



Second 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*



Vol. LI No. 51B - 1:30 p.m., Thursday, June 21, 2001

ISSN 0542-5492

MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
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FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
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GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
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LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
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LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
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NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
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RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
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SMITH, Scott, Hon.	Brandon West	N.D.P.
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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 21, 2001

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Steve Breland, Carol Thompson, Ken Biberdorf and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba (Mr. Doer) consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Marylou Hockley, Kirk Hay, Maureen Watchorn and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

Mrs. Heather Stefanson (Tuxedo): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of William Bilton, Brent Pooles, Grant Stefanson and others, praying that the Premier of Manitoba consider reversing his decision to not support construction of an underpass at Kenaston and Wilkes.

PTH 9 Upgrade

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): Mr. Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Herb Jones, Margaret Krystia, Mavis Wood and others, praying that the Minister of Transportation and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) consider upgrading Provincial Trunk Highway No. 9 and the Selkirk Corridor thoroughfares immediately.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Kenaston Underpass

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen), I have reviewed the petition, and it complies with the rules and

practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read? [*Agreed*]

Please read.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Clerk please read.

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson), 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? *[Agreed]*

Clerk, please read.

* (13:35)

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

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

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

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

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

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

National Aboriginal Day

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I have a statement for the House.

As Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, I am very pleased to recognize the many contributions Aboriginal people have made to this province and to this country. As we celebrate today and reflect on the rich culture and strength of Aboriginal people, we must remember that many Aboriginal people continue to face severe social and economic challenges. It is my desire and the desire of this Government to bring about a new era of trust and partnership with Aboriginal people throughout this province. We have been able to make some significant progress in many areas over the past 20 months, but there is much more that needs to be done. We cannot simply sit still or say it is not our jurisdiction.

Our efforts to address the AJI report continue with major progress being made on justice issues and child welfare jurisdiction. Last month I was very pleased to co-host a federal-provincial-territorial meeting of Aboriginal ministers in Winnipeg. At that meeting, all ministers formally endorsed a report strengthening Aboriginal participation in the economy. A report for an action plan to address all provinces and territories along with the federal government is now being worked on.

Across Canada, only three of fifty Aboriginal languages, Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibway, are spoken enough to be considered safe from extinction. About 10 percent of Manitoba's workforce are of Aboriginal descent. In 10 years time, this will be approaching 20 percent. This means that 40 000 or more new Aboriginal members will be in the workforce by 2011. The Aboriginal unemployment rate in Winnipeg is more than three times the non-Aboriginal average. The unemployment rate in northern Aboriginal communities is even higher. We must turn this around, and this Government is committed to turning it around.

As we look at the reality of climate change and the effect upon winter roads, it is clear that there have to be changes. To build an economy in First Nation and Métis communities will require some basic infrastructure such as all-weather roads that do not yet exist in more than 25 communities throughout northern Manitoba. Our Government has made progress in improving northern roads and airports and is

in discussions with the federal government on proceeding with an all-weather road on the east side of Lake Winnipeg.

As a province, we are working to improve health care services in the North and to increase post-secondary opportunities to vital areas for improving the quality of life in Aboriginal communities. As well, our Government is reviewing what can be done to improve the housing stock in northern Manitoba.

* (13:40)

Progress on dealing with outstanding treaty land entitlement continues. Last December, I stated the position of the Province is that the Northern Flood Agreement is a modern-day treaty, consistent with the recommendation of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry. Discussions and some progress are occurring in Cross Lake. Last month, aerial surveys helped move forward the transfer of land. It is our hope that progress on the proposed titanium mine will occur in the near future. Work with trappers is ongoing, as are improvements to the roads at Cross Lake and other northern communities.

Last year, we announced the creation of TEAM, developing a culture of commerce. The program is now in eight communities: South Indian Lake, Pikwitonei, Wabowden, Sherridon, Norway House, Moose Lake, Churchill and Easterville. TEAM businesses range from bookkeeping services to craft co-ops, gas bars, insurance outlets, furniture making, convenience stores, small appliance repairs, contractors and other activities involving more than 50 individuals. They hope to be in more than 15 Aboriginal communities by August of this year.

Over the last year, we have announced commitments by Manitoba Hydro and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to increase the percentage of Aboriginal people in their workforce, and we have been strong supporters of the federal CHAMPIONS program and the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce Aboriginal Employment Initiative, both of which are targeted to increasing the number of Aboriginal employees in the private sector.

We firmly believe that it is time for all Manitobans to count Aboriginal workers in and to do so in numbers that are truly representative of growing Aboriginal populations. We expect that in 2011, when one in four people in Winnipeg are of Aboriginal origin, one in five employed workers in Winnipeg will be also of Aboriginal origin. This is the goal that Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs will do everything in its power to achieve, and is one of the main reasons we are working with the major Aboriginal organizations in addressing urban Aboriginal issues. Aboriginal people will play a greater role in the economy of this province in the future. Hiring Aboriginal workers is just plain good business.

Next month, the Manitoba Indigenous Games will take place in Cross Lake. In 2002, both the North American Indigenous Games and the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards will be held in Manitoba.

Nelson House First Nation and Split Lake First Nation are both in negotiations with Manitoba Hydro over future hydro development in their territories. The self-government memorandum of understanding with the Sioux Valley First Nation, signed this spring, is another example of the progress being made within communities.

As we look towards the new economy of the next few years, we know that the past attitudes must change. Aboriginal people will no longer tolerate second-class treatment. National Aboriginal Day is both a day to remember and a day to look ahead but more importantly a day to recognize the survival of Aboriginal people as we begin the new century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): I thank my honourable friend for the ministerial statement he shared with the House today. I would like to indicate from this side of the House I know his role and his challenges that lay ahead of him are great. We would like to offer our support where we can in those areas to be able to accomplish some of the goals he has indicated in his statement.

Mr. Speaker, it also gives me great pleasure as well to put a few words on the record about National Aboriginal Day.

In December 1995, Elijah Harper hosted a sacred assembly in Hull, Québec, at which a national day to recognize Aboriginal peoples and their contribution to Canada was discussed. Following consultations, Aboriginal groups and the federal government selected June 21, which coincides with the summer solstice. The summer solstice holds special significance for many Aboriginal groups, who equate this day with growth, both in terms of growth of the land and spiritual growth.

In 1996, former Governor General of Canada Romeo LeBlanc proclaimed June 21 as National Aboriginal Day. On the importance of this day, LeBlanc stated: It is always important to remember how a nation evolved. It is very important for Canadians to understand their history, the history of all who live in Canada. National Aboriginal Day is a chance for all Canadians to celebrate the rich contributions Aboriginal peoples have made to Canada, this great country. It is an opportunity to share in Aboriginal peoples' plans and dreams for the future.

* (13:45)

I know that a number of events are taking place around Manitoba today to mark this occasion. These include a Sunrise Ceremony at The Forks in Winnipeg today; traditional dancing, singing, and arts and crafts displays in Thompson; storytellers and bannock making at Wasagamung; and a powwow in Dauphin. These events provide a good opportunity for all Manitobans to become better acquainted with our province's rich First Nations, Inuit and Métis culture and heritage. These activities also reflect an immense pride and a willingness to share the Aboriginal experience with Canadians.

I am also delighted to hear today, Mr. Speaker, that the minister has issued a press release that two \$1,000 bursaries have been awarded from the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation to Andrea McIvor and Trisha Goulet. These are the first two recipients, and I would like to congratulate them on being chosen to receive \$1,000 bursaries each.

I understand that Trisha is about to begin her third year of training as a dental hygienist at the University of Manitoba. Andrea McIvor is from Cross Lake and is completing her educational assistance diploma this summer at the University of Winnipeg. She wants to begin her Northern Teacher Education Program through Brandon University in Cross Lake this fall.

I congratulate both of them on being chosen as recipients of this, what will be the first of many, many bursaries, I hope. As well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge all Manitobans who are interested and committed to eliminating the barriers of racism and sexism in society, that they can do so by supporting the Helen Betty Osborne Memorial Foundation. Cheques can be made payable to that foundation through the Department of Justice. I urge all Manitobans to participate in supporting that cause.

I hope that all Canadians will join our Aboriginal communities in celebrating National Aboriginal Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to speak on the members' statements.

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

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, National Aboriginal Day is a day to recognize the achievements of people in the Aboriginal community, whether that be in sports, the OCN hockey team last year, other areas of individual achievement. It is a time to recognize and to celebrate the advances that are being made, both in Winnipeg with Thunderbird House and the Aboriginal Centre and in a number of the communities.

Chief Clarence Easter talked to me recently about the progress in his community in terms of employment, and it is one example of where there is significant progress being made.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, I believe it is also important that we recognize today that there are some critical and urgent needs right now in Manitoba. I would mention, as an example, the fact that we have in the gallery Chief Shirley Castel, councillors and other

members of the Mathias Colomb First Nation. They are here because their community is in major trouble at the moment due to a fuel spill contamination. That contamination has meant that their administrative centre has been declared unusable, and they have nowhere, because there is no alternate site, to operate the administrative services for social services, housing, education, justice, concerns about law and order, economic development.

The origin of this oil spill was a Manitoba Hydro diesel generator. So it is a provincial liability and responsibility to get involved. There is an urgent and an acute need which must be addressed, and we need to work together with the federal government and people in the community. There are 2000 Manitobans in the Mathias Colomb community. Their needs must be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that they were addressed. It is time that this Government acted and not just spoke.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Inter-governmental Affairs): I would like leave to table the Annual Report of the Municipal Board for the Year 2000.

* (13:50)

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us from Ste. Rose School, 23 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mrs. Judy Wolfe. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

Also in the public gallery we have Chief Shirley Castel and councillors Ralph Caribou, Moses Castel, Brian Bighetty, Frank Dumas of the Mathias Colomb First Nation. They are the guests of the honourable Member for River Heights (Mr. Gerrard).

I would like to draw all members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery where we have with us today my brother Frank Tootoo, with his wife Becky and children Ami and Trent James from Baker Lake, Nunavut; my nephew Jordan Tootoo from Brandon, or I should say Brandon Wheat Kings; my nephew Aaron Pilakapsi from Rankin Inlet, Nunavut; my niece Charlotte Hickee from Rankin Inlet, Nunavut; and my sister Dorothy Tootoo from Vancouver, British Columbia.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Health Services Insurance Act Amendments-Withdrawal

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we have learned today that the College of Physicians and Surgeons are supportive of overnight stays in non-hospital facilities. In light of this new information that comes to us from health care professionals, those people that understand patients' safety, I wonder if the Minister of Health, instead of going forward with some sort of hidden agenda, if he will not do the right thing for all Manitobans and pull his legislation that bans overnight stays in non-hospitals.

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): It is ironic that a party that closed 1400 hospital beds is now demanding that we open up hospital beds in private hospitals. I find it passing strange for the members opposite through the '90s closed 1400 beds, closed Misericordia Hospital, tried to close emergency rooms across the city, and now they want us to open beds in private hospitals. I think it speaks for itself, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murray: I would like to table a letter of June 15, a letter from the College of Physicians and Surgeons to The Maples Surgical Centre. In that letter that goes on to support overnight stays in non-hospitals, they recognize and support it but they also say regrettably that it is very much a moot point because the introduction of the Government's new legislations will prohibit it.

Rather than putting a hidden agenda in front of Manitobans and attacking the safety of patients, will the minister put the safety of patients and all concerns of Manitobans first before his ideology and withdraw his bill to ban overnight stays in non-hospitals?

Mr. Chomiak: Let me read from the letter the member has just tabled with respect to this.

The clinics privileges panel was of the opinion that if the necessary nursing and other support staff and resources are in place and there is an appropriate physician on call, overnight stays could be allowed in such facilities in principle.

*(13:55)

Could be allowed. Well, very good. That is true, Mr. Speaker; it could be allowed if the resources are in place, but we are following the policy of past governments and not having private hospitals with overnight stays, which was the policy that that government followed, that we are following. For a member of a party that closed 1400 acute care beds in hospitals and the largest hospital in the history of the province of Manitoba in the guise of Misericordia Hospital now wanting us to open a private hospital, I think the agenda is very, very evident.

Mr. Murray: The Minister of Health has stated publicly that he has no plan, no grand scheme for solving the health care woes in Manitoba. He is fondly referred to as "Doctor Dolittle."

I would say that as we go through this issue that has to do with the proper thing for Manitobans, providing the kind of health care that Manitobans deserve, rather than doing the ideological thing, rather than operating on some kind of hidden agenda, why will he not give the kind of health care that Manitobans deserve and want and withdraw a bill that has either a hidden agenda or is ideologically driven but is wrong for patients' safety in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, well, as usual, the Leader of the Opposition is quite factually wrong. We have reversed the Tory policy of getting rid of doctors by expanding the number of doctors for the first time in a decade. We have

reversed the Tory policy of cancelling nurses' programs, by reintroducing nursing programs. We have doubled the number of nurses in training than when members were in office. We have reversed the Tory policy of cancelling the medical technology program. It was cancelled. We have reintroduced it to train medical technologists.

If members opposite do not get a glimmer of what the policy is, Mr. Speaker, I will repeat it. We reversed years of cuts, and we are putting in place a practical human resource plan. Our legislation follows the practice of not permitting overnight stays as a normal course. It does not affect patient care because services can be available, as long as it is not a normal course.

If members opposite were so concerned about beds, why did they close 1400 during the last 10 years?

Private Health Care Clinics Overnight Stays

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Speaker, we have just learned today that the College of Physicians and Surgeons is supportive of overnight stays in surgical centres. We are talking about surgical clinics, not private hospitals. But Bill 25 will not allow patients to be cared for in a clinic past eleven o'clock, even though the Canada Health Act allows that to happen.

Will the Minister of Health, without his usual hysterics, if he would not mind, listen to these doctors, these health care experts, and support their professional judgment and allow patients overnight stays in clinics?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as is usual, members opposite take a statement and try to manipulate it. The statement says: The clinical privileges committee, et cetera, says that overnight stays could be allowed in such facilities, in principle. They offer an opinion.

Members opposite had a law about private hospitals that they supported. All we are doing is we do not want the expansion of private hospitals, overnight stays in this jurisdiction. If

members opposite were concerned about patient safety, they would not have closed 1400 acute care beds during their 10 years in office.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Minister of Health why he has not fully committed to improving access to care for patients in Manitoba, why he is allowing his narrow view to prevent patients from getting faster treatment but also compromising patient safety. Why is he letting his ideology stop this from happening?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we have done more to provide additional services to the people of Manitoba in health care in the past 20 months than any time over the past decade of cuts that occurred in this province.

* (14:00)

In addition, one of the reasons we are taking the Pan Am Clinic from a private and moving it into a public sector is to be able to do more services in the public sector and not be faced with a situation that members opposite are obviously supportive of, a two-tier system with a paying system, where people who have more money can get to the top of the waiting list and people who do not have resources go to the bottom. Our system now depends on need. It has always been the principle of the Canada Health Act. We are trying to maintain that, and we are going to be doing more services in this jurisdiction. We are doing more services than at any other time in history, and with our initiative with the Pan Am Clinic we will be able to do more in addition.

Mrs. Driedger: Why does this Minister of Health allow his ideology to blind him so much that patients are being forced to wait and wait, longer and longer on waiting lists—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Patients are being forced to wait longer and longer on waiting lists, some of them with cancer, a lot of them in pain. He is waiting when solutions are right in front of him, and he

shamefully chooses to ignore them. This is the question. Yet the minister will stand up and talk about user fees and paying money to get to the top. That does not even exist in these clinics, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, a couple of things: Firstly, the Canadian Orthopedic Association did a survey across Canada and found Manitoba—I notice members opposite did not suggest that in any of their questions—had the third-lowest waiting list in the country.

It is interesting, when members opposite were faced with the situation with private clinics coming in and charging facility fees, what did members opposite do? They passed legislation restricting those private facilities, making them become surgical centres and having to have contracts with the government. They did the same policy that we are following, except now that they are in Opposition they are taking a different stand.

Manitobans know that we are being pragmatic, we are doing more services, we are looking at the public-private mix by taking Pan Am in. In addition we are continuing the contractual services with the private clinic. So it is a variety of services to increase capacity.

Private Health Care Clinics Overnight Stays

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Obviously, the letter from the College of Physicians and Surgeons today says that under the Canada Health Act overnight stays can be allowed in clinics throughout the province of Manitoba and right across Canada. Why is the Minister of Health bringing in a law that would deny access to those services for Manitobans who are sitting on long waiting lists waiting for treatment?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this session, the only solution offered by members opposite is why do you not give services to their Maples Clinic; no mention about any other issue except give the services to a private clinic, which clearly speaks to what members are talking about.

What the member says in her statement is not stated in this letter. It is an opinion offered by the College of Physicians and Surgeons. It says, and I will quote again: could be allowed in such facilities in principle. It said that, as an opinion, it could be allowed. It has not been allowed in the past in Manitoba. When members opposite were in government both the Pan Am and Western had capacity for overnight, and, as I understand it, never utilized it, because they knew the government in policy did not want to do it. We have hospital capacity where acute care centres will do hospital procedures and the surgical centres will do day surgery, which is what is required to be done in day surgery centres.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, why is this NDP government going against doctors who want to treat their patients here in the province of Manitoba and going against patients who need that treatment, who are sitting on long waiting lists? Why are they denying access that should be available under the Canada Health Act for Manitobans?

Mr. Chomiak: First off, Mr. Speaker, we are doing more procedures than at any other time in the history of the province. Second, the Canadian Orthopedic Association found, for hip and knee replacements and for knee surgery, we are the third best in the country. Thirdly, one of the reasons for the Pan Am conversion is because doctors want to have surgical centres, and they want to be able to do surgeries at surgical centres and we intend to have that, because that is an expanding area of surgery.

What we want to do is put acute care and more acute surgeries in hospitals where it is appropriate for overnight stays, et cetera, and day surgeries in day surgery centres where it is more appropriate. That has been recommended by CIHI, the national institute that says you should increase your capacity to do day surgery and outpatient surgery. That is what we are doing. It is the cutting edge, Mr. Speaker, no pun intended, of the health care field.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Why is this NDP government, this Minister of Health, saying to Manitobans: Go to Grafton, go to Grand Forks, pay for your

care down there, because we are not going to allow you to have it here in Manitoba?

