



Third Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

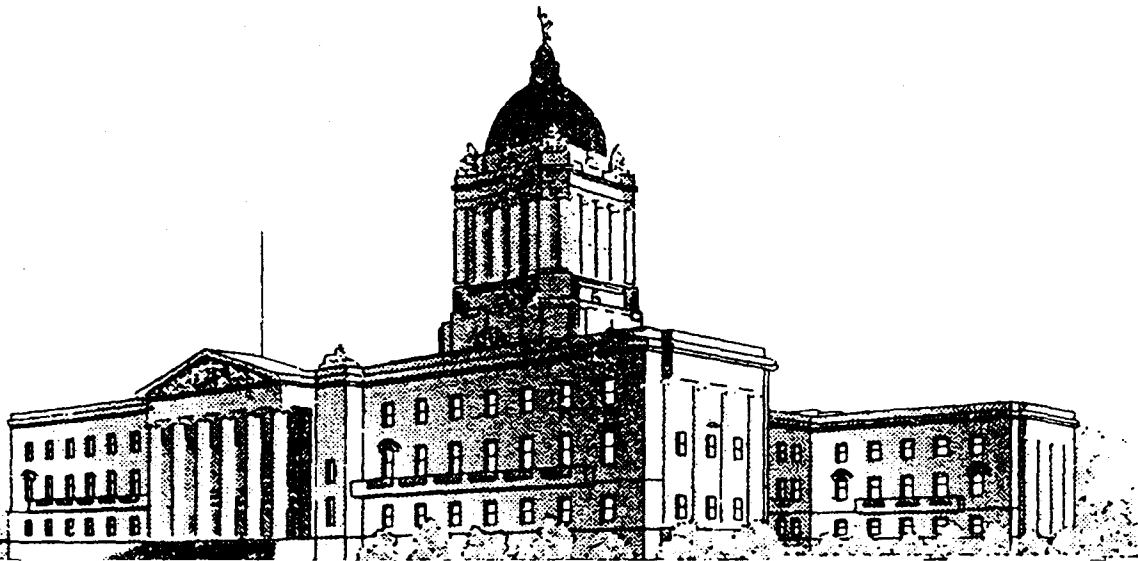
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
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ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
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MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
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PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
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PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
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REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
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ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
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SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
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SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Heather	Tuxedo	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 20, 2002

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Transcona-Springfield School Division

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Mekiela Sweet, Tiuu-Leigh Mustard, Jeremiah Mustard 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.

Universities Property Tax

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Carol Baird, Karen Krysanski, Hank Krysanski and others praying that the Government of Manitoba consider ensuring that local property and education taxes do not rise as a result of the offloading of provincial responsibilities onto the City of Winnipeg, the City of Brandon, Fort Garry, Assiniboine South, Winnipeg One, St. Boniface and St. Vital school divisions.

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.

Universities Property Tax

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Garry (Mrs. Smith), 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): On January 11, 2002, the Government of Manitoba announced a five-year phased-in property tax plan for four of the province's universities.

The Government of Manitoba's plan shifts the universities' property tax bill directly onto the taxpayers of Winnipeg and Brandon.

The cost to the City of Winnipeg for 2002 will be \$1.3 million, rising to \$6.64 million in 2006, for an accumulated loss of \$19.9 million over five years.

The loss of almost \$20 million over five years will have negative consequences for the City of Winnipeg's efforts to lower property taxes and make Winnipeg more competitive.

While all taxpayers in Winnipeg will be adversely affected, those taxpayers residing in the school divisions of Fort Garry, Assiniboine South, St. Boniface, St. Vital and Winnipeg No. 1 will also see increases in their local education taxes.

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

The Government of Manitoba has made it clear that it will not in any way make up the loss of tax dollars the universities currently pay to municipalities and school divisions.

We petition the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba as follows.

We request the Government of Manitoba to consider ensuring that local property and education taxes do not rise as a result of the offloading of provincial responsibilities onto the City of Winnipeg, the City of Brandon, the Fort Garry, Assiniboine South, Winnipeg No. 1, St. Boniface and St. Vital school divisions.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Forecast

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Transportation and Government Services): I have a statement. Mr. Speaker, as Minister responsible for Emergency Measures, I rise to

provide an update for the House on flooding in southeastern Manitoba. This morning, our Government announced a Disaster Financial Assistance program to support the residents of southeast Manitoba affected by flooding.

* (13:35)

This program will provide an estimated \$6.7 million in financial aid and advance cheques for up to \$2,500 will be in the hands of the people who need it by as early as Monday. This is the quickest turnaround ever on a disaster assistance program. This is clearly a disaster, and we understand the importance of fast action on the part of government to help people through this traumatic event.

Staff from Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization will be travelling through southeastern Manitoba next week to provide advanced payments. On Monday, they will be in Vassar, on Tuesday in La Broquerie, Wednesday in Vita, Thursday in Dominion City and Friday in St. Malo.

Residents who estimate their losses, eligible losses at over \$2,500 and can be confirmed as a ratepayer in their rural municipality will receive immediate payment. Shortly after these advance payments have been dealt with, we will begin inspections to establish further damages and compensation for people who have suffered losses due to flooding. Our Government understands the need to provide fast and meaningful assistance in events like this, and this is only the start of our efforts to assist southeast Manitoba in recovering from these severe floods.

Mr. Speaker, the flood situation remains stable at this time. The threat posed by forecasts of heavy rains yesterday did not materialize, and the flash-flood watch has been lifted by the Department of Conservation. The forecast for this weekend calls for more precipitation. With that comes the risk of rises in already flooded areas of southern Manitoba. We are forecasting the next crest at the Roseau River to arrive in Manitoba by early next week, and we are continuing to work with municipal governments to prepare for this.

A number of provincial roads remain closed due to the flooding. I have tabled an updated list for the information of the House.

Beyond financial support, our Government is working to provide residents and municipal governments with whatever resources and assistance we can provide to fight the rising flood waters. We will continue to work cooperatively to prepare for the continuing flood, and we will continue to provide support to help Manitobans recover from this flood.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I thank the minister for the announcement and also to ensure the public is aware of the program that has been announced in the news conference he did just a short hour ago.

* (13:40)

I want to commend the Government for acting quickly and acting as prescribed by the method that was put in place by the previous government. Prior to that, there were no processes that would establish or would have allowed the announcement of such. It was the previous government that established the process under which this could happen. I think a lot of credit goes to the Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), who was the previous minister, and the action he took to ensure this kind of announcement could in fact be made as quickly as it has.

I would also like to draw the attention, Mr. Speaker, to things that are not mentioned in this announcement today. There are tremendous losses that have been incurred by individual businesspeople, business disruption. There is no compensation announced in here for the disruption and business loss, as was previously done in the 1997 flood. There is no announcement made here for the agricultural losses that have been incurred by individual farmers and the business losses they have incurred. There is no feed assistance program announced under this to ensure the people in the flooded-out areas will have continued feed supplies for their program.

So this announcement today, although welcomed by the homeowners, by the

municipalities and by those who have disruptions in their infrastructure, including the school children, will thank the minister for this announcement. However, there is a great big gaping hole in this announcement that needs to be backfilled immediately.

I would suggest to the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province that he immediately sit down with his minister and address the needs of the areas that are lacking in this announcement.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

National Aboriginal Day

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): I have a statement for the House.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is June 21, National Aboriginal Day. The day has become a major celebration across the country and has become much larger than many of us envisioned when we first proposed it about 20 years ago. Canadians of all walks of life are increasingly becoming aware of the history of this country and the vital role that Aboriginal people have played in the development of this country.

In our history, June 21 is not only the longest day of the year, it is also the beginning of the year. On June 21, we celebrate not only what we have done in the past, we celebrate our continued existence in a country and society that has often excluded us.

As we ponder these serious economic and social challenges that Aboriginal people face in this province and across the country, we can also find reasons to be optimistic. We have all heard grim statistics detailing the misery that so many Aboriginal people have faced in the past and continue to face. Thankfully, this Legislature has

now eliminated the legal loophole that was preventing some victims of injustice at residential schools from attaining their day in court.

Addressing the social conditions and the lack of modern infrastructure in remote communities remains a major priority of the provincial government. Through our Northern Development Strategy, we are moving forward on addressing the needs of the North for improved health care, education and training, housing, transportation and employment opportunities.

Our Government is committed to working government to government with First Nations and other Aboriginal peoples across Manitoba. We are seeing real progress in our work with major Aboriginal organizations, AMC, MMF, MKO, SCO, MORN and the Urban Aboriginal Council of Winnipeg.

Tonight I have the privilege of speaking at a major event celebrating the achievements of five Aboriginal women leaders who have made a difference in this province. The Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission has helped our Government move in a number of areas that will benefit Aboriginal people in the future of the province.

* (13:45)

I am particularly proud of the AJIC-Child Welfare Initiative that will see the transfer of an annual budget of more than \$100 million to Aboriginal agencies, the largest such transfer in the history of Canada. A number of other policies and programs are being changed because of the AJIC.

Through the tripartite process, we are moving forward on Métis policies with the Manitoba Métis Federation and the federal government. We have been encouraged by recent interest of the federal government in addressing urban Aboriginal issues. Manitoba has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people of any province, and Winnipeg has the largest Aboriginal community of any Canadian city.

In a few minutes, I will be tabling copies of Aboriginal People in Manitoba, a report that was

jointly funded by the Province and Human Resources Canada. The report documents the growing size of the Aboriginal population in this city and across the province.

Within a few short years, one in four people in the workplace or workforce in Winnipeg will be of Aboriginal descent. Governments and the private sector need to be prepared for and take advantage of this coming reality. We see this as an opportunity to address the aging workforce in this province and to see both the private and public sector implement an Aboriginal employment strategy.

We are heavily committed to the urban Aboriginal development through our new programs and improved services in the core area of Winnipeg. Programs such as Neighbourhoods Alive! and Lighthouses are making a big difference.

Our department has signed MOUs with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the Burntwood Regional Health Authority to increase Aboriginal employment at these bodies. We hope to see that these agreements become models elsewhere.

We continue to uphold the Northern Flood Agreement as a modern day treaty. We are pleased that Nelson House, Split Lake, along with Fox Lake, War Lake and York Landing First Nations are working in partnership on the new potential hydro projects in the North. These communities were involved at the beginning of these developments and will benefit from employment and training as well as future revenue from the projects themselves.

Next month, beginning on July 25, Manitoba will be hosting the North American Indigenous Games. The games will bring over 6000 athletes to Winnipeg and compete in 16 sports. Tourism Winnipeg has estimated a \$60-million spinoff from the games, which will be the largest sporting event ever held in Manitoba and, in fact, is larger than the 1999 Pan Am Games. I hope that members of this Legislative Assembly will also be able to watch some of the events and participate as volunteers.

In closing I want to simply say, Mr. Speaker, that National Aboriginal Day is

increasingly important to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country. I encourage members of this Chamber to take part in some of the many events taking place across this province to mark them all. Thank you.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I applaud the minister for his comments. I would like to also say that June 21, being National Aboriginal Day, is something we all should celebrate. It is all about what makes Manitoba a great place to live. It is because of the diversity and the richness of all of the cultures that provide for our day-to-day existence here.

I also want to make a comment that, as the minister referenced in his notes, we do ponder serious economic and social challenges. I think the issue here really is that it is recognizing those issues are there but I believe, rather than feeling isolated and having to face those challenges alone, I think we all are trying to do that as a society as a whole. I think that is a very important step we are trying to make and I know one we all support in this Legislature, because it is important they all feel a part of our society as we move forward.

The minister made reference, and I would like to again comment on the fact that the Legislature did unanimously eliminate the legal loophole that was preventing some victims of injustice at residential schools from obtaining their day in court. I think we heard some very emotional comments from the minister, as well as from members from both sides of this House on that issue. I think we all unanimously supported it because we want to look ahead; we do not want to look back. I think that was a very, very important day in this Legislature.

* (13:50)

I also want to make a response to the minister's comment about Manitoba having the highest proportion of Aboriginal people and Winnipeg having the highest numbers of Aboriginal people in the city. Again, it is interesting that last night I was speaking to some young entrepreneurs. One of them is in the fishing industry and told me all the people he employed were Aboriginal people, and he was very proud to do so because they do good work.

Mr. Speaker, I think in this Chamber we acknowledge that June 21 is a very special day. I think the minister also raised that July 25 the North American Indigenous Games will be coming to Manitoba.

It will be a very, very exciting opportunity for Manitoba to see athletes who will be doing things that perhaps are different from other athletic competitions that perhaps we have seen in the past. The minister, rightly so, said: Come out and see this. Come out and be a part of it.

I know myself, as well as other members in the Chamber, will be volunteering proudly to ensure Manitoba once again puts the spotlight on our people and we show we are the best in the world.

I would like to just add my comments that tomorrow being a very special day, June 21 being National Aboriginal Day, on this side of the House we very much want to celebrate not only that day but every day, because we believe that is a very important part of our society.

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

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable member have leave? Leave has been denied.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table copies of Aboriginal People in Manitoba, a report jointly produced by Human Resources Development Canada and the Department of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs.

