

Manitoba Youth Town Hall Meeting with Ministers
April 25, 2003
Keystone Centre, Brandon, Manitoba

Background:

Manitoba youth have participated in the Youth Forum held at Rural Forum for a number of years. In discussion with the youth attendees, they indicated that Manitoba youth would like to have the opportunity to speak directly with provincial and community leaders. As a result, the Premier hosted the "Premier's Youth Round Table" at Rural Forum in 2000 and announced the Premier's Pipeline for Manitoba Youth. One of the conclusions reached at the round table session was that the discussion process continues. As a result, the Department of Education and Youth have hosted a "town hall meeting" at Rural Forum each year since 2001. The meetings have been labeled as "Manitoba Youth Town Hall Meeting with Ministers".

In 2001, there were 79 students from 52 schools in Manitoba in attendance. Issues concerning youth in Manitoba that were addressed included: overpopulated schools, lack of teachers and supplies in the north, gang violence, apprenticeship programs, regulating genetically modified organics, supports for farming, francophone services and programs in rural communities, graduated licenses, retention of graduates in Manitoba and province wide vaccinations and doctor retention.

At the second annual "Manitoba Youth Town Hall Meeting with Ministers" held in 2002, 108 students from 65 schools in Manitoba engaged in discussions with five ministers. An example of the issues concerning Manitoba youth that were discussed included: regulation of hog barns, downfall of small rural towns and family farms, keeping youth in Manitoba, Youth Criminal Justice System, Smoking By-Law, Graduated Licensing Program and particularly its effect on rural youth, marriage counseling and parenting programs, teen suicide in the north, recruitment and training for foster parents, more programs in rural schools and lower tuition fees in universities.

An added attraction at the 2002 town hall meeting was the unveiling of a web site designed for youth by the Honourable Drew Caldwell, Minister of Education, Training and Youth. The information on this web site focuses on education and training, job opportunities, driver licensing programs and other youth services. The site is available at www.MB4Youth.ca

Overview:

The third annual "Manitoba Youth Town Hall Meeting with Ministers" was held on Friday, April 25, 2003 at Rural Forum, Keystone Centre, Brandon, Manitoba.

The Honourable Ron Lemieux, Minister of Education and Training hosted the event of 65 students from 26 communities and 28 schools.

The Marquis Project was contracted to facilitate the event, which included two facilitators. Recorders and facilitators were staff members of Manitoba Education and Youth, Advanced Education and Training and Intergovernmental Affairs. They were assigned to each group of students to ensure all exchange of information was captured in as much detail as possible.

The day was organized into two sessions. The morning session involved a general naming and categorizing of issues relating to youth in Manitoba and posting them on a "Problem Wall" according to the Ministry. Students chose the issue that most concerned them and stood next to it at the "Problem Wall". Facilitators assisted to categorize issues by ministry. Youth then gathered at the Ministry table of their interest to talk over particular problems and how best to frame and prioritize questions for the town hall meeting during the afternoon session. In essence there were five town hall meetings running concurrently; each with their own questions and answer period.

Minister Wowchuk was not able to participate during the full question and period due to another engagement. The questions relating to Agriculture and Food were included under the Deputy Premier, Jean Friesen's portfolio. Minister Wowchuk attended the Deputy Premier's table for the time she was available.

The following Ministers were in attendance:

- Honourable Jean Friesen
Deputy Premier
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Minister responsible for Cooperative Development
- Honourable Rosann Wowchuk
Minister of Agriculture and Food
- Honourable Tim Sale
Minister of Energy, Science and Technology
Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act
Minister responsible for The Manitoba Hydro Act
- Honourable Drew Caldwell
Minister of Family Services and Housing
Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities
- Honourable Ron Lemieux
Minister of Education and Youth
- Honourable Scott Smith
Minister of Transportation and Government Services
Minister responsible for Emergency Measures
Minister charged with the administration of
The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation Act.

Invitations were sent to all schools in Manitoba with senior high students. Each school was invited to send two student leaders to the event as representatives of their school and community. Students were encouraged to submit their issues in advance as part of their registration process. Substantial effort was made to ensure the participation of a broad cross section of students from across Manitoba including urban, rural, northern and remote communities. For the first time two students were in attendance representing Duke of Marlborough School, Churchill, Manitoba.

