



First Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

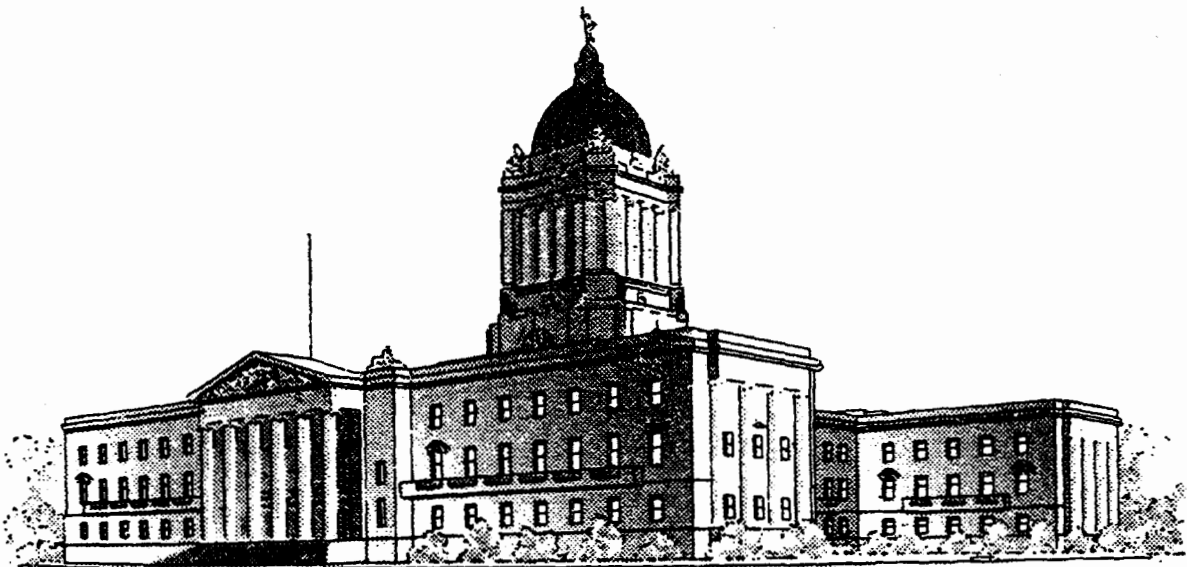
of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(Hansard)

*Published under the
authority of
The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

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| VODREY, Rosemary, Hon. | Fort Garry | P.C. |
| WOWCHUK, Rosann | Swan River | N.D.P. |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 29, 1995

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 2—The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), that leave be given to introduce Bill 2, The Balanced Budget, Debt Repayment and Taxpayer Protection and Consequential Amendments Act; Loi sur l'équilibre budgétaire, le remboursement de la dette et la protection des contribuables et apportant des modifications corrélatives, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill 5—The Education Administration Amendment Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 5, The Education Administration Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration scolaire, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 6—The Public Schools Amendment Act

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the

Minister of Justice (Mrs. Vodrey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 6, The Public Schools Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les écoles publiques, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1335)

Bill 7—The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Education and Training (Mrs. McIntosh), that leave be given to introduce Bill 7, The City of Winnipeg Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Ville de Winnipeg, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 8—The Off-Road Vehicles Amendment Act

Hon. Albert Driedger (Minister of Natural Resources): Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay), I move, seconded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), that leave be given to introduce Bill 8, The Off-Road Vehicles Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les véhicules à caractère non routier, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 9—The Wills Amendment Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 9, The Wills Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les testaments, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

**Bill 10—The Development Corporation
Amendment Act**

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Rural Development (Mr. Derkach), that leave be given to introduce Bill 10, The Development Corporation Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de développement, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

Bill 11—The Trustee Amendment Act

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister of Justice and Attorney General): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), that leave be given to introduce Bill 11, The Trustee Amendment Act; Loi modifiant la Loi sur les fiduciaires, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

* (1340)

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of members to the gallery to my right, where we have seated today ninety-five Grade 11 students from Murdoch Mackay Collegiate. These students are under the direction of Mrs. Pat Adams, Mr. Joe Ptashynski, Mr. Bruce Rand and Mr. Eric Ott. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Transcona (Mr. Reid).

On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you this afternoon.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Winnipeg Jets
Status of Provincial Shares**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, my question is to the First Minister.

During the election campaign, the Premier promised to limit his public contribution to the Jets to \$10 million. Madam Speaker, it has since been reported that the figure may be as high as \$37 million for the capital, up to \$9 million potential loss of revenue to the province in terms of potential tax rulings from the federal government, and what remains unclear to us is the status of the 18 percent shares that the provincial government owns in the Winnipeg Jets hockey team pursuant to the operating loss agreement signed by the Premier in 1991.

Can the Premier advise us as to the status of the shares owned by the people of Manitoba through the Province of Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, they will remain as equity to the credit of the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, given the fact the Premier promised to also cancel the operating loss agreement which created the shares that the Premier and the government of Manitoba now have, would this not constitute a further investment by the taxpayers of Manitoba in the Jets issue here in the Province of Manitoba on the operating side of the equation?

Mr. Filmon: No, Madam Speaker, because the only way that the taxpayers could have benefited from the shares would have been if the team had been sold to an outside party interest outside the province that would have seen the money come back to the credit of the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Since we did not believe that this was in the best interests of the province, obviously we will leave the shares there as equity in the team.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the Premier could have also sold the shares to the new owners of the team, the MEC group, the Shenkarow group and the other groups that are allegedly or reportedly taking over the team.

Would this not now constitute at least another \$9-million public contribution to the Jets? Would this now mean that we have \$37 million potentially invested in the capital, up to \$9 million potentially invested in a

revenue loss through a tax proposal that is before the federal government and now another \$9 million in terms of the equity that we now hold in the ownership of 18 percent shares, one of the largest percentage shares of any owner in a privately owned hockey team?

Mr. Filmon: No, Madam Speaker, you cannot have it twice. Firstly, the Leader of the Opposition has already talked about the fact that we absorbed some \$9 million of losses in the team for which we received, I might say, some \$17 million of direct revenue to the taxpayer for that \$9 million in losses, and for that \$9 million in losses, we have \$9 million of share equity in the team, which remains there to the credit of the taxpayers of Manitoba, is not lost in any way.

Seven Oaks Hospital Funding Reduction

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): I have a new question, Madam Speaker. One hopes that the Premier will be as generous with health and education as he seems to be on the changing relationship with the Winnipeg Jets.

My question to the Premier is, the government announced the pre-election pause on health care cuts and spending reductions to health care facilities. Since the election, we have learned that at Seven Oaks Hospital, a reduction of \$600,000 from previous pauses and now a further \$1.6-million reduction is being implemented at the hospital.

I would like to ask the Premier, what will be the impact of a somewhat close to 5 percent reduction in investment at Seven Oaks Hospital?

* (1345)

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): I just want to say, in response to the preamble of the Leader of the Opposition, that we will continue to be generous to health care, as we have been. We are the province in Canada that spends the highest proportion of its budget on health care, almost 34 percent of the budget, Madam Speaker. That is the highest proportion of any province in Canada. Even on a per capita basis, it is the third highest of all the provinces in Canada.

So, Madam Speaker, we will continue to treat health care more generously than almost any province in Canada.

Mr. Doer: The Premier never answered the question. The \$9 million in equity in the privately owned hockey team is equal to the health care cuts or hospital cuts of \$8 million in this year's budget—money one way, equity one way and cuts another way.

I would like to ask the Premier, what is the impact of the 5 percent reduction at Seven Oaks Hospital on patient care and on the standards of care for the people in Manitoba, a cut that was accelerated after the election campaign by the Conservative government.

Mr. Filmon: Again, Madam Speaker—and, of course, it is the reason why he had no credibility during the election campaign. The Leader of the Opposition does, in fact, give false information.

The cuts were not to hospitals, were not to personal care homes. They were a reduction to the MMA agreement. They were a reduction to the fees given to the MMA. They were not cuts to hospitals, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, my question to the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is, what are the priorities of this government to cut 5 percent out of Seven Oaks Hospital after the election campaign and multiply by three, four and five times the investment in the Winnipeg Jets issue after the election, both contrary to the word of the Premier during the election campaign.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, no matter how the Leader of the Opposition wants to obfuscate this matter, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) met with all of the hospital people last fall to let them know that the amount for hospitals, personal care homes and community health centres would be the same this year as it was last year at \$1.2 billion. That is a very significant contribution to health care.

As the Premier has pointed out, we are second to none in this country when it comes to the share of the budget being spent on health care.

Medical Services Council Information Release

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, the minister might add that when the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) met with hospital officials, they said a 2 percent cut to budgets. It is in their own press release, and it is now being brought to bear after the election.

My question to the Minister of Health is, we are back to the era of cutting. The minister's secret council is planning to deinsure a number of medical services, including general eye examinations.

Will the minister today do something that we asked him to do eight months ago and make the deliberations of that secret committee public, so the Manitoba public can know what services this government is planning to cut from medicare.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, about a year ago, the Manitoba Medical Association and the government of Manitoba entered into an historic agreement, which brought about some level of consultation and working together that has not existed for 20 years in the Province of Manitoba.

The so-called council the honourable member refers to is the Medical Services Council. It has representation on it from the government, from the Manitoba Medical Association, from other parties, as well, including members of the public. That is a very open process, and no recommendations will be coming forward that have not been very carefully screened by that council and by myself.

* (1350)

Eye Examinations Deinsurance

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, the pattern continues with no answers to the questions.

My supplementary to the minister is, can the minister advise this House how much it will cost Manitobans who will be forced to pay out-of-pocket expenses for

general eye examinations? How much will it cost Manitobans to pay for these services that the government is intending to deinsure?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, the honourable member does not like the answers, because they give the lie to the misinformation that honourable members opposite have been putting across in this province for far too long. [interjection] Well, Madam Speaker, if I have said something that is inappropriate or offensive to honourable members—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Health, I believe, was about to apologize in case his comment was misinterpreted or he said something that should not have been permitted on the record.

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, I realize I used the word "lie" and I should not have done that. I am sorry for that, but you know, I think the people of Manitoba spoke very, very wisely when they passed judgment on the misinformation that formed part of the recent election campaign.

The numbers are there for honourable members and everybody else to see. Manitoba has a very, very significant contribution to make and has been making to health care in our province.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, will the minister do something this government has refused to do all throughout its tenure in health care, and that is bring these decisions about deinsurance and other cuts, like the 5 percent cut to Seven Oaks Hospital this year, before members of this Chamber and the public, so they can deliberate prior to the government making its cuts?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, if that argument holds true, then why were honourable members opposite not using that when they were cutting and cutting in the days when they had an opportunity—the Pharmacare program, for example? Why did they not do that then?

It is precisely because of the need for input from the various stakeholders and interested parties that the

Manitoba Medical Services Council was set up. It does contain representation from the various groups I mentioned, like the College of Physicians, like the MMA, the government, representatives from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation, whom honourable members opposite tell us are beyond reproach.

That is the kind of representation we have in decision making on how to run the medical services component of the budget of Manitoba.

The Pas Health Complex Kidney Dialysis

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert'sland): Madam Speaker, as members of the House may be aware, there has been an international conference, that is going to be concluding today at the Convention Centre, talking about the indigenous peoples and the link with diabetes.

My questions are also for the Minister of Health.

Nearly two years ago, we asked this government whether it was prepared to offer dialysis treatment at The Pas Hospital. I would like to ask the minister, does this government now have a date at which such services could be made available at The Pas, instead of forcing people to drive to Flin Flon and even farther for treatment?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I will be happy to provide the detail of that question and the answer for the honourable member in due course, Madam Speaker, but, certainly, over the last few years, we have seen, indeed, an increase in the need for dialysis and an increase in the supply of dialysis services in Manitoba. We will continue to monitor that situation, Madam Speaker.