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the following reports: The Crown Corporations Council Annual Report 2001, and the Civil Service Superannuation Board Annual Report of 2001.

Hon. Scott Smith (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to table the Annual Report of the Automobile Injury Compensation Appeal Commission for 2001-2002.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 39—The City of Winnipeg Charter Act

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), that leave be given to introduce Bill 39, The City of Winnipeg Charter Act; Loi sur la Charte de la ville de Winnipeg, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, having been advised of the contents of this bill, recommends it to the House. I would like to table the message of the Lieutenant-Governor.

Motion presented.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, Bill 39, The City of Winnipeg Charter Act, replaces the existing City of Winnipeg Act. Bill 39 provides a modern legislative framework for the City of Winnipeg. It includes greater powers and flexibility, new provisions to address community priorities and enhanced public accountability.

Bill 39 represents a complete rewrite of the legislation, condensing the contents by almost a half, using plain language wherever possible to make the act more accessible to all citizens.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 44—The Provincial Police Amendment (Aboriginal Policing) Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): I move, seconded by the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 44, The Provincial Police Amendment (Aboriginal Policing) Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Sûreté du Manitoba (services de police autochtones), and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion presented.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, this bill provides the legislative framework that allows First Nations police forces to be created and to

provide police services to First Nations communities.

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 Reg and Eileen Parker of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. These visitors are the guests of the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak).

* (13:55)

Also in the public gallery we have from Brookdale School 12 Grades 6 and 7 students under the direction of Mr. Robert Dyck. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed).

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Agriculture Aid Package Trade Compensation

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, today the federal government unveiled what I believe is referenced as their farm package. I think there is some \$5.2 billion in that package. We know on this side of the House we have talked with the Premier, we have attended meetings together, we have been part of an all-party agreement to ensure the federal government understands that our agriculture community is suffering because of a U.S. farm trade bill that has been brought in and there has been incredible trade injury that is happening to our agriculture producers.

This farm bill the federal government has brought out does not address the trade injury. I would like to ask the Premier: What is he doing to ensure the federal government will support the fact that the trade injury that is happening to all of western Canadian agriculture producers is in

fact going to be funded 100 percent by the federal government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, the package that was leaked systematically over the last seven days and then announced this morning had two parts to it. One, of course, is the longer term proposal to deal with safety net programs, to deal with diversification, to deal with research and development. In fact, most of that money in that part of the package is enhanced, but existing funds from the federal government is not, quote, \$5 billion of new money.

We on this side of the House and members opposite have always been part of long-term diversification. It looks to us, on initial inspection, that that five-year component of the bill will require about \$15 million in additional resources from the Province of Manitoba. Certainly we are interested in being part of the five-year proposal for diversification and safety net programs and are willing to do our part in that part of agriculture, subject to what the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) determines with some of the details that are necessary.

The second part of the bill or proposal from the federal government is for the so-called trade injury section. The trade injury section is about \$600 million per year from the federal government. It is a two-year package. The U.S. trade bill is a six-year package, so it is already a shorter period of time than the American president's proposal that was passed in Washington.

Secondly, it is less than half a loaf of what the legislatures and producers were calling for of \$1.3 billion this year.

Thirdly, it is even more than less than that loaf next year because the pulse crops that are now being escalated into subsidies for next year are not included.

So we remain united on calling on a 100% bridge to deal with the federal government. We believe if the federal Prime Minister cannot get rid of the subsidies from Washington he should match them for the western Canadian farmer.

Mr. Murray: I do not think anybody on this side of the House, other than perhaps, as the

Premier makes reference to, the money that was there for drought assistance, Mr. Speaker, we agree this is not new money to address the trade injury. My question to the Premier simply is: What are you going to do about it?

* (14:00)

Mr. Doer: Yesterday, members suggested that we agree now and worry about how we are going to pay for it later. Thankfully, I think we did not do that, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously it is important to continue to have a united front. I would encourage members to stay with us on calling for 100% support and not 100% support from the federal government for half a loaf, 100% support that matches the Bush package in Washington. We have to stay united.

The obvious strategy of the federal government is to divide and conquer provinces, producers and political parties. I am pleased that in Saskatchewan, the opposition party and the government are speaking with one voice, and I think it will help our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and all Manitoba producers if we stay together and keep a united position on the inadequacies of the federal package.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly understand what the Premier is saying, and I think all of us who were a part of the meetings in Regina and Saskatoon, the all-party committees that met, I understand the Premier making comments that we should stand together shoulder to shoulder. That is a fair comment, but my question as I asked him earlier: What are you doing about it?

What we have had is a series of meetings. I understand the Premier has written a letter to the Prime Minister. I believe he has written one letter. I have not received a copy of it, but I believe he has written a letter.

The Minister of Agriculture, when asked has she had any comments with the federal Minister of Agriculture, the comment came back: Well, we think he is in Rome; we may be getting in touch with him.

I just think that, on behalf of farmers in Manitoba, I just want to know, to all of those

farmers who are out there suffering and wondering what is happening, you are the Premier of Manitoba, you are supposed to have a relationship with the Prime Minister of Canada, what are you doing about it?

Mr. Doer: What we are doing about it is not waving a white flag, as recommended by the Ag critic yesterday from members opposite. I know these systematic leaks from the federal government are intended to divide each of us from each other. They are intended to divide producers from the provinces and intended to divide provinces from each other. We need a united voice at the Ag ministers' meeting in Halifax next week. The Premier of Saskatchewan and I, and I suggest the leaders of the opposition, have a united voice on the inadequacies of this package.

We are not saying we are not in favour of a five-year strategy and that we will not be willing to even add \$75 million over the next five years in terms of the diversification package, in terms of the safety net packages, in terms of research and development. But in terms of the trade injury package that has been ruled in the media communication message with the federal government into this so-called package, we stay united on not being divided from each other, from our producers and other provinces, because that is the only way we can win with the federal government and get fairness for farmers here in Manitoba and western Canada.

Agriculture Aid Package Trade Compensation

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Mr. Speaker, some of us were very aware of parts of the announcement prior to the announcement being made by Ottawa today. Some of the questions that were asked here yesterday were relevant, too, because we knew there was no trade compensation announcement going to be made today.

The federal Minister of Agriculture and the Prime Minister of Canada in their comments today made it very clear there was not one dollar of trade compensation money announced today. There was a negotiated agreement announced by the minister and there was also a drought relief program announced of \$600 million, and \$600

million over a two-year period. That is what was announced today, but no trade relief.

Can the Minister of Agriculture today tell us when she and her Premier (Mr. Doer) are going to make the trip to Ottawa to reinforce what the all-party united committee has asked for continually on behalf of farmers? When will the Premier make the case for a trade compensation package?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, I am glad, I think, the member is on board again, that we should be asking for 100% compensation from the federal government, because that is what we need is a united front from all people in this House saying that we have to have a trade injury package.

What has been put forward by the federal government is half a loaf. They have put forward \$600 million for each of the next two years, and they are looking for funding from the provincial governments to support it. George Bush did not ask the states for any money. He came and put his money on the table for farmers. We need a federal government and a prime minister who is going to stand with—and if he cannot negotiate the end to the subsidies, then be there to carry our farmers through this U.S. farm bill. That is the message we have taken, and that is the message we are going to have to continue to take.

Mr. Jack Penner: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to seem facetious, but I would like to ask the minister whether she knows the difference between a drought relief package and a trade injury compensation package.

Ms. Wowchuk: I do not think the member was listening very well or he has not read any of the documents, because in this document there is bridge financing. If you will remember what Minister Vanclief said when the U.S. farm bill was announced, he said we are going to have to have bridge financing to help our farmers because of this U.S. farm bill. They have started the bridge but it is not enough, and we have to make sure they continue to build on that bridge so our farmers can survive. They have finally recognized. Seven months ago they said there

was no support for trade injury for farmers. Today they announced \$600 million for the next two years. It is not enough, and we have to be sure we all stand united to get more support for our farmers so they can survive, because of the supports put in by George Bush.

Mr. Jack Penner: It is clear the minister does not understand what the announcement was today. Can the minister tell me, tell this House today, whether it is her view that farmers are now going to have to be satisfied to borrow themselves into oblivion, as this NDP government is famous for doing?

Ms. Wowchuk: Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member opposite farmers were not satisfied with his government in 1995 when they ended the Crow, when they ended GRIP and they took \$350 million annually out of this province. That is what this government negotiated away from our farmers. We are trying to get something back for our farmers.

Agriculture Aid Package Minister's Input

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Mr. Speaker, sadly, what this debate needs is some leadership. The Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province, along with his Agriculture Minister, are expected to lead at times like this. It is not good enough to simply say we have a problem with the feds. This press release begins by saying: Along with provincial and territorial governments.

I would like this Minister of Agriculture to indicate if, in discussions with the federal government, she agreed to the principles of this document?

Hon. Rosann Wowchuk (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Mr. Speaker, what we had this morning was a federal announcement. I did not see any provincial people at that announcement. It was a unilateral decision by the federal government that there is going to be a trade injury package of \$1.1 billion this year and next year, and they have said the provinces have to pay. That is the federal government's position on this.

* (14:10)

With respect to the rest of the package, we are going to Halifax next week, and that is when

we are going to have discussion on the balance of the package. I can tell the member I am consulting very closely with producers in this province to see what the impact of this package will be and whether they approve it or whether they want changes to it.

Mr. Cummings: Then this minister is denying she had any input into the agriculture policy framework that was announced today. Is that correct?

Ms. Wowchuk: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. We had a discussion last year at Whitehorse, and we began the preliminary work on the agriculture policy framework. There have been consultations with producers across the province. What we are looking at now is the framework for that agreement. When we are at Whitehorse, we will have the opportunity to discuss it, but producers will also have opportunity to have input to see whether or not it works for them.

There are changes being proposed, and unlike the Opposition when they decided to end GRIP and to agree to end the Crow, I am not going to do those kinds of things. I am going to consult with the producers and see if they like the programs that are being put forward.

Premier's Input

Mr. Glen Cummings (Ste. Rose): Well, if I understand correctly, Mr. Speaker, this minister said she participated in discussions around the agriculture policy framework, yet she says this is a surprise, the announcement we got today.

Will this Leader of the province of Manitoba, will the Premier stand up in this Legislature today and indicate that beyond saying he was going to have a fight with the feds, will he provide legitimate input into a future agricultural policy framework for this province?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Well, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in Canada today where the federal U.S. government makes a unilateral announcement of subsidies paid 100 percent by the U.S. government. The Canadian government says it is going to fight the Americans, but its

fight, after it virtually gets sand kicked in its face, is going to be to pass this on to the provinces and the producers; on to the producers because it does not match the U.S. subsidies, on to the producers because it does not get rid of the U.S. subsidies, and on to the provinces unilaterally because they are not willing to step up to the plate.

This is a federal government that wants to have a 60-40 formula in agriculture on injuries, trade bridge injuries. I do not see a 60-40 program in medicare, and it is time we stood united with farmers against the federal government and get a fair program.

Agriculture Aid Package Trade Compensation

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Well, Mr. Speaker, a question to the First Minister. I gently remind him, the last time farmers had a friendly government both in Ottawa and in Manitoba was under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and a Conservative government, when he offered forward, in 1989, a billion-dollar-plus program for drought, 100 percent funded by the federal government.

That is what this Government should be doing: 100 percent, a billion-dollar program funded by the federal government, and these boys are pussycatting around here and not talking to us.

What kind of a program are they going to take with respect to the U.S. trade challenge?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised with the Mulroney government and its \$41-million excise tax that is not applied by the provincial government. Members opposite, on our side: How much money is relieved from farmers with that policy? The Mulroney government was the first government to take \$100 million away from Manitoba producers with the Crow rate changes, I think without having a long-term diversification strategy—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lakeside, on a point of order.

Mr. Enns: I know, Mr. Speaker, the First Minister does not wilfully put a fundamental lie on the table. I was there. I negotiated for three years. It was the federal Liberal government that took away the \$760 million of support programs the prairie farmers had with respect to prairie agriculture, and everybody at that table knows that. It was the federal Liberal government, the same government, by the way, that when they got elected in '93, this minister and this party said, oh, we are going to have a good working relationship with the federal Liberals.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before I recognize the First Minister on the same point of order, I would kindly ask the honourable Member for Lakeside to withdraw the word "lie."

Mr. Enns: I quickly withdraw the word "lie." I meant a statement of fact that simply belies what, in fact, is history, which every farmer in western Canada knows.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for the withdrawal.

The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Mr. Doer: With the greatest of respect, Mr. Speaker, I noted the honourable Member for Lakeside did not deny the fact that the first \$100 million and the first step against the Crow rate was made by one Charlie Mayer in the last years, the waning years of the Mulroney era. I do not dispute the fact that the majority of the rest of the funds were cut by the Liberals, but the \$100 million, the first step, was cut by the federal Conservatives, and I say a plague on both their houses for cutting the Crow rate.

