

is being made by the broad community of the Province of Manitoba representing all sectors.

● (1805)

Time is of essence. The longer the Minister of State for Science and Technology (Mr. Siddon) and the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) drag out the decision and the longer they keep things hanging, the more we will lose those businesses which were planning to locate there, the more we will lose the scientists and engineers who came to Winnipeg to work in that laboratory, and the more we will lose the opportunity for young people to plan their careers in relation to the facilities which the laboratory would have stimulated.

Not only is my intervention at this time a plea for the Government to respond to the proposals for a research co-op, but to respond with a degree of clarity and quickness. If it simply holds out and continues with no answer to the requests and entreaties of members of that community, many of the benefits will be lost and the opportunity for the Province of Manitoba to meet and plan for a new economic future will also be lost. My intervention this evening is simply to say to the representative of the Minister that it is time to take some action and to make some decisions so that Manitoba can go ahead and do some decent planning for the future of its people.

Mr. Bernard Valcourt (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of State for Science and Technology): Mr. Speaker, the decision to end the ongoing funding of the Institute for Manufacturing Technology in Manitoba was not an easy one for the Government to take. As with many of the difficult decisions announced on November 8, the Government was merely confronting the unpleasant fact that in the presence of the growing national debt we cannot afford to do everything we would like to do.

The ongoing operating costs associated with the Institute of Manufacturing Technology would have been in excess of \$20 million per year. It is clear that the previous Government had not adequately considered this expense when it approved the capital project.

Last November 14, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Fort Garry (Mr. Axworthy) asked about the impact of the decision affecting the institute. In response I would point out that it would be difficult for anyone to ascribe credibly a specific impact to the decision. I say this because those involved with the project are still struggling to define the type of research and the kinds of equipment the institute would have. As the Hon. Member will know, the previous Government was criticized by the Wright Task Force, the CMA, the Senate Committee on National Finance and others, for its policies with respect to technology centres, and IMT was often cited specifically as a concern.

It was in this context that the November 8 decision was taken. Nevertheless, the federal Government recognizes the importance of manufacturing technology. It acknowledges the efforts of many well-meaning people associated with IMT.

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Thus the Minister is pursuing a number of initiatives aimed at keeping manufacturing technology expertise at NRC.

In addition, construction contracts associated with the project will be honoured, and this will see the building substantially completed. As the Minister said in Winnipeg last November, the building offers considerable potential and the Government is determined to see it put to productive use, notwithstanding the financial constraints facing the country. In this regard the Minister has invited the private sector and the provincial Government to participate in the staffing and the operation of the facility.

This proposal holds tremendous promise. As I mentioned before, the task force on federal policies and programs for technology development, the Senate Committee on Science and Technology and other bodies have stressed the need to increase the linkage between government in-house research activity and the private sector applications of the fruits of this research. The Government believes that the private sector is more likely to take an interest in research and use it if it has a financial interest in the activity. It is for this reason that we are optimistic about the Minister's initiative in relation to the Winnipeg institute.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I regret to interrupt the Hon. Member but his time has expired.

● (1810)

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS—PROPOSED WEATHER SERVICE INFORMATION CHARGE. (B) METHOD OF IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. George Baker (Gander-Twillingate): Mr. Speaker, my reasons for requesting clarification of a question I asked in the House some time ago of the Minister of the Environment (Mrs. Blais-Grenier) are quite simple. I blamed the cuts on the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson), but the Minister of the Environment was good enough to stand up in the House last week and say that it was not the Minister of Finance, but she who cut the programs in her Department. Therefore the Minister of the Environment is solely responsible for those cuts that did not make any sense at all.

The Minister announced that she was going to charge Canadians for picking up the telephone and dialing atmospheric environment; charge people for dialing the weather office. She announced at the same time that she would do away with guided tours in national parks. There are going to be self-guided tours, whatever they may be.

When I asked the Minister whether she was going to charge people for telephoning the weather office, she verified that. I then asked about the changing weather patterns in this country, and how they affect the farmers of western Canada, fishermen in eastern Canada, the travelling public on our highways in the north and in other parts of Canada. With our ever changing weather conditions they need frequent updates other than just those available from the media. The Minister said in cases of health and safety they will not be charged. In response to a direct question her words were that fishermen would not be charged.