* (1355)

Health of Manitoba's Children Report Recommendations

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert'sland): Madam Speaker, to the same minister, given that rickets is preventable,

as The Health of Manitoba's Children Report noted with their recommendations, I would like to ask the Minister about those recommendations in that report, when they will be acted on to prevent rickets, as has been experienced in the Island Lake communities of Red Sucker Lake, St. Theresa Point, Garden Hill and Wasagamack in northern Manitoba.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): The child health strategy that came forward in the report by Dr. Postl and his committee formed the basis for the election campaigns of, I think, all three political parties in this House, and I look forward to working with the honourable member and his colleagues in the future as we put some action around the proposals within that package of proposals.

Food Co-operatives

Mr. Eric Robinson (Rupert'sland): Madam Speaker, it has been said that poverty and health are directly linked—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Pose your question now, please.

Mr. Roberson: The question I would like to ask is, will this government assist in the growth of food co-operatives in the North, as recommended in the report?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, poverty and health are indeed directly linked. I am glad honourable members opposite recognize that now. We have recognized it for some time.

We would certainly be happy if our federal friends would recognize that, and instead of cutting back on nutrition programs and programs for new moms as the federal Liberals have done, I think it would be wise if they prioritize their spending as we have done here in the Province of Manitoba.

Physician Resources Grandview/Gilbert Plains

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Health.

Last Wednesday, my colleague the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen), asked a question in this House regarding doctor shortages in his constituency. Today, I stand before this House and ask similar questions on behalf of my own constituents.

Like Leaf Rapids and Lynn Lake, the communities of Grandview and Gilbert Plains are also facing a doctor shortage crisis. Could the minister table an agreement he made with the communities of Grandview, Gilbert Plains and Roblin to pursue the recruitment of four to five permanent salaried physicians?

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Health): I will take the honourable member's question under advisement.

He should know that last Friday I met with representatives from the communities of Leaf Rapids, Lynn Lake and Gillam, as well, and discussed physician issues in general for rural, northern and remote Manitoba.

There is general agreement about the necessity to address the problem, and that goes for communities like Grandview, Gilbert Plains and others in rural Manitoba, because even if they are not having a problem right now, they know that a problem, once it is upon us, is an acute problem. It is not like losing a doctor from one of the larger communities in our province—a doctor in a small community can be a very, very serious problem.

I think I made it clear to the people in my office on Friday that I recognize that, and along with all of our partners, including them, we are working to solve the immediate problems but also to build a long-term solution through the Physician Resource Committee.

Mr. Struthers: Can the minister indicate what financial assistance will be given to those communities for recruitment of these four to five doctors, given the recruitment of even one doctor can cost upwards of \$70,000?

Mr. McCrae: I will look at the traditional level of assistance for this type of activity and also look to see if there is an additional responsibility on the part of the

government indicated by circumstances. We will review that as we are doing with the Leaf Rapids situation.

Mr. Struthers: What full-time support will be provided so that the one remaining physician stays and so that the health of the community is not threatened?

Mr. McCrae: Madam Speaker, that is exactly the kind of question and issue that is being addressed by the community in concert with representatives from my department and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, as well.

As to a precise response to a question like that today, I am not able to give that, but I expect that we will discover the answer to that as we continue to work together.

* (1400)

Winnipeg Jets Estimated Losses

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, a key component of the Jets' new deal between MEC and the Spirit of Manitoba, the new Jets owners, is that there will be a private-sector fund to pay the losses of the hockey team over the estimated 20-year period of the lease or the agreement.

The viability of the hockey team is very much a matter of concern for the viability of the \$175-million public-sector investment in an arena; therefore, the level of team losses, Madam Speaker, is a very critical issue for this House.

Will the Minister of Finance tell the House, what are the estimated losses for 1995-96 and '96-97 for the Winnipeg Jets?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, we continue to await the conclusion of the discussions that are taking place right now between the private sector here in Manitoba and the current owners of the Winnipeg Jets in terms of a realignment of ownership, the current owners possibly staying in for a minority interest.

Obviously, part of those discussions are going to be the operations of the hockey club for the 1995-96 season and what the projections might well be in terms of the ultimate losses of the club, ways of controlling expenses to minimize that impact, and, obviously, a major part of this whole undertaking is the establishment of the endowment fund that has been contributed to very significantly to date by many, many Manitobans.

Mr. Sale: To the same minister, Madam Speaker, will the minister then confirm the estimate of the Provincial Auditor and MEC that the losses will likely exceed \$12 million to \$14 million in each of the next two years for a two-year total of at least \$28 million in losses during the arena construction period?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, those are numbers that are in the range of what projections were several months ago.

As I have indicated, if this whole new arrangement is, in fact, put in place, and we are hoping to hear definitive answers on that within the next few days, a major part of the whole reorganization will be to find ways to control expenses, to reduce losses, but, ultimately, as has been indicated by the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and many others, the whole objective is that the private sector takes over the operations of the hockey club, they take over the exposure to any potential losses, and the mechanism that is being put in place is this establishment of an endowment fund to cover those losses for the next many years.

Part of governments remaining and continuing to hold equity in any future operation is on the basis that governments are in no way exposed to any contributions to any losses, Madam Speaker.

Winnipeg Arena Information Release

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): I thank the minister for beginning to shed some light—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Please pose your question now.

Mr. Sale: Will the minister then commit to tabling with this House the cash flow projections upon which have been based the development of the \$60-million endowment fund to enable the House to see for itself that the fund is sufficient to ensure the long-term stability of the team in Winnipeg prior to a shovel being put in the ground for an arena?

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): Madam Speaker, as has been indicated consistently, the whole objective of the reorganization is to make sure that the team can remain here in Manitoba for many years and remain viable, and that is the whole purpose behind the establishment of the endowment fund.

I know the NDP, through their comments and questions, oppose building an entertainment complex here in Manitoba. They oppose trying to keep the Jets here in Winnipeg. We believe it is in the best interests of Manitoba, the economy in Manitoba, and many other aspects of Manitoba to do the utmost to keep them here, Madam Speaker, and as we have indicated on many occasions, in concert with the private-sector group that is now hopefully taking over control of the Winnipeg Jets Hockey Club, all information that can be made available will be made available, not only here in this House but to the public of Manitoba.

Education System Funding

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, this government's support for the business known as the Winnipeg Jets has rapidly escalated since the election, at a time when the same government claims there is no more money for Manitoba schools.

I want to ask the Minister of Education, when the arena and Jets final package was being considered by her colleagues, did she make the case for an alternative investment priority of the restoring of the \$35 million of cuts to Manitoba schools over the last three years?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member knows full well that in terms of priorities for this government, the largest percentage of our budget goes towards three main areas—health, education and family services.

The member also knows that over the course of our term of government, funding to schools has been good, has been adequate for the needs faced by the schools. The member also is aware of the number of divisions around the province that have been able to acquire and maintain surpluses in the school divisions.

The member is aware that there are opportunities that divisions have had. Some took advantage of those opportunities, some did not, for Bill 22 days. The member is also aware that bargaining units have the opportunity to control some of the rising costs of divisions by the way in which they settle their negotiations at the table.

So, Madam Speaker, I do not accept the premise inherent in the member's statement that funding for education in Manitoba has somehow been inadequate.

Impact of Staffing Reduction

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I am going to enjoy sending that response to every—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Ms. Friesen: Will the minister table the information she must, as minister, have collected on the impact on class size and program availability of the loss of over 270 teachers across the province in this coming year?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member consistently does not wish to acknowledge that school divisions and unions with whom the school divisions bargain have opportunities at the bargaining table to determine whether or not teachers are laid off, staff sizes—
[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. McIntosh: The number of staff any given division is able to employ is dependent upon the amount of wages that division has to pay that staff.

We know that 83 percent of school division budgets goes towards wages. We know that in some divisions, that percentage is much higher than 83 percent, and the

divisions have done an admirable job containing their operating costs.

The one cost they are having difficulty controlling is the wage cost, and there are two parties at the bargaining table, Madam Speaker, that have the opportunity to determine what that cost shall be and the subsequent size of the staff complement in the division.

Ms. Friesen: Can the minister tell us what the impact of the loss of 270 teachers, in some divisions 10 percent of the teachers, will be on the implementation of the new curriculums, the new timetables and the new examinations in the so-called reform plan of this government?

Mrs. McIntosh: I, first of all, would like to clarify that it is not a so-called reform. It is a reform. It is a reform that is going on not just in Manitoba but in other provinces across Canada, in other countries across the western hemisphere.

The use of adjectives and descriptive phrases before good words colour the good words. The member knows it. The member is doing it consciously, and I just want the record to show that most people are not taken in by those kinds of colourful adjectives.

I would like to repeat again, Madam Speaker, that there are two ways in which staff positions can be saved. One is to overspend and the other is to bargain in such a way that wage increases do not interfere with the division's ability to have a certain number of staff in its complement.

School Boundaries Commission Implementation Timetable

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Education.

As fall quickly approaches, there is a great deal of concern with respect to the school divisions and the alignments of the school divisions. The public has a right to know, in the sense that there are many children, what school divisions are going to be coming about in terms of changes. There are literally hundreds of trustees and potential candidates who are out there who

are making their decision today on whether or not they are going to be running, and they need to know what sort of boundaries.

My question to the minister is, will the minister make a firm commitment to establishing a timetable for boundary changes?

* (1410)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, in response to the member's question, it has already been indicated that we now have the Boundaries Review Commission requesting the receiving of written submissions to comment on the proposals and the recommendations as developed by the commission. They will be reporting back to us in September.

The regular school board elections will take place in October, as they do every three years, and those three years during which this particular school term will extend will be transition years.

Any decisions made regarding boundaries will be announced during that period, and during that period, we would expect that the trustees who were elected in October would be part of the process of transition, of any mergers that may be decided upon, and any trustees running should see that as a possibility when they decide to make their decision to run.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, just for confirmation, I understand that the school trustees—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Would the honourable member please pose a supplementary question now.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, can the minister then confirm that this fall election will be on the old boundaries and indicate what options she is also considering for the subsequent elections?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I repeat for the member's information and clarification that we will be hearing from the commission at the beginning of

September as to its final developed proposals based upon reaction to their current recommendations.

The October elections that will take place for school boards across the province will take place as they normally do. The next three years, the normal school board term will be a transition period during which school divisions will prepare themselves for any amalgamation if it occurs.

There may be some divisions where there is no amalgamation. We have not made our decisions yet. Those three years will be a transition period during which school divisions will prepare for an orderly blending or merging of students and staff, et cetera.

Tax Rebates

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, the other indication of changes, that of rebates—and I would ask the Minister of Urban Affairs whether or not his intentions are to have the rebates process in place, the legislation that the City of Winnipeg and others are looking for?

Hon. Jack Reimer (Minister of Urban Affairs): Madam Speaker, I believe what the member for Inkster is referring to is the legislation that was just introduced regarding the rebates for the councillors and the setting up of a system within the parameters of the bill that was just introduced.

Status of Women Government Initiatives

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister responsible for the Status of Women.

This government's document entitled Plan Manitoba, A Vision for the Future and the Speeches from the Throne, December 1994 and May 1995, include virtually no plans, policies or visions which promote the status of women. I cite, for example, family violence, Family Violence Court and women in second-stage housing. These are ignored. I am encouraged, however, in the knowledge that the minister met in Ottawa last week with her provincial

and federal counterparts and trust that she returned with renewed vision and some ideas.