Honourable Jean Friesen
Deputy Premier
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs
Minister responsible for Cooperative Development

1. Is the issue of keeping youth in their home communities recognized?

- Students need to leave home to gain experience and sometimes to pursue their education goals.
- The government needs to provide opportunities to bring the youth back to Manitoba.
- Apprenticeship programs allow students to work and gain experience in Manitoba.
- The government does recognize this issue. The internet allows easy access to employment opportunities in Manitoba.
- Broadband high speed access is very important.

2. What is being done now to keep youth in their communities?

- We do not necessarily want to keep youth in their own communities.
- Students gain a lot by leaving their own communities to experience post-secondary education in other parts of Manitoba or out of province.
- The Community Economic Development Programs are recognizing the need to keep youth in Manitoba and are working towards strategies that would encourage youth to come back to their communities.

3. Could the government provide bursaries and internships to help youth find employment in their communities?

- Manitoba does have a Co-op education and internship program.
- The government could institute a policy promoting work experience placement and internships in rural communities.

4. Is the issue of difficulties and lack of policing in rural communities recognized?

- There currently is a full complement of RCMP in rural communities.
- Rural communities are more difficult to police than in the city, particularly with the issue of drinking and driving.
- Given that issues such as drinking and driving seem to be of particular concern, there is a suggestion that better education on these issues would be more effective than increased policing.
- Vandalism is more of a policing issue in the rural communities. People are starting to become more cautious and lock their doors more.

5. What funding opportunities are available for recreation for minors?

- A recent announcement will provide funding for more recreation programs in four Manitoba communities.

- The government is trying to see beyond just arenas. Grants are available each year for things like community festivals.
- Youth need to make themselves heard. Talk to your municipal council.
- Each council can include a youth representative.

6. There is a need for more innovation, eg. coaches and leaders. How can the government help us with this need?

- Some parts of the province have a regional recreation council and have shared recreation facilities.
- Churches have successfully been involved in obtaining a variety of facilities. Try to involve service groups such as Rotary and Kiwanis.
- Source organizations in your communities can help to build infrastructure and gain support.

7. Could gun control be made more cost-effective?

- This is a Federal initiative.
- The Police Chiefs support this.
- This initiative hopes to accomplish safety and a registry for location of firearms.

8. What can be done about racism in the schools?

- Things are much better than they used to be with Francophone and Aboriginal racism. The development of healthy ethics in the schools is essential.
- Native and non-native children should go to school together beginning in elementary.
- Different culture groups co-exist, but don't necessarily mix/integrate with each other.
- The present policy on school development on the reserves is to correct the faulty policies of yesteryear.
- Minister Jean Friesen believes that the school curriculum should better address the question of racism.

Honourable Tim Sale

Minister of Energy, Science and Technology

Minister responsible for The Gaming Control Act

Minister responsible for The Manitoba Hydro Act

1. What is the government doing besides TV ads to encourage people to Conserve and not waste as much energy?

- Starting ten years ago, Manitoba began PowerSMART with business, which resulted in millions of dollars and 200 Megawatts of power being saved.
- PowerSMART is promoted at booths set up in malls.
- The new target is to have 200 Megawatts of power and the equivalent of 2 dams saved over the next seven years.
- There is a solar panel located at 185 Smith Street-6th Floor to 22nd Floor, Winnipeg.

2. What is the government doing to minimize fossil fuel dependency?

- The most important thing is ratifying Kyoto. We need to have laws and a level-playing field.
- If all countries are bound, then they will agree.
- Similar to school, you have to have a framework. If you can't have rules, how do you deal with those who don't want to play?
- We need to reduce fossil fuels by 240 million tonnes.
- Coal is the cheapest fuel, but it is also the dirtiest fuel. We have to get rid of coal.
- Selkirk went from coal to natural gas.
- The next step is to work on an ethanol strategy. Ethanol fuel usage has decreased by 30%.
- By the summer of 2003, hydrogen buses will be on the road.
- Greenhouse gases will decrease by using precision agriculture which needs only as much nutrients as the fields require.
- Red River College's School of Engineering is looking into rechargeable cars.
- Two companies in Manitoba are working on wind power and monitoring wind in five different locations. These companies are proposing to develop wind farms at St. Leon or Elie.
- Wind power would cost five cents per KW/hour.
- A windmill hub @ 260 feet is approximately the size of a 20 story building.
- For more information on wind power, visit www.hydro.mb.ca

3. What kind of research is being done to find an alternative to conventional fuel?

- In Killarney, Manitoba, Logen Corporation is perfecting making ethanol from straw. Farmer's there will supply over 700,000 metric tonnes of straw annually.
- **Student Question:** Will Killarney be the first place in North America to work on using the wheat component in straw to make ethanol?
- There is a test plant in Ottawa.
- Research is being done into using all parts of the plant.
- Government released a hydrogen strategy last week.
- The government is looking at plants to absorb carbon and more specifically looking at a carbon sequestration strategy.