Mr. Speaker: I thank both honourable members for the little history lesson, but it is not a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Drought Compensation

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Well, Mr. Speaker, insomuch as we are truthfully burying our history on prairie agriculture with the First Minister, will the First Minister not also acknowledge that it was the same Charlie Mayer who negotiated over a billion dollars aid in the drought-stricken year of '89, paid for 100 percent by Ottawa?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): In fact, Mr. Speaker, I recall meeting with farmers in the early 1990s, with the former leader of the opposition, one Jean Chrétien, during the early 1990s calling on agricultural support.

I think the fundamental point is valid, that we need to be united in this Chamber because the federal government is watching to see—the member knows how this operates—whether opposition parties divide from each other after our 100% resolution. The federal party is watching to see whether producers divide themselves from the Legislature. The federal government is watching to see with their selected leaks that basically talked about the Bush bill but did not even meet half of the Bush bill in terms of U.S. subsidies whether provinces will divide themselves from each other.

I say let us stay united for that 100% principal of federal support for agricultural producers across Canada. Let us stay united in this House so we can go united to that meeting with the federal Ag minister on behalf of all farmers in Canada, and particularly in favour of all the producers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Health Care Facilities Food Services

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, it would be unconscionable for this Government to say they have no money for farmers and then turn around and spend \$1 million to build a sandwich factory for their union buddies.

I would like to ask the minister now if he would be willing to share the recommendation made by the WRHA, which he has been sitting on since April, which advises him what he should do with the hospital sandwich contract.

I would remind the minister the longer he sits on this, the longer Manitoba patients are eating five-day-old sandwiches trucked in from Alberta.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, we have repatriated the produce from Ontario that went into producing frozen food in Markham, Ontario. The salad contract from Ontario has

been reversed back to Manitoba. The bread contract—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for River East, on a point of order.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): *Beauchesne's* 417, it is quite clear, responses should deal with the matter that was raised.

* (14:20)

I wonder if the Premier could clarify for us whether he is sending the produce from Manitoba to Edmonton to make the sandwiches to be shipped back five days later.

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

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order raised by the member, who was in Cabinet, who made the decision to close the kitchens and force the tendering that forced it to go to Alberta, it is a strange tale coming from that member's mouth, who made the decision in Cabinet that we are faced with.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Before ruling on the point of order by the honourable Member for River East, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members what points of order are about. A point of order is to be used to draw the Speaker's attention to any departure from the rules or practices of the House or to raise concerns about unparliamentary language, not to be used for rebuttal or debate.

On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for River East, she does not have a point of order. It would be a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Doer: We have reversed the contract on salads. We have reversed the contract on breads. We have reversed the generic contracts of frozen food for Markham, Ontario. We are working on

the sandwich contract, and, by the end of our mandate, Mr. Speaker, much more. *[interjection]* Well, they might not want to laugh too loud.

All the farmers in Manitoba will be much further ahead than the vision of agricultural diversification that went from Manitoba to Markham, Ontario, under the Tory regime.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister of Health: Since this is a very straightforward decision he has been left to make, why is he taking such a long time to make this decision to decide whether or not he is going to tender the contract or spend a million dollars to build a sandwich factory? I think our farmers would like an answer to that.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I hesitate to advise the member that it is a much more complex question than perhaps she understands. Insofar as when members brought in the frozen food experiment, the only one of its kind in North America, when they were going to send frozen food across western Canada, they closed the kitchen in Misericordia, they closed the kitchen at Seven Oaks Hospital, they closed the kitchen at Concordia Hospital, which—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and not provoke debate.

The question was very clear. We would like to know when the contracts can be offered to a Manitoban so that we do not have to have Alberta sandwiches.

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

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, again, I was trying to explain to the Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), who asked the question—

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition

House Leader, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable ministers, 417: Answers to questions should deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: When they closed all the kitchens, they tendered it to private companies. Two Manitoba companies went out of business, which forced the next tender to get the contract, which happened to be the only company left that applied under that tender.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, the minister did not answer the question, and he has been dragging the puck on this for quite some time. I would like to ask the minister to very clearly tell Manitobans today: Is he going to build his \$1-million sandwich factory for his union buddies?

I think it is fair for the farmers of Manitoba to know where this minister stands, where their priorities stand in this province.

Mr. Chomiak: I think it is very clear to Manitobans where our priorities are when we did not fire a thousand nurses and we have brought back the nurses' training programs. Manitobans know we believed in nurses. When we reversed the trend of doctors leaving the province, the first time, Mr. Speaker, in a decade for the last two years, more doctors have been here than left, we showed our priorities on doctors.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

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

Mr. Laurendeau: Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 417: Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and not provoke debate. I am sure the minister heard your ruling the first time.

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

Mr. Chomiak: I believe if one carefully peruses Hansard one will discover the Member for Charleswood asked what our priorities were with respect to the people of Manitoba, and I was

outlining, as opposed to members opposite's priorities, we have a different set of priorities dealing with health care in Manitoba.

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

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): No, not on the point of order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, I have to rule this one as a dispute over the facts.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, to complete his answer.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I was indicating in my response, we have set a number of criteria with respect to that issue. We wanted a made-in-Manitoba solution. We wanted it to be the most cost-effective. We asked the WHRA to review it, report back so we could do what is best for the patients of Manitoba who have asked us to reverse the Tory decision to frozen food.

Protected Spaces Government Record

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Maybe instead of being quite so critical about substantial new aid for farmers, we should recognize it is a positive step and see what we can do to build upon it provincially.

My question today is to the Minister of Conservation who has just received a D-minus rating from the Sierra Club on biodiversity issues, a rating which has fallen from the D-plus under the Tories and the D last year. The minister must have kind of a sinking feeling.

I ask the Minister of Conservation to acknowledge it is not the mining industry's fault but rather his own shortcomings and his tendency to exaggerate the amount of land permanently protected under his Government that are responsible for his low marks.

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Again, I want to say to the member I continue to be proud of our Government's efforts with respect to setting aside land for protection. For example, in early

October the Pembina Valley Provincial Park was established as Manitoba's newest park and protected area. In addition to that, seven new park reserves have been created and portions of eight existing wildlife management areas have been protected since April of 2001 to the present time.

* (14:30)

Mr. Speaker, currently efforts are being made to focus on the six park reserves created in 1997 to ensure appropriate land use decisions are made by—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Conservation: I ask the minister why he said in the Legislature on June 11 that he has put one million hectares under permanent protection when in fact a considerable proportion of the area claimed, notably the seven new park reserves, are only protected temporarily.

Mr. Lathlin: Mr. Speaker, I can advise the member setting aside land for protection in Manitoba is quite a long, complicated process right from when areas are identified to be candidates for protection and then we have to go through the process of analyzing the ecosystem. Then, after that, we have to do quite an extended consultation period. We have to consult with the Aboriginal communities who are in the area; we have to consult with the stakeholders, industry, and so on. Before an area can be deemed to be a protected area in Manitoba, it takes about—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: The problem is claiming more is permanently protected than really is.

Endangered Species Legislation

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): I ask the Minister of Conservation in my supplementary: When is he going to introduce legislation or procedures that will require recovery planning for endangered or threatened species in Manitoba?

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): Mr. Speaker, since we have

been in Government we have set out processes that will eventually result in policies and legislation being introduced in this House. For the time being, we are going to be continuing with those projects we have started with and also pick up other projects as we go along, but only after we have consulted with the communities where these areas are going to be located.

I want to assure the member we on this side of the House are also supportive of protecting natural areas of this province. The work is continuing.

School Divisions Amalgamations—Benefits

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): In the past two days, the Minister of Education, Training and Youth has outlined some benefits of school division modernization in the Emerson constituency, Tuxedo constituency, Fort Garry constituency, Lac du Bonnet constituency and the Whyte Ridge constituency. These benefits were articulated by individuals in the constituencies themselves and are in contrast to the obstructionist opposition by their Conservative MLAs.

Can the minister advise if any other areas of the province are also in favour of school division modernization?

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank the Duck Mountain School Division for sending a Jeanne's cake to my office this morning in appreciation for our Government's support of their amalgamation efforts.

I have today an editorial from the Portage *Daily Graphic* entitled: Bring on the mergers, Mr. Speaker, wherein the editorialist writes: The time has come for the Government to show the fortitude to implement parts of or the entire Norrie Commission report in an effort to reduce bureaucracy and improve services for divisions.

I urge members opposite to take the advice of the Portage *Daily Graphic*, the Steinbach *Carillon*, the Brandon *Sun* and school divisions across the province and let people speak in committee to get this bill passed and support students in the divisions of Manitoba.

Manitoba Hydro (Dauphin) Workplace Health Issues

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett). On an open-line radio show yesterday a caller asked: At a time when the Government is taking millions of dollars from Manitoba Hydro to feed its spending habits, Manitoba Hydro employees at the Dauphin office are having to use outside port-a-potties for washroom facilities because of a mould problem in the office. Just wondering whether this Government has its priorities straight and whether the construction of a new office will be delayed because of the Government flushing Manitoba Hydro money down the proverbial toilet at its employees' expense. Perhaps you can ask the Government whether this workplace health and safety issue will soon be resolved.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I would trust, Mr. Speaker, that the Member for Springfield would also be listening to a number of people in Manitoba who do not feel going from nine school divisions in the city of Winnipeg down to six school divisions is a bad idea to modernize our school divisions in Manitoba, who want to have administrative caps on school divisions, a cap so that people do not flush their money down the toilet on administrative costs but rather can have that money directed at students.

Mr. Schuler: I ask the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) when she is going to stand up for working men and women and stand up for what is going on in Hydro, or has she been flushed by the Premier, and is he going to put somebody in who will actually stand up for the workers? Has he flushed his minister?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Labour has brought in a wonderful piece of legislation on workplace safety and health, and I assume from the member opposite's comments now that he is going to join us and support working people in this new piece of legislation for workplace safety and health.

The real question: Is he going to let the people of Springfield, along with other Manitobans, appear before public hearings before school ends, or will he continue to fili-

buster this bill against the issues of democracy of the people?

**Henry G. Izatt School
Expansion**

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Education are trying to convince the people of Manitoba that, as a result of their dictate to amalgamate, there will be more resources for the classroom.

I would like to ask the Minister of Education what he has to say to the parents and the children in the district of Whyte Ridge, where this Government has refused funding to expand Henry G. Izatt School. As a result, we have children who are going to be forced to give up their art room, who are going to be forced to give up labs and, in fact, whose safety is going to be put at risk because this New Democratic government has refused to provide the necessary funding to expand their classroom. As a result, children are going to have to be bused down major thoroughfares and at great distance, and families are going to have to have their children split up in order to attend school. How is that putting more resources in the classroom?

* (14:40)

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): I know the member was not part of this Chamber during the nineties. I suppose it is to his credit that he was not because, in 1992, there was minus 2; '93-94, minus 2; '94-95, minus 2.2; minus 1.8. The provincial government, under the Filmon Tories, retreated from public education support; \$130 million was pulled out of operating support and transferred directly to local property tax bills. In terms of school capital, the entire mandate of the members opposite provided \$144 million—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Caldwell: The retreat from school—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, on a point of order.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne* 417: Answers should be brief and deal with the matter raised.

The matter the minister needs to answer is how the parents in Fort Whyte are to respond to the fact he is refusing to fund the expansion of Henry G. Izatt School. As a result, children are not only losing classrooms, they are going to have to be bused at considerable length. Where is his answer to that?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Minister of Education, Training and Youth, on the same point of order.

Mr. Caldwell: Same point of order, Mr. Speaker. The retreat from school capital funding left a \$250-million capital infrastructure deficit in the public school system, a deficit that we are addressing today.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I will not allow points of order to turn into debates. I have heard enough to make a ruling, so I will not be recognizing for a second time the honourable Member for Fort Whyte. If you want to raise a new point of order, that is your right, but I have heard enough to make a ruling on this point of order.

The point of order raised by the honourable Member for Fort Whyte, he does have a point of order. *Beauchesne* 417 says that ministers should deal with the matter that is raised.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: So I ask the honourable Minister of Education, Training and Youth to conclude his answer. Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, on a new point of order.

Mr. Loewen: On a new point of order. As the minister was giving his response, the Premier yelled at me from his seat that I do not care about parents. I want to advise this Premier that I take this issue very seriously, and I would ask him to withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I think, if we all cared about parents, we would let Bill 14 go to

committee, and we would let parents speak out on the education bills before their kids go home for summer holidays a week tomorrow. The comment made, I truly believe if we all cared about parents we would let the public speak at the legislative committee and not shut them down in the Legislature. I stand by my word, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Fort Whyte, he does not have a point of order.

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Mr. Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education, Training and Youth, you have about four seconds left.

Mr. Caldwell: Mr. Speaker, this Government is investing in capital infrastructure at unprecedented levels.

Whyte Ridge Community Education Facilities

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Premier, who, in his responsibilities as minister of urban development in 1988, approved the subdivision of Fort Whyte, I would ask him if he will now speak with his Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and inform the Minister of Education that he had some type of vision all along about how the children he foresaw living in that area of Whyte Ridge would, in fact, be accommodated at schools within the area he approved.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in 1987, we did approve the Whyte Ridge development. We are pleased to see how positive it has been for the city of Winnipeg.

Certainly, I know the Minister of Education is allocating out of the Budget more money for capital investments every year, year after year, for capital considerations that go to the Public Schools Finance Board.