Mr. Chomiak: This is not the era, as the member might remember when she was a member of Cabinet, when her Minister of Health would not allow Seven Oaks Hospital to operate its CAT scan, would not allow Concordia Hospital to operate its CAT scan, would not allow Misericordia Hospital to operate a CAT scan, and then, Mr. Speaker, they promptly closed Misericordia Hospital.

We have increased capacity, we will increase capacity, we are doing more surgeries. The only—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. MRIs increased by 40 percent, CAT scans by 9 percent, ultrasounds by 16 percent. We are doing more, and there are going to be announcements in the next few weeks to come in terms of increased capacity and ability in this system. We are continuing to do our efforts.

They had 10 years, and they did not do anything. We have done more in 20 months than they did in 10 years.

Arena/Entertainment Complex Public Consultations

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): In spite of howls of protest from those in our community who want to have public consultations regarding the location and the financing of the proposed new arena, our Premier (Mr. Doer) continues to drive negotiations secretly behind closed doors.

He has negotiated a deal that is going to end up with the public sector paying 70 percent to 80 percent of the costs of a new arena, and, at the end of that he is going to turn the keys over to the private sector to own and operate the building.

This is the same Premier, Mr. Speaker, who in 1996 called for a referendum before spending any money on a new arena. I would ask the Deputy Premier if she will now do the right thing and insist that her Premier stop driving

these negotiations behind closed doors until a full public disclosure has been of the business plan so that we can have a full public discussion, not only of the financing but of alternative sites for this project.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): I recognize that the question comes from a member who was deeply involved, as was his leader, in a previous discussion about an arena rather than an entertainment centre, something which was to be dedicated to one particular sport, something which was done entirely behind closed doors, something which had a variety of public funds in front of it. One day it was \$90 million when they were applying to infrastructure. When they came to an election, it was \$10 million. Then we heard, I think, it was \$37 million after the election. All done behind closed doors.

Perhaps the member would like to put his position on the record as to what in fact the real number was in that original Jets deal. I would be delighted to hear it.

* (14:10)

Point of Order

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

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Again, we understand why the Opposition may feel provoked. They are saying again, do not do as we have done. It just points out that they have a double standard.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. According to *Beauchesne's* Citation 417: Answers to questions should deal with the matter raised. I would ask the co-operation of all honourable ministers.

VLT Revenues

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Deputy Premier if she is aware that in spite of the assurance of the Premier (Mr.

Doer) that the VLT revenue dedicated to the financing and debt of this new structure would be capped at \$1.5 million a year for 25 years, in fact the term sheet indicates that the VLT revenue will be a minimum of \$1.5 million a year for 25 years and may rise as high as \$3 million per year for 25 years.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): I recognize that the honourable member is relatively new to this House. I would remind him that he does have an obligation to bring correct information to the House. In fact, he has a duty to do that.

I think if the member rereads the term sheet, the publicly available term sheet both from City Council and through having been tabled in this House, and if he were to read that and if he were not to make the same mistakes that his Leader (Mr. Murray) and the Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) have made in interpreting the letter of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, a complete misinterpretation of what they said, I think the same member has done exactly the same with this.

Point of Order

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

If this minister would like we could repeat the question if she did not hear it, but she is dancing.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, the minister was simply pointing out that the information in the question, as so many questions before are similar, there was incorrect information. It is important that the context of the question be available to Manitobans, and we pointed out that the information was inaccurate once again.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. It is a dispute over the facts.

Public Audit

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, this minister is putting incorrect information on the record, and she should be ashamed of that.

I would ask this minister: If she truly believes that her numbers are right, will she and the Premier (Mr. Doer) call on the public Auditor to do an independent, unbiased review of the term sheet and the final proposal and the business plan for the True North project so that the Auditor can give an unbiased opinion on what the true percentage of public sector funds is in this project?

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): The True North entertainment complex term sheet is publicly available, both through this House, it is a tabled document, it is publicly available through City Council where it was also tabled.

I would like to refer the honourable member, who I think does need to reread this, to page 8, section B, subsection 2 which talks about a revenue allocation formula. A revenue allocation formula, not the revenue allocation. It deals with the allocation formula will be determined, and if I may quote, to provide 75 percent of the first \$2 million in annual gross revenues to the True North. In the event annual gross revenues exceed \$2 million, the revenue allocation formula may be adjusted downward to provide 20 percent of gross revenues in excess of \$2 million, i.e., the one that is applicable to others. In the event that a minimum of \$1.5 million is not returned to True North, i.e., that they do not reach that level, the revenue allocation formula may be adjusted upwards.

What the member unfortunately has misconstrued is the difference between a revenue allocation and a revenue allocation formula. I ask him to reread that as the public in general has done so that he understands that.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Fort Whyte, on a new question.

VLT Revenues

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): I appreciate the fact that the minister has read into the record

the exact terms of this agreement, but I would remind her that it was her in reading that that just clarified that \$1.5 million is in fact a minimum that is going to be received in VLT revenue. In fact, if the total revenue is over \$2 million, there will be at least 20 percent of that revenue given to the project to finance the debt.

So would the minister look at it again and confirm to the people of Manitoba that the \$1.5 million of revenue that is going to this project is not a maximum, as was stated a number of times by the Premier (Mr. Doer), but is in fact a minimum?

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am afraid that I am not responsible for the early impressions that the Member for Fort Whyte had of what this paper said. What I do have is what the paper said. I have repeated it to him. I have read it to him again. It is a public document available through the city and available through this House.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister then if she will confirm to the people of Manitoba that \$1.5 million will be the maximum amount that goes to the True North project from the 50 VLTs. Is 1.5 the maximum, as the Premier stated on numerous occasions?

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It does give you a sense of why we went from \$37 million to \$10 million to \$90 million in the allocations for the proposals that the member had in a previous Jets agreement.

An Honourable Member: What is it?

Ms. Friesen: The agreement is as it says here. The caps are on the formulas, over \$1.5 million as it says here, as was publicly indicated, is that it then goes to 80-20, as all other VLTs do, except, of course, we might say, for the ones that went to the Jockey Club, which were I believe

negotiated by the previous government, where there is indeed no limitations on revenue, nor limitations on—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Public Audit

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, well, the minister should realize that when she talks about the 20 percent the wording is very clear: may be adjusted downwards, "may" not "will be."

I would ask the Deputy Premier if she would do the honourable thing, call in the Provincial Auditor to settle this debate and ask the Provincial Auditor to tell the truth to the people of Manitoba about what percentage of the new arena project is being financed with public dollars, not only in the short term but in the long term. Just call in the Auditor.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, I stand by the fact that this is a public document which has been publicly available. It is unfortunate that the members of the Opposition have not been able to understand it clearly. "May" also means "can." Can and may be moot to the 90%, 10% formula if that \$1 million is not reached.

It is quite clear in the document. I do not know if the Member for Fort Whyte is the only member of the Opposition who has not understood that, but it is certainly very clear in the public document that this Government has made available and the City of Winnipeg.

Mathias Colomb First Nation Fuel Spill

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, today on Aboriginal Day, while we should celebrate the achievements of Aboriginal people, we also need to be concerned about the critical needs in Aboriginal communities. The Mathias Colomb First Nation is dealing with a major fuel spill contamination. Their administrative centre has declared contamination, and they have no alternative office space to administer social services, justice, economic development, housing, education and other important needs in their community.

Since the fuel spill was from a generator operated by Manitoba Hydro, a provincial Crown corporation, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs what his plans are to address this situation as soon as possible.

* (14:20)

Hon. Eric Robison (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we have worked with the community on several occasions to address some of the dire needs of communities, not only Pukatawagan but elsewhere in the province of Manitoba. On June 1, as a matter of fact, in 1994, the former Leader of the Opposition and now the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the now Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) and a former Member for Flin Flon, Jerry Storie, and I went to the community of Pukatawagan.

At that time, we met with the then-chief Ralph Caribou and members of his council. They told us about a severe problem at that time, which was sewer and water. The day after we got back from Pukatawagan, we raised it in Question Period and asked the chief medical officer of Manitoba to go to the community and in fact were able to convince the federal government to build a new sewer and water system for \$11 million.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just bring the member up to date on the current situation as I understand it, there were two diesel generating station sites at Pukatawagan. The earliest Pukatawagan No. 2 site was primarily operated by the Indian Affairs of the federal government, with Manitoba Hydro operating it for a short period of time. Based on the short time of Manitoba's involvement with this site, Manitoba Hydro made an agreement with INAC, whereby Manitoba Hydro paid INAC \$120,000.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, the contamination continues. Because it has not been fully addressed, it continues to raise a problem. I ask the minister to address this issue. Is he going to work with the federal government and find a solution on an urgent basis, or is he just going to give us small talk?

Mr. Robinson: Mr. Speaker, if I could carry on, Manitoba Hydro made an agreement with INAC whereby Manitoba Hydro paid Indian Affairs \$120,000, and Indian Affairs assumed full responsibility for this site.

Site No. 2 contamination may be a component of the current contamination concerns of the community. There are believed to be several sources of contamination. Now the later diesel-generating site No. 1 has been remedied by Manitoba Hydro, Mr. Speaker, with INAC paying 72 percent of the share, and it is now believed to be a concern.

With respect to the question by the honourable member, I am indeed grateful that he has all of a sudden taken a sudden interest in these Aboriginal issues that we deal with each and every day. Certainly I will commit our Government to working with the community.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary to the Minister of Health: I ask the Minister of Health what action he is taking to address the significant health concerns which have arisen as a result of the contamination problem in the Mathias Colomb First Nation.

Mr. Robinson: As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, we have always worked with communities that want to work with us. In 1996, with Pukatawagan, with the then-chief Ralph Caribou, we worked with him on getting a wood allocation, as another example, for housing in the community in support of their efforts to get more housing in their community.

The situation in many Aboriginal communities, I need not tell you, is dire. There are many illnesses. There is diabetes, tuberculosis, suicides that I do not care to talk about. I have just committed our Government that we will work with this community. Hopefully, this member will also convince his federal counterparts that they will work with us in good faith as well.

Child and Family Services Aboriginal and Métis Agencies

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the recommendations of the

Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Manitoba government has signed historic agreements with First Nations and Métis organizations with regard to child welfare.

Can the Minister of Family Services and Housing update the House on progress being made on these important initiatives?

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I will explain to the House that the beautiful jacket that I am wearing is a gift of the Métis people of Manitoba on the signing of the historic accord that we signed, in February of the year 2000, in regard to the transfer that the member asked about.

I am very pleased to tell the House that the first seconded employees have moved to the Métis Federation to begin the process of assuming care for their children. We have provided funding to that organization over a period of a couple of years, in excess of half a million dollars, to develop their capacity. This is short-term funding to develop the capacity to receive the transfers of cases which will begin later this year and early next year.

I expect that my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (Mr. Robinson) and I will receive within a week the draft detailed plan, which has been drafted in consultation with the three signatories, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanac and the Manitoba Métis Federation, and that that plan will be shortly going to community groups for feedback and consultation.

Eaton's Building Heritage Status

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Culture and Heritage confirm to this House that he is in receipt of a report that recommends that the Eaton building be classified as a Class 2 heritage building?

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): I certainly am not in receipt of any report and I am certainly looking forward to receiving it.

I would also like to point out to the member opposite that with regard to heritage sites and so on, we are looking at \$31 million invested in the new Red River community downtown. I know that also, Mr. Speaker, we have the Big 4 building that we are investing in. We are pouring millions of dollars into the downtown.

Where do they stand on redevelopment of the city of Winnipeg? Nowhere. We are the ones standing up for Winnipeg.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Loewen: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary question to the Minister of Culture and Heritage: Is he actually contradicting now officials in his department who are saying that the province is sitting on a report from the Manitoba Heritage Council, recommending that Eaton's be protected and listed as a Class 2 historic heritage building?

Mr. Lemieux: Mr. Speaker, I, as the minister—and certainly the Manitoba heritage advisory council reports to me—have not received a report of any kind. As was pointed out by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen), the member opposite has difficulty reading. Sometimes, and I do not want to point that out a second time, but I just want to state that there are a lot of inaccurate facts being pointed out by the Opposition with regard to not only this centre, but a lot of the business community are really wondering: Do they really support the redevelopment and the initiatives downtown?

Mr. Speaker, I just want to state that this report, I am certainly anxiously awaiting it. With all due respect, there is a process to be followed, and all the levels of government are following that. In due course I will receive it. I will be pleased to read that and see that report and see what they have to recommend.

Arena/Entertainment Complex VLT Revenues

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Several times in recent weeks the Premier (Mr. Doer) has been quoted in the local papers and in

press that the maximum amount of revenue returned from VLTs to the project, the arena project, would be capped at 1.5 million; 1.5 would be all they would receive.

My question to the Deputy Premier is: Will she confirm the Premier's statements that the cap will be at \$1.5 million?

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): There have been so many pieces of misinformation, misinterpretations brought just today in Question Period by the Opposition that there is very little credibility left, it seems to me.

What the Premier has said and what is written in this document which has been publicly tabled is that there is a cap on the formula. There is a cap on the formula. It is in the document. It is what the Premier said, and that is what is happening.

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

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Turtle Mountain, on a new question.

Mr. Tweed: Certainly the Deputy Premier is correct. There is a lot of misinformation coming forward.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) stands up and publicly announces that the cap is at 1.5 million. The Deputy Premier stands up and contradicts the Premier's public statement. The people of Manitoba want to know, and I will ask the minister: Who is telling the truth, or better yet who is lying?

* (14:30)

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, the member started a new question. Our rules clearly provide and *Beauchesne's* states that a question must be brief, a preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence. I believe the member had three or four

sentences as a preamble. I know it is the longest day of the year, and perhaps in the member's mind that permits him to ask the longest question. Will you please ask him to abide by the rules?

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, it was clearly a new question.

Mr. Speaker: Order. On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I did recognize the honourable Member for Turtle Mountain on a new question. On a new question I allow a little leeway on preamble to all members.

* * *

Mr. Tweed: Again, I just will ask the question. Due to the conflicting stories that are coming out in the press, one comment by the Premier says it will be capped at \$1.5 million, another comment by the Deputy Premier, Mr. Speaker, we have seen the misinformation; we have seen the hidden deals. Who is lying? Who is telling the truth? The Deputy Premier or the Premier?

Point of Order

Mr. Mackintosh: I know it is the longest day of the year, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that means things to the member opposite. Will you please remind him he was just asked to put his question, Mr. Speaker? Would you please ask him to be succinct in his question.

Mr. Tweed: On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker, the question is very clear. Who is telling the truth, the Premier or the Deputy Premier, or better yet, who is lying?

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all honourable members that *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2): A preamble should not exceed one carefully drawn sentence. The honourable member has put his question.

* * *

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Speaker, the assumption of this House and of all members is that all

members are honourable members. The word "lying" is not normally used in the practice of this House. I accept that members do make mistakes when they bring questions to the House. I do anticipate that they have a duty to bring the correct information, and I will point the members again. I notice he has not tabled a statement to the Premier; I notice he has not indicated a source; I notice that he has not given me a footnote for that, but nevertheless I will repeat that the public document that has been tabled in this House indicates three types of formulas and that there is a cap on each of those formulas.

Over \$1.5 million, those formulas become 80-20, just as other VLTs are. At 1.5 there is an allocation of 75-25. Under a million dollars there is a different allocation, a more generous one of 90-10. That is what it says here, that is what the Premier says, and that is what I am saying.

Arena/Entertainment Complex Public Audit

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): We on this side of the House will clearly accept that this Premier (Mr. Doer) does make mistakes and does exaggerate. Mr. Speaker, this Premier makes statements to the people of Manitoba through the media that implied there was a cap. We want to ask the Deputy Premier just to clear the air for all of us and all Manitobans, whether or not this Government is prepared to have this deal reviewed by the Provincial Auditor so that Manitobans can have full comfort in the numbers that are being presented to them.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, this document is a public document. It is available to all Manitobans who may review it.

Arena/Entertainment Complex Business Plan Tabling Request

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Speaker, in 1996, I quote the Premier, who was then Leader of the Opposition, from Hansard: Can the government please account to this Legislature and table the business plan in this Legislature? It is taxpayers' money. We are entitled to the business plan. Can the Premier please provide it?

Will the Deputy Premier advise the Premier of his words in 1996 and urge him to table the business plan to this Legislature?

Hon. Jean Friesen (Deputy Premier): Mr. Speaker, the Member for Fort Whyte is well aware and in other contexts would argue in an entirely different case. The True North is a private sector—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Friesen: As the Member for Fort Whyte knows and as I was suggesting in another context, he might well argue that True North is a private-sector-led initiative and it is inappropriate for governments in that situation to table business plans which have reference to a third party. This is how government proceeds. Mr. Speaker, this is how the previous government proceeded. Whether it was a REDI application, whether it was the Workforce 2000 grants, when it involved a third party those things were not generally publicly available in full.

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

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Rural Municipality of Ochre River

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, June 15, 2001, was an important day in the history of the Rural Municipality of Ochre River. On that day residents of that R.M. gathered in the Ochre River community hall to celebrate its 100th anniversary and pay respects to all those who have lived in this R.M. over the years and contributed to its success. I was pleased to represent the constituents of Dauphin-Roblin at this event where messages from the Premier (Mr. Doer) and the Prime Minister were read.

The highlight of the afternoon was the prominent contribution made by the students of the Ochre River School and their school band. The band entertained the crowd with several selections. The Grades 7 and 8 classes re-enacted the rural municipality's first council meeting.

The younger children in the school entertained the audience with several musical selections.

Another highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of two Century Farm Family Awards, one to Bob Schapf and one to Glen and Dawn Recknell. These families were very deserving of this honour, and their neighbours recognized their long-standing contributions to their community.