4. Why can minors sell lottery tickets and cigarettes, but not purchase them?

- I do not have a good answer. I would be happy if no one smoked.
- An age limit is important because young people may be more vulnerable to habits.
- This is a moral choice that society makes.
- As students, you do make a good point.
- We would not want to restrict students from working in a convenience store and gas station because the law allows them to sell lottery tickets and cigarettes.

5. What is government doing to increase accessibility for high speed internet in rural areas, e.g. North?

- MTS has a pretty large broadband. MTS is looking at adding 22 communities next year.
- MTS is a profit-making company, but needs to expand into the North.
- Manitoba Hydro has many substations in the North.
- Churchill has a satellite network, which is being done through cooperatives.
- We are using hydro fibres and towers to get internet into Northern communities through community cooperatives.
- There has been a recent announcement of a goal to have high-speed internet access by 2010.

6. What is the government doing to make internet service affordable?

- The internet is primarily not government. In Manitoba, it is SHAW and MTS.
- The government wants e-mail addresses for students for homework and tabling.
- Eventually each school will have its own account.
- The first school division may be St. Vital.
- This will be a free service for school divisions, but we will still have to pay for telephone connections.
- Community Connections has six hundred sites with one to eight computers per site.

7. How does distance education resolve the lab component of a course?

- I am not sure. It was noted that with some distance courses, a student is obligated to go to the physical location of the educational institution to fulfill the lab requirement.

8. How does the government prevent people from double doctoring, eg. prescription shopping, using internet pharmacies?

- This is a hard question. The rights of people have to be weighed.
- Honestly, I do not know if internet pharmacy cannot sell to Canadians. This has to be looked into.
- Pharmacists should be checking to see if the person has had their prescription filled already.

9. What is being done to retain and attract doctors and nurses in Manitoba?

Doctors

- The previous government cut back medical school enrolment from ninety to seventy graduates per year.
- It takes ten to twelve years to specialize.
- It takes seven to eight years to be a general practitioner.
- We hope to bump up numbers and increase the number of graduates over time.
- We are currently recruiting overseas.
- A program for rural students who will stay and practice in Manitoba will be tried. These students will have their loans forgiven.
- We hope to have sixty more doctors.

Nurses

- Most people go through as Registered Nurses.
- The previous government abolished the program for Registered Nurses.
- Health care workers were health care aids, LPN's or BN's.
- The NDP government standardized the Bachelor of Nursing Program and re-established the Registered Nurse program.
- In 1999, there were two hundred and ten nursing graduates.
- In 2003, there will be six hundred nursing graduates.
- The shortage has been made worse now that baby boomers are retiring. We have to graduate six hundred nurses to make up for the loss.
- Sometimes government does not think long-term.
- Government has increased wages and implemented a Quality of Life Committee.
- Not only nursing and medical programs have been cut by the previous government, but the X-Ray Technologists program was cut.
- Students in the Registered Nurses' program scored higher than Bachelor of Nursing students at standardized testing.

10. What can the Government do to work with schools to encourage empathy?

- A Roots of Empathy program has been created.
- Empathy is not an inborn thing, it is learned from parent to child.
- Anti-bully programs are good.
- Boys can typically be bullies.
- In some cases, babies have been brought into a classroom and students' interactions with the babies are monitored.
- Over a six month period, students developed a bond with the babies.
- Interaction with babies helps to heal people.
- There are links between parents and children.
- Students are sometimes fuelled by violence on TV.
- Manitoba is the only government in Canada that has a standing committee on children.
- **Student question** - Is there anything that the government can do about racism?
- Minister Sale stated that he believed the thing that works best to eliminate racism is for people to travel and gain exposure to other cultures.
- Twinning programs are another way to broaden young people's cultural background. Minister Sale's child had someone from Drummondville in their school.
- In the Fort Rouge School, there are 140 students from 30 different cultures.