The real question, Mr. Speaker, before us is: Should the parents of that school and every other school in Whyte Ridge get a chance to speak about the amalgamation bill before the school year rises next Friday, or are the minority going to be the tyranny against the majority of people to speak out?

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Before we move on to members' statements, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us His Worship Glen Murray, the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg.

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

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions had expired, so we will go to members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Daughters of the Nile

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of attending the 86th Annual Supreme Session of the Daughters of the Nile, where I brought greetings on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Manitoba government.

The Daughters of the Nile, founded in 1913 in Seattle, is a benevolent international fraternal organization for women who are wives, daughters, mothers, widows, sisters, granddaughters or nieces of Shriners. Today, the organization has a membership of 49 000 women in over a hundred temples throughout Canada and the United States.

The Daughters of the Nile have gained a respected reputation for humanitarian activities over the past 86 years working within North American communities to support the Shriners' hospitals for children. Their philosophy of working together for children is one that they live out every day. More than \$1.5 million is raised annually by their members' efforts. This money is used to provide supplies for hundreds of thousands of children in need of medical care and support.

The host of the recent Supreme Session in Winnipeg was the local Sphinx Temple No. 116. I would like to thank the Temple Queen, Marilyn Kowaluk, and its members for their hard work in bringing this convention to our city and province. The attendance was estimated at 2500 people, representing 150 temples throughout Canada and the United States.

This huge feat required booking the entire Winnipeg Convention Centre for a week, as well as eight downtown hotels, transportation services, city and rural tours, restaurants and catering. It is estimated that this convention would generate up to \$5 million for the city of Winnipeg and surrounding areas. Mr. Speaker, I greatly enjoyed the beautiful pageantry of the night. I would like to thank the Daughters of the Nile for having me for their opening ceremonies and wish them continued success.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Henry G. Izatt School—Expansion

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of hosting approximately 80 students from Whyte Ridge Elementary School as they took a tour of the Legislative Building and spent some time with us in the House this morning.

I want to inform the House that the biggest concern those children had when I met with them in Room 200 was the fact that, as a result of this Government's refusal to provide funds for the expansion of Henry G. Izatt School, they were wondering how far they would have to be bused when they graduated from Whyte Ridge Elementary School.

*(14:50)

Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious concern not only to the children of Whyte Ridge but to the parents and everybody in the community. This Government, because of its decision to refuse funding for the expansion of Henry G. Izatt School, is purposely in a very purposeful and political way punishing people in southern Winnipeg. The parents are concerned that not only next year will they be losing access to classrooms, they will be losing their art classroom, they will be losing laboratories, but in addition to that, teachers do not have the facilities necessary to provide the type of learning environment they want to provide to that growing community.

Mr. Speaker, this is a direct result of this Government's refusal to fund capital expansion of Henry G. Izatt School. Their option is to ask students to get on a bus, to cross very, very major thoroughfares, which I might remind them, and they do not have to go back four years

to realize how serious an accident that happened at the corner of McGillivray and Kenaston. In fact, students lives were put at peril as a result of a bus accident going through a major thoroughfare at a very, very busy intersection.

This is what people in Whyte Ridge and their children are going to be faced with as a result of the shortsightedness of this Government. I am very, very saddened, as are the parents, that this Government has chosen to play punishment politics simply because the parents in Whyte Ridge did not vote for an NDP member.

VOXAIR Newsletter

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski (St. James): Mr. Speaker, a unique and useful Winnipeg newspaper recently celebrated its 50th anniversary.

VOXAIR is the unofficial Service newspaper of 17 Wing Winnipeg and is published every two weeks under the authority of the Wing Commander, Colonel D.C. McLennan.

VOXAIR is available to all members of 17 Wing, which includes those at the South Side 2PPCLI, the air force base on Whytefold, and 1 Canadian Air Division on Air Force Way. Also, members of 17 Wing are in detachments in Yellowknife; Kenora; Dundurn, Saskatchewan; and Southport in Portage.

In Winnipeg, the paper is hand delivered to members' homes. *VOXAIR* was first published May 30, 1952. Throughout the years it has seen its ups and downs as it reflected the changing face of Canada's armed forces. Today the paper is making the best of adapting to the technology of the information age. The *VOXAIR* is now enjoyed by those who are deployed overseas as a source of news from their home unit. Also, it provides vital and interesting information for the families of armed forces personnel. It helps them find access to resources vital to military families.

With 17 Wing in my constituency, I appreciate receiving the *VOXAIR* because it helps me and so many of my constituents understand the complexities and current issues of military life.

I was happy to hear that the *VOXAIR* office has recently moved from the trailer they once occupied to a new office in Building 63.

I would like to extend my best wishes to the editor-in-chief, Lieutenant Colonel S. Neville; the managing editor, Second Lieutenant Benoit Doyon-Gosselin; and the office supervisor and sales manager Maureen Wells who has been working at the *VOXAIR* for more than a decade.

I congratulate *VOXAIR* on 50 great years and wish them another 50 more. Thank you.

Fort Garry School Division

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, punishment politics forced on the Fort Garry School Division is a concern to all the people in south Winnipeg.

The Fort Garry School Division encompasses Fort Whyte and Fort Garry constituencies. The people in this area, Mr. Speaker, have been the recipients of a very unfair government that has selected south Winnipeg out to be the place that needs to be sliced and diced and disregarded when it comes to either the needs of the children, the needs of the taxpayers, the needs of the residents in south Winnipeg.

It is with grave concern, Mr. Speaker, that south Winnipeg is rising up, asking questions. We have seen in the area of Fort Garry constituency the slicing and dicing of the boundaries at the civic area due to the NDP government's influence on The City of Winnipeg Act and the refusal to let the Boundaries Commission deal with the boundaries in the way they had preferred. Consequently, we had the slicing and dicing of Fort Garry constituency, a community that has been historically well known throughout the ages. It has rebounded in very angry residents wondering why a top-down, Big Brother government has done this in the darkness of night.

We have seen the offloading of the taxes, municipal and provincial, property taxes at the University of Manitoba, Mr. Speaker, without any regard to giving grants to the Fort Garry School Division to enable the residents, the taxpayers in the local areas of Fort Garry, to not be heavily burdened with the additional tax load on their shoulders.

Then today, Mr. Speaker, when we come to Bill 14 and we speak about the concern that the

taxpayers have over Bill 14, and then we have the letter written by Brent Pooles of the school trustees about the busing in Fort Whyte and about the lack of consideration where the NDP will not approve--

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I rise to talk about the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre. Since 1984, the centre has provided Aboriginal children and families with culturally relevant, preventative and supportive programs and services. Their name, translated from Ojibway, means "We all work together to help one another."

Their philosophy is based on the belief that the entire community has a responsibility to nurture future generations. As such, a commitment to the development and growth of the Aboriginal community underlies all of their work.

Mr. Speaker, this centre has truly innovative community development programs to, as they say, touch the human spirit. These programs include dancers that form groups called Rising Sun-Sons and Daughters of the Four Directions. The group provides an opportunity for people to reconnect to their culture and is funded by Winnipeg Child and Family Services and Neighbourhoods Alive!.

Ma Mawi also offers Aboriginal Scouts, weekly sweat lodge teachings, the adolescent parents support project, positive adolescence, sexuality support, healthy relationships for young men and women, and family violence prevention. In the year 2000, the centre launched the adolescent parents support project due to the high rate of teen pregnancy. This project was made possible with funding from the provincial government.

In addition to all these programs, there exists a youth group called Owiisookaage(g). They have partnered with Ma Mawi in order to make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal youth, and I am proud to see that this group won the Mayor's 2002 Volunteer Service Award. They have also

secured contracts with this provincial government, Canadian Heritage, and Health Canada. I am also happy to hear that they have an excellent working relationship with Ma Mawi, who are providing them with office space.

There are many other programs which I will not list, but the centre is doing a wonderful job in the community and they deserve our support. I miss them on Selkirk Avenue. They used to be beside my constituency office, and I used to drop in for coffee and visit with the staff, but now they have moved to Point Douglas at McGregor and Stella, and I occasionally drop in to see the staff there. I would like to thank all of their staff and volunteers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings, Bill 14.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

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

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on second reading of Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Fort Garry, who has 21 minutes remaining.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I will continue from the speech that I had this morning talking about some comments regarding Bill 14. This morning, just to review, I was referring to a very skillfully written letter that was communicated to the *Winnipeg Free Press*, and it is in today's paper. It is called "NDP won't approve needed classrooms."

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) is not here to hear the comments that I am putting on record, because as we said today—

Point of Order

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

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, I would direct your attention to the Manitoba rule book and ask you to provide guidance to the Member for Fort Garry. She knows quite well that it is against the rules in Manitoba to refer to the presence or absence of any member of the Chamber, and I would like you to remind her of that rule.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Member for Burrows, I would like to remind all honourable members that when making reference to a member in the House to refer to them by constituency or ministers by their title and also to not make known the presence or absence of members.

* * *

* (15:00)

Mrs. Smith: I do apologize for that. This morning, due to his very rigorous objection to what I was saying and putting on the record about Bill 14, his rigorous objection, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that Bill 14 has some very worrisome aspects to it, I am sorry that I did comment on the fact that he was not in the House. I do apologize for that. Having said that, there are things that perhaps the minister at his leisure will have time to read in Hansard.

But I want to bring to the attention of the rest of the members opposite today that this letter, NDP won't approve needed classrooms, is yet another slap in the face of residents in Fort Garry and Fort Whyte. The present Government, Mr. Speaker, has done much to anger the residents, and it is things that they cannot take back anymore and do not want to take back. When Fort Garry was sliced and diced, it was done so quickly that the residents in Fort Garry knew very, very little about it, if anything. In fact, the people who spoke to me made it quite clear that they had no idea this was going on and that they objected to it very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, when the property taxes were offloaded from the University of Manitoba—and I know it was a very welcome break for the University of Manitoba—the residents in Fort Garry were very mindful of the fact that all of the province of Manitoba benefits from the University of Manitoba. The present Government put no regard to the tax burden on the shoulders of the residents, of the people who live

in Fort Garry who happen to be right in the area where the University of Manitoba is. I must say that residents of Fort Garry and myself are very, very proud of the University of Manitoba, very happy about the tax relief that was provided for the University of Manitoba, but the unhappy aspect about this announcement was that no regard was given to the residents, the resident taxpayers in Fort Garry.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, we have had senior citizens calling, senior citizens who say that they have to move out of their homes because of that extra tax burden, the extra money they have to pay on a daily basis. I must say to members opposite, the Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) put forth a resolution the other day talking about elder abuse. It was very regrettable when the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) from members opposite put on the record that the Member for Seine River was exhibiting—she rather made fun of this resolution and made fun of the Member for Seine River about this very, very important resolution, a resolution that we supported on this side of the House, a resolution that we absolutely needed to have in this House.

The Minister of Labour was very vocal in twisting that around and holding the Member for Seine River to task about the resolution, accusing her, a member on this side of the House, a very honoured member and a former Speaker of this House, accusing the former Speaker of this House of inadvertently utilizing seniors' abuse or elder abuse because of the selling of MTS. Mr. Speaker, this was right off the Richter scale. It made no sense in any way, shape or form, and, to my knowledge, the member to this time has not apologized to the Member for Seine River.

So we have all these kinds of things going on here in the House, and this morning, when I rose to put my comments on the record about Bill 14, you could hardly hear what was going on in here with the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and some of the members opposite making derogatory remarks about Fort Garry and then making political remarks of one sort or another when we were talking about a very serious topic.

The very serious topic is Bill 14. Bill 14 has very serious ramifications. Section 21 of the

minister's Bill 14 robs Manitobans of any opportunity to challenge any changes made to school divisions because of the experience we have had in south Winnipeg, and even today, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the busing of the students and the refusal of the present Government to put additional classrooms on, and forcing students to bus out of the catchment area.

Mr. Speaker, everyone is very mindful of the school bus accident that happened a very short while ago while this current Government was in power, the problems that have occurred when this Government has total disregard for south Winnipeg, total disregard for the democratic way.

In Bill 14, here again, we have the minister effectively creating a system where a citizen's right to question their Government's actions is stripped and dissenting voices are silenced. Manitobans do deserve better.

Mr. Speaker, as MLA, member of the Legislature for the Fort Garry area, it is very worrisome. It is very—I cannot even find the words. It is more than troubling. I cannot believe what has happened in south Winnipeg. This present Government coins the phrase all the time: It is the first of its kind. Well, I have to say, here in this Legislature, we are experiencing in the province of Manitoba the first of its kind in stripping the democratic process from the citizens of Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in other speeches, our people, our veterans, fought in first and second world wars for the democratic process. The reason why the current Government has the opportunity to speak out freely is because of the democratic pattern that has been set, the democratic policies that have been set for years by the veterans, by the people who stood up for the democratic process.

when this morning, standing in this House, I was reading out the letter from the trustees in Fort Garry which said, and I quote from this letter once again: There is no objective reason for the shift of authority from local school boards to the minister. The only logical conclusion to which a reasonable person can

come is that this legislation is politically motivated. We cannot afford, in this province of Manitoba, to have an unfair, unequitable government that picks out pieces and parts of the province to take care of while excluding the other.