I would ask that all members of this House today join with me in congratulating Reeve Laurie MacMillan and her council and staff and all the residents of the Rural Municipal of Ochre River on reaching this important milestone. May your next 100 years be just as successful as your first 100 years.

Fort Garry Rotary Villa

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Last Friday I happily attended the 25th anniversary party of the Fort Garry Rotary Villa. The evening was a wonderful success. I was pleased to have had the opportunity to meet many of the extraordinary people who both live and work at the Rotary Villa. The complex consisting of 116 studio and 6 one-bedroom suites is home to a number of residents, providing them with the opportunity to live in great comfort and to socialize with their friends and neighbours. The villa boasts stunning grounds and even has a large, live tree growing indoors for the residents to enjoy year-round.

Having visited the facility several times I have had the opportunity to experience first-hand the wonderful spirit that fills the air. The 25th anniversary celebration was made possible exclusively by private and community donations. The generosity of those who contributed is greatly appreciated by all who attended. I also want to thank the manager of the Fort Garry Rotary Villa, Ann Sherwick, and Rotarian Douglas Hutchings, Rotary Villa board chairman, for their hard work and commitment to the facility.

Finally, I would like to recognize four special women who have been a part of the Fort Garry Rotary Villa since its inception, Zophie Bohatko, Mary Ulstad, Myrtle Parmley and Winnie Ramsay. All have been residents of the

villa for 25 years. These women were recognized at Friday's celebration for their role in helping to make the Fort Garry Rotary Villa such a warm and friendly place to live. Once again, congratulations to the Fort Garry Rotary Villa on their 25th anniversary.

* (14:40)

Fort Rouge Play Structures

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): Mr. Speaker, I want to draw the House's attention to the fact that this afternoon the diverse neighbourhoods of Fort Rouge will be coming together to celebrate the construction of three new play structures in one of the most needy areas of our city and community. The celebration will include children's games, community displays, bands, a firefighting exhibition, a bash tent for sick bears, a barbecue, and this is all taking place on River Avenue from Fort Rouge Park to Fort Rouge School between 3:30 and 8:30 this evening.

This event is about more than celebrating new play structures; it is about building our community. For the first time in Fort Rouge residents, together with community groups and agencies and the three levels of government, have come together to decide what is best for their community. Residents, teachers, day care workers, nurses, social workers and students have met monthly since the new year to plan this event.

I know this may be the first time this has happened recently in Fort Rouge, but it will not be the last. As we celebrate the first day of summer, we also celebrate the beginning of a new way of working together and moving forward.

I would like to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the groups that have worked so hard for many months to plan today's activities: the Fort Rouge School parent advisory committee; the Osborne Village Resource Centre; River Osborne Community Centre; Augustine Family Resource Centre; Mayfair Resource Centre; Housing early literacy project; River Avenue Co-op Day Nursery; Mayfair hope program; the City of Winnipeg; the Winnipeg Regional

Health Authority, with the River Heights primary health care team working at the core of this planning event; Anita Neville, the MP for Winnipeg South Centre; Jenny Gerbasi, the councillor for Fort Rouge ward.

I thank all of those who worked so hard for this, and I want to extend an invitation to all members opposite and on our side of the House to come and share a hot dog and enjoy the fellowship of the Fort Rouge community this afternoon.

Red River Exhibition

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise before the House this afternoon to speak of an event that has been part of Manitoba history for nearly half a century. The Red River Exhibition celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

From the first Red River Ex in 1952 at the Osborne Stadium Amphitheatre complex near the Manitoba Legislature, its new permanent home on the West Perimeter by Assiniboia Downs, the Ex has played a part in the lives and the history of Manitobans. The Ex has had many homes over the years, including the Polo Park Race Track and on the grounds around the Winnipeg Stadium and Arena. However, no matter where the Ex was located, it has always stayed true to its goal and mission, which is to showcase the talents, abilities and achievements of Manitobans.

The Red River Exhibition Association is a non-profit organization which enjoys the enthusiasm and support of hundreds of volunteers each year. It is truly the efforts of these people that make this event possible year after year. With the opening in 1997 of Exhibition Park, the Red River Exhibition Association is well positioned to make even more of a contribution to the enjoyment and quality of life of Manitobans and will continue to be part of Manitoba for the next 50 years and beyond.

I would urge each and every citizen of Manitoba, but particularly the two-thirds of Manitobans living within a 20-mile ring outside the Perimeter Highway, to bring their families,

young and old, to this celebration which begins today, June 21, and runs through to June 30. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dakota Collegiate

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Speaker, a number of exciting events have taken place at Dakota Collegiate in the past few months. On April 26, seven band students and nine supervisors left in two buses bound for Banff for the music festival. Dakota's musicians attended numerous workshops and concerts. The band performed and received accolades from judges, adjudicators and the audience. Congratulations to Ms. Treichle and her students for this performance.

On May 10, Dakota Collegiate held its first annual fashion show. Some 50 Senior 4 students modelled casual sportswear to graduation gowns. Stores donated the clothes, and merchants gave prizes for the silent auction. Bravo to Luisa Mastrotonardo and Destini Bridges who suggested the idea and organized the fashion show.

On May 18, the third annual job fair at Dakota Collegiate involved 26 businesses who offered part-time summer and full-time employment to students. This was an excellent example of local employers helping young people in our community.

On May 31, an evening of drama included *A Night to Remember*, an original '50s murder mystery, and *Rules of Thumb*, written and directed by Senior 4 student, Lindsay Brown, and starring Nick Friesen as a hitchhiker working his way across Canada.

Finally, over 40 students trained for this year's track and field season. Their goal was to qualify for the provincial championships in June. Ron Guarino, school principal, his staff and students, should enjoy a well-deserved summer holiday after a year of activities and success. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable Government House Leader, I would like to draw the attention of honourable

members to the Speaker's Gallery, where we have with us Cynthia Chavez from the Museum of North American Indians.

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

* (14:40)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, would you canvass the House to see if there is leave to give, I guess it is, concurrence and third reading to Bill 301, The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company Act.

Mr. Speaker: Is there leave? [*Agreed*]

CONCURRENCE AND THIRD READINGS

Bill 301—The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company Act

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Family Services and Housing (Mr. Sale), that Bill 301, The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company Act, reported from the Standing Committee on Economic Development, be concurred in and be now read for a third time and passed.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, would you please call debate on second readings of the bills in the following order: 21, 27, 50, 11, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 46, 49.

DEBATE ON SECOND READINGS

Bill 21—The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act

Mr. Speaker: Resumed debate on second reading, Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Gimli (Mr. Helwer).

Is it the will of the House to keep it standing in the name of the honourable Member for Gimli?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Speaker: Leave has been denied.

Mrs. Louise Dacquay (Seine River): I am pleased today to rise and put a few comments on the record about Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act.

I understand that Bill 21 arose from public meetings that were held last year with the multiculturalism community, and the basic thrust of the bill is to establish a new organization. We do have some questions and concerns with relation to the 16 members that are going to be selected by the ethnocultural organization, plus 5 remaining council members that will be appointed by the provincial government.

* (14:50)

We agree that issues such as anti-racism, human rights, immigration and cultural diversity are important topics, but it is our hope that this council will be representative of Manitobans from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This council should be inclusive, not exclusive. We do have some concerns relative to the process by which the members on the council will be selected.

I thank the minister for affording me the opportunity to meet with her and her staff to ask several questions regarding this bill. She indicated in the selection process that 300 organizations had been sent the nominations, and the deadline has come and gone, but only approximately 25 percent of those communities have responded.

Once the minister tables or lists those members that have been identified as nominees, then they will go back to the communities, and only 16 of those will be selected by the community and then reviewed by the minister. So I am raising that at this point in time. I would hope that the minister would be able to respond to that concern in particular at the committee stage.

In fact, she indicated in her comments when she introduced the bill for second reading that the primary role of this council was to ensure that they would be acting in an advisory and advocacy role. She also stated, and I am going to quote her: They may not respond totally to all of the advocacy that is going on, but it is our responsibility as government to make sure that we are open and that we hear from every portion of our society.

So I would suggest that the minister herself has some reservations that perhaps the structure will not permit the inclusivity of the entire community.

I will speak in more general terms about the need for this particular structure and this council, but the other concern I want to put on the record at this time is relative to my question in her office regarding whether the council would have a funding role. She explicitly said no at that point in time, but in subsequent review of her question-and-answer sheet that she provided, the question, will the council have a funding role here, her answer is no and somewhat conditional. After conducting numerous consultations in the community, it was evident that the community was satisfied to have the grants administered by government. However, once the council is formed, it will be asked to participate in the review process. So I would like a more definitive response as to whether the council will or will not have any involvement in the grant funding process.

Another question that I asked during my meeting with the minister is whether the council will be able to issue its own press releases. I have gone through the structure process. The means being taken to ensure the council is as representative as possible of the needs of the different groups, as I indicated previously, Mr. Speaker, is one of our major concerns.

In 1990 it was a Progressive Conservative government that introduced Manitoba's first multicultural policy. The fundamental principles of the policy included pride in our cultural diversity; a determination to achieve equality of opportunity for all in the community; and a solid sense of partnership among communities and with government. Manitoba is a province that

indeed values the importance of immigration and that prides itself on being respectful of other people's cultural traditions. In fact, under former Premier Filmon's Progressive Conservative government, Manitoba was a leader when it came to issues such as immigration. Indeed, it was under the former government that the Provincial Nominee Program was put in place. That was deemed to be a made-in-Manitoba settlement services agreement that finally became a reality.

In speaking to this bill, the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism stated that the former government was afraid of advice or input. Nothing could be further from the truth, and, frankly, I find those comments quite insulting. We had many, many open public forums. One in particular was the Round Table on the Environment that provided advice, advocacy and education on sustainable development. There were other public consultations on a number of issues ranging from water rights to day cares to the Young Offenders Act.

The Canadian Ethnocultural Council's objectives are to ensure the preservation, enhancement and sharing of the cultural heritage of Canadians, the removal of barriers that prevent some Canadians from participating fully and equally in society, the elimination of racism and the preservation of a united Canada. There has been significant interest in ethnocultural issues over the years in Manitoba. With more than a hundred different languages spoken in our province and more than 300 different ethnocultural organizations, Manitoba society and culture has been enriched by the continued flow of immigrants to our province. In 2000, 4584 immigrants came to Manitoba. Also, during the previous government's term, Manitoba was the first province to implement a skilled worker promotion and recruitment campaign and provincial nominee program and was at the forefront in developing proactive and strategic means to increase provincial immigration levels.

I am very proud of the track record of two of our former ministers of Culture and Heritage because they lobbied federal immigration ministers on issues related to immigration, including landing fees and making sure Manitoba received its fair share of immigrants.

Manitoba is proud of its multicultural heritage and is interested in attracting qualified newcomers to further enrich our multicultural fabric. Also, immigration and multiculturalism are recognized as vital to our continuing growth and development. Many Manitobans of every heritage have built a thriving and prosperous community that continues to attract new immigrants from around the world every year.

We take pride in Manitoba in our diversity and our determination to achieve equality of opportunity for all in our community. A multicultural society provides great opportunities for all Manitobans.

Ms. Bonnie Korzeniowski, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

I made reference earlier to Manitoba's policy for a multicultural society, and there were several key points. I know that my colleague wants to go into more detail with relation to the goals of the multicultural policy, and there were three main components of the policy. We recognized that the cultural diversity of Manitoba was a strength and a source of pride to Manitobans. We recognized that Manitobans, regardless of cultural, religion or racial background, have a right to equal access to opportunity to participation in all aspects of the life of the community and to respect for their cultural values. I cannot emphasize that enough because that, as I indicated, is one of our foremost concerns, that this council be inclusive and ensure that all Manitobans have equal opportunity. The third objective was that the opportunities of the multicultural society would best be realized through partnerships within communities and within government, and that is absolutely key to the success of Manitobans working together and being able to access the same opportunities. Our diversity in Manitoba is a national asset, and we should respect that we all stand to be enriched by Manitoba's ethnic diversity.

* (15:00)

In conclusion, I would just like to wish the members of the Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council our best wishes. We have a history of celebrating the different cultural and

ethnic groups that make Manitoba such a special place to live. I am very hopeful this tradition will continue.

As I indicated, we on this side of the House will be supporting this legislation. However, we will have questions of the minister. Following the comments by my two colleagues, we will be prepared to move this bill through to committee. Thank you.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg (Rossmere): Madam Acting Speaker, I would like to make some comments on Bill 21, which will set up the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council. This organization will basically advise the provincial government on cultural matters. This ethnocultural organization will replace the Manitoba Intercultural Council, which was very active and played a major role in the ethnocultural community.

The previous Filmon government wound down the Manitoba Intercultural Council. This act will begin the rebuilding of the ethnocultural communities. It will tell us what the certain groups such as new Canadians want. It will give various groups access to government. It will also develop a dialogue and partnership.

Multiculturalism is a reality in Canada. It is an attitude we have towards others and it is something we should foster. This is only the first step in restoring what the MIC once did. Let us hope that this act says to government we will assist new Canadians to adapt to their new country.

Many countries support new immigrants in various ways. A European country provides education for their new immigrants until they learn the language. They support them in different ways until they have learned the customs and ways of their new country.

My own parents came to this country in 1929, Madam Acting Speaker, and had a difficult time, like all immigrants, adjusting to their new country. Multiculturalism was not an accepted concept by the country then, but we have become very progressive and we have learned to accept multiculturalism.

Also, if you look at this side of the House, and, I will say, the other side of the House, you will notice that this House, especially our side, reflects the cultural makeup of Manitoba fairly well. For this reason we are probably more representative and more interested in cultural communities that make up Manitoba.

I appreciate what the Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) said about this bill and multiculturalism. Madam Acting Speaker, I always appreciate hearing from the other side. I appreciate the debate that took place on graduated drivers' licensing where several of the members studied the bill and showed real interest and put forward some good ideas on driver training.

Until recently I have not heard too much from the Opposition side, but I appreciate the remarks made by the Member for Seine River. She did refer to what their government had done in 1990, but I do not think the multicultural community is quite aware of their goals and policies. I think they should have done a better job in putting forward their policies.

Actually I am surprised the Member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) has not spoken on this bill. In the last election he pointed out his involvement with the ethnocultural community, but I have not heard anything from him. Last year in Estimates the Member for Springfield was not very positive toward the former Manitoba Intercultural Council. I wonder what his stand is today, but, as you say, he will be speaking on it. I am looking forward to that debate. It is always nice when both sides of the House express their opinion and improve and make recommendations on legislation.

However, the Member for Springfield usually has an opinion on most issues, but to this point he has been rather silent.

An Honourable Member: Strangely silent.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Order.

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Yes, Madam Acting Speaker, I would have to say, obviously, to allow for our rules, is the member

from across the floor prepared to accept a question?

An Honourable Member: Out of order.

An Honourable Member: It is not out of order.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Our rule is where questions are proposed to be put to a member after the member has spoken for whatever time is allotted to that particular item, the question shall be permitted only by the unanimous consent of the House.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Consent for a question?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Some Honourable Members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Consent has been denied.

* (15:10)

Point of Order

Mr. Praznik: I would just like the record of the House to show that it was the New Democratic Party caucus who denied access to other members of this House to put a question to the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg). They must have no confidence in his ability to answer.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): The Member for Lac du Bonnet, on that point of order, that was not a point of order.

* * *

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Korzeniowski): Would the member from Rossmere please continue.

Mr. Schellenberg: Madam Acting Speaker, I appreciate the interest from the Opposition. It is great to hear them want more information from this side of the House because I think their side of the House is rather lacking in this area.

As a former history teacher of many years, and I might say Canadian history, I always enjoyed teaching this topic. That is one of the reasons I got up today. The other reason is my parents were immigrants, and that also increased my interest in this topic. If I gave to the other side of the House the full history lesson that I usually gave to my Grade 11 students, I think I would really get a rise out of them. But I will just tone down my speech, and I toned down my notes already.

I would like to draw the attention of this Chamber to changes that brought about in the early 1970s. The Liberal government at that time had the Immigration Act changed, and three new classes of immigrants were created: family class, refugee class, independent class. This changed our former policies of immigration. We no longer only received immigrants from Europe but from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. This changed the Immigration Act of Canada.

Also, Pierre Elliott Trudeau developed the multicultural policy at the federal level and, of course, our bilingual framework to recognize the contribution of all cultural groups to our country. This is just one reason why Trudeau was known as a very progressive Prime Minister.

We celebrate multiculturalism annually by supporting Folklorama, Festival du Voyageur and the Winnipeg Art Gallery where various cultures use artwork to express their values and history to our society. Public events that pertain to multiculturalism are well attended, which means Manitobans support multiculturalism.

We also have the Provincial Nominee Program that the Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay) pointed out that has allowed Manitoba to nominate immigrants. This last year, about 4500 immigrants came to Manitoba under this program. Immigrants from all over the world have come to build this country and have made it the best country in the world to live in.

Multiculturalism is a policy that should be valued, shared and understood. I appreciate the remarks from the Member for Seine River. They actually run parallel to many of the things that I wanted to say. Thank you, Madam Acting Speaker.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Madam Acting Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to stand in the House today to speak on Bill 21 and to indicate that I took great pride when I was re-elected in 1988 in the fact that our premier of the day had the confidence in me to appoint me to his Cabinet as the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Recreation.

At that point in time, multiculturalism fell under the Minister of Culture. It was not very long, a couple years into our mandate, to a point in time where our premier and our government realized that it maybe was time to raise the profile of multiculturalism by appointing a minister responsible for multiculturalism, the first ever minister responsible for multiculturalism in the province of Manitoba. I was privileged to have had that responsibility and that opportunity for several years.

Madam Acting Speaker, when that announcement was made, we had done a lot of work and spent a lot of time and energy and effort on developing the first ever multiculturalism policy for the Province of Manitoba. That was done with significant consultation with the multicultural community. We worked with everyone in the community, had several meetings, certainly listened to the input of many within our community.

I was pleased and proud to be able to introduce the first multicultural policy in the province of Manitoba. I do want to quote from it, because I think it is extremely significant that all members in the House, some who were not around back in the late '80s and early '90s, should not forget the importance that the Filmon government placed on multiculturalism in the province of Manitoba.