My first question for the minister is, will the minister table with the House her presentation to last week's meeting in Ottawa?

Hon. Rosemary Vodrey (Minister responsible for the Status of Women): Madam Speaker, I was very pleased to represent our province at a meeting of Ministers responsible for the Status of Women last week.

There were a number of issues which were discussed. Among those at the top of the agenda were economic security. One of the major issues to be determined in the area of economic security for women is the federal Minister of Human Resources' plan. We have yet to see what detail will be put forward on behalf of Canadian people to deal with economic security.

In the area of violence against women, of course, there was a renewed emphasis across Canada for provinces to look at initiatives to deal with violence against women. I was very pleased to again put forward information regarding Manitoba's Domestic Violence Court and also put forward to my federal counterparts that I will be tabling in this House legislation in the area of maintenance enforcement. However, again, a great deal rests with the federal government of this country to deal with the child support guidelines.

Ms. McGifford: Will the minister detail for this House the ideas that she has brought with her from Ottawa?

Mrs. Vodrey: Madam Speaker, I will be pleased to see that the member receives a copy of the communique in which all areas that were agreed upon between Ministers responsible for the Status of Women were outlined.

I was very pleased, just as an example, to tell the member to take forward the initiatives that have been put forward by our Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson) in the area of Taking Charge!, in the area of initiatives dealing with single-parent families and

our position and questions that we had concerning the plan that the federal minister of human resources will put forward, again initiatives relating to family violence. I was pleased to draw that to the attention of my counterparts.

Madam Speaker, I was also very pleased to receive agreement from my counterparts, ministers for the Status of Women, that we would, by agreement, look at any barriers between provinces for the collection of maintenance enforcement payments. That was, I believe, a really important step taken at that meeting. I was pleased to do that on behalf of the Province of Manitoba, the people of Manitoba.

Ms. McGifford: Can the minister outline for this House her current and future plans for promoting the status of Manitoba women?

Mrs. Vodrey: This government has made major strides in the promotion of women and the position of women in the seven years that we have been in government, and we look forward to up to five more years in which we can continue to do that.

Strides have been made and certainly we will be looking at this, I am sure, in Estimates in terms of the senior positions women hold within the civil service, strides that have been made in the area of employment and also economic equity in the area of training.

I am very pleased to remind the member that it was this government which introduced the Training for Tomorrow Scholarship. The Training for Tomorrow Scholarship deals very specifically with economic security of women, encouraging women to move into the nontraditional professions by way of a scholarship.

Madam Speaker, there are a number of initiatives which this government has implemented and will continue to implement, and I will be more than pleased to discuss those during the time of Estimates.

ACCESS Programs Funding Restoration

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): Madam Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Education.

Manitobans, particularly northerners, hope this minister will be open-minded and generous about proven success stories such as the ACCESS program.

Is she willing to restore funding of ACCESS and BUNTEP to previous levels?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): As the member realizes, in terms of post-secondary education, we have more people now currently taking advantage of the ACCESS program than did before, so, clearly, the number of people being able to take advantage of that particular program has not been diluted in any way, given the increase in sign-up.

BUNTEP Program Wage Deductions

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My supplementary question is, will the minister review the policy of deducting 80 percent of BUNTEP students' part-time wages, since many of these students cannot make ends meet on loans alone.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): As I indicated, we have an increased enrollment, we have an increased number of students accessing the ACCESS program, and all indications are that the success of that program in terms of providing opportunities for students still remains, in fact, is enhanced with the increased take-up.

I indicate in terms of equity and fairness that taking some responsibility, if you have the means, if the money is there in your own personal income, to repay that money to the people of Manitoba who provide it is something that other people in Manitoba have to do and that we are now saying is a fair and equitable way to proceed.

* (1420)

BUNTEP Program Government Initiatives

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): My final supplementary question is this. What specifically is

this minister prepared to do to keep ACCESS programs such as BUNTEP affordable for the disadvantaged and, specifically, the most disadvantaged students in this province?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, ACCESS students are not denied any educational opportunities. More people are taking advantage or taking up to it.

Eight hundred of the most needy students are exempt from paying student loans, so what we are saying is those who are in need will still have those needs met. Those who have an ability to repay, we will be asking to repay, as other students do in this province.

School Boundaries Commission Transcona-Springfield School Division

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): With the release of the final report and recommendations of the school division's Boundaries Review Commission, taxpayers of the Transcona-Springfield School Division No. 12 learned that their school taxes will rise from between \$80 to \$100 per home as a result of the recommendations.

Can the Minister of Education explain how taxpayers of the Transcona-Springfield School Division are going to have their taxes reduced, considering the report's recommendations?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member knows from my announcement that those questions are ones that the government is taking under further review. I should emphasize these are recommendations. They are not decisions of government. They are recommendations being made to government, and those recommendations we are now sending back to people, such as those who sit on the Transcona-Springfield board for their commentary.

We have also said in terms of the division of assets and liabilities that we will be taking a careful look to ensure equity, to ensure that no one division is unduly penalized or rewarded but that fairness exists before any decisions are made in that regard.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

NONPOLITICAL STATEMENTS

Children's Hospital Research Foundation

Mr. Gerry McAlpine (Sturgeon Creek): Madam Speaker, do I have leave for a nonpolitical statement?

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for Sturgeon Creek have leave for a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. McAlpine: Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my congratulations to the Children's Hospital Research Foundation for hosting probably one of the most successful Teddy Bears' Picnics in history.

I would like to also recognize the volunteers, the people who really made this possible and, actually, the weather co-operated with the organizers. I would like to congratulate the Research Foundation, Colin Ferguson and his board of the Teddy Bears' Picnic in hosting the very, very successful campaign and picnic.

Also, Madam Speaker, this morning at Children's Hospital, I had the pleasure of participating in another leg of the Research Foundation raising money for children. I was able to participate on behalf of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and the government of Manitoba to start this memorable race off this morning and participate by running 14 kilometres from Children's Hospital to the Perimeter Highway.

I think it is fitting that we, as members of the government and sit in this Chamber, have from time to time an opportunity to participate, but this was one I felt was one of emotion because if it were not for the research of the Children's Hospital, two grandchildren that my wife and I enjoy, 25 months ago born to my son and daughter-in-law, Melanie and Nicole, would not be here if it were not for the research that was done at this Children's Hospital.

Madam Speaker, I say that with a great deal of emotion because these two young girl twins were born something like three months premature and their hearts

would stop 25 and 30 times a day and as a result of the research that is done at this facility, I really want to thank them and congratulate them and wish them continued success in all their endeavours. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Leader of the official opposition have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and to members of the Chamber for granting leave.

I also want to pay tribute to the thousands and thousands of volunteers who are working throughout the events of the Children's Hospital Research Foundation.

I understand the weekend was another very successful occasion. Many thousands of young people attended and volunteered their activities and were involved in the activities of the research foundation. It is truly a remarkable public institution that we have here in our community, the Children's Hospital. It is a great partnership between the professional staff, the medical staff and the community.

I was involved in an event just a couple of weeks ago for the Research Foundation of the Children's Hospital, and that was the fundraising dinner for the book market that the Children's Hospital Research Foundation puts on on an annual basis. I have some very, very intimate knowledge of that book market.

My mother used to be the volunteer chair of that book market. It used to be a wonderful opportunity to carry books around. I was her labourer for that book market. I know carrying those books around, it was a wonderful recycling opportunity both of the intellectual material in those wonderful books and a great fundraising activity that I believe has gone from approximately \$40,000 a year to \$240,000 a year through the work of volunteers and people.

I understand next week that the telethon is scheduled, and I hope again that is very successful. I am sure that

all of us will join in, in working as part of our community, in this very, very successful activity.

The Children's Hospital is very important for the kids of Manitoba. It is very important for residents of northwestern Ontario, even as far away as Saskatchewan. We have excellent staff, as I say, there at the hospital. We are only too happy to join in paying tribute to the community for their great investment in this wonderful community asset that we all own, called the Children's Hospital Research Foundation. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for The Maples have leave to make a nonpolitical statement? [agreed]

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): I would like to join in with the celebration of the fundraising effort for the Children's Hospital. This is a cause that is very near and dear to my heart. I spent almost a year in the Children's Hospital when I was six years old with rheumatic fever, and if not for the advances in medical science at that point, I would not be alive today.

I had the opportunity to attend the Winnipeg Police Association charitable ball this weekend. The funds from that charitable ball will also be given to the Children's Hospital Research Foundation, as it has over a number of years. I learned at that ball that the Winnipeg Police Association has donated almost \$100,000 to the Children's Hospital Research Foundation.

Again, Manitobans have shown they have got a strong community spirit, and I applaud the efforts of all the volunteers and the efforts of the Children's Hospital Research Foundation. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Fifth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Riel (Mr. Newman) for an address to His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor in answer to his speech at the

opening of the session and on the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition in amendment thereto and the proposed motion of the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in further amendment thereto, standing in the name of the honourable member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), who has 18 minutes remaining.

* (1430)

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, I just want to make a few concluding remarks and hand over debate to two of my new colleagues joining the New Democrat caucus. I am anxious to give them as much time as possible to conduct their debate today.

I had spent some time on Friday talking about the misplaced priorities of this government. With election issues focused on funding infrastructure programs like the arena for a professional hockey team—it is interesting that a group in the community has dubbed Premier Filmon the winner of the Stanley Cup for child poverty—I want to talk a little bit about the other events in the province over the weekend that highlighted a few other priorities that should be deserving of attention of governments that have been negligent, and that particularly is in the North.

I find it quite obscene that we have a situation in the North where the poverty there is causing illnesses like rickets and an increase in diabetes. When we have governments that are ignoring the situation and trying to pass off the situation—in the Speech from the Throne when the government basically tried to dismiss child poverty and poverty in our province as a federal responsibility, I have to say I find that reprehensible and quite obscene.

In the North we have, I think, the worst examples of the economics of exploitation that have been practised throughout this province's history, about the kind of economics that this government continues to practice.

I also find it similarly a concern when we have, over the last week, pleas for facilities for young people in Winnipeg, with the North Y and recently a drop-in centre in West Kildonan being denied public funds. We have over \$100 million being given to professional

hockey players for their rink, and yet we are threatened with losing facilities for the children and youth in our city, in our province.

I just want to say that youth and children are not money-makers. Young people and children deserve to have education and health care that is going to meet their needs and also the provision of recreational activities that are going to meet their needs so they can grow up in a caring environment. We must look at this not even as an investment, even though that is what it is, but just look at it as what we have to do so that children can grow up to be healthy, contributing, intelligent adults.

We have seen an increase in crime under this government, particularly youth crime. We have seen an increase in poverty among young people. That has to be directly attributed to the cuts in education and health care and again to the practising of the kind of economics that increases the gap between the haves and the have-nots.

I know that I have raised this question, as many other members on this side of the House have, in trying to demonstrate the link between poverty and health care cuts and education cuts. We know that the majority of young people who drop out of school, particularly high school, come from low-income families. I think that we have to take a serious look at that.

It is reprehensible to me that this government cannot come up with a strategy for what this government could do on child poverty. I am going to be looking forward to spending some time on demonstrating that there are a lot of things this government could do to have more equity in our province and to deal with the situation for far too many families in the difficulty they have for providing for their children.

I think this government has gotten away with a lot, ignoring problems. It was a disappointment to me that there was a real disregard for sustainability. When I talk about the kind of economics of exploitation that this government practises, yet they have put out a lot of material on sustainability. I think the challenge for us as legislators, as elected officials, is to try and change the practices of government, and if we truly believe in

sustainability we will see that we have to start talking about the connections between health, environment, economics and justice.