Mr. Speaker, it comes to mind that school divisions that are not amalgamated do not fall under this Bill 14. In Bill 14, all decision making, all authority is taken away from the local area. Fort Garry is a very close neighbourhood.

Fort Garry is a place where people know each other. They talk amongst themselves. We have raised our six children there. My husband moved there when he was two years old. We have lived there for a long time. We know Fort Garry. I love Fort Garry. As MLA in Fort Garry, it is very worrisome—[interjection] When once again across the way, we hear different members from the Government making disparaging remarks about Fort Garry and what Fort Garry needs. A government in power is supposed to be listening very carefully to what all residents of Manitoba have to say.

* (15:10)

We have not only been hit in Fort Garry with a slicing and dicing of the boundaries, we have not only been hit with the offloading of the burden of the taxes onto the residents of Fort Garry, and members opposite know that this has been very unfairly dealt with, now we have the Fort Garry School Division coming forward and appealing to the present Government for fairness, appealing to the present Government to take care of this bill and eliminate it.

If you look at the amendment, Mr. Speaker, our amendment clearly asks this Government—I am going to read out the amendment for members opposite who are not aware of the amendment or have not bothered to read it:

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and substituting the following therefor—this is what we want, Mr. Speaker:

Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended), be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject

matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments.

Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that has serious ramifications, and now we are seeing residents in south Winnipeg rebelling against this punishment politics that is occurring. When one event happens, you can say, well, maybe something has happened. Then we have two events. Then we have three events, and there is real consideration. So we have to be very careful with Bill 14, be very careful not to take away the democratic right, because everybody knows that when this comes to committee, this Government is on record of taking almost no suggested amendments from our side of the House. There might have been, I do not know. Has there been one or two? I cannot remember, but most amendments, I do not recall to my knowledge any amendment that was accepted by members opposite in Law Amendments.

So they are crying out for this side of the House to take it to Law Amendments when they know they will be able to ram through that bill as quickly as they hear everybody. When we had other bills in this House, instead of calling time at twelve o'clock, this Government insisted on causing people to stay until three and four o'clock in the morning to make their presentations, when there were other bills that they wanted to ram through like Bill 44 and Bill 42.

Now we have Bill 14 and you can almost predict, Mr. Speaker, what is going to happen because members on the other side of the House are not reasonable, are not fair, are not equitable, and this is politically motivated. This bill is politically motivated.

We have in this House stood behind different bills, like Bill 8. We have supported good bills. We have put them forward.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much political spin on the other side of the House. If you recall during the last session, we only sat for a little better than two weeks, if it was two weeks, and they were demanding that all these bills be put through. No one even had the bills in their hands. No one even had the spreadsheets. No one even had time to collaborate.

Then they went out to the media and they said, oh, members opposite are holding up the bills. In reality, we do not have the power to hold up bills. We are outvoted, and so the public is beginning to become very wise at what is really happening in this House. What it is is a lot of press releases, a lot of photo ops and a lot of political spin. Mr. Speaker, south Winnipeg is hurting, Fort Garry is hurting, and, to be quite frank, we do not like it.

Bill 14 is another example, and that is why this time to go right now, to let this bill go would be a very bad move simply because if we cannot get time right now, if we cannot have the Government taking steps to withdraw the bill and go out and collaborate with the people, listen to the people and pay attention to the kinds of letters that people are writing, pay attention to the petitions I brought in the other day, I think around 700 in a folder, then there are real problems. Nobody has said much. Nobody has addressed all of these issues on the other side of the House. So this is why we are making a point; yes, we are speaking on Bill 14.

Do we want to hold things up, Mr. Speaker? We would not do that. There are many, many bills that we have put forward as soon as we saw them. The fortified buildings bill went right through as soon as we had time to take a look at it. When we looked at Bill 8, which was a very important bill, we thought it was good. We put it right through. There are some bills that we have co-operated 110 percent on, but I am telling you this is our stand on the hill. Bill 14 is our stand on the hill.

I want to give this Government notice that south Winnipeg is not happy, and that should matter because they are Manitobans. South Winnipeg is not happy, Mr. Speaker, because of this Government's policies, because of what this Government is doing. The problem is they are not collaborating. They are not listening.

It is unfortunate when members have to stand up in the House and display the behaviour that was displayed this morning when I got up to speak for Fort Garry, and, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking for Fort Garry. I am speaking for the residents. I am speaking for the trustees. That is my job. That is what I was elected to do.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the present Government cannot get beyond the

political spin because, in actual fact, as I said before, there are many bills that we have passed. There are many bills that we have co-operated on. There are many positive things that we have done, and we are saying that this is yet another bill that will do damage in the school system.

We are saying that members on this side of the House and, as MLA in Fort Garry, I am saying you cannot take the local decision making from elected trustees. We had an election of trustees in Fort Garry. There was a competition. They went out, and they talked about why they wanted to be trustees. In Fort Garry, we trust our trustees. We have fine trustees, and Mr. Brent Pooles, who wrote this very well-crafted letter in the *Winnipeg Free Press* today, was expressing the frustration and the actual wonderment at why the current Government is punishing the children in the Fort Whyte area, because this is a dangerous precedent that is being set.

When we have had bus accidents, Mr. Speaker, and we have had things that can be done. There has been much money put on the Golden Boy. There has been much money put on a lot of projects. When this Government chooses to do that, they put money in where they think it is necessary. Well, we are saying that the people of Fort Garry and the children of Fort Garry are saying it is important that Fort Garry children are safe. It is important that Fort Garry children can attend school in their area.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Fort Whyte very eloquently this morning in his question period was saying: Why bus kids out of catchment areas? Why bus kids out of their local school? Well, with the slicing and dicing in Fort Garry in the boundary situation and now with Bill 14 and now with the refusal of the NDP, refusal to approve needed classrooms at Henry Izatt School, this is the attempt to break up the Fort Garry School Division, the Fort Garry community. This is not democratically right, and, as MLA for Fort Garry, I object to this approach to doing business. I ask them to vote for this amendment when the vote comes up.

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I would like to rise to speak on Bill 14, in particular the amendment to Bill 14, and my colleagues from across the way

are interested whether I have unlimited time or not. I ask them to sit in their seats and find out.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that we have seen a very interesting process or perhaps lack of process in Bill 14.

* (15:20)

I find it interesting that last evening I had a chance to visit with my trustees in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division, and they are a very, very hardworking group of trustees. They have done a marvellous job in St. James-Assiniboia School Division. As a matter of fact, they have had to make some very, very tough decisions, and the school trustees in St. James-Assiniboia are very, very well respected by the students, by the parents and by the teachers. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because they, at their level, have made some very, very tough decisions about education in the school division of St. James-Assiniboia. While they have had to make some tough decisions and cut some spending, they have done it without affecting programming, and that is an absolute tribute to those people and those trustees in that school division.

I will tell the members opposite who want to ram Bill 14 through, Mr. Speaker, that this is a flawed piece of legislation. When I asked these school trustees, I thought that it would be important to reflect upon some of the comments from the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) who, when he talked about forcing the division of schools or the school amalgamation, came out with this incredible announcement, that forced amalgamation—again, Mr. Speaker, forced amalgamation, whether those divisions like it or not, forced amalgamation was going to save \$10 million.

Well, you know, you can write a press release to sound pretty good. Maybe if you had peeled it away, there might have been a trip to Disney. You are not sure, but it was going to save \$10 million, Mr. Speaker. Well, that is a fantastic statement to make, and we on this side of the House have been very interested in how the Minister of Education stands and says that this forced amalgamation is going to save \$10 million.

Well, we are trying to be generous in our questioning, so we might start and say show us

where you might save \$1 million. Well, Mr. Speaker, they cannot do that, and they cannot do that for one very simple reason, because they know. They know on that side that there is not a \$10-million saving. They know, in fact, there is a cost. The incredible part about it is you have a Minister of Education talking about a fantastic number of \$10-million worth of savings when, in fact, it is a known fact that it is going to cost money through this forced amalgamation.

I was told that the St. Boniface School Division, which is being forced with St. Vital, that in the very first year their calculations—and I think it is important that always when you are debating that you make sure the facts are there, and the facts are that they did their homework. In their deliberations, in their homework and their research, they show that there is going to be a cost for them to amalgamate, and the number they are talking about is somewhere in the range of \$1.25 million to \$1.5 million. They did say that there may be the possibility, there might be one saving of \$79,000.

Well, Mr. Speaker, this Government wants Manitobans to believe there is \$10-million saving. There is not a person who would not stand up and applaud if they could show how \$10 million will flow into the classrooms, but they cannot. They are unable to. They are unable to show any savings at all. Why? Because they know that it is going to cost the taxpayers more.

Now, I would say that in a discussion on amalgamation, I think it is fair to say that anytime two groups get together, a school division, a business for example, community centres, anytime they as a group on a voluntary basis want to get together and have a discussion and say I think there are opportunities for us to work together, well, Mr. Speaker, I think that any reasonable person would say good for you, showing some leadership. If you think there are opportunities to work together, then, by all means, why do you not go out and do that.

But this Government and this Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and this Premier (Mr. Doer), this New Democratic Premier, what did they do? Well, they made decisions about forced amalgamation in a backroom somewhere. They made decisions on forced amalgamation on the basis that it was politically motivated. So you

have politically motivated decisions in forcing two school divisions to amalgamate, and then you have a minister standing up and making an announcement that this is a wonderful thing; it is going to save \$10 million.

Well, the two pieces of that puzzle are flawed because a forced amalgamation of two school divisions does not make any sense. I would like to reference the current Intergovernmental Affairs Minister, who, when talking about amalgamation, and I think that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) is a very astute person, Mr. Speaker.

I think her background speaks very positively about her ability to look at issues like amalgamation and make a very succinct, a very positive, a very correct interpretation. What she said was that one of the difficulties I think we have had as a community, and I mean Manitoba, is that the second boundary commission, or the final report, as the minister calls it, were all written submissions, no public hearings or discussion, very short time period for people in the various constituencies to have public meetings in order to have a general discussion.

So she wanted to suggest to the minister, Mr. Speaker, and I wonder if she might, as we speak, be talking to the Minister of Education, I wonder if she might be giving this current Minister of Education the same advice. She said: I feel that the final report was very limited in its discussion of the representations that were made. What she really was referring to was that there was no opportunity for the public to have some input.

Now, I know that members opposite are going to stand up and say, well, take it to committee. Let the public speak. That is a fair comment, Mr. Speaker. In due process that will happen. But what of the process leading up to forced amalgamations? What of the meetings of coming into school divisions and sitting down with parents, teachers. You know, it may be a little bit unusual, but they could have sat down with some students and said, look, here is what we want to do. Here is what we think is right because we believe that it is the right thing to do, and lay out a plan, maybe get some input from those stakeholders.

But, no, Mr. Speaker, no, not this Government, not the Doer government. No, that

would be wrong. Why? Because some people would be opposed to it, clearly. We hear that today. Some people are opposed to a government coming in with a heavy hammer and just ramming down something that is forced down their throats.

I would say that when you look at framing a debate, when you look at framing why something should be done, I believe that you should stand up and put forward an argument, an argument that maybe members opposite will say, look, we take exception and therefore we would like to do A, B and C instead of what you are putting forward as an argument.

Well, I happened to attend, Mr. Speaker, a meeting of concerned parents in the community of Oakbank. Their concern was simply to ask the Minister of Education: Why are you taking a division, that being the current Transcona-Springfield School Division, which had previously amalgamated some years ago, ripping Springfield out of it, and amalgamating it with Agassiz School Division? There was nothing that was malicious about it. It was simply concerned parents saying, we understand that the Minister of Education, without consultation, is going to amalgamate our school division with Agassiz School Division.

The question for the Minister of Education was asked by concerned parents, not one, not two, not three, but some forty or fifty parents who were able to get to the microphone, because there were a thousand people in the gymnasium at the time.

They simply looked at the Minister of Education and said, as a parent who has children in school, I would like to ask the minister, why are you amalgamating our school division with that of Agassiz.

* (15:30)

The minister responded, time and time again, to those very sincere questions asked by the parents. His response to them was the devil is in the detail. I thought to myself, as I looked around and looked at some of the other parents that were there, you cannot be serious with that answer. You cannot be serious that the devil is in the detail, being the person who has made the

decision to force the school divisions to amalgamate.

Parent after parent kept asking the same question: Please, minister, tell us why you have chosen our school division to amalgamate with the Agassiz School Division. The best answer that they got time and time again, Mr. Speaker, was that the devil is in the detail.

I think that parents did not go away frustrated. I think they went away with a sense of despair, a sense of despair because something was being forced upon them and there was not one slight hint of an answer. Nothing, zero, zip. You have parents who are concerned about their children, and the best that the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) can say is that the devil is in the detail. I believe the minister left a sense of those parents that he would be prepared to take back their concerns to Cabinet and address them at the Cabinet table.

Well, it is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the end result is that the parents from Transcona have taken the minister, in essence, have taken him to court for lack of action, and I think that that speaks directly to this Minister of Education's inability to manage the situation properly.