Madam Acting Speaker, I do want to quote from the policy that was introduced. The policy stated clearly that Manitoba is a multicultural society and that the Government of Manitoba believes that a multicultural society is not a collection of many separate societies divided by language and culture. Rather, Manitoba is a single society, united by shared laws, aspirations and responsibilities, within which persons of various backgrounds have the freedom and opportunity to express and foster their cultural

heritage and the freedom and opportunity to participate in the broader life of society and the responsibility to abide by and contribute to the laws and aspirations that unite society.

This ideal of a multicultural society affects all parts of the community and speaks directly to Manitoba's determination to meet the challenge of living together in harmony and equality.

Madam Acting Speaker, I take those words very seriously and, to this day, continue to support that multicultural ideal and know that we also do not consider multiculturalism to be a recent phenomenon. I think it is important that we are debating this bill today. When we look at National Aboriginal Day, and we look back to the roots and the heritage of our province, and we see that we have from our inception been a multicultural society, I do not think we ever can forget the contribution that our Aboriginal or First Nations people have made to the development and to the progress of this province of Manitoba. So I do not appreciate sitting and listening to the history lesson from a history teacher who obviously did not pay much attention in 1990 to the fact, and I guess maybe he did not include it in his history lessons when he taught the Grade 11 students in River East school. He did not include in that history lesson the multiculturalism policy that was introduced by the Filmon government in 1990. I think that did a disservice or an injustice to the students that should have had the opportunity to know and understand the full history of the multicultural society that we live in today.

* (15:20)

Madam Acting Speaker, not only did we bring in the first multiculturalism policy to the province, not only did we appoint the first Minister responsible for Multiculturalism, but we enshrined that policy into legislation under The Manitoba Multiculturalism Act that was introduced and passed in June 1992. So we have enshrined in legislation today on the books of this province of Manitoba a law which speaks to not only members, new immigrants and members of cultures that have come and immigrated in recent years to this province, but to all Manitobans that say that we have shared values. We have shared roles to play in our

multicultural society. We have shared responsibilities to abide by the laws that make up this great province and this great country of ours.

Madam Acting Speaker, I do want to indicate also that we were the government that did place a significant focus on immigration by creating a Citizenship branch within the Department of Culture, Heritage. Actually, the name was changed, of the department, to the Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. We negotiated and urged the federal government to move on new classes of immigration and to ensure that Manitoba had the ability to foster immigration in a very significant way.

We realized that immigration had a very positive impact on the province of Manitoba, and we worked diligently to try to ensure that Manitoba would have the opportunity to bring more immigrants to our province. I think we were successful. The kinds of things that this Government is able to continue are as a result of the things that we put in place when we were in government.

Madam Acting Speaker, I take some great pride in the accomplishments over the years that we were able to achieve as a result of our vision and our moving forward in the area of multiculturalism, citizenship and immigration. I spent a lot of time with many members of the multicultural community in my years as the Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship and Minister responsible for Multiculturalism. I took great delight in having the opportunity to travel throughout the province and meet with many, many people of many cultures. People who are part of a multicultural community or society do not have different issues. They have some specific issues that they need to talk about and want to talk about, but they are Manitobans with families, Manitobans with families that want what is best for them in our democratic province and our democratic country.

I believe that any type of a policy or a piece of legislation around multiculturalism needs to be inclusive. It needs to be inclusive, and it needs to say to all members of our society, to all members of our multicultural community that our doors as government are open to all of you, that our doors need to be open to listen to all of

you when you have an issue to bring to the table. Madam Acting Speaker, it is very difficult for 25 members of our diverse multicultural community to bring and represent the issues of the over 300 organizations and the thousands and thousands of individuals who make up our multicultural society.

So I have a little difficulty with this legislation, because this legislation singles out 25 individuals from possibly 25 different organizations. I know that there are 300 organizations throughout Manitoba that should have an equal voice and an equal access to the Government and to the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism. I do not believe that there should be a select few that represent the views of the 300 organizations. I do not see any mechanism in this legislation that ensures that all 300 of those organizations will be consulted before issues are brought forward to the Government.

The legislation only seems to say that this council, these 25 select people out of the thousands that make up our multicultural society, that those 25 have to in any way consult with the 300 organizations, meet with them, call those organizations together and ensure that the issues that are being placed before this minister and before this Government are truly reflective of the total multicultural society. What we did in legislation and in policy was try to ensure that every member of our multicultural society, every organization in our multicultural society had access to our ministers and to our ministers' offices.

So I have a little difficulty in understanding how this legislation will truly bring the significant issues that affect our total community to the table of this minister. Is this minister then going to say to others that might call that are not part of her select few that they have to go through this council, that her door is not open to them should they come with an issue that wants to be discussed? I have some difficulty thinking that we have to move away from being inclusive to saying to people you are not welcome. I have a council, and I have my select representatives that I have chosen.

You know, maybe that is the way this Government wants to deal with members of our

multicultural society. I wish them well. I hope that the minister will be successful in receiving representation that will be truly reflective. But, when I look around this Chamber, when I look around Manitoba, I would believe that out of the 300 organizations that 25 may not be representative of every different cultural background or every different community that might have specific issues that they want brought forward. So I have some difficulty with enshrining in law special privileges for a select few at the expense of all.

I will indicate, Madam Acting Speaker, that this legislation will pass. It will pass because the New Democratic Party is government and has the majority in this House. They are putting forward legislation that does in some way restrict the ability of all Manitobans that have an issue around multiculturalism from being able to have their voices heard by this Government.

I would hope that would not be the case. I would hope that the minister will be able to explain to us at committee how she plans to overcome those issues and how she will break down the barriers and how she will explain to the thousands of others within the multicultural community that they are not as important as the select few that she has chosen to represent. Twenty-five people to represent the diversity of thousands of Manitobans that have come to our province, have built our province to what it is today, truly reflective of the communities that are represented in Manitoba by the different waves of immigration and by our First Nations that were here long before many of the new immigrants that we see today.

So we will listen with interest to representations that are made at committee. We certainly will be asking the minister some questions about how the process is going to work and how she is going to deal with the exclusion of thousands of Manitobans that might want to have their voices heard around the Cabinet table and in the minister's office.

* (15:30)

With those comments, Madam Acting Speaker, we are prepared to send this to committee. I just want to indicate again how

pleased and honoured and proud I was to be the Minister responsible for Multiculturalism, the minister responsible for bringing in the first multiculturalism policy in the province of Manitoba, the first multiculturalism act. I still believe very much in the principles, the goals and ideals that were enshrined in legislation when we were government. I would hope that this new legislation and some of the answers to the questions that I have put on the record today can be answered by the minister so that truly members of the multicultural community in Manitoba will feel that they are all equally welcome by this Government. Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): Madam Acting Speaker, I stand today and speak on one of the issues that is one of my first loves.

My first home was on McGee Street, right off of Ellice Avenue, right in the heart of a multiculturalism community. We had neighbours that had emigrated from all over the world, as my parents had. I lived it, I breathed it, and I enjoyed it. Throughout my whole life, what we call multiculturalism or diversity, or however you want to call it, has been very important to me. It is part of my fabric. It is who I am and why I am here. I just want to talk a little bit about that.

I have spent a lot of time in multiculturalism, and it probably starts with my parents immigrating after the Second World War. Unfortunately, my parents did not live that long, so a lot of these questions I did not have the opportunity to ask of them, but I asked my aunts and uncles on their behalf: Why choose Canada? Why not stay in Europe? The feeling was always that there was a war-torn Europe, poor, devastated, the middle class, what there was, had been wiped out, what they owned was gone. My mother arrived in Canada in 1949 on a displaced person's pass, went to Saskatchewan and worked off her fare on a farm.

One of my aunts was with her. Of course, they had been raised in very proper families, but they were also very hungry, and often the farmers were very nice people to them. It was customary to stand with the food. They would stand at the table and say, would anybody like anything else to eat? Nobody would say

anything. All the leftovers were then put into a pan. That was meant to go to the back and feed some of the animals. Actually all the immigrants, who were starving basically and were too proper to say anything, would then go and they would eat all the food, whatever was left. Finally the farmer lady one day asked them and said: Why is it we just cannot seem to fatten up the pigs? Because all the workers who were so hungry but too proper to say anything at the table would eat the food in the back of the kitchen in the pantry.

They came to Canada and could not believe the wealth that was here after coming from a war-torn Europe. Again, my mother came in 1949. I believe my dad came in 1952. My older siblings remember him telling us a story that he arrived here on a train in one of our very famous blizzards. He looked outside the window and he said: I am not staying, take me back. So a couple of big guys came and said: You are getting off. This is the end of your ticket. They picked him up and they threw him out. That was his entry to Winnipeg. He ended up learning to love Winnipeg and this province.

That is how many came here. Even when you talk to Europeans today they have no idea, they cannot fathom the size of this country. Just recently good friends of ours had relatives arriving from Romania. They got a really cheap ticket into New York. So they wrote and they said: Why do you not come and pick us up from New York? And why not? They could save themselves a lot of money.

So anyway, the relatives wrote them back and said, you know, from us to New York is like from you to Moscow. They thought it was one of those, you know, ha, ha, ha, we are not going to pick you up. So they wrote back and said: Fine, if you do not want to put any effort to come pick us up from New York we will take a bus. So they got on the bus, know no English, drove for about six hours and then it stopped. That is of course a break, right? They figured no reason really to get off. What they did not realize is then it drove for another six hours. Well, they did not get off for a bathroom break. I guess there might have been one on the bus, but certainly no food. They did not understand what the bus driver was saying, so for 12 hours they sat, no food, no

water. Finally they somehow communicated with the bus driver that clearly they had to have something to eat. He explained to them, well, we stop every six hours.

Anyway, they got to Winnipeg. I think it was either 36 or 42 hours later. They got off the bus and they said: Where do you live? This has got to be the end of the world. Where do you live? They said, well, we told you from New York to Winnipeg is like from you to Moscow. They said, well, we thought you were just being polite and saying that we are not going to pick you up. Anyway, they ended up flying back to New York and took the flight home from there. That is how Europeans when they come here and people from other lands who are used to very tight kind of countries come here. They are just awed at the open spaces and certainly the wealth of it.

When I was the chairperson of the MIC I was allowed to go to citizenship courts. I always found that when I told some of these stories, certainly those that had arrived just recently loved them. One of my favourites that my father had, of course he and all his buddies were standing outside a little corner grocery store, if anybody remembers those still, and there were all the Canadian guys. They were all cool and everything. So these immigrants decided they were going to get themselves a little quart of milk. They brought the quart outside, you know, a very nice quart, and pulled out their pen knife and cut the bottom corner off. They passed it around and all took a sip out of the bottom, all the Canadian guys laughing at them, till finally they consumed all the milk. Then one of the guys came over and said, here, let me show you something. He opened up the top for them. They didn't have to cut the corner off. Well, they felt a little smaller, but, you know, that was part of it.

My one aunt says, when they arrived on the shores of Canada, you got off, and there was an escalator. Well, who had seen an escalator before? They had two Canadian customs officials standing on the bottom, and they would just pull everybody onto the escalator, and remarkably the steps rose you up. On the top, they had two more people who had to pull everybody off. So it was very interesting. That is kind of how you got your entry to Canada.

Another one of my more favourite stories is my dear Aunt Elsie Hembruch who decided she was going to become a Canadian. Well, other than working hard—I mean, that is what you did when you got here. You tried to pay off the house, because that was the European thing to do. Debt might as well have been Satan; you try to provide for your family. So she is going to go and get her Canadian citizenship. At that time, you had to stand in front of the judge, and they asked you questions. So the question he asked her, he says: Mrs. Hembruch, how many people live in Canada? Well, she knew that there were quite a few people living in Winnipeg, must be other people living around, so she said to him, she says, well, judge, there has to be at least 17 000. They gave her her Canadian citizenship anyway.

* (15:40)

My grandparents tell me another interesting one. They got a package of Jell-O in the mail. Of course, they could not read English, so they looked at the instructions, hot water, mix in, and thought that looked all very easy. So they boiled the water and mixed it up, and there is obviously a hot drink. So they all sat around that night and they made this nice hot drink. It was a little sweet; of course, but they sat and they drank their hot drink. Anyway, the rest they put into a pitcher, put it in the refrigerator, and, my goodness, in the morning, you got up and you could not get it out of the pitcher. So they took it downstairs and asked the landlord: What is wrong with our juice? She, of course, enjoyed it at their expense and explained that actually you are supposed to eat it not drink it, but they learned from that, too.

Of course, when you come to this country as an immigrant, I mean, also the children, even though you were born here, I mean, you are raised in those traditions. My one Aunt Elsie always went to the store, and you jumped in and you became Canadian. Of course, here in this country you bought everything by the lb., by the "lib." So that is how she would stand there and say, I would like two "libs" of hamburger meat and two "libs" of this, and I will have a couple of "libs" of that. So the teacher one day at school asked my cousin Trudy: Okay, does anybody know what this sign says? Well, of course, my

cousin knew that because she went shopping with her mother and put up her hand. The teacher says: Okay, what does the lb. stand for in weights? She says, well, that stands for "lib", and the teacher said, no, that stands for pound. What do you mean? That stands for "lib." She came home and she said, mom, do not ever call that a "lib" again. That is a pound. That is how we all learned, and it was a great experience. We still get together and laugh about these stories and many more of them.

I certainly got involved in my church; I got involved in my community. It is interesting, Madam Acting Speaker, that the Member for Rossmere (Mr. Schellenberg) asked why the Member for Springfield, myself, had not gotten up to speak. Well, I wanted to give the opportunity to a few others. Certainly, I would make sure that I know what my community thinks. I like to know what is going on in my community. I certainly spoke to a few individuals about this bill. I just wonder if the member from Rossmere worked as hard getting his community support on the doubling of gambling as I did speaking to this bill. But we will let him answer that one.

I got involved, amongst other organizations, in the MIC, and who could forget my time on the board with Wade Kojo Williams? He always had a lot of advice for me. In fact, I bump into him periodically; Joanne Lewandosky-Kuzia, who I still appreciate as one of my good friends; Sam Koshy who, dare I say, Madam Acting Speaker, ran for the party opposite. He and I became very good friends. In fact, believe it or not, good NDPer that he is, he came out and canvassed for me as school trustee because he said he appreciated the work that I did. He is from India originally. He speaks Chinese, Ukrainian, Urdu. He would go to doors, and, you know, you have got to love politics in the multicultural community. He would go to the doors, and they would say: Do you speak Urdu? Yes, I speak Urdu. I am canvassing for this man. Is he a good man? And he would say; Yes, he is a good man. Good, then we will vote for him. Sam Koshy, who, I think for me, personifies multiculturalism, his heart was always in the right place. Maybe his politics are not always in the right place, but I will forgive him for that one, but certainly his heart is in the right place. He was a

great individual. He was sort of the executive director of the MIC at that time, and he and I had the opportunity to work through a lot of issues. I know we were working at that time on the multiculturalism policy, and again he really had his heart in the right place.

I was appointed initially by the government, and then I became a delegate to the MIC from my community. It was not soon after that, that I was elected by the community, if you would believe it. The minister at the time, the honourable Member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson), appointed me as chairman because, of course, whatever the choice of the MIC was, the minister then appointed. We certainly had a lot of tough meetings. We had a lot of very passionate discussions on where the MIC was going, and I felt that the community had matured to the point where it could then have its own organization. I see that the government of the day is looking a little bit more to an MIC model, and that is government's prerogative. I do point out there are those concerns laid out by my colleague in that, again, you have to watch the inclusive, exclusive. Like in any organization, there are individuals who are appointed that are supposed to be representing their communities, and we hope that they are. We know that most of them do. Maybe some do not. How do you get that balance to make sure that those who are elected actually represent the interest of the greater community?

I was also involved on the MMRC. The Manitoba Multicultural Resources Centre was involved with them—Los Latinos, Dr. Louisa Loeb, O. T. Anderson and others there too. They certainly had a very strong input in the multicultural community. The Folk Arts Council, another venue. Who can forget Don Blair, Tony Tavares, and the group?

I went to a multicultural conference in Calgary, and those stories I cannot tell, but I can only say that it is probably the most I ever laughed in my entire life. I think from the moment we woke up to the moment we went to sleep, we laughed. We had a great time. It is great to get together with other communities and find out where multiculturalism is going in Canada. Again, there was great networking that took place. I was involved with organizations

like Max Reinhardt Theatre and others, of course, in my community.

But, again, I think the bill that is before us does have some difficult areas in it. I certainly hope that the minister might have another look at it. No bill will be perfect. I think we all recognize that. Maybe there are some areas that could be looked at to strengthen that those who are on the commission or on the committee, or that are going to be sort of the leadership of the group, that they maybe be mandated a little more strongly to represent the greater community, because we want to make sure that this is not an exclusive club. It is not to become that and I know nobody intends it to be that, so we want to be careful on that.

I have been on a lot of organizations. I mention MIC, MMRC, Folk Arts Council. You want to be careful that the leadership does not become disconnected because, just like with governments as with any other organization, you become disconnected from the membership and in very short order, you lose the moral authority really to speak for them.

I do not know the exact numbers of the respondents from the letters that came back. That might be very telling. What kind of support is there in the community for it? You know, really there should be an overwhelming support for this. Who is calling for it? Certainly, we want to make sure that this is very reflective of the communities. I would suggest that we also look at the new communities coming in, the more traditional communities who have been here for 100-and-some years who, you know, are able to defend themselves a lot better. But it is the new communities that come in. They are not as strong in the language skills. They are just trying to find their way around the city. Let us make sure that they are well represented, and certainly that their interests are being represented on this commission.

I do not know if there is a lot of clarity on the funding side, how that is going to work. I would caution the minister I am not entirely convinced, and again, I am willing to be convinced of this. As I stand right now, I am not too sure that advisory to the Government and

funding are a natural mix for organizations like these, because the two do not seem to work that well.

