker, had much awareness of the need for that. The shelters indicate that women accessing non-residential services is steadily increasing.

I think the thing that I appreciated the most, though, was the program for men established in Russell and in Dauphin. The You Can Stop Violence Program for men will be established in both Russell and Dauphin. This program provides counselling services for men who recognize their abusive behaviour and seek help before their situations escalate further. I think that is rather a commendable thing to know about.

Our Nor'west Co-op Community Health Centre are expanding their counselling program: Spousal abuse resources for Lynn Lake and per diem adjustment for Flin Flon; Women's Safe Haven Resource Centre. So it is nice to see how our resources for keeping the safety and health of our women all through Manitoba seems to be quite in place.

The second reason I wanted to speak to this is just once again to have the opportunity to speak on what I think is one of the most important bills that has been brought through in terms of protection for not only women but I think particularly with the elderly, being more elderly women it impacted on, is our Protection for

Persons in Care Act. I was working in the system when this was brought forward.

I am also aware that our now-Minister of Health, then critic, had brought this same act forward, I believe it was in 1997, as a resolution which was defeated. Given that it is probably one of the most important acts that has come through that affects not only people and women in institutions, but, as I have said before, a lot of people coming into institutions is just a temporary thing. They go back home and through outreach programs we are able to follow up on any kinds of abuses identified while a person is in the hospital.

The act defines abuse as mistreatment, whether physical, sexual, mental, emotional, financial, or a combination of any of them that is reasonably or likely to cause death or that causes or is reasonably likely to cause serious physical or psychological harm to a person or significant loss to the person's property.

I think the reason that I want to speak to this is because having worked in the system I saw a lot of the more insidious types of abuse that are not as easily recognized as the physical mistreatment or neglect. For instance, and I have spoken of it before, discrimination in all forms is alive and well, unfortunately. We do still have some racial discrimination. I think I have given before, it was years and years ago, but just since it was such a more commonly known one was beads sewn into a native woman's abdomen. I am almost positive the doctor had no mal-intent. This happens, ageism, with the elderly women particularly. My own aunt, who was in with a treatable delirium, was treated as though she had a dementia. The nurses were saying, oh, is she not cute.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, July 8, 2002

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