I have talked about that a number of times in this House, but it is quite a concern to me that there has been really no effort to change the approach, and we did not hear much about the environment during this election.

This past week and over the long weekend last weekend I was looking for a book to take with me on a canoe trip, and I pulled this small book that would fit in my pocket from my bookshelf. It is *Brave New World* written by Aldous Huxley. In the introduction there is a passage that I am going to read because I found that it was appropriate coming from the election and the kind of propaganda that we saw following the election particularly dealing with the arena and the Jets issue.

The cohorts that I was with on the canoe trip, we had a chuckle in reading this and applying it to our time and facing the world that we do right now. Part of the introduction says the greatest of triumphs of propaganda have been accomplished not by doing something but by refraining from doing. Great is the truth, but still greater from a practical point of view is silence about the truth. By simply not mentioning certain subjects, by lowering an iron curtain between the masses and such facts or arguments as the local political bosses regard as undesirable, totalitarian propagandists have influenced opinion much more effectively than they could have done by the most eloquent denunciations and the most compelling of logical rebuttals, to end quote. Then it goes on to talk about people having to love their servitude.

I want to close my comments on the Speech from the Throne by committing once again to speaking the truth in this House about the unfairness and the inequities and the disregard for people of disadvantaged backgrounds, to speak the truth about the destruction of the economic policies practised by this government in the environment.

I also received in the mail today a copy of an article from the *Ottawa Citizen* which says that Canada is

second only to France in losing quality of air and water, that we have had a 28.1 percent decline in resources and in the state of the environment.

I also want to conclude by taking the opportunity to encourage the House to engage in intelligent debate. We can have passionate debate about the differences in our ideas, but I hope that we will not resort to belittling people and personal attacks. I think that we have to take the high road, and we have to endeavour to not attack people even based on their ideas, that we all have the right to present our ideas here. It is fine to debate our ideas but to not belittle each other or attack each other based on those beliefs in a personal nature.

So I encourage the members opposite to take issue with what I may say on the substance. I encourage them to do that, but I hope that we will elevate the level of debate in this Chamber from what it has been in the past and that we will actually debate ideas. I hope to bring some new and innovative ideas on a more sustainable approach to government and economic policy, and I would encourage members opposite to do the same. With those remarks, I conclude my debate.

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): Madam Speaker, I want to begin my first speech in this House by making several congratulations and several thank-yous. I want to begin by congratulating all the MLAs, all 57 of us, for the hard work that we put into representing our people back home in our constituencies and the hard work that we put into the pre-election and the election campaigns.

I think it is just great that 57 of us can get together every day in the House, discuss the issues of the day and then go back home and report to our people back there the progress that we have made.

Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your position as the new Speaker of the Legislature. I look forward to working with you and have appreciated your fairness in handling the situations that have arisen so far and wish you success in your endeavour.

I want to recognize and to congratulate the members of the cabinet. You have a heavy responsibility on your shoulders. You have many of the acts and the

proposals that we will come up with on this side to consider, and I hope that you very fairly consider what we have to say as well from this side of the House.

* (1440)

I want to acknowledge and to congratulate the Pages who are working with us in the Legislature. I had a friend in university who worked as a Page in the House of Commons in Ottawa and she cherished the time that she spent as a Page. She quite often told me she learned a lot about our parliamentary procedures and the working of government and years later thought back and remembered fondly the times that she spent in the House of Commons. I hope that the Pages here today have the same kind of good experience as my friend had.

I want to also acknowledge the two fine gentlemen who ran against me in the election campaign of 1995, Mr. Sarin and Mr. Ryz. Both worked very hard and represented their respective parties admirably, and I want to acknowledge their work in the campaign and wish them every success in their other careers.

Finally, I want to congratulate the class of 1995, all 11 of us, that took part in the orientation sessions and have got their feet wet in the House. I am very impressed with what I have seen so far of the class of '95, and I am hoping that at least five of us make it through to the class of 1999. You decide for yourself which five I was talking about.

I want to thank those volunteers who worked in my campaign team in the Dauphin election. I want to commend them on their hard work. I want to thank them for not panicking when 18 gazillion blue and red signs appeared on election night.

I want to thank them for not panicking when there were more papers distributed by the opposition. Enough paper was used to eclipse the allowable cut of Louisiana-Pacific in the amount of trees that were killed. I want to thank my campaign team for not panicking at those times. I want to thank them for keeping me from panicking when things were getting wild and crazy in the campaign. I want to thank the

voters for having the wisdom to send me to the Legislature as opposed to someone else.

I want to express my thank you and my appreciation to my fellow members in the NDP caucus for their help in keeping me on the straight and narrow and making sure I am in the right place at the right time and not doing things a little too far out of the ordinary.

I also want to recognize, congratulate and thank the former member for Dauphin, John Plohman, for his hard work, for all the good that he has done for Dauphin and for the province of Manitoba when he was a cabinet minister. I am not going to try to pretend to fill John Plohman's shoes, especially in his performance within the bounds of the Chamber. I have my own style and John has his. I just want to make sure that I have recognized Mr. Plohman's contributions to the House and to the people of Manitoba.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

I also want to thank Binx and the legislative staff for an excellent orientation session, especially the mock session that we spent within the Chamber here. It made the first day a lot easier; it made the first day a lot more comfortable. I wish to express my gratitude to the legislative staff for the time and effort they put in helping us Class-of-'95 people get our feet wet in the Chamber.

Just before the provincial election was called, I was in a dentist's office waiting nervously to be called in. I picked up a magazine and started flipping through it, and I came across an article that was written in this magazine. It dealt with maneuvers that the U.S. Marines were going through off the coast of New England. In the course of these maneuvers, two of the subs collided, and one of the subs sank to the bottom of the ocean. The marines got the divers together quickly and dived down to the bottom of the ocean to see what they could do to help this submarine and the people within it. As the divers moved along the outside of the submarine, they began to notice a Morse code message being sent by the people from within the submarine.

The Morse code message was this, the people were asking, is there any hope?

I looked at the throne speech that was presented here last week and I asked myself the same question: Is there any hope? Well, let us see. First of all, is there any hope for my constituents back in Dauphin coming out of this throne speech?

In the north part of my constituency of Dauphin is the Waterhen, Mallard, Skownan and Rock Ridge area. This is an area of the constituency, an area of the province, which is economically depressed, but within this area there are people who are bound and determined to turn their area around and pursue a plan of economic development and try to make their area successful. They are doing this in a number of ways.

There are lodges in the area whose purpose is to attract tourism, bring outside dollars into the community. They have a buffalo compound. A concern that they have is the condition of the roads in the area. They are very much interested in promoting their area as a fishing site to bring tourists up to their area and stimulate some kind of economic growth in that area.

A little further south are the Meadow Portage, Toutes Aides, Rorketon, Magnet, Methley areas. Some of the best ranchland in the province is found in this area. There is some grain farming mixed in with the ranching. This is an area that I am very well familiar with. As the principal of the Rorketon School I got to know many of the people of the Rorketon area very well.

What I noticed in the Rorketon area is something that I would like to see take place within this Chamber, I would like to see take place throughout the province of Manitoba, because those folks in Rorketon know what it means to have community spirit. They know what it means to co-operate. In an area that is not one of the more affluent areas of the province, this little community with the few people that are left in Rorketon has developed for itself very much a co-operative community-focused kind of a spirit that is serving them very well. [interjection]

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members wanting to carry on a conversation to do so in the loge, please. We are having difficulty over here hearing the honourable member. This is the honourable member's first speech in the House, so if we could have a little bit of decorum.

Mr. Struthers: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the one area of this part of the province that I would like to point out is a place called Manipogo park, which is Manitoba's best-kept secret. It is located along Lake Manitoba. It is another example in this area of folks trying to promote their area in an economically developed way.

Further south again we come to Ochre River and Malinak, a mixed-farming, cattle-ranching area. Another area that they are looking at again as a way to develop economically is through recreation and leisure, situated close to Lake Dauphin and cottage country in the area, with beaches and cabins there that many people in the area utilize.

* (1450)

Moving further north and west in the constituency we come across Sifton, Gilbert Plains and Grandview. Again it is a mixed-farming area, with some income brought in through logging. Gilbert Plains is known as an area with an excellent nine-hole golf course, so I invite all of you and any of you to come up and try out the Gilbert Plains golf course.

The last town in the area that I want to briefly mention in this speech is Dauphin. It is our largest centre. It is known as our regional centre for the whole area. Inside Dauphin we have a large seniors population which indicates a very important need in the form of our Dauphin Regional Health Centre. At one time Dauphin was a major hub for the CNR. The CNR employed many people, injected many salaries into the local economy. Of course, we all know that is changing and that the CNR no longer is a major employer in the town of Dauphin.

I want to take a minute here to put in a plug for Countryfest on July 1 and the National Ukrainian Festival at the beginning of August and the Dauphin

fair, as well as many small-town fairs that occur in all of the little communities throughout the Dauphin constituency.

Lake Dauphin is situated right in the middle of my constituency, and there are a number of different challenges that face Lake Dauphin. It has a very high potential to bring in much-needed dollars to our area. It has many opportunities for commercial fishing, for leisure and recreation and for tourism.

Throughout the course of the 1995 election, I came across a multitude of concerns that the constituents brought to me and that we will be expected, all 57 members will be expected, to address some time over the next four to five years.

High among the list of concerns were rural depopulation, health care cutbacks, reliance on gambling, school closures, young people leaving our area, access to education, low commodity prices and high input costs, transportation. In the area of transportation I cite the CNR track north of Dauphin to Swan River, offloading to R.M.s, natural resource management, everything from fish to forests, and aboriginal issues.

In my riding are two reserves, one at Valley River and the other one located on the Waterhen First Nation. Both of these First Nations are very positive, very upward-looking in their attitude and their philosophy. They are very aggressively pushing for the betterment of their people. This is an area that we will be expected to help, and I say we should not take their concerns lightly.

So did last Tuesday's throne speech send a message of hope to the Dauphin constituency? Let us look further. Let us deal with some specific areas. One that I mentioned today in the questions that I asked the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) dealt with the doctor crisis that is taking place in Grandview and Gilbert Plains as well as in Roblin and areas in the North and areas in other parts of rural Manitoba.

Back in the fall this government knew that this crisis was taking place. Back in the fall this government could have moved to alleviate the situation. Back in

the fall this government did nothing. Footdragging took place throughout the fall and winter. Promises were made during the election, and today I am not just quite sure what the government has told me in terms of where these people stand now in badly needed health care treatment.

Also in the area of health care, the Dauphin Regional Health Centre, in the middle of the election, found out that it was going to be implementing a \$1.4 million cut. This is something that will most likely, in my opinion, mean layoffs of nurses and a reduction in staff for the people that I represent in Dauphin. I want to put the government in a warning position, saying that if this is something that they are going to continue to do, they will see me standing up in the House day after day yelling and screaming about it.

Another issue that came up in the area of health care concerns the Waterhen area in my constituency. It makes economic and service sense to open a nursing station in the Waterhen area. This is a project that the people of Waterhen approached me on which I think makes a lot of sense, and I would urge the government to consider such a move as well.

Another area that was very much an election topic that I heard a lot about as I knocked on doors was the Home Care Program for seniors and for others who are in need of home care. Does this throne speech offer any kind of hope for people who have been cut off of home care? Does this throne speech offer any kind of hope for people who have had their home care reduced? What about farmers? In Dauphin, our base is agriculture. In Dauphin, if the farmers suffer, everybody along the way suffers as well.