I know under the previous government you still had the MIC and you had MGAC, and the division of those two seemed to work. Certainly if there are problems with it, we would like to hear about it in committee. I am always, as anybody else here, willing to learn and listen how things have changed. But I know, during the MIC days, that was probably one of the difficulties: the funding being caught up in being an advisory board to the Government.

* (15:50)

Anyway, we certainly look forward to hearing presenters and hearing the communities, and again, I will be out as I am on an everyday basis, out in my community. I pose these questions, whether it is standing around the campfire a couple of nights ago, or if it is at a soccer game like tonight. I pose these questions: What do you feel? What do you think? We want that feedback to come back to this Legislature.

Like I said, I have such a soft spot when it comes to multiculturalism, when it comes to new Canadians, because those were my parents, my relatives, and again, this is something that I feel very strongly about. I hope that what we do, that we do it right. It is done for the right purposes; that it serves those who really do need help in getting accustomed to Canada and getting that feeling they are welcome here, because—I will close with this one—I know of several families who have immigrated. They first went from Russia to Germany. In Russia, they were not German. In Germany, they are not Russian. They come to Canada, and they find out: You know what? Nobody cares. It does not matter. So what? You are Russian or German or Polish, Ukrainian, Filipino, Jewish; it does not matter to us. It really does not matter.

So the one family went back for Christmas, and they said: Ah, it was the three worst weeks of our lives. They went back because, you know, you just do not fit in Europe because you are not that group, your not that group, and they come here. I asked them a couple of weeks ago, and they said: I love it in this country. I absolutely

love it in Canada. This is where I want my children to be raised. They are a young couple; they have young children. This is where we want to be. So what we do here I think should help those kinds of individuals. Let us get them in and make them feel comfortable in this country, and continue to build really one of the greatest countries in history we have had in the world.

With those notes, I will pass it on to the next speaker. Thank you.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Madam Acting Speaker, I rise to speak briefly on Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act. I am ready to give general support to putting together the Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council. But I would suggest that there are some serious omissions in this act which would have really helped in making sure what was put forward and put in place really was a workable and influential council.

First of all, the make-up of the council. It seems to me that the constitution of the council needs to be done in a fair way that will truly be representative of the multicultural community which is so important to our province. Indeed, this is so important that it really should be in the act itself: how the members are going to be selected. That could, indeed, be a serious subject of discussion and debate, and I would hope that the Government will introduce some amendments to clarify how this will happen and make sure that everyone knows right from the start and has the opportunity to discuss and debate this.

With regard to the five members of the council who are appointed by the minister, it is not clear, at this point, what sort of appointments the minister is going to be making. I would refer back to, as an example, the Round Table for Sustainable Development, where government appointees were primarily ministers. Is that the endeavour here, or is the Government going to appoint people from the multicultural community, or bureaucrats? I mean, who are the government appointees? I think this should have been clarified. It would certainly have helped for a better understanding of the intent of this council, where it is going and what it is going to do.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

In looking at the purpose of this council, which is a short paragraph, it contains admirable goals to be concerned with anti-racism, education, human rights, immigration, settlement, cultural and linguistic diversity and heritage—all-important in this province. All-important as we approach our goal, which is a diverse, multicultural, open, tolerant society. But the problem that I see is that the way this is constituted, it probably provides a forum more for lip-service than to real service to the multicultural community.

I would look back again at The Sustainable Development Act, which set up the Round Table for Sustainable Development. Although I have been very critical on some occasions at the former Conservative government, in this instance, The Sustainable Development Act laid out quite carefully the functions and the goals and the plan of action with specified timetables, so that it was quite clear what should be accomplished within the first year, the second year, all the way to five years out.

In this act, we have no idea what they should be accomplishing. They are to advocate in the most general terms, but what are the deliverables? What are the real goals? What should we expect in a year, two years, three years, or five years? We really do not know. I think that that is a problem, and I think it will be a problem in not having set this out at the beginning.

I notice that the NDP government seems to have difficulty in carrying through and in following timetables and accomplishing goals. Clearly, when it came to The Sustainable Development Act, they had a lot of difficulty meeting timetables, and getting things done according to the timetables, and the plan and the framework that was already laid out. That was a reasonable framework for action. But in this case, what we have is not much in terms of real objectives, goals, deliverables and timetables. I think that this is a problem for the Government that they have set up, as I said, an organization which, if care is not taken, will provide lip-service rather than real service.

There are important questions about how this council will operate. It seems to me that they should be set out in the act. Are the meetings of the council to be open to the public, or to the media? Or is this an NDP move to put things behind closed doors, to have secret meetings which will not be open and where there will not be public or media allowed? We do not know how this council is going to operate. Clearly, in an open, tolerant society we should expect open meetings, but we have no guarantee of that. I have a concern that this may evolve into something which is a closed, rather than an open council.

There is a provision for a quarterly report. But there is no provision to keep minutes or records of the meetings, and how they will be communicated to the general public, or whether these are going to be available. You know everyone in Manitoba should know what is being said on so important a topic and so vital an area for the people in our province. So the reality is that when we look at this act, there is much more that is omitted than that is present, and that there are many questions. One can only hope that the Government will introduce some amendments and improvements to this act before it passes all the way through.

There have been in the last little while a number of concerns and questions related to the Government and its involvement and support of the Immigrant Women's Association of Manitoba. Clearly, this is an organization which is involved in immigration, settlement, human rights and anti-racism activity. Yet, the Government has not been nearly as supportive as many in Manitoba would have expected.

So, from my point of view, I just have some concerns about whether this Government is really going to deliver what is an open and tolerant functional approach to the multicultural community in these areas, or whether, in fact, they are going to have a council which operates behind closed doors without producing reports, without a real plan and timetable.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I lay these concerns on the table, and I just hope that before this is finally passed the members of the Government will introduce some amendments

and make some changes to improve this and make it really a much more functional and complete and clear council in the way that it acts and contributes to the life and work of Manitobans.

Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: On second reading of Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act; Loi sur le Conseil ethnoculturel manitobain de consultation et de revendication. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Agreed. It is ordered.

* (16:00)

Bill 27—The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (2)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Resume debate on Bill 27 standing in the name of the honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura). Is there leave to let the bill stand?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is there leave to have the bill stand in the name of the honourable Member for Morris?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Leave denied.

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to address Bill 27, and I believe there are a number of my colleagues who would like to put some words on the record on Bill 27 and have it passed to committee today.

Bill 27 is a very short concise bill, and it really is composed of two things. The first portion of the bill is to bring in uniform rates across rural Manitoba, to require Manitoba Hydro to charge the same rates throughout the province, for power supplied to a class of customers connected to its main power grid. This is something I can support. This is something that I am prepared to vote in favour of. This is something that will be well received by rural Manitobans who are under a lot of stress, particularly in the farm community. I would say that, even though the relief given them by this bill will be small, it is going to be helpful to them. Certainly, we can support that part.

The second part of the bill includes transitional provisions to allow Manitoba Hydro, without the approval of the Public Utilities Board, to reduce rates to comply with this new requirement for uniform rates. This is the portion of the bill, I think, that the Government needs to really think about. They are making a fundamental decision here to circumvent the Public Utilities Board process and one that I think they may regret some day.

I can tell you that Manitoba Hydro knew what the rules were. Manitoba Hydro knew what the rules were. In a letter by their solicitor, February 22, they sent an application to the Public Utilities Board, and I commend them for that. This is the appropriate process. They laid before the Public Utilities Board a request to have the rates reviewed, so that uniform rates could be brought into effect. In fact, they sent with that letter many pages of documentation to the Public Utilities Board, which were part of their application to establish uniform province-wide rates for all classes of service.

This, undoubtedly, was a document that had been worked on for weeks and weeks to fulfil government policy, and this is the appropriate way to go. The Public Utilities Board could have reviewed this in detail. Members of the public could have come forward to have their input, and ultimately they would make a decision. But clearly, Hydro was asking to follow the process. Hydro was presenting this documentation, perhaps hundreds of pages of it, and prepared to send their experts, their staff, their lawyers to

support this process and to ask the Public Utilities Board to establish uniform rates.

I commend the board and the management for doing that. That is the appropriate way to go, and the Government could have had their policy instituted through the Public Utilities Board. However, barely two weeks had passed when Mr. Brennan, who says he was following the instructions of the minister and the Premier (Mr. Doer) to withdraw this application, to put an end to this process, that the Government was overriding the process. They were overriding the Crown corporation, they were overriding the board. I say that they may live to regret that some day, because they are taking away from Manitobans the opportunity to have input into the rates in this province. So, in fact, this application, this substantial application—was withdrawn. Instead, the Government chose to go the legislative route.

I grant you that is their prerogative. They are the Government. They can choose to do that, but I would like them to think today about why we have this Public Utilities Board process. Why do we take rates from Crown corporations and others on public utilities to a board to be examined? This was put in effect in 1988 by the government that was led by the previous Premier, Mr. Filmon. This was a process to see that there was a fair process and a fair examination of all of the aspects of rate setting.

Why did we do that? Because the government of Howard Pawley and previous governments had some history on the setting of rates. The entire province knew that rates for MPIC during the Howard Pawley years were set at the Cabinet table, and there was a cycle to them, where they were politically manipulated. There was a cycle that in the first years of a mandate rates would go up dramatically, and then, as you approached an election, rates would be set more modestly. The government of the day, the Howard Pawley government, got caught at this, and, in fact, probably saw one of the biggest demonstrations this Legislature would ever see, Thousands and thousands of Manitobans, I understand, probably instigated by a student who was very upset with the rate she was going to have to pay, very upset with the process, but it was a movement that caught on

with leadership from the opposition party at that time. Thousands of Manitobans came to the Legislature to say: this is fundamentally wrong, what you are doing, this manipulation of rights.

As a result, that government that set rates at the Cabinet table, that government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think you were a member of, and I know you have told me on many occasions they were wrong, and they should not have done that, and I believe that you probably think they are wrong now, to circumvent a good public process. When you circumvent a good public process, you are wrong. The Board of Hydro knew that. The management at Hydro knew that when they submitted this to the Public Utilities Board, and it was overridden. They must have spent months preparing that to instigate a new rate structure for the province. Why was the Government so lacking in confidence in the board, in the management, in the utility or the process, that they have to come in with legislation to override what has been an accepted process in this province for the last 12 or 14 years?

I can tell you it is a throwback to the days of the Howard Pawley government, where the Member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) sat at the Cabinet table. They know that they were severely reprimanded by the public, that when the Member for Concordia became the Leader of that party, he declined to become the Premier at that time because he knew what was coming; that the public was irate over this. I can tell you the same sort of interference with public utilities, with Crown corporations, is leading you down that same path again; that the public wants to be involved. So why would members opposite change this process in midstream? A process that had already started with many months of work, probably hundreds of thousands of dollars of expenditures to prepare a very detailed submission to the Public Utilities Board. Now the Government steps in, with a heavy hand, to put an end to the process, and they are saying on a one-time basis, this is a one-time thing we are going to do.

* (16:10)

Well, I can tell you it is wrong, and the public of Manitoba see it as wrong, but this is a

pattern that is developing with this Government. There is an aversion to openness. There is an aversion to public scrutiny. We saw it in the House today when we were asking that the Government table details of the building of a new arena and entertainment complex in Manitoba. They had said initially that there was a \$10 million contribution by the provincial government, and that is it. Now, almost on a daily basis, we find out that there is an escalating cost; that there is an escalating contribution being asked for, and obviously granted by this provincial government, and now we are seeing this lack of openness to the extent where Manitobans are saying can we send the Provincial Auditor in to look at this? The Member for Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) is saying, no, heavens no, we would not want to do that.

Well, what are you afraid of? The Member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) knows that you are on a slippery slope here, that you have this aversion to a public process, to public information coming forward. I bring this back to this bill, that you are putting an end to a process and saying this is a one-time only thing, but Manitobans do not accept that. They know that this Government has this penchant for secrecy, this penchant for doing things out of the public eye. This is a prime example where you are circumventing a very public process.

Now if members opposite think that this is just an opposition issue, they need to read the papers. They need to listen to third-party organizations, and I know the Member for Burrows, Mr. Deputy Speaker, does that. The *Winnipeg Free Press*, in many, many editorials and articles is saying: give us a public review of Hydro rates. They are saying: is this Government skimming money, skimming power, skimming money from this Crown corporation to put into the activities that government should be handling through their line departments? They have written many, many editorials—clarify hazy agreements. This newspaper, this editorial board, is watching what you are doing with this Crown corporation, and again there is no openness here. There is no willingness on the part of the Government to present their plans where they are going.

In this year's Budget, the Government took over \$100 million in water rental rates saying

they have devised a new formula. Well, a new formula indeed, but you have taken more money out of that Crown corporation than any government before for the water rental rates, and as part of an additional revenue that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has put before this House. It is part of additional revenue, and believe me, you have more additional revenue in the last two years than you probably are ever going to see again—an increased own-source revenue, increased transfers from the federal government, and still you are skimming over \$100 million out of Hydro.

None of these things have been scrutinized by the Public Utilities Board, and that is what the *Free Press*, in a number of editorials, is asking for. That is what groups like the Society of Seniors, the Consumers' Association of Manitoba, the major power user groups are asking for; that Hydro has not presented before the Public Utilities Board since 1996. Many, many people think it is time that the board went before the Public Utilities Board to lay all the cards on the table. Interestingly, the board and the management were prepared to do that, but they got cut off at the knees by the Premier, saying: We do not trust the process. We do not trust that Manitoba Hydro has put together a submission that is going to pass that test. I believe that the Public Utilities Board would have accepted this very well, but you never gave them the chance. Again, you have a government here who is manipulating the process. We are seeing that in other areas. *[interjection]*

The member from Brandon West is a newcomer to this House, and he has only listened to part of the comments that I have had to say today. I have indicated that I will be supporting this bill, but I am asking this member and this Cabinet to reconsider the process.

The corporation already has the submission ready. They assented to the Public Utilities Board once, and the Public Utilities Board was prepared to set a date to hear them. It clearly says that this application is to establish uniform, province-wide rates for all classes of service. The work had been done, and I believe it was done thoroughly by the board and, probably, they would have had some success. Yet, this Government does not have the confidence in that

process, so they withdrew it only two weeks after it had been sent. I can tell you that the third parties, who are going to appear before committee, are going to raise a whole bunch of issues to do with Manitoba Hydro.

The Premier has spoken on many occasions about the expansion of the corporation to include new projects in the north, and the first question he was asked is: What public process is this going to go through? He said: Well, I do not know. We will have to figure that out. We do not know what process is going to go through.

Well, I can tell you on the one hand, he is saying that there should be a public process, but on the other hand, you can be sure, given the behaviour of this Government, that it is going to be a limited one. The public, through the Public Utilities Board, will not have that ability to scrutinize all of these activities. They have, according to the board and the management at a committee earlier this week, upwards of \$6 billion of projects on the board, and if you counted Conawapa in there, it would be even more. Again, Manitobans are going to demand an open process where they have an opportunity to have some input into what this Crown corporation is going to do.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

If the Government is so sure there should be uniform rates, and they want to pass legislation, does the same apply to other utilities? Would the Government advocate that MPIC rates should be uniform throughout the province? As we all know, there is quite a structure of rates for automobile insurance for all sorts of vehicular insurance in this province. If this Government believes in uniform rates, are they going to bring in legislation next time to override the process and override the Public Utilities Board?

The natural gas corporation, which is now part of Manitoba Hydro, also has differential rates. If this principle is one that the Government believes in, will they also bring in legislation to provide for uniform rates for that particular Crown corporation? Again, the Government, I think, is on a slope here that they will regret some day. Instead of going through a well-documented, well-accepted process of the Public

Utilities Board, they are circumventing that and going in a different direction.

Manitobans, generally, will be pleased to have lower rates. That is without question, and people in this Chamber, I think, will vote in favour of that. Certainly, I will. But how are you going to get there? You are doing it with the heavy hand of legislation, rather than accepting a process, and Manitobans, more and more, are going to question how this Government operates. They are going to side step the accepted processes in this province and they are going to do this through the means of legislation, rather than going through the accepted process.

The member from Brandon East who had some input earlier when I was speaking on the subject and referred to the *Winnipeg Free Press*—well, the *Brandon Sun* is also of the same mind. In an editorial in February of this year, the editorial is headed, "Keep Hands off Hydro Windfall." In fact, there are going to be increasing windfalls if there is expansion of this utility and Manitobans are very concerned about how that money is being spent. In fact, there is upwards of \$400 million of profit from sales outside of the province.

* (16:20)

This money, this year, is being used for special government projects. It is being used to take more money than ever before into the consolidated fund. It is used in ways that the Crown corporation has never before used those funds and I say to the Government: It is not too late to review the path you are on and the direction you are going. This process and this bill can be put in abeyance. You can go back the route that Manitoba Hydro officials and the Board of Manitoba Hydro wanted to go in the first place. There will be no lag time. The documentation is ready. The work has been done and I would urge the Government to go in that direction.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am prepared to have this sent to committee, although I believe there are other speakers on this. Again, I reiterate that I will support the lowering of rates, but I say to you that you are making a very, very fundamental mistake by circumventing the process

and not going the direction that was mandated since 1988, to go to a very public review of rates and give the Manitobans an opportunity to examine them. The corporation wanted to go that way and it is very clear, the Premier overrode the board. He overrode the corporation and said: No, we are going to go this way. That was the way of Howard Pawley. That was the way of the member from Concordia when he almost lost his seat in 1988. He should look at the history of Crown corporations.

Members saw that, when they tried to raid MPIC for \$30 million to build universities, within five days the outcry made the Government change their minds. There has not been the same outcry here, but the same concern is there in the public. The same concern is there with third parties that are watching. It is there with the editorial boards. It is there with the public. I tell you, you are going down the wrong path here and you should reconsider. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet (Mr. Praznik), I would ask the House if there is leave. When the members agreed to leave it standing in the name of the honourable Member for Morris (Mr. Pitura), it should have been the honourable Member for St. Norbert (Mr. Laurendeau). All in agreement? [*Agreed*].

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few words to this particular debate on this bill.