11. Why does not the school fine underage smokers or under age drinkers?

- Most students smoking do not do it for a positive reason. Fining may not be part of the solution.
- Keeping the price high and the message going out about health problems as a result of smoking are very important.
- Drinking alcohol puts more than you at risk at the time of the drinking. Smoking has long-term problems not short-term problems.

12. What kind of education program does the government have for West Nile?

- Mosquitoes do not transmit West Nile Virus. It is transmitted by warm-blooded animals like birds.
- \$3 million has been committed towards public health and education.
- Manitoba now has a website specifically for West Nile Virus at www.gov.mb.ca/health/wnv/index.html/
- Small mosquitoes breed this disease early in the year.
- Not unlike encephalitis, West Nile Virus can cause nerve damage, fever, lethargy and stiffness of muscles similar to the flu.
- In 99% of the West Nile Virus cases the infected person does not even know that they have it.

13. What does the government do in terms of improving the quality of water in smaller communities?

- Refer to the government Web site, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/watres/index.html>.
- There have been twenty additional staff and about a dozen new inspectors put in place to deal with this issue.
- The Departments of Agriculture, Intergovernmental Affairs, and Conservation are working together on a water strategy.
- There are reinstated subsidies such as well testing. Well testing is both mandatory and reportable.
- The Manitoba Water Resources Board provides resources to municipalities and allocates \$30 million to this project.

14. How will the government deal with the environmental impact of hydro dams?

- There are two types of dams that capture a river. There are dams that flood a river and new dams called run of the river, dams that utilize the deep channel of the river. The new dams lessen the environmental impact.
- Dams can be a waterfall of up to one hundred and fifty feet.
- New dams do not cause a lot of flooding.
- The creating of dams has to be approved by the Clean Environment Commission.

***Honourable Drew Caldwell
Minister of Family Services and Housing
Minister responsible for Persons with Disabilities***

1. What is the government doing to involve youth in the development of policy that affects them?

- The development of the ideas that are flowing here at Rural Forum will be added to the government's agenda.
- Youth issues that are discussed in sessions such as these are essential in deciding which programs are best for youth. Youth play an essential role in helping the provincial government make policy decisions.

- The Premiers Pipeline is another way youth can speak out and have their issues and concerns heard. The Premiers Pipeline can be viewed by accessing the web site www.MB4Youth.mb.ca/premierspipeline
- Students shared with Minister Caldwell that they would like to see lower tuition fees for post secondary education, a skateboard park for the youth, interest free student loans and youth candidates in political campaigns.

2. Are youth under the voting age involved in any committees that make decisions that affect youth?

- The Manitoba Youth Town Hall Meetings with Ministers and the MB4Youth.ca Web site give youth the chance to express their issues. Youth can also form their own committee to get in touch with local authorities such as mayors, constituents and elected members to voice youth concerns in the rural areas.

3. What programs and support services does the government have to support youth and issues, eg. rural vs. city?

- There are education programs and grant programs.
- To learn more about the many programs that support youth and youth issues visit the web site: mb4youth.ca

4. What programs and supports are available in the rural communities?

- **Student comments:** In rural Manitoba alcohol and drugs are being used by youth as young as twelve years old. Youth in rural Manitoba do not have access to the after school programs such as dance, music lessons, intramural sports programs that are available to the students in the city. Therefore, students are getting involved in substance abuse to occupy their time.
- Substance abuse among youth is becoming an issue at a very young age. It is important for students of rural Manitoba to get actively involved in the community. If there are programs that you would like in your community, the issues would be getting youth interested and getting the funds to start up these programs. Fundraising is one option to raise money for community programs and the involvement of community councils and members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly. Costs can be reduced by starting up programs in the schools and using school resources such as scripts, stages, props, etc.
- **Student comments:** Sometimes students who take initiative are viewed as losers to their peers.
- Minister Caldwell was a member of Reach for the Top when he was in high school and that was one of the coolest things he ever did. He stated it gave him something to do and he met a lot of really fun people. It didn't matter to him what others thought.
- There are Addictions Foundation of Manitoba programs for youth, which are the responsibility of the School Divisions. It is the local schools responsibility to hand out information on the programs that are available to youth.
- There is peer support in schools for youth for physical abuse, alcoholism, drug abuse and negative peer pressure.