One of the most fundamental questions that we are going to be asking and that you are going to be answering in the next four to five years and even sooner is the Canadian Wheat Board. Now the Canadian Wheat Board is an issue itself, but it is a very fundamental, basic, who-gets-to-decide kind of a question. Are we going to favour the move that is taking place right now to durnp the Wheat Board and leave the decision-making power in the hands of a very, very few elite farmers, or are we going to have the courage to stand up and say that we need to protect

the Canadian Wheat Board, not only protect the Canadian Wheat Board but expand the role of the Wheat Board? For example, are we going to have guts enough to say that oats should fall under the auspices of the Canadian Wheat Board?

In the fall, the Minister of Agriculture was asked to make a simple statement of support for the Canadian Wheat Board. He did not do it. After the elections to the Canadian Wheat Board Advisory Committee, both the provincial Minister of Agriculture and his federal counterpart in Ottawa belittled the results of the election. That is not standing up for farmers, in my opinion. There is tremendous support amongst the farm community for the Wheat Board because the Wheat Board has helped farmers a great deal since its inception in 1935. If there is anyone in this House who doubts the statement that I just made about the Wheat Board, ask somebody who hauled grain to the elevators before the Wheat Board was here. They will straighten you out.

Another issue that is absolutely basic, absolutely fundamental and most beneficial to farmers in my area is the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay route that connects us to our seaport. Up until now, the Port of Churchill has got absolutely minimal, if not less, support from both the federal and provincial governments. It is my contention that it is worse than no support. I believe there are people in the provincial and federal governments working against the viability of the Port of Churchill and the Hudson Bay route.

Any kind of excuse will do when it comes to saying that the Hudson Bay route will cost too much money to fix up. Any kind of excuse was used in the line between Swan River and Dauphin when the flood hit and the figures that were used to claim how much money it was going to cost were inflated. If we put our minds to it we can save farmers money per tonne in shipping our grain up through Churchill to market. We can also use the Port of Churchill to bring goods into the province of Manitoba if we had the political will to do so.

On the cattle side of the agriculture equation, I had the distinct pleasure of living in the middle of Manitoba's best ranch land, i.e., Rorketon, and learning

a lot about cattle producing. I learned enough to know that when you make a promise in an election for \$10 million to go to grain farmers so that they can go into cattle in combination with the amount of cattle coming in from Australia, you are going to kick the daylight out of the domestic price of beef. Is this what this Legislature wants to accomplish? That is one Tory promise, I hope, that is broken.

* (1500)

All of this is premised, all of these statements I have made in agriculture are premised by the loss of the Crow benefit that has been kicked out of the Manitoba economy by the federal government. We are looking at \$30 to \$40 per tonne that it is going to cost farmers in my area in the constituency of Dauphin.

We are looking at a ripple effect, and you talk to the chamber of commerce, which I am a member of in Dauphin, and they will tell you the same thing. When the farmers have less money coming in, they have less money to spend in the businesses. As a result, a lot fewer jobs are created.

Another major issue that is going to take up some of our time in this House in the very near future is the amount of flooding that has taken place throughout the province.

In my constituency, there are particular problems in the Grandview and Gilbert Plains areas, and there are many problems along the west side of Lake Dauphin. Cottage owners and ranchers and grain farmers are going to need to be compensated for the damages that they will sustain given the record amount of water that has flowed into Lake Dauphin.

One thing I want you to understand about this is that, first of all, they need to be compensated, and second of all, we need to discuss some long-term solutions to the problems of flooding.

Mother Nature is a tough person to deal with sometimes, and I do not ever think that we can ever tame Mother Nature, but we have to take some steps that we can take in order to help people who live in

these areas and people who farm in these areas and the people who work and make their income in these areas.

The one thing that we do not need is to be told by the Agriculture Minister (Mr. Enns) that farmers are out of luck. The policies that have taken place and the laws that have been passed over the last seven years have created a shift in attitude in the agriculture community.

In pioneer days there was a spirit of co-operation. If something needed to be done, the district got together and they did it. Today things have changed. If you want to get a good reading on the attitude that is out there right now as a result of the policies that I have seen enacted by this government over seven years, go to a sale sometime and watch the scavengers fly. Watch what happens when a sale comes along, and the neighbour is going under, and certain other neighbours think it is a good chance to get in and buy some stuff cheap.

We are starting to produce in society the attitude that I am going to sit back and do nothing until my neighbours go down, and then I am going to swoop in, and I am going to get some good deals. That is the attitude that we have to start to change. That is the attitude that has been produced by a very narrow-minded, rugged-individualist kind of attitude that I have seen emanating from this Legislature.

Let us shift to education for a little bit. I want to talk about our public schools, the importance of the public schools to rural Manitoba, the importance of the public schools to my constituency of Dauphin.

I also want to speak a little bit about the boundary reviews that are in the works.

In my area we have small schools whose very hub ends up being the public school. Many of the programs that help children even outside of schools are run through the public schools, and the public schools are used as a focus, as a centre for the community.

I think that we should fight against the closure of any of these smaller schools. In Rorketon, in Gilbert Plains, in Ochre River, in Waterhen, these schools are of utmost importance to the future of our communities.

Over the last several years we have adopted the attitude, the premise, that bigger is better. Well, it does not always work that way. I speak from personal experience in this. As the principal of the Rorketon School, I never taught in a better school situation than a K to 12 school with 154 students. We developed an absolutely great, fantastic family spirit in that school in which older brothers and sisters helped out their younger brothers and sisters. Discipline problems that you read about in the papers did not occur in that school because of the situation, the setting in the small town that we were able to begin.

Another aspect that I want to address in terms of education is the staff morale that is prevalent in our schools right now. Many of these are a result of Filmon Fridays and the lack of consultation that has taken place in terms of the decisions that have been made in education directly involving the work done by our teachers and the education received by our students. Morale has never been lower, in my opinion. I have never seen morale as poor in the 10 or so years that I have spent in the education field. It does not produce results. It does not produce students who can compete in the outside world. It does not produce creative, logical-thinking students. We have to do something to help alleviate that problem.

Staff reductions—by getting elected to the Legislature I saved the Winnipegosis school the layoff of one person. Our school was slated for a 1.5 percent reduction. My question is this: Who does the cutting? It is not the Premier (Mr. Filmon). It is not the cabinet. It is not those of us in opposition. Sometimes it is not even the superintendent. It ends up being the school principal sitting across the desk from a teacher aide or across the desk from a new-time teacher. That is where the cut takes place. It is easy to sit in an office and decide that you are going to reduce education spending by 2 percent for the year, sit back in your chair and take it easy and let the school principal do the dirty work. That is the kind of thing that I think has to stop in education.

Another area in Dauphin that is of big concern to the constituents is the Parkland campus of Assiniboine Community College. When Assiniboine Community College was moved into the Dauphin area, it was a

boon for the town of Dauphin and for the region. Now young people could get the community college courses that they need and not have to take off into Brandon or to Winnipeg. What we are looking for now is an expansion of the services of ACC. There are still students out there who could gain if more courses were added to the roster at ACC. That is what I will be looking for. Also, I will be looking for an expansion of the first-year distance education courses that are offered through the Dauphin Regional Comprehensive Secondary School.

One of the reasons that I bring these up is that I think everybody here, especially those of us from rural Manitoba, should know, if we do not already, that the costs of education discriminate against rural students. We have to pay tuition and we have to pay books just like urban students do. Add in there though an extra \$2,000, \$6,000, whatever it may be, for rent and accommodations. That there is a barrier against rural students coming into universities and performing well. If they do get to university, they end up with humongous debts that they carry after, and that is not fair either.

* (1510)

What has happened with the money becoming a barrier to access to university is that you have students in the middle grades and their parents deciding that university is not for them. They simply cannot afford it. They never see the day when they will be able to afford it, so they decide real soon in their educational careers that college and university is a no-go. Then they make course decisions when they get to high school based on the fact that they do not think they can go to university, and it all relates to money.

We wonder why we cannot get veterinarians and doctors in rural Manitoba. I think that is a clue right there.

So looking at the throne speech in the area of education, is there any hope for our students contained within that speech? Let us look again; let us look a little further. Let us look at the Parkland recreation complex. Here is an issue in Dauphin that actually does present a ray of hope for the people of Dauphin.

The recreation complex represents the hope of people in Dauphin that they will: No. 1, not lose as many young people as they have in the past; and No. 2, that we might actually be able to offer something to people outside of Dauphin and outside of the Parkland Region as an enticement to move into our area. We believe that this Parkland recreation complex can actually attract people to our area. Rural depopulation backwards.

The complex was first proposed as a \$9.2-million project and the Province of Manitoba, through the infrastructure program, kicked in approximately \$600,000. That was matched by the federal government as long as it was matched by the local government. Now, \$600,000 might sound like a lot of money, and when it comes to paying off the mortgage on my house, it sounds like a real lot of money, but when you look at the big picture, it does not amount to a great big percentage of that total figure.

The people of Dauphin realized this and were forced to split the project into two phases in order to raise enough money to get started on the leisure pool and on the six-sheet curling rink. The plan is to go to phase 2 at some point in the future and begin construction of a hockey arena. I hate to say the words "hockey arena," but that is what our plan is.

One of the bottom lines here is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that when we move to phase 2 and start to build the hockey arena, it is actually going to cost us more money to do it this way, so by not putting up a whole lot of money to begin with, what the province and the federal governments have done is they have ended up costing the taxpayers of Dauphin more money in the long run.

My suggestion would be that the provincial government and the federal people should belly up to the bar and put in the kind of money that they put into other projects. I think I do not need to say it, but I will name it.

If you supported the Dauphin recreation complex the way you support the Winnipeg Jets and the second arena for Winnipeg, there would be no problem building the Dauphin recreation complex.

I contend that the people of the Parkland have paid a lot of money to the federal and provincial governments over the years, and they are still curling and skating in buildings that were built during the Second World War. We are still swimming in a birdbath that was created as a centennial project in 1967. We have paid a lot of money in income tax over the years, and it is my view that we are not getting our fair share of the funding. It is also my view that instead of funding the Jets to the tune of at least \$40 million, they should be putting a little bit more money into the Dauphin recreation complex.

Another project that has been a long-standing issue in Dauphin, a project that has tremendous benefits in attracting people and industry to our area is the condition of our water. We are looking and talking preliminarily right now about a water treatment facility, a water treatment facility which would improve dramatically the quality of our water. If there is any doubt about the quality of water, I would invite members opposite to come on up and have a drink of it, especially in the springtime and not watered down with too much scotch in order to choke it down. My hope is, when we finally do get funding in place for a water treatment facility, that we can use this water treatment facility in a plan to attract people to the Parkland area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, another issue that I think I would like to address right now is the issue of the Dauphin airport. The federal government has seen fit to cut from the Dauphin airport the \$128,000 subsidy. Where this stands right now is that the provincial government could pick up the Dauphin airport and fund it if they saw it as a good idea. No. 1, I am concerned with safety. I am concerned with safety of the passengers flying in and out of Dauphin.

The Regional Health Centre located in Dauphin, if it is going to be a regional health centre, needs the Dauphin airport for medical evacuations. It needs to rely on the safety of the Dauphin airport. It does not need to fly around the Dauphin airport for 45 minutes while somebody comes running in to turn the lights on so that they can see where the runways are, as has happened in the past. That has happened because of a lack of commitment, a lack of willingness on the part of the federal and provincial governments.

There are a few more issues that I want to deal with. I want to talk about some of the people in my constituency, not people in terms of resources, but people in terms of living, breathing humans. I talked during the election with a mixed farmer whose husband is hooked on VLTs. Is there any hope in this Speech from the Throne for that woman? I talked to a provincial civil servant who has a young family who is not sure just where he is going to be transferred to next. Is there any hope in this Speech from the Throne for that civil servant? Is there any hope for the farmer who is sick and tired of replacing windshields because of the condition of his road near Makinak. Is there any hope in this speech for him?