First of all, let me say that I believe that the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) has very adequately covered the ground and the position of our side of the House, with respect to the bill. As the Member for the Lac du Bonnet constituency, which will receive some of the benefit from this particular change, I am certainly intending to support this bill. I do this on behalf of my constituents who will be beneficiaries of this particular move and I have no hesitation in doing that. But, Mr. Speaker, the words and wisdom of the Member for Minnedosa, the comments that he has made with respect to the process, and the concern, I must say, as well, are extremely valid.

I was a candidate in the 1988 election. When I first entered this House, along with the Member for Minnedosa—and in that campaign, in which the New Democratic Party was so badly decimated by the voters of this province—one of the key issues was the way in which they used, and handled and dealt with Manitoba's Crown corporations. Mr. Speaker, when we remember back to those days, Autopac, MPI was the main target of public scrutiny, because after seeing rates being artificially lowered by Cabinet—and we remember those days when it was the Cabinet of Manitoba who set the rates for MPI—we saw voters prior to the '86 election receive a benefit in artificially lowered rates, only to find that after the Government had been re-elected, after the New Democratic Party had been re-elected, the rates now had to go up more than they needed to, to cover that artificial election goody shortfall that they had created.

You know, Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Hydro, another good example, when we came to power in 1988, the debt-equity ratio—

An Honourable Member: A black day.

Mr. Praznik: Well, the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) says a black day, but I tell you, what he defends with Manitoba Hydro, when his party managed that corporation, was a debt-equity ratio of 98 percent to 2 percent. Manitoba Hydro, all we owned of it, as Manitobans, was 2 percent of its value.

An Honourable Member: Two percent more than we own of MTS.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, 98 percent of its value was covered by debt. Now the members talk across the way about Manitoba Telephone System and privatization. Hydro, in 1988, was virtually in private hands as security for its debt. All we owned was 2 percent, and the Member for Brandon East today defends that. He thinks that was wonderful.

An Honourable Member: Two percent more than we own of MTS.

Mr. Praznik: If 2 percent of Manitoba Hydro is what that member says is a good amount of public ownership, let him get out there and

campaign among his own supporters, if that is what he campaigned for, for 2 percent. That is ridiculous. It is bad management; it is bad for Hydro; it is bad for the people of Manitoba, and he today, arrogantly, in this House says again: It is great, 2 percent.

Mr. Speaker, it took us many years to bring that debt-equity ratio down and it continues to go down. It continues to show an enhancement of public investment, You know, the irony of it is that virtually all the real public ownership of Manitoba Hydro today is there because we as Progressive Conservatives managed that corporation to build up our equity. To build up our equity that the Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell)—that turns his back now—his colleagues, his party, arrogantly left, left to go away to get worn down to 2 percent and he calls himself the defender of public ownership.

What hypocrisy. What hypocrisy. Defender of public ownership? It is a laugh. He is embarrassed; he should be embarrassed. That is why he turned his back, because the truth hurts. Two percent and he says that is great. That is pathetic. That is pathetic.

An Honourable Member: You are breaking the rules.

Mr. Praznik: The Member for Brandon East chews on his apple in the Chamber. You know, 2 percent of public ownership in Hydro is great. That is fine. That is his standard: 2 percent. So we now have a benchmark. In other words, Manitoba Hydro can see the public equity fall down to 2 percent of the end of its assets and that would meet the test of members opposite for public ownership. This is really pathetic.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the point made by the Member for Minnedosa (Mr. Gilleshammer) is a very valid one. If it is government policy, as it is, to do away with the rate differential, then the numbers that they will use to ensure that that is sustainable should be, must be, in all good conscience put to the Public Utilities Board to ensure that they are valid and sustainable. You know, Mr. Speaker, what they are not saying in doing away with rate stabilization, or with rate differential—my constituents benefit, but other categories go up. The Government has said: This

is neutral. They will not go up. We are going to use the surplus.

* (16:30)

Well, Mr. Speaker, that formula in itself should be put to the Public Utilities Board for review to find out if it is sustainable, or if in two, or three or four years from now, the results of this decision may mean a higher rate increase for some of the categories now that enjoy a lower rate. When that happens, that should be part of the review, so that this decision is made for all of the public to know all of the consequences. Now for my constituents, it is a benefit. Am I going to support it? You bet, but there should not be surprises in this. All of the ramifications should be known. The numbers should be tested. The irony of this, Mr. Speaker, is that the utility was doing the right thing. They were preparing this large presentation to make the case for their numbers to the Public Utilities Board, and this administration was afraid to have it happen. They politically interfered with the management of a Crown corporation and had them withdraw it from the Public Utilities Board.

That is what is wrong. You know, Mr. Speaker, if they have nothing to hide, if these numbers are right—and I have no reason to argue that they are not, but having that seal of approval by the Public Utilities Board is just the right thing to do, that they should not be afraid. The real point to be made with this bill, Mr. Speaker, is the trend—is the precedent—that this Government is not interested in ensuring proper independent scrutiny of its Crown corporations by the Public Utilities Board. The end result of that is going right back to where we were under the Pawley government in the '80s, where Crown corporations do more than this Legislature mandated them to do, which was to provide service at cost to their ratepayer.

But this Government wants to use them as instruments of public policy, as a source of back door taxation, which we have seen before. So, Mr. Speaker, yes, we will support this level rate structure. But we ask the questions again: What are they afraid of in going to the Public Utilities Board? Why did they politically interfere with Manitoba Hydro in pulling back Hydro's

proposal to the board? Why are they not committed to do what the people of Manitoba fundamentally believe must happen? All of our Crown utilities, whose mandate is to provide service at cost, why are they not committed to ensuring that their financial decisions are scrutinized by the Public Utilities Board to make sure that the long-term financial future of those corporations and the financial responsibilities of their ratepayers are protected by that scrutiny?

You know, that is really the issue here, but I know that the Member for Brandon East, the Minister of Education, Training and Youth (Mr. Caldwell), has clearly said today in this Chamber—and we all heard it—that their standard for public ownership in our Crown corporations is 2 percent. Mr. Speaker, 2% equity, and that is okay with them. Whatever other equity exists in those Crown corporations they can spend it away, but as long as there is a fingernail of equity left, that is okay for these New Democrats. Put the ratepayers at risk. Give them rate shock in the future. Do not be responsible with that money. Soak those Crown corporations, because as long as there is that 2% equity, they can get up and say: We believe in Crown corporations. Even if 98 percent of it is held by our creditors in New York and other financial markets, they do not care.

The Member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) today was pretty honest with this House and that comment. He was honest with this House that this Government does not give one bit of care about the financial health of our corporations. His standard is 2% equity and that is okay. Well, that is not a standard that is acceptable to this party and it is not a standard that is acceptable to the people of Manitoba. Those words will come home to haunt him some day and, I think, the sooner the better for the future of this province. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education, Training and Youth): I would be remiss if I did not put a few words on the record, given the eloquent—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have just been advised that the honourable minister has already spoken to this bill.

An Honourable Member: Shame, shame.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I just want to put a few words on the record regarding Bill 27, the Hydro bill. Listening to the speeches last week—I guess it was last Wednesday from some of the members opposite, especially the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff)—he said a few things which I do not quite agree with. He said that we are against lowering Hydro rates for farmers and for rural people. Well, that is definitely wrong.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

First of all, I think that the problem with the bill is not the fact that it will equalize the Hydro rates, it is the fact in the process and the way it was done. I have some of the largest Hydro customers in Manitoba in my constituency. I have the Manitoba Rolling Mills in my constituency in the arm of St. Andrews; part of it is in Selkirk, also, but part of it is in the arm of St. Andrews. The Manitoba Rolling Mills is one of the largest Hydro customers in Manitoba. They are about the third. Inco, I believe, is the first; Simplot in Brandon is the second; and Manitoba Rolling Mills is third, I believe. They are a very large customer and provide a lot of jobs in the St. Andrews-Selkirk area. So Manitoba Hydro is very important to Manitobans.

Last week, when the Member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) spoke, he talked about who brought in the electrification to Manitoba. It was D. L. Campbell, under a Liberal-Progressive government in the late '40s that served rural Manitoba and brought in rural electrification. Who paid for that? The people of Manitoba subsidized the installation of Hydro in Manitoba, and it was a very good move. It was very much appreciated by the rural people of Manitoba, I can assure you, and I want to commend the D. L. government of the day for taking the initiative to do this, to supply Manitoba Hydro to the farmers. I can recall, as a matter of fact, at the time they putting it in. Certainly, when we first did get Manitoba Hydro in the rural areas, it was a big

convenience and every one certainly appreciates that.

But the fact is this Government is playing politics with Manitoba Hydro, and that is what they are doing by not letting Manitoba Hydro take it to the Public Utilities Board like they should be. Whether the rates are going up or down, regardless, they should be going through the proper procedure. That is the problem. They are not using the proper procedure. They are not going to the Public Utility Board, and instead of doing what Manitoba Hydro even recommended, now they are going to have the bill forwarded through to equalization, which is fine. We are not against the equalization of the rates, but we are just against the process and the way it is done, the way this NDP government is playing politics with our Crown corporation. That is what the problem is.

Then the members stand up and say that we are against this and that we are also against lowering not only hydro rates for farmers and rural people but also the assessment. Well, it was their own assessors that increased the assessment for rural Manitoba, increased the assessment for farmers. As a matter of fact, I had one farmer phone me this morning. His assessment is going up on his farm, on his yard site, from \$225,000 to \$305,000, which is an increase of \$80,000. These are the assessors by the Department of Intergovernmental Affairs doing this.

So now they are going to reduce the rate from 30 to 27. Big deal. They are increasing it about 25 or 30 percent and then reducing it by 3 percent, which does not make sense. They are still going to get a lot more money and still tax those poor farmers and poor rural people more than what they should have been doing in the first place. The members, especially the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), who was criticizing us for not standing up for farmers, I can tell you, our government, during the time when we were in government, when the Filmon team was in government, we did stand up for rural people. We did help the rural farmers. We did help the people in rural Manitoba.

* (16:40)

Just getting back to Manitoba Hydro for a minute, Manitoba Hydro is very well run. It is

because of the fact that people like Bob Brennan and people who have been involved with Manitoba Hydro for years and the former Hydro board did see fit to keep the hydro rates and froze them for about 5 years. There have been no increases.

Yet this Government is going to take another \$48 million and tax that Crown corporation another \$48 million for the water rates so that this is really an increase in the hydro. Hydro should really come down some more, the hydro rates, to the users of Manitoba. They should come down some more rather than be increased, but they are taxing the Manitoba Hydro by increasing the water rates another \$48 million. This is another way of trying to mislead the public and using our hydro as another political football. That is what this Government has been doing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not the only thing they are trying to do. They are trying to use Manitoba Hydro money to build roads in northern Manitoba. It is bad enough they are spending the majority or 40-some percent of the Highways budget in northern Manitoba. I do not doubt the roads need improving, but I think it has to be fair. It has to be in proper proportion of where the populations are. Why should Manitoba Hydro be building roads? I have no idea. You have to ask the Government. They are using Manitoba Hydro's money to build roads.

The Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff), the other day when he was criticizing us, talked about the MPIC. Well, I can remember when I was first elected to this Legislature in 1988, it was because of the mismanagement of MPIC by the former government, by Mr. Pawley. But I remember the fellow who I beat in the election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Bucklaschuk; he is still costing the MPIC and this Government millions of dollars because of the lawsuit and one thing and another. I think during the campaign we called him "Shreddie" or something like that because he shredded some MPIC papers.

But one of the reasons why the people of Manitoba elected a new government in 1988 was because of the mismanagement of that government of the NDP of a Crown corporation. MPIC

was another one of those corporations that was best managed by the former government.

I appreciate the opportunity to put a few remarks on the record and want to correct the record and correct some of the untruths that some of the members opposite have been talking about and saying that we do not support rural Manitoba. I can assure you that we support rural Manitoba and we have done for many, many years since we were first elected. *[interjection]*

That is right. There is another example. They took away the Department of Rural Development.

An Honourable Member: Unbelievable.

Mr. Helwer: Unbelievable. Here was a department that was trying to get the municipalities and to diversify and get the people and get some industry and create jobs in rural Manitoba. What did they do? Chucked it out. Dismantled it. Threw it out. There is another perfect example, so when you look at the mismanagement of the—

An Honourable Member: REDI program.

Mr. Helwer: Yes, there is another example. What are they doing with the REDI program? Where is that money going?

An Honourable Member: Going to Wolseley.

Mr. Helwer: Yes, probably. Who knows? We do not know. We can go on and on and list the mismanagement by this Government and the former NDP government. This is why we will be the government after the next election. Regardless of how they use Manitoba Hydro money, or MPIC money to try to buy votes, it will not work. The people of Manitoba are smarter than that. They will not fall for that.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to put a few remarks on the record.

Thank you.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): As the MLA for the constituency of Springfield, I have been pushing for Hydro rate equalization for some time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and have supported

Hydro rate equalization from the word go. I also have some concerns with the process. I believe, when you go through these kinds of exercises, they should always be open and as transparent as possible. I would strongly encourage the government of the day to go through the proper route, in particular, going with this whole decision to the Public Utilities Board. I believe that as all legislators, as Manitobans, we will view this as being a good move. It is the people's utility. It should serve the people of Manitoba.

I also believe that there will be little difficulty going through the Public Utilities Board. It just sets an historical precedent that we always go to the Public Utilities Board when it comes to these kinds of things. It just leaves it open. There are no questions. Later on there might be other issues coming up with rates and again, we will not have that tradition built in that we do it by legislation but that it goes the proper route to the Public Utilities Board. It just gives it that open, transparent look I would strongly recommend to the Government.

Politicians of all stripes, if you look historically, whether in this province or other provinces, have made decisions by legislation, have made errors through legislation, and it is very helpful when the public has a vehicle, a venue, by which they can come forward. I daresay, in this particular case, you would have the public coming forward and saying this is a good decision. This is a good move. Let us move forward with it.

I would say that Manitoba Hydro should take those accolades. It should be able to go in front of the Public Utilities Board and have citizens come forward and tell them what a great move this is, what a good decision it is. There is really no reason to fear. One has to wonder: Why is the Government so scared of the Public Utilities Board? Why this inane fear of it?

Take it forth. Let them have a look at it. Let the public come. Again, it just sets that precedent that the people are able to ask questions, to make comments on their utility, because in the end, it is not the present government's utility, it is certainly not this

Chamber's utility, it belongs to the citizens of Manitoba.

So I, again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, do strongly believe in Hydro equalization across the province. I have always been a supporter of that. Our hydro should be of benefit to our people, but I would encourage this Government to do the right thing, to do the courageous thing. Take it to the Public Utilities Board. Again, it just leaves the process so open, so transparent, and it serves the best interests of the people that we represent.

So, with those few comments, I would like to thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to speak on this bill dealing with Manitoba Hydro and setting uniform rates throughout the province.

I would say, in general terms, that I think that this is a reasonable move for the Government to make at this particular juncture. It provides a level of fairness throughout Manitoba and it will provide opportunities throughout Manitoba in terms of the utilization of hydro-electric power and it may provide for opportunities for business and industrial development as well as opportunities for individuals to have cheaper hydro-electric power than they might have had in many parts of Manitoba.

I think that there are some important issues which have been raised by the Conservative Party with regard to the Public Utilities Board. In this instance I would say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, first of all, that I believe there is a role for the Government to set a directive and to set a directive in which there are uniform rates. However, I would suggest that it is important for the Public Utilities Board to have the opportunity to review what that uniform rate is, how that uniform rate is currently set with regard to the real costs of running Manitoba Hydro as it is now.

I think that that is something which is important, particularly being that it has been a number of years since Manitoba Hydro rates have been reviewed, and it would be appropriate to have the Public Utilities Board have a look at

the question of, and the issue of, what is the best and the optimum uniform rate. Is it the one which is now? Could, in fact, rates be lowered province-wide at the moment, given the accumulated surplus and the financial position of Manitoba Hydro?

* (16:50)

That being said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that it is important clearly for Manitoba Hydro to continue to pay down the debt to be in a better position from a debt to equity ratio and improved financial circumstances so that Manitoba Hydro is not in a potentially difficult situation, for example, were interest rates to rise significantly. Hopefully that will not occur, but one should have some long-run planning. One clearly should position an important operation like Manitoba Hydro in a good place in terms of the debt to equity ratio.

I want to make some comments with regard to the net effect of this bill and some of the other things that have happened in the last few years in relationship to the expansion of natural gas in many areas of rural Manitoba. This is a concern for me and I believe a concern for many in rural Manitoba. When one compares Manitoba to Saskatchewan and Alberta, we have far less access to natural gas in rural areas than Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Just before the last election the former Progressive Conservative government moved to have Manitoba Hydro take over Centra Gas. What happened was that it created a monopoly situation with regard to energy supply in parts of rural Manitoba. Although there may be some advantages in some respects, it has taken away the competitive aspects in large measure, the drive to put natural gas in rural Manitoba, because from a Manitoba Hydro perspective, Hydro gets the benefit of selling electricity where there is not natural gas available.

This may be okay in some respects, but for quite a number of rural communities, if they are going to have opportunity for industrial development and manufacturing opportunities which need natural gas to be economically viable, I think it is quite important that we do not forget the importance of getting natural gas into rural areas.

The net effect of having a single-rate structure province-wide will be to close the differential between natural gas and electricity and make it less likely under the scenario of the Doer government that we will get natural gas into many areas that need it. That would include the constituency of Lac du Bonnet and Pinawa. I suggest that the access to natural gas is important and that we need to be cognizant of some of the effects of this legislation. Let us not pass legislation without understanding that it may have some effects to delay development and economic opportunities that might have been available under other circumstances.

We have seen in the last little while that natural gas prices have gone up quite high and now have come down, come down perhaps more quickly than people anticipated. With natural gas it is not clear what is going to happen a few months from now, whether they are going to continue to come down, whether, in fact, they will go back up again, but I think that we are faced with a circumstance where, clearly, there are significant advantages to natural gas in rural areas. In passing this bill, we should not forget the importance of continuing to think about and to develop access to natural gas to communities like Pinawa and others in rural Manitoba.