- To start programs, ask for help from your student council or school counselor. There are courses available for training and facilitating programs. Use the government web site www.gov.mb.ca for information on who to contact.

5. What about financial assistance for peer support?

- To operate a peer support group would cost around \$1,000 to \$1,500 per year.
- There are provincial grants available to assist programs for youth.
- If the schools know in advance that youth are interested in starting up peer support groups, the school can ensure that there is money in their budget to accommodate this.
- Peer support groups are perhaps the best way for students to get information and advice on issues that they might not feel comfortable talking to their parents or teachers about. The peer support groups have been very successful in schools.

6. What about prevention programs?

- Rural communities are presently receiving money for upgrading current facilities.
- Some rural communities are receiving new buildings for youth activities.
- Prevention programs have been implemented in rural communities.
- **Student Comment:** I used to live in rural Manitoba and I now live in Winnipeg and I have noticed that there is a lot more substance abuse among youth in rural Manitoba than in Winnipeg.
- Rural Manitoba has a much lower population than Winnipeg. Specific areas of Winnipeg have high substance abuse problems.
- In rural Manitoba substance abuse is more pronounced because it is more visible.
- Increased funding to rural Manitoba for programs will help to control some of these issues.

7. What information is the government providing to youth about sex education? Why are condoms not provided to students in schools?

- A large number of school counselors have condoms available for students in their office. School counselors may require that you receive additional information before giving you the condoms. School counselors do not want to encourage unsafe sex, but they also do not want to give additional pressure to students who are not ready for sex!
- The school division curriculum currently provides sex education up to Sr 1. The government is currently working on having sex education available up to Sr 4.
- Students can ask professional counselors to come in and provide a sex education course.
- Today, youth are far more informed about issues than students in the past.
- Students can start-up a group of peer supports to address the school board about this issue.

8. How many children are put up for adoption?

- Not many children are put up for adoption. Statistics show that a very small percentage of youth are put up for adoption, surprisingly smaller than many people think.
- Youth that are put up for adoption are put into good foster homes until a suitable adoption family is found.

Honourable Ron Lemieux
Minister of Education and Youth

1. Can the government provide more financial programs and incentives for professionals to come back to Manitoba?

- The government has been talking about different incentives to keep students from leaving the province such as tax breaks.
- My responsibilities are more K-12, and this would be more Diane McGifford's area.
- There is no easy answer to this question. Rural and northern students tend to leave their communities to go to Winnipeg.
- There are a lot of financial barriers for students. The government has to figure out how they can assist students financially to reach their goals.
- There are no solutions yet, but we are willing to listen if you have any suggestions.

2. At what level or point is the decision made to close schools? What is the feasibility of keeping schools open?

- Decreasing enrollment in rural schools is a big issue. The Province of Manitoba subsidizes rural schools and rural school divisions based on a per-student base-grant.
- The above scenario presents a problem for small schools with lower enrollment to offer all of the courses that they need to.
- ***Student Question:*** Is that school able to offer all courses? What is the solution? Should we close the schools?
- The schools are not able to offer more courses and ultimately, the school division makes the final decision on school closures and other things such as busing.
- Another trend is population-based magnet schools. Magnet schools refers to those schools that offer specialized or elite programs.
- ***Student Question:*** How can government ensure that high school grads have the same equal levels of education as other provinces?
- This is the idea behind the provincial curriculum documents. The curricula sets the “bar”, so to speak.
- If courses aren't offered in rural communities, it shouldn't lower the education standards for those students. The province wants all students to have the same level of education.
- We do not want to limit students' post-secondary options.

3. How can we ensure that Manitoba graduates will be accepted at out of province universities? Why aren't universities working more closely with high schools?

- This is starting to happen more. We are starting to recognize credit in S4 towards some university degrees.
- There is always a problem with “turf wars” so to speak, when we try to recognize equity between high school and community college courses. We are trying to break down those barriers.
- Now, when there are more students than ever continuing on in their education, it is very important to have a closer link between high schools and post secondary institutions.
- For the students who don't continue, we would like to address the barriers that prevent them from doing so. Is it financial? If we can make stronger links, there may be fewer barriers for students.

4. Why are there not more provincial government scholarships available to students? Most scholarships are from the federal government.