Is there any hope for the woman who travelled to Winnipeg for the service of a mammogram, only to discover that her date had been changed and that she had to go home without ever receiving the service? Is there any hope for the senior whose home care was significantly reduced? And why is this government picking on seniors?

Just to wrap up, I just want to mention that each of us receives our inspiration from different sources. I receive my inspiration from my grandfather, Stan Paull, who died three weeks ago, just after the election. He was an employee with the R.M. of Swan River for 42 years. He built bridges. He installed culverts to connect people from one part of the valley of Swan River to the other. That is how I see myself operating as an MLA, building bridges with whoever wants a bridge to be built between us in order to help the people of Manitoba.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

* (1520)

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): I would like to congratulate you on your appointment as Deputy Speaker, and the Speaker. It is an old and honourable position that includes the serious responsibility of ensuring the independence of this legislative House.

Having followed the House for the past few years, I know that the former Speaker fulfilled the task with fairness, justice and good humour. I look forward to

your guidance and the Speaker's guidance to lead by those principles which will ensure the proceedings in this House are rendered in an appropriate manner.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Clerk of the House for the provision of the new members' orientation session for us. It provided us with some background and the basics of the rules of the House as well as an opportunity for us rookies to meet other new members.

As my Leader and other colleagues of our caucus have expressed, I wish to also concur with their opinion that in the future this House move from an appointed Senate—I mean Speaker—to an elected Speaker, as is the custom in other Legislative Assemblies. I also agree with the Senate part. [interjection] Yes, I am biased.

Today I will discuss what I bring to the House as a new member, some of my experiences, my constituency of St. James and the issues expressed by the people of St. James during the election campaign. It is an honour for me to serve this House. I would like to thank the people of St. James for the honour that they have given me by putting their support by my name on election day.

Additionally, I would like to thank my family, particularly my husband, Ken Marshall, who always encouraged me and had confidence in my abilities. He took care of our family. He worked tirelessly on the election campaign. To my son, John, who is 12, who helped distribute pamphlets, and to our daughter, Sarah, who was only two months old when the election was called. A special thank-you to my mother, Katherine Salamandyk Mihychuk Meleshko, as a feminist and a pioneer who worked very hard to raise her family and instilled those feminist values in us. Finally, a thank-you to my friends, to my neighbours and all of those who helped on the election.

With your indulgence, I would like to refer to my Manitoba roots. Next year our family will be celebrating our centennial in Manitoba. Wasylana and John Salamandyk arrived in Manitoba from Ukraine in 1896 to homestead in the Stuartburn area. My father, Metro Mihychuk, arrived with his parents from Ukraine in 1900 to settle in the Arbakka area. These settlers

came with dreams, Mr. Deputy Speaker, dreams of a new life, dreams and little more. They were poor people, but they were ready to sacrifice all to see their dreams come true, and for the most part they have.

Unfortunately, the situation is not the same today. If my ancestors were trying to come to Manitoba today, I doubt that they would qualify.

To my late father, I would like to give a special tribute. It was also his dream to one day stand in this House and speak before you. As an early CCFer and through the NDP he fought diligently for the people of his community.

I was born in rural Manitoba in the village of Vita. Our family moved to Winnipeg when I was ten and I was educated in the north end and in St. Vital and received my undergrad degree through the University of Winnipeg.

I bring to this honourable House my experience as a geologist and a school trustee. I also bring my rural ties with a small farm in the Interlake. In my activities as a geologist I have had the good fortune to visit and live in many parts of Manitoba, including Flin Flon, Seal River, Churchill, Cross Lake, Snow Lake, Thompson, Boggy Creek, Morden, St. Malo and Cartwright as well as Neepawa. This has made me aware of the natural, social and economic diversity of our great province, Manitoba.

We are fortunate to have bountiful mineral resources, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in our province. It is essential to Manitoba's future that these resources be managed in a well-thought-out manner to ensure the benefit for them in the future and by all Manitobans. I was very honoured to be appointed opposition Energy and Mines critic, a position I take very seriously.

The mining industry has undergone several distressing years under this government. Over a thousand have been lost and several mines have been closed. Fortunately, the industry is rebounding somewhat currently and there are several projects in the preliminary stages. Regrettably, this government, in a very short-sighted move, sold Manitoba Resources, a valuable asset for the North and all of Manitoba.

First elected as a trustee in 1989 for the Winnipeg School Division, I have had the good fortune to serve my community for five and a half years and for the last three consecutive years as chair of the board.

Public education is vital to our children and their families and our province. The current crisis in education is as the result of slow financial starvation of the public education system, while private schools receive windfall levels of support and knee-jerk reactionary policies. The cuts to education mean cuts to our children. Our children are facing hardships on all fronts.

In terms of social and family services, we have seen cuts by this government to foster families, cuts to the child-parent centres, long waiting lists for access to psychiatrists, psychologists and counselling services, health care programs such as the dental services for rural Manitoba and such cuts in recreational opportunities such as the summer programs, the closing of the St. James Y and now the North Winnipeg Y. Today we learned the Kildonan youth activity centre is in danger of closing.

Our children need a healthy and safe place to meet. They need more opportunities, not less. They need an alternative to the streets, not boot camps which studies indicate do not rehabilitate but may actually harden our youth and move them into a life of crime, not away from it. Where are the policies to help our children so that they do not choose a life of crime?

There are also many children coming to school without proper clothing and not fed. This is a disgrace. The fact that Manitoba has the highest child poverty in Canada is not a theoretical concept. Look at some of our children in my riding, in your riding, in the core, in the North and in rural areas.

It is true that changes are necessary in education; however, this government's changes are just for change sake. Three ministers, three plans. These plans have a fundamental flaw, and I would suggest that the plan will not hold any type of structure. Cuts to recess, then no cuts. Compulsory exams at Grade 12 in two courses, then all courses, now even in Grade 3. Making Canadian history optional. Cuts to English at

the senior level while spouting the need for more basics, not less. No phys ed and then mandatory phys ed.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one superintendent told me the only way they could program for the now mandatory phys ed is that we would need to build a second gymnasium on every school. This would be valuable because with the cuts to the lunch hour these children need to have lunch at school, unless we are willing to bus them all. I hope that the government has enough money for these programs.

As if there are not enough real issues in education this government talks partnership in education and then leaves out the educators. I say shame. This government is preoccupied with changing the lines on a map under the guise that bigger is better. We are not fooled. Changing names and lines is more expensive, not less. More bureaucracy, not less. More energy on the unimportant, rather than dealing with the real issues.

* (1530)

This government should be open with the people of Manitoba and make change where it is needed, when it is needed and where it will save money, not waste it. Public reaction to the proposed school division boundaries is appropriate, and I congratulate the minister. Unfortunately, the minister's timetable requiring feedback to be over by September makes the process a farce.

It is true, and everyone agrees, that changes are necessary in education. We need a new model of education, a model which is inclusive, a model that meets the needs of the student. We need a model which will meet tomorrow's needs, not yesterday's needs.

Our goal is to have an educational system which allows each person to learn at their own speed in their own way, not a system based on an industrial factory model which assumes that all the pieces are the same. Our goal should be to have each learner achieve to their best ability. Our goal should be to reduce dropout rates, not increase them.

Our schools do need to be violence free, but we also have an obligation to provide an education to the young people who need to be removed from the regular school system. I hope the minister will be announcing very soon an alternative for these young people. These changes will not be easy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the education system is a very complex one. It will require real consultation, real vision and real support by this government.

I would now like to take you all for an imaginary walk through my riding of St. James. I would ask the members to close their eyes and help imagine this tour, but it seems to me that too many of this government already have their eyes closed to the reality of Manitoba.

Our tour begins by turning left out the front door of this building. We walk to the end of Broadway, across Portage Avenue, and this puts us at the southeast corner of the riding. It spans from Portage to Ellice starting at Toronto Street. We pass Toronto, Beverley, Simcoe and then Home. What do we see when we cross over these streets? We see an inner-city area. We see poverty. We see housing stock deteriorating; houses that have been owned by slumlords and are looking for only profit.

We can see people that do need reasonable housing and do need opportunities. We see people without work, people falling through the cracks of the mental health system, people without hope. Their issues are their day-to-day needs. They worry about food, clothing and shelter for their children and themselves. They worry about safety, work and a purpose in life. Unfortunately, the growth areas are in food banks, soup kitchens, slumlords and unemployment lines. It is terribly unfortunate that this government's throne speech does not address the needs of this community or those in the same position.

Next on our walking tour we cross Arlington. From here to Polo Park the area is known as the West End, a community composed of a wide diversity of people, language, culture and social customs. We see an older residential neighbourhood renewed with young families. We see professionals, working people and new immigrants and seniors.

Many choose to live here because of the great conveniences, within minutes to downtown for work, close to major shopping centres like Polo Park. Presently, we are close to the arena, and we are close to the stadium and other sporting events, concerts and a variety of special events.

Parents are particularly happy that we will finally have renewal of the Greenway School. This has been a project that the community has been working to get for many, many years, approximately 10 years. It is ironic that it took us 10 years to renew a school building for children when it took a few weeks to build a multimillion dollar complex for millionaire Jet players. Their children will finally have a place which is safe, which has all the features of a modern school, including a computer room, a library, a gymnasium, wheelchair access and special needs facilities.

Continuing on, we pass Omand's Creek as it meanders through the riding, a much needed and valued green space which must be protected from development and pavement. People in this area are concerned about community safety. There is a need for a greater visibility of the community police officer program. The community police program in schools, which provided an accessible link with youth and with community, has been removed. They also are concerned about job security and a health care system that will be there when they need it.

Continuing on westward, we pass Polo Park and we pass the Prairie Dog Central Station which may soon be the only remaining passenger train left in Canada. We are now in the community of St. James. The riding now extends south of Portage to the Assiniboine River, north to the airport and west to Albany Street. The area has some renewal, and infill housing is quite common. The other characteristic, you will notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the sound of aircraft coming into the Winnipeg International Airport.

The people here have a real sense of community. Many have lived in the area for their entire life. The people are strong-willed, independent and hard-working. Many people here are affected by the airport and associated industries, businesses and the military. The decision to transfer Air Command from Winnipeg

to Ottawa was particularly hard because of the hundreds of civilian jobs that were lost here, many of them in the riding of St. James. There was no transfer for them. There are also the associated layoffs that are occurring at Bristol, and many of them live in St. James riding as well.

During the election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet many people. I would like to share some of their stories with you. I want to tell you about the new immigrant family whom I met who wanted to be reunited with their family members in Vietnam but could not afford the landing fees.

I want to tell you about the 50-year-old man whom I met, who was in tears, who had been laid off eight months ago from a job he held for over 30 years. How would he be able to support his family as he always had? He wanted to know who would hire him and what he was to do.

I want to tell you about an elderly woman in her 80s who told me about her husband suddenly becoming ill last Christmas when they were visiting family in Portage la Prairie. He was at home now on Banning Street, a home they had lived in for the last 50 years. She was very worried about their future. The deinsured medical expenses for her husband over the past three months was \$800. They did not know how they were going to manage. These are but a few of the many stories that I heard in the riding of St. James. It is unfortunate that the throne speech is not dealing with these issues that I have mentioned.

In conclusion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a great honour for me to be here. I wish to thank you and the other members in the House for their patience, and I vow to represent the people of St. James and work to the best of my ability. Thank you.

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad for the opportunity to contribute to this debate on the first throne speech of the thirty-sixth parliament of Manitoba.