I would not have minded, Mr. Speaker, and, again, I will tell you I represent a school division that is not part of the amalgamation, not part of this forced amalgamation, so I was merely attending this to find out what the minister's rationale was for this forced school division amalgamation. I thought that if he, at least, would say here are the three reasons why we believe that we should force your school division to amalgamate with another division, you may not like the answer, but you asked the question why, and I am telling you that these are the reasons that we made a decision. But no answer came forward, no answer that those parents could sit down with their children at the coffee table, the kitchen table the next morning, and say, well, you know, we have talked about this; you have heard a lot about this amalgamation. We may not agree, but here is why the NDP government of the day believes we should be doing it.

Mr. Speaker, I think that that is always and should always be a way that you deal with those

concerned constituents of yours. We all know that we do not always agree, but, for goodness' sake, put your point forward and be open and up front with the parents, because the inference that I took away from that meeting, again, I am not part of that forced school division amalgamation that the NDP are doing, but what I took away from that was the Minister of Education standing high above all the parents saying: You know, leave it to me, I know better than you do. I know what is better for your children than you do. I mean, how could you? You are only the parents. You are only the parents; I am the Minister of Education.

It is reminiscent, really, of how the New Democratic Party operates in this province. They know better than everybody on every issue. You know, when it comes to taxes, they want to take as much out of your pocket as they can. Why? Because they know how to spend it better than those people that earn it. When you look at school trustees, those are the people that are on the front lines making decisions, making tough decisions, making budgetary decisions, but under the legislation that the Minister of Education wants to put in, that is going to be ripped away.

The analogy, I thought, was very interesting. It was given to me by my trustees when I met with them. They gave this analogy of the Minister of Education being the boat and the public being the dock. As it comes in, in case there is any disagreement between the public, the dock, and the minister, the boat, they will be the fender and take all of the pressure as that boat comes into dock. So they want them there to take the pressure; they want them there to take the responsibility, but they are going to yank away all of the authority.

So, you wonder, when the heavy hand of the NDP comes in and they want to take away that authority, what is the incentive for those parents, because I believe it is mostly parents that have children in school that are interested in becoming a trustee? Why? Because they want the best for their children as any parent does. But these are parents that take another step in showing that leadership by running to become elected school trustees so they can sit around the table and make sure that if there are tough decisions to be made, as there were in the area

that I represent, St. James-Assiniboia, tough decisions to be made financially but never taking your eye off the sight of the fact that programming is what allows our children to get the best education possible. So make tough decisions but protect programming, and that I think is something that school trustees—and I think if you look across the way, historically there is always going to be—and we know the NDP are masters at cherry-picking here and there and saying: Well, the whole world is falling apart because look at what they did in this one school division and look at what happened. I guess perfection rests on the other side and it is tough to compete with that. But we know that is not reality.

We know that those school trustees, day in and day out, take phone calls at night. They work in the local area. They shop in the local area, and a lot of business takes place. When I say business, I mean talking about ideas to deal with issues happening at the school, maybe something to do with programming. Those sorts of discussions can take place locally in their community because they have an opportunity to meet one another. Now you are going to have the situation where not only are they forcing school divisions to amalgamate, they are reducing the number of trustees, and so you are going to have less of a relationship with that trustee because they represent a much larger area.

I have got the comments that were made by some of my trustees I thought were very interesting. I thought that the one quote that one of the trustees made was very interesting. He said: These deals have been negotiated, and I quote, "out of the sunlight." I thought it was a very apt description because it paints that picture of exactly what happened. Dark room, there is the map of Manitoba with the divisions on and you can see the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) scheming. Which one should we go after? Well, wait a minute. How about St. James-Assiniboia because it is one of the best-run school divisions? We cannot let that one alone. We better do something. Oops. Wait a minute. Let us look at the representation in that school division. There are two constituencies that we won in the last election. We won one by three votes. We had better not touch that school division

because, as much as we are going to try and say that there are savings in this process, we know, although we will not say it publicly, there are no savings. We know there is a cost to the taxpayers. So, rather than taking that school division, they moved on, and they looked at those school divisions that politically they could go in and they could force them to amalgamate.

* (15:40)

I thought it was fascinating that during the discussion at Oakbank the Minister of Education stood up and said: Well, wait a minute. No, there are not just Tory school divisions that are being amalgamated. I think there are some others and looked at the member from Springfield and said: Are there not? He did not know. He had no clue, no clue, and he is the one that is supposed to be championing this process, showing the leadership, driving it, explaining it, but he can do none of those, none of them because they know full well that, as they are trying to convince people that there are savings in this, they know it is going to be a cost to taxpayers.

The members across the other way there are pretty adept at trying to weave a web. The web that they are trying to weave over forced school division amalgamation is that there are \$10-million worth of savings. So I asked my school trustees: Could you give me an idea if there are any savings, or do you see \$10-million worth of savings? Again, I understand that our division is being left alone out of this forced amalgamation, but I thought it was interesting because they are very astute trustees. I do not know their politics. They represent the constituency of the school division extremely well, but I asked them. I said: Well, where do you see the savings? They looked at me with almost disbelief and said: Savings? There are no savings in the school division amalgamation.

They had done their homework, because they had heard rumblings from this NDP government that they may be taking a look at forcing divisions to amalgamate. They had looked at other school divisions. They did their homework, not on the back of a napkin, but they did it properly. They went through the whole process. What they found out is that it was going to cost them probably somewhere in the

neighbourhood of a million bucks, a million dollars. So, Mr. Speaker, they were very concerned about forcing their division to amalgamate. I believe they are breathing a sigh of relief that the NDP have left them out, and so they are not partnered, but I thought it was fascinating when we talked about those savings, because nowhere did it show that there were savings.

On the \$10 million, I just want to read something else into the record. It is from the chair of the St. Boniface School Board, Anita Chapman. What she said was, and this was in the newspaper, so it is public information. She said about forcing school divisions to amalgamate, she said, and I quote: It is creating a lot of anxiety. She said that right from the beginning we said amalgamation is going to cost, end quote. Amalgamation is going to cost.

Is it not interesting that that would be coming from the school board chair, somebody who, on a day-by-day basis, sits at the table dealing with all of the issues that they have to deal with and particularly on the financial side, somebody who, in essence, knows what is going on. I do not think you would ever see a quote from a school trustee that said to a parent the devil is in the detail. If they did, I am hunching they would not get re-elected. That is just a hunch, Mr. Speaker.

Assiniboine South, they calculate that amalgamation will cost residents at least \$645,000 or about a 3% increase in local school property taxes. Now, this drives to the heart of the issue, because the heart of the issue is that the NDP would have you believe there is savings, and those that know are saying, wrong, this is going to cost the taxpayers money. So there is really where the debate should be. That is where the debate should be.

I thought it was interesting. I will just talk because I believe that, when you have a debate—and I got this quote because I thought it was interesting when you talk about a debate, because I believe a debate really epitomizes what a democracy is about. I got this quote, and it says democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word "equality." But notice the difference. While democracy seeks equality and

liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude. That is what we are getting from the other side on this.

It is a heavy-handed approach to something that denies parents, teachers, children an opportunity beforehand, not as we have heard members opposite say take it to committee. Well, of course, we will take it to committee in due time. We know that. That is part of the legislative process. But you have a majority government over there, Mr. Speaker. They are not listening. They are not interested. The best they can do is hearken back to the Norrie report, which is close to a decade old, and say, well, this is the benchmark that we are using.

Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, it would be like Tiger Woods having to go out and use a set of clubs that was 10 years old. Things change. *[interjection]* As my member from Seine River correctly points out, there, at that time, were no savings either. So they are using a report that said there were no savings. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), knew it; they all knew it. But, instead of listening to what those who went before that did homework and did some studying on this issue, instead of doing that, no, as I said earlier, typical NDP fashion; we know better. Homework was done, does not matter. Somebody went out and did a study. They actually consulted the public. That does not matter. That does not matter because we know better.

Mr. Speaker, when you think that all of this is being hinged on the ability of the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) to make this happen, I am telling you, that is a very frightful thought, and, I think, one that, I believe, on this side of the House, and I know people out in constituencies, because I have heard it, are very, very concerned about. We have a Minister of Education who has the inability to manage his portfolio. We have seen editorials calling for his resignation over his inability to deal with the Morris-Macdonald situation and the Agassiz situation. We know that it is on record in this House, his inability to answer any questions. The scary part of this whole Bill 14 is that he is the minister who is supposed to know it inside out, be able to answer any questions, and he is

incapable of answering a single question on why they are forcing the school divisions to amalgamate.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that this is a very flawed bill. I believe that, if the minister understood his portfolio, he would know that he does not need to bring in this kind of legislation to simply force school divisions to amalgamate. He is doing this legislation, and it is causing a lot of concern in the public with the school trustees. I know that there are issues that have been raised by trustees. I do not know that the minister has even listened to some of those concerns.

I asked the school trustees about this July 1 date. I said: Are you concerned about the fact that the minister has this magic July 1 date that this must happen by? I was fascinated by their answers because what they indicated to me, and I have heard this from others, is that the July 1 deadline is, in essence, a figment of the imagination of the minister, that there is no magic to the July 1 deadline. In fact, it was introduced in November when the minister brought in the legislation, and he has put in a very, very short time fuse on this whole process.

I think most people who would understand how this process works, the difficulty that trustees are going to have, that to put a short time frame and a short time fuse on it, again, flies in the face of what this proper process should be all about. I am interested to see the letter from MAST that went to the Minister of Education, and, in particular, there were some issues that were raised about Bill 14, and what they said, and I quote this. It says: school boards' calls for speedy passage of amalgamation legislation cannot be construed as support or agreement of the Government's decision to approach to school board consolidations in Manitoba.

* (15:50)

So, again, you have an independent body that represents all of the school teachers, the school principals, the parents, the children, in the form of the trustees who have the responsibility of ensuring that they deliver the best education they can, given the framework of finance that they operate in.

Well, would you not think that the Minister of Education would sit back and heed that advice? Would you not think he would sit back and listen to some advice that is being offered up time and time again by people that have as much, if not more, desire to ensure that their children have the best education they can? Those people, Mr. Speaker, are not coming forward because they want to make the Minister of Education's life miserable, but it sure seems that the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) is coming forward to make the school trustees' life miserable. I think that is unfortunate. I think that is a very, very sorry part of why this Bill 14 is in front of us. It need not be in front of us, because if the minister wanted to force school divisions to amalgamate, he was able to do that prior to bringing in this bill that we all believe is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, the other issue that I think is worth talking about under Bill 14 is the Board of Reference procedural changes that Bill 14 contemplates. I think that that is an issue that trustees, I believe all people have some concerns on, with the Board of Reference, because they are saying it would be final with no right of appeal. In other words, they are looking at a process rather than the substance. I think that speaks volumes about the kind of power grab that this minister is trying to pull with Bill 14.

The other issue that I know is of a concern is the provision of authority to the minister to make subsequent regulations. They cite 12.2 (a), (b), (c), and, in particular, (d), Mr. Speaker. I think again what you see is that these policies cause more undue pressure in an already stressful environment.

You ask yourself when trustees are saying things like, you are putting undue pressure in a stressful environment, you have to wonder aloud, is that the best for our children? Is that the best for the education system? Is that the best to put into classrooms? I think the answer to that is, no, it is not. If people are already under stress because of this minister, then why would you add to that? Why would you put more burden on them? Why would you ask them to go out and do those sorts of things and give them that kind of responsibility, but none of the authority? Because, once again, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education will try to convince Manitobans he

knows best. He knows better than the school trustees.

The centralized budget requirement that we see in Bill 14, Mr. Speaker, well, you know, they like to say they are establishing the limits on administrative costs. That seems to be their big item that they want to hang this thing on. You know, we will control administrative costs. Well, I tell you that the school trustees of St. James-Assiniboia are offended that this Minister of Education has no confidence that they have the ability to control their costs.

There was a comment made by the Minister of Education that said that he would hope that with forced amalgamations you would not see one level of custodian being paid X in one school division and custodians in the other forced amalgamation being X plus three dollars an hour, saying that not necessarily are they all going to go to the X plus three, because he is saying he hopes, Minister of Education hopes that the trustees will negotiate in good faith.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is an attack on their ability to do their job, because I submit to the Minister of Education that those trustees are very, very capable of doing a job, in fact far more capable of doing that job than the Minister of Education. But what is he doing? He is ripping the authority away and saying, no, you might be elected and you might be at the local level, and, yes, you might deal with the parents on all the issues, but you have no authority. I am taking that away because I know better than all of you.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that we have seen Bill 14 come into this Legislature, and I am speaking on the amendment to Bill 14, because I believe it is a flawed bill. I believe it has been brought in by a flawed minister who is working for a flawed government, the NDP government.

I think at the end of the day—and this is going to be interesting, because when in due time this bill does go to committee and we see that the public comes out and we know the trustees are going to come out and speak against it—we know full well, Mr. Speaker, they are going to be passionate about why it is wrong and the cost that it is going to lay onto the taxpayers

because they are being forced to amalgamate it will fall on the deaf ears of the NDP government.