- This is a concern. The government has identified deficiencies in this area.
- Manitoba has a lot to offer. It doesn't help the province to have youth leaving. When someone leaves to pursue education elsewhere, they often don't come back. They often take up roots in another place.
- Manitoba has more than fresh air and water to offer, and we need to work to promote this province.

5. Why are there not more courses offered as part of the curriculum? Why do we have to pay extra for vocational programs?

- Minister Lemieux stated that he didn't know that in Hamiota, students have to pay extra for vocational programs.
- **Hamiota Student Comments:** I paid \$75 for an after school art program, offered in my division. This did not include art supplies and I had to find my own transportation. This same course was recognized as a curriculum course.
- Minister Lemieux will bring this back for discussion with the department.

6. How is it decided which courses are offered by computer? How can the government ensure that these programs are free of “glitches” and are of good quality?

- Another issue I was not aware of. Courses offered by computer should not have these types of problems. I will also look at this problem with the department.
- **Student comments:** Some courses should simply not be offered via the computer as they are too difficult to learn this way. I'm taking pre-calculus, and it is extremely difficult to learn without a teacher. Language courses should not be offered this way. I would be willing to bus quite a distance to be taught these courses by a teacher.
- Minister Lemieux said he appreciated these issues and will look into them with the department.

7. How can we afford to get the computers we need to access the courses required to graduate? Access to computer labs is limited. How can we get access to high speed internet services in our schools?

- We try to work in partnership with school divisions to facilitate computer labs.
- We have done some partnering of communities to give them access to high speed service. One example is with Niverville, Ritchot and Tache.
- We encourage schools to have the latest technology. This is difficult without high speed or broadband. We are trying to get these services into schools.
- Computer labs and access to high speed internet service is very important to rural students, and the government is trying to help.

8. Can the province address the issue of favoritism between teachers and students in small schools? When teachers are spending a lot of time being friends with students, they don't have the time to get through the curriculum.

- It is impossible for teachers to get through the entire curriculum
- To address internal problems, it must be done on a school level.
- There is a code of practice that teachers must follow. Students can try the same approach. First, approach a teacher if you have a problem with how things are being done. If that doesn't work, approach a parent or guardian.
- It is easier to solve problems with those who are closely involved rather than going too far above them.
- It is important to learn skills in problem solving and getting along with people. This is an important life skill.

9. Could there be a Rural Youth Employment Program in addition to the Hometown Green Team?

- Basically, this is asking for more money. The problem with this is that the taxpayers pay for these programs, and it is always a balancing act. People don't want to pay more tax.
- However, the government is trying to keep youth employment a priority.

10. Can we keep university students in Manitoba by keeping tuition fees down?

- Currently, there are record numbers of students attending post-secondary educational facilities in Manitoba, so right now this is not really a problem.
- Some years, however, this was a problem. Students leave Manitoba for a number of reasons such as course options, provincial grants, and career opportunities.
- This year, we almost have too many students at University. This may be attributed to the tuition freeze that was recently implemented and/or the increase in payment options for tuition fees.

11. How can the government ensure sufficient funding for school sports programs?

- Minister Lemieux stated that he understood the importance of funding for sports. In fact, sports kept me in school longer.
- The province gives the school division a lump sum based on a per student formula. The school division makes the decision on how the money will be allocated. Sports programming isn't mandatory in S4, but some people would like it to be.

- If sports were mandatory, then funding would come with it. This would give more options, but can also reduce options in terms of people who may not want to be in sports programs.
- Sports have been cut back over the past number of years. This is becoming a health concern.
- Sports, recreation and wellness are a proven proactive measure in improving health. This is an issue for the next election.
- **Student Question:** How can the government endorse sports to improve the healthcare system?
- Sports funding has traditionally gone to Olympic-level athletes. The challenge is to get funding for sports for all people regardless of skill-level.

12. What is the province doing to address the bullying issue in schools?

- Safe Schools Manitoba just had a conference on bullying. Mary Hall looks at all safety issues in schools. It is now law that all schools must have a safety committee in each division. Safe Schools Manitoba supports and encourages inter-organizational efforts to ensure safe and secure school communities. For more information visit www.safeschoolsmanitoba.ca.
- There are legal issues around this. Bullying and other safety issues are a huge problem. Drugs and alcohol in schools are also a big problem. There must be representation from students on these committees.
- It has to do with respecting one another. Intimidation has no place in school. There is serious ramifications such as suicide or drastic action such as school shootings. To fix the problem, we must all agree that it is unacceptable. We must create policy around it. Students must be safe, and enjoy their time at school.