I would like to add my congratulations to those of others on your new appointment and to wish you well and also to wish the new Madam Speaker well in her

future as well. The position of Speaker demands qualities of nonpartisanship which are not easy to come by in this House but which are essential if the work of government is to proceed and if the interests of all Manitobans are to be served.

I would like also to pay tribute, as have others in my party, to your predecessor, the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan), who steered the House through the difficult times of narrow majorities and tied votes and who set a standard with his sense of humour and his accommodation of those of us who were new to the Chamber.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the general election of 1995 seemed at the time relatively low key, although I—

* (1540)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. Could I ask the honourable members please go to the loge and carry on their conversation? Thank you.

The honourable member for Wolseley to continue.

Ms. Friesen: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It seemed low key in some parts of the city, but I know that was not the case in some of the rural ridings. It will in retrospect be remembered, at least in the short run, for the ghost issue of the future of the Winnipeg Jets.

The name of the sports team was rarely breathed openly during the campaign, yet in some suburban ridings and among younger and, some say, predominately male voters, it apparently played a determining role.

The electoral impact of this perhaps fell most heavily on the Liberals. Our own party was able to increase our popular vote and the number of seats in this House, and I am delighted to welcome the new members on this side: Osborne (Ms. McGifford), Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) as well as the new representatives from Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) and Dauphin (Mr. Struthers), and, of course, St. James (Ms. Mihychuk).

Indeed, I have listened to the first speeches of most of these new members of the House with great interest, and I am glad to have the opportunity to add my comments to theirs today.

The issue of the Jets and the arena was of concern to Manitobans. How puzzled and let down they must feel by this government. One day after the election the government claims it never knew of the NHL conditions for the long-term situation of the team.

No, this government had never been briefed on the April 13th NHL telephone call to the MEC. No, this government had never understood for the past year and a half that the NHL might have some interest in the long-term requirements for the team, and why, yes, of course, the public purse was wide open to support this business enterprise that also calls itself a sport.

Firm election promises of \$10 million were thrown away. The mandate the government had received to spend only up to \$10 million meant nothing apparently, and the Filmon team seems to have a bottomless pit of public dollars for the support of this business venture in the city of Winnipeg.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it has been a curious public debate over the last few days and weeks. There have been passionate, public outpourings of support for the presence of the team in the city. Some of this has been exploited by some of the media, but that is another story. There was, in fact, a genuine, popular sentiment that we were losing something of value to a broad section of the Manitoba public. Underlying much of that sentiment was a sense of resistance to what the Tories would view as the inevitability of market forces.

Small markets such as Winnipeg cannot support major league teams in a free market system, and yet at Portage and Main and at The Forks there were thousands of Manitobans who were prepared to make their stand against the tyranny of the market. They were prepared to turn out their piggy banks and even their children's piggy banks to support such a symbolic attempt to stem the tide of the new right ideology. In fact, in general, this is an ideological world turned upside down.

The right, the Tories, have responded to this popular movement with a cynical disregard for democratic mandates of election promises. During the election they were, to use the British phrase, economical with the truth. They are now being less than economical with the public purse as the \$10 million of public money climbs daily to \$37 million and more, including millions in foregone tax revenue, millions in the new arena management plan, and, in my view, an intangible and immeasurable loss in the location of the proposed arena at The Forks.

Here are the Tories saying, spend, spend, spend. On the other side of the House, the New Democrats are saying, be prudent, be mindful of the needs of all Manitobans, beware of the long-term implications of continuous financial support without corresponding guarantees such as those outlined in the earlier financial evaluations of the Burns and Mauro reports.

Which of us is the more fiscally responsible? Which of us is the more respectful of the public purse? Which of us has the clearer picture of the democratic mandate received during the last election? Such sentiments in this House are usually met by calls from the government side of, you must be against the Jets, the NDP is against the Jets.

I must admit, when I first came to this House I was appalled by that type of manipulative and fundamentally dishonest form of debate. I have come to expect it as a matter of course from some honourable members. I was still disappointed to hear it not only from the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) the other day but also twice now in Question Period from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson), of whom I expected better things, but I suppose tax-and-spend Tories in a tight corner have very few defences left.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know of no one who wants to see the Jets leave. Their economic presence here is important. The opportunities they offer to us in the broader context of Canadian and North American markets are important. The role they play in the popular culture of our province deserves recognition. The sense of pride that they engender amongst young Manitobans is noteworthy. All of this I have heard from my constituents.

What I have also heard is that the fundamental issue is, what is the price we are prepared to pay as a community to support this particular business enterprise? There is a wide range of responses to that question.

There is vociferous opposition for any public support from some parts of my community. I particularly have heard this from nurses and teachers' aides who have lost their jobs, who live in families who are fortunate if they still have one pay cheque in the family and who more frequently now are seeing themselves realistically on welfare within the year.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some constituents are indeed philosophically opposed to any form of support for business. They come from both sides of the ideological spectrum. There are some who are prepared to support \$10 million invested in a sound business plan. I know of no one in Manitoba who voted for \$37 million and climbing. Come to think of it, I know of no one in Manitoba who publicly will admit to having seen a sound business plan either.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the irony of all this is that these many different responses spring, I believe, from the same root. I believe that most Manitobans have great anxieties about the future of this province. Those who have lost their jobs, those who see public services deteriorating, those who see post-secondary education slipping beyond their grasp, those whose children cannot find work, those whose children have been forced to leave their communities—all those families know that the future is insecure.

Those Manitobans who still have jobs are finding themselves asked to do the work of several to the detriment of the health of themselves and their families. Those who still have jobs are being asked to take wage cut after wage cut whether at the direct hand of this government as in Bill 22, or by the indirect route of underfunding of public institutions, or at the ordering of a market where the ghost army of the unemployed is always present.

How timely in this was the reply of the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) today to my question about the impact of the loss of 270 teachers in Manitoba next

year. Well, teachers have a choice, she said, and the Premier (Mr. Filmon) echoed her, they can accept lower wages. This is in fact to people who have taken wage cuts over the last two years at least and in some cases have not seen wage—[interjection] The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) wants to say that is not so. What does he think that Bill 22 did? Has he got no contact with his own constituents?

In the last speech I made in the House before the election, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the budget, I spoke of the underlying insecurity of so many of my constituents and other Manitobans. It is an insecurity which leads us all in a downward spiral. Families who are insecure do not invest in the capital goods which drive the North American economy. Insecure families do not invest in the training and further education which will be required in the next century. Businesses locate and stay in communities which have a sense of energy and which have invested in education and other modern elements of infrastructure, not in communities which are losing their hope for the future and which are divided over their sense of direction.

At one level, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Manitobans want to feel pride in their sense of community. This demonstrated itself in the outpouring of support for a hockey team. Whether or not they support the spending of large sums of public money on stadiums and private hockey clubs, Manitobans all are tired of seeing their friends and families going down the road to Alberta or British Columbia. They are fearful about finding the pink slip in their own pay cheque. They feel helpless and despondent when it is their own spouse or child who is the next to lose their job. In my view it is that kind of sentiment, that level of daily insecurity which is behind the public's desperate efforts to find a solution to the Jets.

* (1550)

Equally, it is these same anxieties for the future which drive the response of many of my constituents who fear that we cannot as a community afford to divert public spending on such a munificent scale to a private hockey club and away from dealing with the tragedy of the daily expansion of child poverty in our province. If the government chooses to see in the

public demonstrations of support for the team only the mirror image of their own aimless brands of boosterism, they will make, in my view, a serious mistake. Behind this issue lies a genuine and widely shared sense of growing despair about the prospects for our province in the new and brutal world that the free-market Tories have constructed.

In the longer term, of course, the re-election of this government will have serious consequences for the future of the province and for the well-being of its citizens. The government has a majority, a parliamentary majority, and I do not quarrel with that, but as it proceeds on its narrow, ideological course, it should be mindful of the majority of Manitobans who did not choose to vote Conservative.

Elections and election campaigns are always milestones. This, my second, allowed me to reflect on the changes I have seen in the past five years in Wolseley, West Broadway and the area of the constituency which is north of Portage Avenue. Most notable is that in the poorer parts of the riding, the poor have become poorer. This is no surprise if one follows the reports from the Social Planning Council or Statistics Canada, but its human face is always and eternally shocking. In areas where the majority of money comes from various forms of transfer payments, such as pensions, disability pensions or social assistance, the increased poverty is clearly due to government policies—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. There are two or three members out there seeming to want to yell at each other across the floor. If you want to have that discussion, go sit over here in the loge or out in the hall, so we can carry on with this meeting.

The honourable member for Wolseley to carry on.

Ms. Friesen: —of reduction in assistance or changes in daycare regulations and fees or changes in special allowance regulations, which in themselves may not sound large, but which make enormous differences to the lives of the people whom I meet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with increased poverty comes a decline in nutrition and in overall health, and as some

of these young people head into the over-25-age group without ever having had a place in the workforce, their prospects for the future, indeed their own sense of a future, becomes ever more bleak. Similarly for those who are disabled or without work and over 50, there is no golden sunset at the end of the day.

Students, in particular, are growing cynical about their prospects. Those who are aware of the dramatic changes in federal legislation, which will withdraw federal funding for post-secondary education, are working as quickly as they can in academic and financial terms to finish their courses before the changes are made. Many of them now see that the graduate school or professional school they had hoped to attend is now out of reach. Young and informed as they are, they are often surprisingly cheerful in their pessimism, but no government can afford to ignore the warnings of their situation.

We face the prospect of having only a small portion of our young people in post-secondary education and a larger number who are unable, for financial reasons, to get that first foot on the ladder that their parents did or that their parents, immigrants and others, believed that they had struggled for. Such wastage, such exclusions are not the foundations of a hopeful and healthy community.

Elsewhere in Wolseley I found a community of citizens who are working very hard to keep their families, their education, their aging parents in some form of stability in a world which they are coming to see is inherently unstable. Indeed, one of the most striking differences in this election was in the difficulty in finding people home. So often they were working at more than one part-time job, trying to take an upgrading or extension education, but they were rarely home. Yet even so, their energy and interest in a discussion of political affairs often amazed me.

Wolseley is a dense urban setting. Politics is not some abstract form of discussion among the elites. It is about what happens in the community club, what happens on the street to one's neighbour, the upkeep not only of your own house but that of the rest of the street, whether it is owner occupied or rented from an absentee landlord. But it is not just in the daily life of

community and street where politics counts. To many of my constituents, provincial legislation, The Landlord and Tenant Act in particular, is a daily necessity. Its interpretation by civil servants and the ability of both the province and the city to enforce housing and safety standards are vital parts of the daily life.

My constituents also place great store in the ability of the city and the province to work together. This is not just in housing and social assistance and day care matters but in the area of the prevention of Dutch elm disease and in the improvements which could be possible in the emerging park at Omand's Creek. They care deeply about the maintenance of good service at the community hospital, the Misericordia, and applaud its recent outreach work in our community. They are passionate about education. Our schools are full and serve a great diversity.

I notice in particular at this election a great participation and interest in schools, not only by parents but in parent councils, and not only at Laura Secord where registration queues begin at three in the morning but at Mulvey where parents are involved in computer education, lunch programs and the organizing of community events such as powwows. At Gordon Bell, the satellite campus downtown and its extended high school alternative program have made it a very exciting high school.

What ties all these together, of course, is not just that they are in Wolseley but that they are public institutions built by the people for the people and increasingly run with a wider democratic participation by the people. This last weekend brought home to me how important these public institutions were not only to the innate quality of life in the city but also to our sense of ourselves.