They will not look at it and say, you know what, gosh, you have done the right thing. You have brought actual information. You have done your homework. Thank you for doing your homework and bringing it forward because you know what? We have made a mistake. We have made a mistake, and, in fact, we know this is going to cost money, not save money. Lo and behold, we have said it is going to save, but you have proven otherwise because you have done your homework, unlike us, oops, sorry, we must admit that. Yes, I was correct when I said the devil was in the detail because I did not know. Yes, I am the minister, so thank you very much, public, for coming forward, and we are going to take Bill 14 and we are going to turf it because we do not want the taxpayers of Manitoba to pay more money.

So, Mr. Speaker, I hope that this NDP government listens to those people and does the right thing and withdraws Bill 14. Thank you.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I want to speak to issues that have arisen in the constituency of Fort Whyte, particularly with regard to Bill 14. I spoke the other day about a number of the general issues that have arisen with the bill, in particular those issues that are causing significant problems in the Assiniboine South School Division which accounts for a portion of the constituency I represent.

But I also want to indicate to this Government and to the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) that there are serious concerns in the Fort Garry School Division which I also represent in the constituency of Fort Whyte. Both of those divisions are being forced to amalgamate. Both of them have identified issues with the minister on numerous occasions, issues which the minister has not had the intestinal fortitude to answer, either to the school trustees, to the administration or to the satisfaction of the parents advisory council in all situations.

I think that is very unfair to the ratepayers in both of those school divisions who are being told and being told accurately by both school divisions that amalgamation is going to cost

significant money, not only significant in terms of one time where the estimation is that the combining of school divisions will likely result in a minimum of a \$1.5-million amalgamation cost, but also there will be ongoing costs that will be at a minimum in the neighbourhood of \$1.5 million to \$2 million for combining both school divisions.

It is unbelievable that this minister and this Government would absolutely ignore the people of Fort Whyte and the people of those two school divisions who have indicated this clearly and, in particular, would ignore the advice of the trustees.

* (16:00)

Under set-up questions from backbenchers again which we heard today, the minister stood up in this House and read these letters that they have coerced out of their friends, but they do not talk about St. Vital. They do not talk about the letters they get from Fort Garry. They do not talk about the letters they get from Assiniboine South because they are afraid to talk about reality, because they know that amalgamation is going to cost more money, and they will not address the issue.

In fact, this minister ought to be ashamed. In dealing with it, he will not even talk to the press about it now. He sends his deputy minister out to talk to the press about a bill that he has before this House, because he is so embarrassed that he will not talk to the bill on his own. I think that is despicable behaviour from this minister.

We found out this week that as a result of amalgamation, as a result of the increased cost in amalgamation, there is not going to be funding for the expansion of Henry G. Izatt middle school in Whyte Ridge. That is a direct result of this Government going out and dictating that school divisions have to amalgamate and instructing their friends that they have appointed to the Public Schools Finance Board not to fund capital projects in this area.

As a result, what do we see? We see that as early as the fall of 2003, in what will then be the new Pembina Trails School Division, we will see that students will lose access to their art room; they will lose access to science labs.

Teachers will have to travel. They will not have their own classroom to teach the children in; they will not have a classroom full of resources, full of books, full of displays that they can use to teach the children. The teachers will have to travel from classroom to classroom to teach their children.

All because this Government is forging ahead in a politically motivated way that will cost the taxpayers more money, that will mean fewer resources for the classroom, and which will deprive the children in both of those schools of a higher quality of education, and deprive the teachers and the administrators of the opportunity to provide the type of setting that they need to provide our young children with the very best education possible.

I had indicated earlier that, today, I was visited, the Legislature was visited by a group from Whyte Ridge Elementary School, about 80 students. When I met with them in room 200, their biggest concern was what was going to happen to them when they graduated from Whyte Ridge Elementary School. Where would they be bused to? Their parents are concerned, and quite rightly so. This is a very, very serious issue and one that needs to be taken seriously by this Government, and one that needs to be addressed immediately. They are still fresh in people's minds, the issue of busing and of transportation.

In the Assiniboine South School Division, presently, there is a minimum of busing, but there is some busing for such issues as woodworking shops and automotive shops. Children go from Linden Woods by bus over to the Charleswood area. Just four years ago, we had a very, very serious bus accident at the corner of McGillivray and Kenaston which resulted in a number of injuries and, certainly, a lot of trauma to close to 30 students, I think, that were on that bus. In fact, one young individual, a friend of my son's, spent close to four weeks in hospital recovering from injuries.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

So, legitimately, the parents are concerned; the teachers, the administrators are concerned, and, as I saw today, the children, themselves, are very, very concerned. What type of environment

is that to put those young children into, an environment where their biggest concern is not, is the sun going to shine today and we are going to get out for recess, but what is going to happen when we graduate? Are we going to have to climb on board a bus, or are we going to have to be separated from one of our brothers or sisters who is fortunate enough to go to Henry G. Izatt School and we are going to have to get bused over to older Fort Garry? Are we going to get separated from our friends?

That causes real concern with those young people, and it causes great concern with their parents. So I would call on this Government to do the right thing, to admit to what they are being told virtually by every school division in the province, and, that is, enforced amalgamation is going to cost more money.

This myth about the \$10-million saving is being dispelled more and more every day, and the Government needs to listen to that information that is coming directly from the school administrators and from the trustees, and needs to take some action to it.

This Government needs to go back to the drawing board. Actually, the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) should have the courtesy to put his crayons back in his desk and actually go out and have some meaningful consultations with people, particularly in those divisions which he has decided to force amalgamation on.

For the record, I would like to indicate that I have received copies of correspondence to the minister from both the Assiniboine South and the Fort Garry school divisions. That correspondence, of course, does not get read into the record by the Minister of Education, because that correspondence clearly indicates that those two school divisions see serious, serious flaws in Bill 14, and that they would like them, not only to withdraw the bill, but, in fact, to rethink the whole process.

Fort Garry School Division in particular, and I quote from a letter written by Karen Velthuys, the chair of the board, to the minister on May 28, and I should also add that myself and some of my colleagues are meeting with the trustees of the Fort Garry School Division

tonight. We met with the trustees of the Assiniboine South School Division last week. These meetings are being asked for by the trustees to express to the local MLAs their very, very serious concerns, not only about the forced amalgamation, but about the lack of process, the lack of consultation that has taken place, and now the lack of response from the minister or from his department to any of their very, very serious concerns that they have raised.

The Government does not respond when presented with the facts, that it is going to cost more money. Instead, they get platitudes from the minister. They get arrogance from the minister, who stands before a meeting of the presidents of the advisory councils, and has the gall to tell them that he has sheaves and sheaves and boxes full of information that support his case back in his office. But, when asked to produce some, to actually bring some of that information, he refuses to do so. He says: Oh, no, no, there is too much information. I cannot sort through it. That is the type of arrogance we get from this Government.

The Member from St. Vital, his deputy, wants to contradict it. She should have the courage to get up on her feet and put it on the record, but, of course, she will not because she cannot even deal with the issues in St. Vital. She cannot deal with the fact that her own school board has sent a letter to this minister, advising him how unfair and how ridiculous the new funding formula is. So, before she wants to chirp from her seat, I would advise her to get her facts right, to come out and visit with the people of Assiniboine South. As a matter of fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she should come out and, first of all, start with the people of St. Vital, who have thoroughly chastised her and her minister for their missteps. But the Fort Garry School Division, as indicated, has written to the minister. They have told the minister that this legislation is seriously flawed. This legislation allows the minister, and I quote: to impose arbitrary limitless decisions on school divisions, which may not be practicable, nor necessarily even in the best interest of the students in the local community.

This is a government that stands up and talks about how they are trying to improve education when, in fact, what they are doing is reducing funding at the same time. Funding for operating

costs of schools has fallen to an all-time low under this Government. As a matter of fact, they try to hide that by their clever little shifts of funds. This is the same math we use for Hydro. They take their financial statements and move from the Department of Finance a property tax credit, move it into Education, none of which goes to the classroom, none of which goes to school divisions, and they claim that to be an increase in funding in the education system. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a lark. That is a fallacy. It is one that has been proven wrong, documented, not only by the Manitoba Teachers' Society, but documented by Winnipeg School Division No. 1 in a rebuttal that they sent to the *Winnipeg Free Press*. One would think, if there was any school division in the province that would stand up and support this Government, it would be Winnipeg No. 1, but, no, they felt it necessary to refute the minister's argument regarding funding.

* (16:10)

So he can stand up in this House and make up all the information he wants, but the truth is out there. The truth is known by the school divisions. The truth is known by St. Vital School Division when it comes to funding. Once again, I would encourage the Member for St. Vital to get out and talk to the people in her community so that she has a clearer understanding of their views, not only of the increased costs of amalgamation, which she has clearly been told by St. Boniface School Division, but also to speak to the inadequacies of the new funding system, which her very own school division has identified to her as worse.

I quote from their letter in conclusion: We believe that the Government is not fulfilling its commitment to improve the equitable funding of school divisions. So, once again, trustees, people involved in the system, people close to the system, are refuting actions taken by this Government. What does this Government do? Does the minister go out and talk to the people? Does the minister go out and talk to the press? Does his ministerial assistant go out and talk to the press? Does she go out and talk to the people? Do they answer questions? Well, the answer to all those is no. What do they do? They send their deputy minister out to talk to the press. They send Dr. Benjamin Levin out to talk

to the media because they cannot explain it. They know they are wrong, so they send someone else out. Quite frankly, probably the only reason they are sending him out is because they know he is returning to the university and will not have to bear the brunt of their mistakes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a number of points that have been made, that need to be made with regard to extra costs: Assiniboine South School Division has done their numbers, 1.4% increase as a result of amalgamation costs; Fort Garry School Division, 9% property tax increase as a result of this Government's misguided decision to remove the property tax from the University of Manitoba. Instead of filling in the funding, they dropped the burden on the taxpayers in south Winnipeg. They dropped the burden on the citizens of Fort Whyte, on Assiniboine's citizens of Charleswood, on the citizens of St. Boniface, because they did not have the courage to do the right thing. If they really felt that this was the right thing to do, they should have had the courage to stand up and backfill. Instead, they are downloading costs on the ratepayers, on the property taxpayers in Winnipeg and, in fact, on the property taxpayers in Brandon so that they can stand up and try to make some political hay.

People in Winnipeg, people in Manitoba, they see through this charade, and they have a clear understanding that this Government is on the wrong track. The people in St. Vital have a clear understanding that the member that represents them is clearly on the wrong track, and they have a clear understanding, particularly those people in the constituency of Fort Whyte, that this Government is not only practising punishment politics on the adults, those over 18 who did not vote for their representative in the last election, but they have taken it a step further. They are punishing the children because their parents did not vote accordingly, and this Government needs to be ashamed of that.

We have a situation where young children are going to be faced with busing simply because their parents did not vote the right way. What kind of message is that to send to the youth of Manitoba? I mean, it is bad enough that this Government will not do the right thing and build some type of overpass or underpass to allow—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Loewen: The members hoot because the members do not care about the young children on buses who have to cross those tracks day in and day out to have their basic education needs met. That is how arrogant this Government is. They should stop and think more about the children. They should think about the safety of the children. They should maybe sit down and have a discussion with those 30 children that were on the bus that was involved in the accident at Kenaston and McGillivray four years ago and see how they feel about being bused across major, major high-speed thoroughfares and having to travel great distances to achieve the same type of, in fact, a reduced educational opportunity as other children in the city of Winnipeg.

Once again, I chastise the Premier (Mr. Doer) because, on many occasions, he has stood up in this House and tried to claim credit for being the member in Cabinet who had the foresight to create and zone and plan Whyte Ridge. Well, if he had the foresight and he wants to claim to have the foresight that he says he had in 1987 and 1988, when the Pawley government moved ahead with that subdivision, then he should have had the foresight at that time to understand that people living in those communities have a right to have their children educated in that community.

It is unfortunate that he is using punishment politics to withhold badly needed funds for the additions to schools that would house the children so that they have an opportunity to access a first-class education. He should be ashamed of that, and he should get out and talk to those people. He should force his Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and the minister's ministerial assistant to get out and meet face to face with the parents in Whyte Ridge and explain to them exactly how this forced amalgamation has resulted in them losing the opportunity to have Henry G. Izatt School expanded.

That is not the only issue. A very serious issue with the residents of Linden Woods is the fact that, as a result of this forced amalgamation, we may lose our dual-track French immersion school, and that those children in Linden Woods, who are now afforded the opportunity to take

French immersion in their neighbourhood school, may also face the issue of being bused. That, again, is of serious, serious concern to not only the children, but to parents and the administrators and the teachers in Linden Woods school, which has been there, and been a dual-track school, for well over 10 years—I think probably closing in on the 15-year anniversary of that school.