Those, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are the primary comments that I wanted to make, that I believe, in general, that this is a reasonable measure at this time, that it does need to be reviewed down the road so that we understand the economic trade-offs, that people in Winnipeg, in fact, are going to be paying higher rates, and I think, in general, provided that that is a small differential that the issue of fairness will suffice to allow Manitobans to feel that they are being treated well and treated fairly.

But I do think that there is an opportunity which was missed, in having set the uniform rate structure, to go to the Public Utilities Board and have it review what that uniform rate level should be, so that we know from an independent source whether, in fact, the direction this Government is setting is a reasonable one for the long-term best interests of the Crown corporation and of Manitoba citizens. Thank you.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to put a few

comments on the record on Bill 27, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (2), and want to, at the outset, say that we on this side of the House have absolutely no problem with the standardization of Hydro rates throughout the province of Manitoba. That needs to be made very clear, because the Government today appears to be using this bill, or trying to use it, to their political advantage, and I think the record needs to show that we have never indicated that we have an issue with the standardization of Hydro rates.

What we do take issue with is the process that this Government has used or the circumventing of the proper process that this Government has used to implement this policy. It has become very clear and very evident that Manitoba Hydro, because of an election commitment that the Government of today made about standardizing rates, spent hours and hours, Mr. Deputy Speaker, probably weeks I would say, a significant number of person hours at a significant financial cost, to prepare a submission to the Public Utilities Board, with a covering letter that went in February, at the end of February, asking for a hearing before the Public Utilities Board in order to implement standardization of hydro rates throughout the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the management, the board and the employees from Manitoba Hydro were taking a responsible approach, based on the policy that has been in place in this province of Manitoba. I want to remind all of my honourable friends, especially those on the government side of the House today that maybe were not here, many were not here between the years of 1986 and 1988. That was when I was first elected to this Legislature. One of the most significant events that took place between 1986 and 1988 was the political manipulation of the Manitoba Public Insurance Corporation by the Pawley government, when the now-Premier (Mr. Doer) sat around the Cabinet table and with a stroke of a pen politically manipulated the rates for MPI in the province of Manitoba.

Now let us just go through the history of what the Pawley administration did when they were in government because right before every election when they were in government, they

made sure that MPI rates did not increase. There was no public process for any type of public scrutiny under the Pawley administration, and then right after the election, when they won the election, they would increase MPI rates significantly hoping that by the time it came to the next election, Manitobans would forget how they politically manipulated MPI rates. There was no public scrutiny. It was around the Cabinet table, by the stroke of a pen, that the Pawley administration played games with our Crown corporations, but they got caught in their little games.

* (17:00)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have never seen the outrage by Manitobans that I saw around the political manipulation by the Pawley-Doer administration. As a result, one of their own members, Jim Walding, voted against his government because of their, I guess, I am not sure whether "dishonesty" is an acceptable word, and if it is not, I will not use that word. I would say that the Pawley administration, while the now-Premier sat around the Cabinet table, showed disrespect for Manitobans with the way they dealt with Crown corporations. Manitobans knew, and Manitobans saw through that. I know that is one of the reasons that there was overwhelming support to get rid of the Pawley administration in the 1988 election.

So we saw what had happened, and when we came into government we put a process in place so the public would have the ability to make representation that all of the information would be available to the public, witnesses could come forward and present their case, and Manitobans would have some impact or some ability to ensure that there was due diligence done on any changes to rates for Crown corporations. I think that process has worked well for Manitobans for the last decade.

What we are seeing today is very much a disrespect for the Crown corporation, the management and the employees that put their time, energy and effort into following the proper process only to be chastised by this Government and told to withdraw that application. Now I am not sure what the hidden agenda was. Was it because the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger)

had already determined what his Budget was going to be and he knew that he was going to dip into the cookie jar and he was going to take \$48 million of revenue out of Manitoba Hydro for water rental rates and another \$17 million out of Manitoba Hydro for a debt guarantee fee? Mr. Deputy Speaker, \$65 million more taken out of Manitoba Hydro as a result of this Minister of Finance dipping his hands into the cookie jar.

Was the hidden agenda, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this Minister of Finance thought he would get his hands slapped by the Public Utilities Board if he went before them and told the truth about what he was planning to do, that his Budget was set, and I believe Hydro could have made the case and did make the case in the submission that they made to the Public Utilities Board. I believe that when all of the facts were on the table and they knew that hiding behind this application was an additional \$65 million in revenue that this Government was going to take out of Manitoba Hydro, that they would have been chastised severely as a government.

So they did not want to go to the Public Utilities Board and they did not want public scrutiny because they were afraid that the real truth would come out and that their hidden agenda, Mr. Deputy Speaker, would be seen through and that the Public Utilities Board would have approved the standardization of rates, but they would not have approved this Government and this Minister of Finance dipping his hands into Manitoba Hydro. I believe that is why after Manitoba Hydro sent a letter and did all of the due diligence to support the application for standardization of rates, that this Cabinet and this Government, behind closed doors, made a political decision to circumvent that process and bring in legislation so they would not be held accountable and they would not be publicly chastised for the revenue that they were taking out of Manitoba Hydro.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why we support the process of having an open public consultation where Manitobans can come forward before the Public Utilities Board and make representation. Manitobans can support fairness and balance throughout Manitoba. What Manitobans cannot support is the deviousness of this Government and going back to the old days

where with a stroke of the pen around the Cabinet table, they can politically interfere with the process of the Crown corporations.

This Government has a history of manipulating our Crown corporations, and it appears to me that they are going back to the same old ways. I guess Premier Pawley must have had a significant impact on the now-Premier (Mr. Doer) of the Province of Manitoba, and he has fallen back. Maybe it is because the chair of the Board of Hydro, who was the Finance Minister who was turfed out back in 1988, still has a significant influence.

I wonder if he was the one who sort of made representation around the Cabinet table when the political decision was made to direct Hydro, the management and the staff who had worked hard and wanted to follow the proper process, directed them to send a letter to the Public Utilities Board and ask not to have this issue heard, ask that Manitobans not have the ability to put their thoughts on the record and ask Manitobans not to know that this Government was going to politically manipulate and take an additional \$65 million of revenue out of Manitoba Hydro. I say, shame, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is the old gang back to their old tricks, and Manitobans will see through this.

So the record needs to show that this Government does not trust the proper process where Manitobans have input into what their Crown corporations' rates will be. I honestly believe that if the books had been examined, the Public Utilities Board may have said: Rather than dipping your hands into the cookie jar, maybe you should lower Hydro rates across the province, \$65 million could have gone a long way to reduce Hydro rates, but, no, this Government chose to politically manipulate the process.

So those comments needed to be put on the record, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say shame to the Government. It is Manitobans who are the losers as a result of the process that they have put into place. Thank you.

Mr. Frank Pitura (Morris): Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to put a few comments on the record

with respect to this bill. I just want to start out, I think that the Government should give themselves applause for moving toward having a uniform rate right across the province, and they can be applauded for that. However, they should also give themselves a great big slap for the way they have gone about the process of coming up with the standardized rates. It is a travesty. It is a travesty.

* (17:10)

You know, after the Pawley government was trounced out of office, there was a lot of work put in to establishing the accountability of the Crown corporations within the province of Manitoba, in setting up the Public Utilities Board which would take a look at the rate setting for MPI, for Manitoba Hydro, for Manitoba telephone system. It was an open process where the public was invited to participate in the discussions and to take a look at the facts that the Crown corporations would put on the table.

If they disagreed with them, they could bring their arguments and say to the Public Utilities Board that, you know, if the amount of money that the particular Crown corporation was asking for with regard to a rate increase was not justified on the basis of their numbers that they presented, then they would ask the Public Utilities Board to make a ruling as to how high the rates could be increased.

An Honourable Member: The Crown Accountability Act.

Mr. Pitura: It was The Crown Accountability Act that they were operating under. So the Public Utilities Board would then take a look at all of the information, both coming in from the public and from the Crown corporations, and establish a rate which they felt was justified on the basis of the arguments put forward by the Crown corps and by what the general public could afford to pay, a very open process, a very open process to the public of Manitoba, so that they could see how their Crown corporations were being administered, how they were being run.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they could even highlight some areas within the Crown

corporations where they felt that improvements could be made in terms of how they ran the corporation. There were a lot of good things that happened, and this all happened after the Pawley government was turfed out.

That Pawley government sat around the Cabinet table, established MPI rates, put them up after the election, brought them down before the election, did not care about the bottom line, did not care whether the corporation was financially sound or not. They just went ahead and willy-nilly set the rates to please their own political interests. They did the same thing with Manitoba Hydro, and they did the same thing with Manitoba telephones. So they did that just at their pleasure in terms of what they wanted to do politically in terms of establishing the rates. But the public of Manitoba saw through that and in 1988 gave them the goodbye wave. There is a song that goes with that, too, and we sing it sometimes at football games when the Bombers are way ahead.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the way the bill is presented, I certainly support the standardization of rates throughout Manitoba. That is good move. Most of my constituents will probably appreciate that. It is not a significant amount of money, but they will certainly appreciate any kind of standardization of rates, which will, in fact, reduce their rates.

But I am certainly not very happy with the way the second half of that bill reads with regard to establishing through legislation the way and the method that Manitoba Hydro comes about to establish those rates, because from here on in, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this Government needs to have more money and they want to maintain balanced budget legislation, they need more revenue and they are going to take more revenue, the hydro rates are going to go up to create that revenue. There is going to be some silly argument about how Manitoba Hydro needs the extra money generated from rates to support their operations, and, really, all they are going to want the money for is to be able to spend it on more other programs within the provincial government that are just big cavernous pits that are eating up the money.

So the way this bill is presented, it really puts, I think, a member like myself in a difficult

position because you have to give up the transparency that is within the public purview in return for establishing standardized rates throughout the province.

With those few comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am prepared to see this legislation proceed through the committee and am interested to hear the responses of the public to it.

Mr. John Loewen (Fort Whyte): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to correct the misinformation that was put on the record regarding our position on this bill during a number of speeches that I listened to the other day by members opposite, the Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers), the two members from Brandon, the Member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) and a number of others.

Quite frankly, I sat here for the afternoon listening to them, and all they did was put on the record what they thought we were thinking and how we were going to respond to that bill. Quite frankly, it was a load of dribble. I mean, instead of putting their thoughts on the record, instead of explaining to the people of Manitoba why they are in support of this bill, they spent all their time trying to accuse members on this side of the House of not supporting the bill. They have no idea. They have no idea, period. They have no innovative ideas. They have no idea on this bill.

So today we have member after member on this side of the House standing up and telling this Government, yes, we are in support of rate equalization across the province, but, no, we do not like this bill. We do not like this bill for a number of reasons, but the most important one is the fact that the Government has used this bill to circumvent the Public Utilities Board in a blatant fashion. They have used this bill to avoid following the law. They have used this bill to avoid following due process.

I am not surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because this is a government that seems to have very little regard for the laws of the Province of Manitoba. That has been demonstrated over and over and over in my short tenure as an MLA. As a matter of fact, it goes right back to the very first days when I took a seat in this House, when

the Premier (Mr. Doer) stood up day after day and called the Deloitte and Touche report an audit, when, in fact, it clearly stated on the second page, by Deloitte and Touche, a clear sentence: This is not an audit. That did not stop the Premier, up day after day, on the radio, in the media: We conducted an audit. This was in spite of the fact that the credible firm of Deloitte and Touche stated clearly that it was not an audit.

That continues day in and day out, month in and month out in this House, where the Minister of Education, being chastised by the Auditor for showing total disregard of the law of the Province of Manitoba in his handling of the Manitoba Teachers' Pension Fund, stood up and he wrote and he told the people governing that fund: Do not worry about the law; I am going to change it. So just go ahead and do what I tell you, regardless of what the laws are on the books, because, you know, I am the Minister of Education, and I am going to change it. Well, it was the Auditor that had to remind this minister that in fact he had broken the law in a very arrogant way. One would think that, when the Auditor stands up and tells a minister of the Crown that he has broken the law and he should be repentant, the minister would show a little humility, but, no, instead of that, we see him again today flout the law by trying to stand up and speak for a second time on this bill. I mean, I realize he has not been in this House that long. I realize it was probably him that was after the Minister of Health to change The Podiatrists Act so that every time he has a headache he can go and get treated, but for him to flout the rules of this House and to flout the laws of this Province is not acceptable.

* (17:20)

We have the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk) doing the same thing with regard to the Crocus Fund, which specifically states not only in the law but also in the very clear prospectus that was issued this January by the Crocus Fund that they would not invest in real property. They should not invest in real property. They can make other investments, and they can make ineligible investments, which an investment in real property is, but to do so, they need authority in writing from the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines. She stood up in

this House and said she was not going to give them the authority. They stood out there and said we are making an investment in the True North project, and investment clearly in a real estate project. That was on a Thursday. On a Monday, she tabled a bill which she said—and we will talk more about this bill when it comes before the House—just by happenstance removed all the restrictions on ineligible investments. It had nothing to do with the arena project. Just by happenstance, it happened to come before the House a day after the issue was raised, the very next sitting of this House. That is the total disrespect that this Government shows not only for the laws of the Province of Manitoba but for due process, and that is the problem I have with what is being undertaken and how this Government is approaching changing Hydro rates across this province.

I have a great deal of respect for the staff at Manitoba Hydro. I have known Bob Brennan for a number of years as CEO, got to know him quite well through the good work that he has done with the United Way, very involved. Mr. Brennan is a chartered accountant. I think he may even be qualified as an FCA. I am not sure. I will have to check that—but certainly a well-respected individual. He has been running that corporation on a sound basis for a good number of years, and that is demonstrated by the financial results that corporation has shown. Just for the record, just so the members opposite understand fully what has transpired since they left Manitoba Hydro in the huge mess they left it in the late '80s, between that period and what Mr. Brennan has been able to do when he is given the authority to run the corporation as a corporation should be run without government interference.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the years 1981 to 1987, the then reserve fund of Manitoba Hydro shrank from \$141 million to \$137 million, and in plain language that means that, over the course of those eight years, Manitoba Hydro racked up a net loss of \$4 million. Now what kind of corporation was that? What kind of sound financial and fiscal management was going on at that time? Now, under Mr. Brennan's tenure, in the period from 1991 to 1999, we see a slightly remarkable difference. In that brief period, the same corporation that lost \$4 million during the

period from 1981 to 1987 racked up profits that benefit the people of Manitoba to the tune of \$650 million, which clearly demonstrates that when that organization is left alone, when it is not subject to the whims of government policy—as we saw in the '80s and we are seeing again today—it can produce remarkable results that benefit the people of Manitoba.

It is that type of management that this corporation received during the 1990s that led the way to ensuring that Manitobans, not only benefit from the lowest Hydro rates in North America, but in fact they benefit from the opportunity to attract new business to this province as a result of those low rates. That is something, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this Government seems to be willing to throw away overnight, all due process that has ensured that that corporation is operating on a sound footing.

We had the opportunity to go before a committee to take a look at the operation of Manitoba Hydro the other day, and we received a very well-thought-out and in-depth presentation from Manitoba Hydro on the state of their financial affairs, as well as some of their plans and prospects for the future. Quite rightly so, Mr. Brennan during his presentation took a great deal of pride in the fact that he was meeting and in fact exceeding one of their main financial targets, which was to lower the debt equity ratio of this organization to 75 percent.

During the 1990s, to the credit of Mr. Brennan and others of the organization, that debt equity ratio has continued to fall towards their target of 75 percent. In fact, they are projecting that they will reach that goal in the year 2004, and then through continued good management that number will continue to decline. Their projection right now is that in the year 2010 it will fall to under 70 percent, roughly around 68 or 70 percent, a tremendous achievement.

Unfortunately, I do not think that will be what we see happen with this organization, and the reason will fall directly on the shoulders of this Government, which is more interested in using our Crown corporations for their own particular agenda and for promoting their public policy than they are for producing sound financial results, and in fact assuring that all

Manitobans receive the benefit of not only the lowest rates in North America but receive the benefit that will accrue from being able to attract more business to this province as a result of those low rates and the spin-offs and job production. That is what we should be working for.

That management, Mr. Brennan and his crew, when they realized that the Throne Speech of this Government intended to follow through on its election promise and equalize rates—and we give the Government some credit, they are following through on one promise that they made during the election. I cannot think off the top of my head of any other promise that they followed through on, certainly none that have proved beneficial to Manitobans. I do remember that there was some promise of six days of parental leave promised by this Government. I have not heard anything about that in this House. There are many other promises like that they are strangely silent on now that they have their hand on the tiller.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

Mr. Brennan and his management team did the right thing. When they learned of that, they put together a very detailed and in-depth presentation to the Public Utilities Board. They wrote to the Public Utilities Board informing them that the Government had announced that it was going to follow through with its intention to equalize Hydro rates. On February 27, they wrote to the Public Utilities Board and requested that they convene, in short order, to hear the presentation that Manitoba Hydro had prepared for them to justify the equalization of the rates across the province of Manitoba.

That was a process that was undertaken. It was a process that should have been undertaken. It was the law. It is the law as we stand here today. It is the law, and once again this Government has shown a total disregard, not only for the process but for law. They showed that with MPIC.

Mr. Speaker, the Public Utilities Board is put in place for a specific reason. It is to protect the interests of the citizens of Manitoba against monopolies. They have a job to do and they do it

very well in spite of this Government. I will quote from a letter from the Crown Corporations Council to our leader, Mr. Stuart Murray. This I will admit, although it refers directly to Manitoba Public Insurance, the same principle applies to all Crown corporations and applies to Manitoba Hydro. This is a letter from Mr. Art Mauro, chair of the Crown Corporations Council, a man well respected in the community for his knowledge and acumen, not only of business but of law. I quote: In addition, the corporation is subject to the authority of the Provincial Auditor and where applicable, and particularly where policies directly or indirectly affect rates, the corporation requires the approval of the Public Utilities Board.