13. Can more severe punishment/penalties be instituted for perpetrators of high school violence?

- Often when bullying occurs, there is not a big enough injury for it to be called assault. It is harder to deal with bullying in a serious manner.
- Often suspension happens. Sometimes that is what students want, so it becomes more a reward than a punishment.
- Between doing nothing and corporate punishment, what do you do?
- Often in small schools, the bully and the person being bullied are in the same class which is a big problem.
- Bullies need other options. It's tough in small schools to offer programs to meet these needs.
- The role of teachers, principals and administrators is to be "in loco parentis" or in place of a parent. We have a responsibility to keep students safe.

14. It is illegal for minors to purchase cigarettes, but it is not illegal for them to be seen smoking them around school grounds. What could be done about this?

- Young people smoke. It is terrible, but it is a reality.
- It is a legal problem and an education issue. Education on the danger of smoking happen in phys ed, health class and the gross ads on TV. When youth start young, it's hard to stop.

- The problem with trying to police minors who are smoking is logistics.
- One student suggested a non smoking radius around the school property.
- People are talking about an all out smoking ban in public places. Province must work closely with the municipalities on this issue.
- Some have a ban, others do not. Bans must be standardized.
- Soon it will become difficult for smokers to find a place to smoke.

Honourable Scott Smith

Minister of Transportation and Government Services

Minister responsible for Emergency Measures

**Minister charged with the administration of
The Manitoba Lotteries Corporation**

1. Do we have a plan for SARS and West Nile?

- There is a team of medical professionals in place that has the ability to track and control any diseases within Canada. We are very aware that SARS and West Nile virus is out there and we are monitoring it.
- **Student Question:** What are we doing to prepare if SARS or West Nile starts to spread to Manitoba?
- We would suggest quarantine and removal of infected people from the general public. There are other diseases in Manitoba that are more serious than SARS. Manitoba is ready if an outbreak of either SARS or West Nile Virus surfaces in Manitoba.

2. What can the government do to protect us?

- **If senior health officials thought that any one person or persons were a threat they would be detained for the length of time necessary until they were no longer considered contagious.**
- **Student Question:** How will it affect our freedoms, eg. voluntary vs. forced quarantines, screening at border crossings?
- Manitoba is Canada's fastest growing tourist industry and since 9/11 we've seen increased ground travel. Manitoba is in no way discouraging tourists at the border.

3. Does the provincial government support the federal government in its stand in the Iraqi War eg. cabinet solidarity?

- The interesting piece in the Iraqi War was first the buildup and now the aftermath of the war. Manitoba is clearly in favor of the Prime Minister's decision. In retrospect, Minister Scott stated he believed that the world will applaud the position taken by our Prime Minister took.
- **Student Question:** What does Manitoba expect in terms of post-war retaliation from the United States in regards to trade backlash?
- **Under the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement), business is business.**
- The short term effects could entail many people in the United States being unhappy, but we often have disagreements and in the end, we are still partners.

Individual businesses within the United States may hold grudges, but the average American accepts our position.

4. A lot of qualified people are moving to British Columbia from Tolko Paper due to loss of their jobs. What processes are being taken to resolve this issue, eg. softwood lumber free trade?

- This is a federal issue.
- Under NAFTA, we know that if it works for the United States, they'll work it to their advantage and if it doesn't, they'll stop it at the borders.
- There are always ups and downs in softwood lumber.
- **Student Question:** Based on what is happening in The Pas at the Tolko Pulp and Paper Mill, what is the government doing to address the issue? What are they doing to keep these skills in Manitoba?
- We are hoping to retrain and that this will be of short duration.
- When you have subsidies like the Americans have, it is difficult to compete.

5. What roads are priorities in the Manitoba infrastructure plan?

- **Historically in Manitoba, roads have been under funded for the last twenty-five years by about 100%. Maintenance is just maintenance.**
- In 2002, the government came up with a five year plan with a commitment of 120 million dollars per year.
- For the first time, last year, a large amount of money was spent on Northern Manitoba roads.
- If Manitoba could get 50% of the money spent on roads back from the federal government that would allow for great improvements.
- **Student Question:** How does government prioritize pavement of roads?
- The government looks at the heavy traffic roads. Highway No.1 is one of those roads.