So, on those notes, I would ask this Government, I would ask this minister, to do the right thing, to stand with us in this House and to vote for the amendment to this bill, and to go back to the drawing board, maybe to find a new box of crayons for the minister that he can go back and rethink his boundary issue. Maybe what they should do is wait until they appoint a new deputy minister of Education, because they put the deputy minister in a horrible position. A number of years ago he wrote an article about how there were not any savings in amalgamation, how bigger was not necessarily better, and he was right. He is on the public record, and now this Government is forcing him in a position where he has to be sent out in front of the media and try and defend an action that was taken purely for political gain, an action that had no forethought in terms of the effects it would have on the ratepayers, was not well thought out, did not have ample forethought into how it would affect the lives of young people in those communities where forced amalgamation was going to happen.

I would remind the minister that the Manitoba way, as stated by the Premier (Mr. Doer), was to do these types of amalgamations on a voluntary basis where local elected officials who understand local circumstances can get together and negotiate. It may take a little more time, but the results are far, far better than this Government simply dictating to the people of Manitoba what the boundaries are going to be.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I call on this Government, I call on the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), I call on his assistant, to do the right thing. Stand up and agree to this amendment; withdraw this bill and get on with a reasonable and manageable consultation process that will truly allow the people of Manitoba to have a say, and not this sham that they are trying

to perpetrate in terms of, oh well, get it to committee, get it to committee. They know full well that when it gets to committee not only will this Government and its members limit the amount of time that people have to speak to committee, but, as they have done in the past, they will force people to come to that committee and sit through the night. They have done that repeatedly since they have come into office.

I would ask them to do the right thing. If they are going to call committee, if they are not going to stand up and support this amendment, to at least have the decency, and show some decency toward the people of Manitoba. Have the committee at reasonable hours spread over a number of days so that people can come and properly air their concerns. And, at the end of that process, I would ask them to listen, and listen to Manitobans and vote accordingly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put these words on the record, and, hopefully, the Government will come to its senses and do the right thing.

* (16:20)

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill is nothing but a smoke screen for a power grab by this Minister of Education. It is nothing but a bill that squelches democracy. They do not need this bill for amalgamating school divisions. They have the authority already to amalgamate school divisions. This bill is really a smoke screen that allows them to actually have the minister mess around with school division budgets, and this bill is what gives him that opportunity to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this bill squelches democracy. It takes away the rights of individuals to have their day in court. It allows the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), who is quite removed from the schools, to impose arbitrary and limitless decisions on the local school divisions. In fact, it allows him only to do that on amalgamated school divisions, so it is really creating two tiers of education here; where a minister can actually mess around with the budgets of some school divisions, and not the ones that are not being forced to amalgamate.

This whole bill is quite interesting because, in opposition, the NDP was very opposed to

amalgamation; they were opposed to the Norrie report when it was tabled; and we certainly see, for some reason, they are now in favour of this. The deputy minister, who was opposed to it prior to becoming the deputy minister, is now being put in a position where he has to defend it for a Minister of Education who does not even have the graciousness, or the courtesy, to face the media and address these questions. He is hiding out from them, which is shameful in itself.

When you have a bill that squelches democracy, when you have a bill that takes away the rights of an individual to have their day in court, we can see why this particular Government did not want to take this out for public consultation. Because I cannot imagine that they would have been welcomed with open arms once people found out that this bill was more than just about amalgamation. This bill is more about a power grab for a Minister of Education, and has very little to do with amalgamating school divisions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, nobody is opposed to voluntary amalgamations, if voluntary amalgamations can show an advantage. We have seen school divisions in Manitoba who have seen this advantage; who have seen an economic savings; who have seen an improvement in the quality of education, and they have voluntarily amalgamated. Nobody objects to voluntary amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

In fact, the Premier (Mr. Doer) of this province told MAST, told others, that he was not going to force amalgamations on the people of this province. That was not the Manitoba way. He did that in a roomful of MAST representatives. He got rousing applause for his comments, and, in fact, his word meant nothing to him.

We have seen that with the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) lately too. They say one thing, they certainly did in opposition, and their word does not seem to have that same value now that they are in government. They are flip-flopping from previous positions then, they are flip-flopping in positions now, and we are certainly seeing an NDP government that does not seem to find it important to keep their word

to the people of Manitoba. We have certainly seen it in the whole area of health care.

Mr. Speaker, we are not opposed to voluntary amalgamations, but we certainly are opposed to forced amalgamations. We are also opposed to the process by which this happened—a process that is objectionable to many, many people, and actually has been flawed from day one. There have been no broad-ranging public consultations. In fact, what we see is a government that is saying one thing and then doing quite the other. There has been no analysis by a review commission. There has been no evidence of any savings.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I would like to put on the record some information of some numbers that have been crunched in my own school division. At first, when people in Charleswood heard that there were going to be amalgamations, there was a feeling that, well, if there could be savings, if there can be improvement in quality of education, then there would not be an objection to amalgamation. Unfortunately, what has happened is after the numbers are all crunched, we are not seeing any savings that are going to be occurring in my area. In fact, people in my area are quite shocked to find out that, in fact, the costs are going to rise.

My Rotary Club had a presentation recently, and they were shocked to find out that the information presented to them by this Government was actually inaccurate, because the people that made the presentation before them told them that there would be no savings, and, in fact, there will not be. My community leaders, upon hearing the fact that there will be no savings, are shocked as well, and amazed that this Government would try to misrepresent themselves by saying there would be savings.

This minister has been asked many, many times to put forward information that validates the reason for this legislation, to indicate where he is getting his \$10 million of savings. One would think that, if the minister wanted to have credibility in being able to present his position, he would be able to put forward information that can support his decision. Instead, he is not able to do that. He is not able to substantiate the fact

that amalgamation will save money, because there are no savings.

For Assiniboine South School Division, it should be told that the funding ratio of Assiniboine South's budgeted expenditures is 53 percent through special levy versus 46 percent from provincial funding. So provincial funding provides only 46 percent of the funding to my school division. Although you have a Minister of Education that is running around telling everybody about the wonderful level of funding, the highest in all time that is ever being provided to school divisions, there is only a provision of 46 percent from the Province to the Assiniboine South School Division.

Regarding amalgamation in my area where Assiniboine South School Division is being forced to amalgamate with Fort Garry, there is a potential one time in ongoing amalgamation costs of \$800 000. There is a potential for additional recurring annual costs projected to be in excess of \$750 000, due to harmonization of salaries, benefits and working conditions. There are going to be higher transportation costs of \$25 000, due to the elimination of fees for Grades 4 to 6 students who are eligible due to distance and are not required to pay that fee in Fort Garry. So the school division is going to have to pick that up. So it will be the taxpayers of the school division that are now going to have to bear that cost.

Although the minister stood in the House the other day crowing about the fact that parents do not have to pay it, well, where does he think the money comes from when school divisions have to pay it? Of course, parents are going to have to pay for this. It is just in a different way.

The Assiniboine South School Division recently spent \$400 000 to implement two new computer systems. Neither of these is being used in Fort Garry. He never gave them an adequate time line in which to bring about amalgamation, never gave them warning to, perhaps, prevent something like an expenditure on computers. Nobody was given adequate time for preparations. So \$400 000 was spent, almost half a million dollars, so that they could have the computer equipment they need, and now they find that it is not compatible with what is used in Fort Garry.

I think once the people of Charleswood become much more aware of the other facet of what they are going to have to pick up with the forced amalgamation with Fort Garry, they are going to be extremely disturbed because, with a decision by the current Government to forgive property taxes payable by the University of Manitoba, my school division is now going to have join Fort Garry in making that amount up by going to our taxpayers. When fully implemented, the impact on special levy for Fort Garry taxpayers is expected to be in excess of 9 percent over a five-year phase-in which is now going to have to be shared by Assiniboine South taxpayers.

* (16:30)

So, if we start adding this up, we are going to be paying a lot of money because of this forced amalgamation. So, when the minister is saying that it is going to save money, he surely cannot prove it and it is not going to be obvious in the Assiniboine South School Division and in the constituency of Charleswood. Our local property taxes are going to rise by 1.4 percent next year due to the provision for amalgamation costs. By the time we add everything else into this, I would not be surprised to see that number rise. There may be increases in other layers of administration due to a larger division size, which would only be partially offset by reductions in trustees and senior administration.

It is not clear how our Council of Presidents' organization is going to be able to operate under a 33-school model with approximately 70 members participating in interactive discussion on policy issues. When we were in government, we certainly supported parental involvement in schools. We found that there was evidence that when parents were involved in schools, their children did better. We had a very effective Council of Presidents in the Assiniboine South School Division. Very involved. Even the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has been on record a number of times indicating how impressed he was with their ability to function. Now, he has not given them an opportunity, though, to figure out how they are going to possibly be able to function if there are 70 of them around the table under a 33-school model.

In fact, I think it is very likely that he is going to demolish the effectiveness of the

Council of Presidents that was so effective in making a difference in the education quality for their children in the Assiniboine South School Division.

Mr. Speaker, contract amounts for buy-out clauses of personnel is not yet known and, again, could make the cost of amalgamation rise in Assiniboine South School Division. So, when I look at what this is doing, what this forced amalgamation is doing, it does not seem to be having a positive effect on what is going to happen in my particular area. As the information becomes more widely dispersed in my constituency, I think there will be more and more people upset.

I am not sure that this Minister of Education or the Doer government is really going to care, because they do not have an NDP representative there. I do not think they are going to be too bothered to see Conservative voters in Charleswood upset with their decision. As my colleague before me stated, we certainly are seeing punishment politics at play here with this particular legislation. We certainly saw that they did not touch other areas, like St. James, where the parents were absolutely ready to rally on this issue, if they were forced to amalgamate. The parents were all lined up, they had a plan in place, and they were ready for a battle with this Government. Did this Government touch them in amalgamation where the member of Assiniboia won only by three seats the last time? No. St. James and that area have been left untouched.

Certainly, I think it speaks very loudly to the fact that we are seeing punishment politics well at play. Trust an NDP government to play that game.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's lack of process, their lack of consultation, their lack of understanding of the impact on taxpayers, their lack of respect for the democratic process, their lack of respect for rights of people and individuals to be heard, their lack of openness and fairness, their lack of judgment, their lack of good management, all display an incredible arrogance by this Government.

When we see what this Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) has displayed when asked by someone from rural Manitoba who

said, you know, why do you not answer questions in Question Period, he said, well, it is Question Period; it is not answer period.

We have certainly seen this Minister of Education try to bamboozle people in the province with that kind of arrogance displayed when he has answered questions in this House.

Mr. Speaker, that does not speak well of this Government. It does not speak well of this minister and, if they think that people are not paying attention, they are misunderstanding what is happening in the community, because people in the community are tuning in. The people in the community are very offended by what they are seeing with this particular legislation.

When people start seeing their tax bills go up, they are going to be even more offended. I think the constituents of Charleswood are certainly not going to be pleased when they find out that their tax bills are going to go up because of the forced amalgamation with the Fort Garry School Division. So, Mr. Speaker, with those few short words, I appreciate the opportunity of having had the opportunity to make these comments on behalf of my constituents in Charleswood.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the proposed amendment by the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson)

THAT the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "THAT" and substituting the following therefor:

Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended), be not now read a second time but that the order be discharged, the bill withdrawn and the subject matter thereof referred to the Standing Committee on Law Amendments.

Is it the will of the House for the—

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: For the amendment. No?

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in support of the amendment, please 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. So I declare that the amendment is defeated.

Now we will go to the main motion of No. 14.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on the main motion, No. 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended), standing in the name of—and the debate remains open.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Official Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, there comes a time when the opposition to a bill is so outspoken that even we have to turn around and say it is time to hear from the people. We are going to send this bill to committee, because we believe that the public needs an opportunity to put their voice forward on this bill.

Mr. Speaker, we have been listening to the people, and we are only hoping that this minister will listen when it finally does get to committee. So I am afraid it is not fair that this minister is bringing forward legislation that is giving him extra powers, but I am prepared at this time to move it on to committee and hear what the people have to say.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is the motion on Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended).

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

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Laurendeau: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Recorded vote having been requested, call in the members.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Minister of Education, Training and Youth, Bill 14, The Public Schools Modernization Act (Public Schools Act Amended).

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Dacquay, Driedger, Dyck, Faurschou, Gerrard, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, Loewen, Mitchelson, Murray, Penner (Emerson), Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Schuler, Smith (Fort Garry), Stefanson, Tweed.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 29, Nays 18.

Mr. Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

* (17:10)

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I have several committee meetings to announce.

The Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, July 2, at 10 a.m., to consider the 2000, 2001 annual reports for the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

The Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Monday, July 8, at 10 a.m., to consider the 2000 and 2001 annual reports of Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Monday, July 29, at 10 a.m., to consider matters to be referred.

The Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Tuesday, June 25, 6:30 p.m., to consider Bill 14.

Mr. Speaker, I would also ask if it is the will of the House to call it six o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Tuesday, July 2, at 10 a.m., to consider the 2000 and 2001 annual reports of Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

Also, the Standing Committee on Public Utilities and Natural Resources will meet on Monday, July 8, at 10 a.m., to consider the 2000 and 2001 annual reports of the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board.

Also, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet on Monday, July 29, at 10

a.m., to consider matters to be referred at a later time.

Also, the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Tuesday, June 25, at 6:30 p.m., to consider Bill 14.

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

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 20, 2002

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