* (17:30)

I do not know how you get any simpler than that. If this Government plans to put in a policy that affects the rates of any Crown corporation in this province, as they have done with this bill, the corporation involved requires the approval of the Public Utilities Board. Directly from the chairman of the Crown Corporations Council.

It just goes to prove that the work done by Mr. Brennan and his staff was necessary and would have been useful to the Public Utilities Board, but what happened? In very short order, the Government found out about it. One can only surmise that maybe, just maybe the chairman of the board, one Vic Schroeder, informed the government of the day that Manitoba Hydro is going to the Public Utilities Board. What are we going to do, Mr. Premier? What are we going to do? Well, the Premier (Mr. Doer) thought and thought and thought, and then one of his staff told him: Well, Mr. Premier, just write a letter. Tell them you are going to change the law. They do not have to obey the law any more, because you are the Premier and, like the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), if you want to change the law, change the law. Do not worry about the law, just tell them you are going to change it.

So, without thinking, no doubt he instructed his staff to write the letter, without thinking of what he was doing to the people of Manitoba for his own personal political gain. And sure enough, the Public Utilities Board had no option and Manitoba Hydro had no option but to

request that the utilities board withdraw their application.

The Government stands and says: Trust us; trust us.

It was an election promise. We know what we are doing. We promised it, we are going to fulfil that promise. We are going to change the law because we do not like the law the way it is. It makes us justify our promise. It makes us bring other information to the Public Utilities Board which is not going to shine a very good light on our management. As is reported in the *Free Press*, trust is not acceptable from this Government. Process is what is deemed to be acceptable from this Government.

One might ask why. It seems pretty straightforward to me that when it is the chairman of the board, Vic Schroeder, who was appointed by this Government, a former Cabinet member in the government of Howard Pawley in the '80s, that same period of time when this great corporation suffered through mismanagement the loss of \$4 million of their reserve fund over a period of seven years. They decided to appoint Mr. Schroeder as chair of this organization and pay him some \$52,000. Mr. Schroeder said, well, this is great, I am the chairman. That makes me kind of above everybody. So I can use this vehicle to promote my own idea of public policy regardless of the taxpayers, similar as he did in the 1980s. But in the 1980s he was an elected official and it caught up with him and he paid the price. He lost his Cabinet position, the NDP lost government, and the people of Manitoba sent a clear message to the NDP that they should stay out of the Crown corporations.

This is the same Vic Schroeder. Maybe he has changed his view of the world. I doubt it. But I will just remind this House and the people of Manitoba that this is the same Vic Schroeder who was Finance Minister, was subject to the then-auditor of the day, one Bill Ziprick, being the only Finance Minister in the history of this province where the Auditor would not sign off on the books. And why would he not? Because the books, in his words, were misleading. As Finance Minister, Mr. Schroeder had tried to twist the numbers, play with the numbers in such a way as to present misleading statements and

reduce the deficit that the government had run up under his watch. That says a lot about why we are not going to trust Mr. Schroeder at this point in time.

We want to know what his hidden agenda is. We want to know what the hidden agenda is of the Premier of Manitoba. We want to know what the hidden agenda is of the NDP government. Of course, I think and I do believe with all sincerity that there are a lot of members on that side of the House, many of them sitting here today, that do not even know the hidden agenda. They are simply content to be led around by a string through their nose by the Premier and by Eugene Kostyra and by Vic Schroeder, because, at the end of the day, that is who is really running this Government. It is the same old NDP with the same old policies, the same old beliefs, the same old people. The only difference is this time two out of three of them are appointed, not elected. That is unfortunate for the people of Manitoba.

I think even more galling was then-Finance Minister Schroeder's response to being caught red-handed providing misleading information to Manitoba. I quote from a newspaper article of December 28, 1984, where in response Mr. Schroeder added, and I quote: Ziprick's comments are just an accountant's opinion and a Conservative position.

Just an accountant's position. He is the Auditor of the Province of Manitoba, a C.A., similar to Mr. Brennan, and according to Mr. Schroeder, it is just an accountant's opinion. So one can only wonder, does he still believe that? When Mr. Brennan comes to him with sound financial management plans and brings to the board his recommendations, does Mr. Schroeder, as chairman of the board, say, well, do not worry about Bob. Do not worry about his opinion. After all, it is just an accountant's opinion and probably a small "c" conservative one at that.

Mr. Speaker, I do not think that that is the way the people of Manitoba want to see their Crown corporations managed and run. We have seen the same type of attitude out of this Government and their dealings with the Manitoba Public Insurance Company. We have seen them try to raid that Crown corporation to the tune of \$30 million. We have seen them use

the chair of that organization, a chair that they appointed. We have seen the Premier (Mr. Doer) use that chair. We have seen the former Minister responsible for MPIC use that chair as a scapegoat when they got caught red-handed with their hands in the cookie jar. The people of Manitoba spoke. They spoke quickly, and they spoke decisively. They said we are not going to tolerate this, and this Government reversed this decision, not because they wanted to, not because they thought it was the right thing to do, because they knew they had been caught by the people of Manitoba.

They remember. They remember what happened in the late '80s, when they were caught by the people of Manitoba close to an election. The people of Manitoba made their choice on the ballot box and threw that government out. They knew that, if they did not reverse their choice, it would happen again this time.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to be very, very diligent with this Government. We need to watch them every step of the way, every day, every minute because, quite simply, they cannot be trusted. We have seen that today. We saw the fact that this Government cannot be trusted exhibited in the House today. May 9, the Premier of the Province of Manitoba (Mr. Doer), full of bluster about the great deal that he had negotiated in secret behind closed doors to see the construction of a brand-new arena on the old Eaton's site, when explaining the details of that deal, what did he say? What did he say? Oh, well, you know, we will give them \$10 million, and that will be our contribution. Only 30 percent will be public sector money. Oh, yeah, by the way, we are going to give them, you know, maybe up to, and I quote because it is the Premier's words, \$1.5 million a year for 25 years of VLT revenue to help sustain the operation. Well, we know, we knew right then, that the \$1.5 million a year, if that is what the number was, was to pay off the debt, and it was public sector money that was not being counted that was going into this project.

*(17:40)

Then, lo and behold, five days later, on May 14—Mr. Speaker, I need to correct myself. He made that statement on May 10. Four days later,

on May 14, he presented a term sheet which said that the \$1.5 million was not up to \$1.5 million, but in fact that was the starting point. It was a minimum of \$1.5 million a year for 25 years. So not only without any foresight did he commit the Province of Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg to having VLTs for 25 years, he committed a minimum of \$1.5 million and went out and said it was a maximum.

We witnessed that today in the House. Quite frankly, I felt sorry for the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen), because she was put in a very, very difficult position today. She had to stand up and defend her Premier (Mr. Doer), and she had to stand up and try as best she could to put a good face on the situation. She did an admirable job in the face of what were contradictory statements four days apart. I give her credit for that. I believe she is not only an intelligent minister, but an honest one and trying to do the best job possible for the people of Manitoba, but today her Premier forced her into a position where she had to stand up and put misinformation on the record to defend him.

That is why we do not trust this Government. That is why we object to this bill. That is why this rate equalization needs to go to the Public Utilities Board prior to being dealt with in this House. This Government needs to think about that very, very carefully. This Government maybe needs to caucus. I know that would be a novel idea. They maybe need to get all the members together and talk about it in an open fashion, about what they have done and how they have shown so little regard for the law, not only on this issue, but on the issue with the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines and her handling of the Crocus Fund. Maybe, just maybe, some common sense would prevail, and they would say, as they did with MPI, we are going to get killed on this in the election.

You know, I would not expect them to sit around and say, well, we have made a mistake; we should go to the Public Utilities Board. I think that would be too much to ask, but surely they could take a look at the public's view of this situation and agree to reverse their position to amend the legislation, to take out the piece of

that act that changes the law, on a one-time basis.

I do not know if I mentioned that, Mr. Speaker, but this bill changes the law on a one-time basis. We will just do it this one time, and, then, of course, everything else that deals with rates, well, we will go back to the law of the Province that has been in existence for years and years and years. We will go back to the law of the land once we just do this one little thing. Yes, we are just going to do it once, is what they say today. Well, that is just like the Premier saying, well, it is up to a million and a half when, in fact, we all see today that it starts at a million and a half.

We are heading down that slippery slope that we have seen from one NDP government after another in this province. They start by changing or ignoring or abusing the laws of the Province just this one little time. It is as plain, as plain as the egg on their face over MPI, what they should do. I mean, is there a member on that side of the House who would tell one of their children, well, look, just ignore the law this one little time, because it is only this one little time, and, after all, it does not really apply to us in this situation. Just run this red light this one time, because there are no cars around and you will not get caught and nobody will know. After all, what difference will it make?

Well, no, I give them a lot more credit than that. I would not do that. They would not do that. So, why, I ask the members opposite, when they have the responsibility of governing the Province of Manitoba, would they say to themselves, let us just change the law this one little time? Let us just forget that that law exists. We will make an amendment so we can do what we want because, after all, we are in government, and it is the right thing to do. Oh, and then the law will come back into force. Then we will do the right thing after that, honest, promise. It is just this one time, just this one time that we have to change the law.

Quite frankly, it was likely the same thought on the Minister of Education's (Mr. Caldwell) mind when he said, well, I want to get this done. I want to appease those retired teachers out there who are looking for a cost-of-living adjustment.

So, look, just this one time I will break the law. I will just disregard the law and I will forget what the Auditor has to say. I will just go do it this one time.

I guess probably the same thought maybe crossed the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines' (Ms. Mihychuk) mind—

An Honourable Member: Mini-minds.

Mr. Loewen: No, no, she has a good mind. She has a good mind. The minister likes us to think she has a mini-mind. She is trying to lull us into this false sense of security, so we will not take her seriously. There may be lots out there who do not take her seriously, but we see her in this House and we know better, that, you know, she has a good brain. She has a good brain. I just wish she would be a little more out front with the public about what she does, instead of hiding behind the Premier's (Mr. Doer) hidden agenda.

I asked her a simple question in the House one day, Mr. Speaker. I asked her if she intended to either issue a letter to the Crocus Fund or change the law so they could invest in an ineligible investment. It would have been very simple for her to stand up and say, well, yes, we think it is a good idea. We like the fact that Crocus is helping, in our minds, to revitalize downtown. But, instead, they say, oh, no, no, we are not even thinking about that. That was on a Thursday. Then, just coincidentally, on the Monday she tabled before this House legislation that, lo and behold, removed all the sections of the act that deal with ineligible investments, just by coincidence.

We ask ourselves, Mr. Speaker, are they on the slippery slope? I wish I could answer differently. I wish I could say, no, no, this is all above board, but it is obvious to members on this side of the House that not only are they on the slippery slope, they have greased the trough, and they are well on their way down it. They are not just sliding down it. They are hurtling down.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to urge this Government to do the right thing, go back to their caucus, and particularly those members in the back benches who spoke the other day in glowing terms about how they were doing this

wonderful thing for everybody in rural Manitoba. Take credit for it, but take honest credit for it and stand up and say we are going to take this to the Public Utilities Board and do the right thing. I urge them to do that and do that quickly. Thank you.

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

Some Honourable Members: Question.

Mr. Speaker: The question before the House is second reading of Bill 27, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (2). Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? Agreed?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Mr. Speaker: Agreed and so ordered.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, rather than the order earlier, would you please go to Bill 11?

* (17:50)

Bill 11—The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act

Mr. Speaker: Resume debate on second reading of Bill 11, The Highway Traffic Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act, standing in the name of the honourable Member for Minnedosa.

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my colleagues have had a chance to address Bill 11, the one that will implement graduated licensing. We have a lot of concerns on the process again with this particular bill in that, rather than enunciate the program for graduated licences in the bill, this gives the minister responsible the opportunity to follow through with this initiative in regulation. The regulations are a bit of a mystery to Manitobans, and it is an issue that is very fundamental and one that many Manitobans would like to have a very clear picture of.

Unfortunately, they have had about three different pictures of where we are going with graduated licences. There was the task force

report, and I commend the Member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) for taking a leading role there. They brought in a report that, I think, covered many, many aspects of safe driving initiatives, and all of us would like to think that we can make our roads, our highways, the driving of licensed cars and trucks more safe. This is a fundamental issue that I am sure all legislators across this country would agree to.

Following that report, came, I guess, a press release indicating that the legislation was going to look a certain way, or at least the regulations. This is where Manitobans were faced with some confusion because the press release talked about safety and young people and the need to have additional training and to go through a more strenuous process. When you apply that announcement to the report that was brought in, I think it was going to quite dramatically change the manner in which young people, in particular, were going to be able to access their first driver's licence. For many months, young Manitobans felt that they would be 18 1/2 or 19 years of age before they in fact were able to secure that final driver's licence.

That was a dramatic change, and I point out to members opposite that there was seemingly a sense of unfairness with this, because many young Manitobans live outside of urban centres where there is no public transportation. I know the member for Dauphin will understand that issue. Even within a jurisdiction like his, there would be young people who were part of families that attended many events, were involved in many activities, and there are hardly enough vehicles in the family to accommodate all of them. Given the fact that some of them would be non-drivers but yet they were involved in school sports and other activities, this was going to present quite a hardship, because in most of these jurisdictions there is no public transportation.

In fact, in many areas of the province, families live some distance from their main community, their school, the place in which they engaged in sports activities, and even with the status quo it was very difficult to accommodate all of those children.

I once taught in the Oak River area, and I often think of the Paddock family. I think there

were seven or eight children. John Paddock was well-known for his hockey prowess and coached the Jets here, played volleyball on my school volleyball team. A younger brother was on the national volleyball team, played internationally. Three sisters were all involved in figure skating and sports, and it was not unusual in the Paddock family not to have enough vehicles for all of these young people. I can tell you, the parents rarely, rarely missed a game. They, too, were travelling and seemed to be everywhere to watch their young family participate. It was part of the culture of the Oak River community. It was certainly part of that family. They needed many vehicles.

This new legislation, I can tell you, would have impacted very negatively on their ability to participate the way they did. I acknowledge that at other times there were friends, relatives and neighbours also doing the driving, but there is a sense with this legislation that there is an unfair outcome as far as rural people are concerned.

Now I grant you, the minister has modified it. I recognize that. Again, given that the legislation or the detail of this is going to be in regulation, there are still a lot of questions about how these regulations are going to be drafted and how these regulations are going to be applied. So I can tell you that as a critic for this legislation, I have had a lot of unsolicited letters, petitions.

A government employee in Minnedosa, who works in sort of a retail operation there, has a petition at the counter. When people buy some of their favourite beverages there, they are signing it. His son is graduating—and I think he is 17—and is going to be attending Brandon University next year, was going to commute. There is fear that this is going to impact on him. He is not going to have that ability, and there is real concern there.

As well, what seems to be missing in this legislation is a real thrust towards driver education. The minister gave me a list of the schools that provide driver education. I would say that some of them are in remoter communities, where unless they have a certain number they do not offer the course. They offer

the course at certain times of the year. There tended to be a fall intake and a spring intake maybe in February. Somebody who qualifies perhaps a little later is not going to be involved in that driver education course.

So I think what is missing is that there is not an ability to access this driver education, and this is the weakness. This is the weakness in the process and the legislation, this from a government who was able, through MPI, to enhance driver education, to use that corporation in what should be part of its core business, creating safer drivers. I know MPI is involved in driver education, but it is not as comprehensive a program as I think is necessary. There are gaps in it. There are communities where driver ed is not available. There are communities where there is difficulty getting cars because there may be a shortage of local dealers. In fact, we have fewer and fewer dealers out in some parts of rural Manitoba all the time, and they put certain restrictions on the use of that car. They get some stipend from the corporation that the car came from to get them to be involved in this. Then they are told: But be careful. Do not put too many kilometres on it. Do not drive on gravel roads. Do not drive in icy conditions.

There is a problem there because young people often taking the driver ed get what training they do under almost ideal conditions. In rural areas, part of that is the inability to drive in urban settings, where traffic is heavy, where there are other skills that need to be developed, and that is missing. So I think, while graduated licences has some appeal in that safety has to be uppermost on all of our minds, I think the initiative by itself is incomplete and that the Government should be doing more than they have announced so far. Again, I remind you that this is all being done by regulation, and many of the people concerned with the bill are saying how can we be sure what the Government is going to do because we have seen more than one iteration of what those regulations might look like.

* (18:00)

Mr. Speaker: Order. When this matter is again before the House, the honourable Member for Minnedosa will have 29 minutes remaining.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Leave not to see the clock?

Mr. Speaker: Is there agreement to not see the clock for government House business?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Mr. Speaker: There is leave.

House Business

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, I would like to announce that the Standing Committee on Economic Development will meet on Monday, June 25, at 6:30 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 18, The Teachers' Pensions Amendment Act, and Bill 26, The Winnipeg Commodity Exchange Restructuring Act.

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Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, I would also like to announce that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments will meet on Monday, June 25, at 6:30 p.m., to consider the following bills: Bill 7, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act; Bill 21, The Manitoba Ethnocultural Advisory and Advocacy Council Act; Bill 22, The Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation Amendment and Consequential Amendments Act; Bill 27, The Manitoba Hydro Amendment Act (2); Bill 40, The Podiatrists Act; Bill 42, The Regulated Health Professions Statutes Amendment Act; Bill 300, The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba Incorporation Amendment Act.

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Mr. Mackintosh: I would like to finally announce that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments meeting this evening to continue consideration of Bill 41 will also be considering Bill 8, The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act, and Bill 10, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods and Consequential Amendments Act.

Mr. Speaker: It has been announced that the Standing Committee on Law Amendments meeting this evening to continue to consider Bill

41, An Act to Comply with the Supreme Court of Canada decision in *M. v. H.*, will also be considering Bill 8, The Mines and Minerals Amendment Act, and Bill 10, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods and Consequential Amendments Act.

* * *

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, June 21, 2001

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Helwer 3174
Schuler 3176
Gerrard 3177

**Bill 11 - The Highway Traffic
Amendment and Consequential
Amendments Act**

Gilleshammer 3187