I started out my day doing the early shift at the Teddy Bears' Picnic. It was a spectacularly beautiful day at Assiniboine Park. The many marquees were pitched behind the pavilion, and even though there were large crowds the park was still home to many other activities from the zoo to the gardens to the picnic grounds to the cricket pitches and the baseball diamonds. It was mostly free and it was all public and it was so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because in the last century there were

citizens and taxpayers who equally saw the long-term benefits of such an investment. The park that opened in 1909, the zoo which began in 1905 and the Conservatory which began in 1914 all give pleasure still in 1995. Moreover, they still elicit active support by the citizens of Winnipeg. The Friends of the Conservatory, the Friends of the Zoo give their time and energy to institutions which benefit us all and which we all support with our taxes.

Similarly, the enormous amount of time and energy which went into organizing the Teddy Bears' Picnic represented the commitment of thousands of Manitobans, public sector workers such as nurses and hospital workers, the fire and police departments, who had their vehicles drawn up, the St. John Ambulance, whose headquarters is also in Wolseley, and the many Winnipeg businesses who made their contribution to one of our major public institutions, the Children's Hospital.

As Manitobans we have built this institution. We have trained the many professionals who work there. We support it with our taxes. We are grateful to all our fellow citizens without whom we could not build such centres in a population of this size. We are grateful when we must use it, and we are thankful that it is there even when we no longer have children.

Equally important is the point that I think Manitobans, like many other Canadians, do not simply let government take all the responsibility for these institutions. This is not a distant democracy. They care now, as they did earlier in this century, to lend active support to create a province which does collectively for all of its citizens in health and education what none of us could ever hope to accomplish alone.

* (1600)

Later in the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was at Omand's Creek, where a large group of citizens did as we did last year under the enthusiastic leadership of Roger Cheeves. We planted trees to repair some of the damage done by Manitoba's hungry beaver population. Community residents joined with public-sector workers from MTS, joined with the Scouts of St. Jude's and the youth group of the Mennonite Brethren Church to add

their part to that of the city workers who have created sports facilities, picnic areas and trails. All volunteered their time in ways I am sure that the member for Riel (Mr. Newman) would extol. It was for a public institution which remains free and open to all.

Our taxes have enabled us over generations to create neighbourhood facilities such as this which are safe, free and open to all. It is that principle of civic equity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which is a principle that Manitobans over and over again devote their energies to. They are principles worth devoting support to, and Manitobans gain in the sense of their collective endeavour.

Elsewhere in the constituency, as you take a walk through any part of Wolseley, you will see citizens taking responsibility for portions of the urban forest, for the planting of boulevards, for the protection of the public good and of the investment of generations of Manitobans.

How different that is from the priority of Conservative governments. No longer the Progressive Conservative, as unfortunately the member for Rossmere (Mr. Toews) still seems to believe, they have joined the stampede to monetarism. The effects of that will be felt most severely by many of my constituents.

As Peter Townsend has written of European counterparts, the Conservative agenda, the edicts of monetarism, mean deregulation, privatization, centralization through the deliberate weakening of local governments as well as trade unions, targeting to conceal substantial withdrawal from the welfare state. We hardly need to fill in the blanks for Manitoba. The examples will spring to most people's minds instantly. With a new majority the Manitoba pseudo-monetarists will continue down the same road. I would expect the privatization of MTS will be on the agenda, as, I understand, is the very early complete privatization of home care.

As Townsend notes, nowhere in the world are these policies producing higher rates of economic growth, nor are they producing any equality of access to whatever economic growth does exist from time to time.

What they have produced, here as elsewhere, are higher, long-term rates of unemployment, a shortage of skills and a shortage industrial expansion, inner-city deprivation, higher rates of burglary, theft and crimes and of personal violence, social insecurity, wider and deeper poverty and people set at odds with each other.

In short, Conservative monetarist ideology and practices are simultaneously producing here in Manitoba, as they are elsewhere, social polarization and social disintegration in parts of our community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not the message of the Tory throne speech, nor was it the message of the Tory throne speech in the election. But it is the reality of Manitoba Tories today, and it will fall, I think, with increasing hardship upon many of the people whom I continue to be honoured to represent.

Mr. Gary Kowalski (The Maples): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise for the first time in this 36th session of the Manitoba Legislature.

First of all I want to make note of our former Speaker from the last session, the member for Gladstone (Mr. Rocan). He was a Speaker at a time that there were some precedent-setting motions. Because of the narrow majority of the government at that time, he was called upon to use all his knowledge and facilities of his office. I think he did an admirable job and won the admiration of all members of this and the previous Assembly. So I wanted to pass on those words to him.

I want to welcome the new Speaker (Mrs. Dacquay). This position is very important to us because of our small numbers in the Liberal Party. The rights of the minority will be very important. It is a Speaker's duty, and I am sure she will perform to make sure the tyranny of the majority does not overrule our rights.

The lesson that I learned from my life experience as a police officer is that I arrested people from all different backgrounds, social strata, and when I arrested someone who was down and out, a derelict, someone who was less fortunate than myself, I always treated them with dignity and respect and watched their self-esteem, because I always thought, there but for the grace of God go I.

I remember the day before the election was called, I looked in the eyes of many of the members who are here and, if they were the same as me, I had no idea whether I would be back here or not. There was uncertainty in many of our minds.

When these members look at the three remaining Liberals, remember, there but for the grace of God go you. I hope we will continue to be treated by all members in a respectful, fair way.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I also want to note the MLAs who did not return, whether by resignation or by defeat in the election. I think we know as politicians that it is sometimes a very thankless job, and I think we must draw our attention to the efforts that they put out on behalf of Manitobans. We should keep them in mind and they should be our inspiration to continue to serve Manitobans well.

Also, for us in the Liberal Party, it was very sad for our staff. We had a large number of staff who worked here and, through no fault of their own, they are no longer here, many of them in difficult situations. Again, we know with our own staff that we now have how much effort they put in to help us all. I want to thank all those members of the former Liberal caucus staff for all the efforts they made to help us.

I would also like to thank the constituents of The Maples who, without their support, I would not be here standing today, as well as all the volunteers and family members who helped me during my election.

In this transitional period going from an official party status to what is officially an independent member, I want to thank all the members of the building services staff, the Legislative Business Information System staff, the Clerks, the members' allowance staff, who have made this transition easier, who have been very helpful.

I also want to welcome the new members. I have not had an opportunity to speak to most of them, but being one of the rookies who was elected in the by-election it is always nice to have someone a little bit junior to you that you could say you are senior to. I am now no longer the junior person here in this Assembly.

I still remain proud to be a Liberal. Throughout this session I will remember that one in four Manitobans supported me as a Liberal candidate. I not only represent those members of The Maples who voted for me, I represent all people in The Maples. Just as this government does not just represent the 43 percent of the population that voted for their party, but they represent all Manitobans, and they have a duty to serve them, all Manitobans, as I have the duty to serve all people from The Maples.

For the next four or five years I hope this Assembly, especially in this 125th anniversary of Manitoba, has a positive attitude. Unfortunately, during an election period, there is a lot of critical talk, a lot of negative talk. I am an optimist both by nature, and I am a member of the service club called the Optimists. I hope that in this 125th anniversary of Manitoba that we could talk about everything that is good in Manitoba and personify the people, the resources, the benefits that we have living in Manitoba.

I hope to represent the alternative view that one in four voters voted for in this election, and I will do so with all my resources and all my energy. As far as talking to the throne speech, I spoke to the throne speech in the last session of the 35th Legislature and there is not much different here, so I will allow my remarks on that throne speech to stand.

Thank you very much.

* (1610)

(Mr. Gerry McAlpine, Acting Speaker, in the Chair)

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): It is a pleasure to be able to rise today and address the House in this 36th session and address the throne speech that we had heard originally back in December and get a secondhand view of this throne speech that really has not anything there for the future of our province in so many words.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would just like to make comments on being re-elected and what an honour it is for me and my family to be able to represent the constituency of Interlake for a second term. I want to add my thank-you to everyone involved in the

constituency who made it possible for me to be re-elected and serve another term. Some of the thank-you, perhaps, would go to some of the ministers across the way who took their time out from their busy schedule during the campaign to come out and visit in the Interlake and come and have pancakes and coffee in the different areas of the Interlake.

I am sure they were well received. I certainly appreciate the fact that they took time to come out, but of course the offer is always there to anyone from the other side that you do not have to wait for election time to come and visit the Interlake and have pancakes and coffee.

The invitation, Mr. Acting Speaker, is open to the government and the ministers all the time to come out and visit with me and my constituents and not use an election campaign to do so, because there are many issues in the constituency.

I would also like to thank those supporters and I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my family. Through the four and a half years that we were in since 1990, as we are all aware, it is a difficult time for rural members being away from family and friends and their home communities and travelling throughout the constituency. So I want to just thank my wife, Linda, and my two children, Tyler and little Kels, for their support, as always, through the election campaign. Kelsey even asked me one time, when is this going to be over, Dad, so you can stay home more than one day.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I just want to make some comments about the issues and the concerns my community has and has had over the past four and a half years, and matters that were brought to my attention during the campaign time. In 1990 I was new at the game, as we would want to call it, newly elected, new in the community—only in the community since 1987 and was elected in 1990. That in itself was a great honour for me. But in 1990 I had the opportunity, or was beginning to get the opportunity, to pick up on issues, and as the years progressed and the time progressed more and more I was made aware of the issues, more and more I was able to deal with them, and eventually, hopefully, on top of all the issues that are of concern to my constituents.

I heard at the door about education, right from Ashern, right to Riverton, to Inwood. I heard at the door about health care and what this government has done about health care, to health care. I heard from doctors. I heard from nurses. I heard from the senior citizens. I heard from concerned parents, that those two specific departments were of great concern to not only them but to all the people of Manitoba. They were wondering, Mr. Acting Speaker, just how much further this government is going to go with the proposals that they have in education reform, health care reform. We will see just where we will be going with this in the next four and a half to five years. I certainly hope that it is for the betterment and the benefit of all the communities, not only the Interlake but in Manitoba, that this government take the right kind of action to provide better assistance, better care, better education so that people do not have to leave rural areas, so that people can have service in their own communities.

Some of my colleagues have mentioned in their communities, the rural members, about the lack of doctors that we are finding now in the past couple of years. The lack of doctors in my community of Arborg, in the community of Ashern, and though not in my constituency, although I go through it each and every day on my way up to Ashern and Moosehorn, is Eriksdale, which has lost all their doctors.

It is a concern, not only for Interlake but for other rural communities where the opportunity to have doctors there on a full-time basis and have enough of them is very important and has created a certain amount of sensitivity to those who feel that they are losing out on the proper service and care without any doctors.

Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) has been invited to come out to Arborg to discuss the issue of doctors in that community. I am sure, just as he has met with other communities, the issue of doctors in rural areas is important, and I hope the minister will attend. I will be in attendance. We have to combine our thoughts with the communities to be able to resolve the solution of doctors in rural areas and the whole health care system. As always, I will be there to help and provide my input and assistance in

any way I can for the government and for the minister responsible for any issue.

I do want to say that the community of Interlake, and I say that as a whole Interlake—for some of those who are not aware of just the expanded area that I have in the province, we run from Inwood, Manitoba, north to Dauphin River-Gypsumville area, St. Martin, Ashern, Moosehorn, on the west and the north side, Fisher Branch, Arborg, communities in Meleb, Riverton, Mason Island, Pine Dock, Hnausa, and other smaller little communities that we have in the Interlake.

I enjoyed my four and a half years of travelling the constituency and meeting with new people, learning. I also learned, saw first-hand what people were saying about infrastructure in their communities, in their area. Now Interlake and the people of Interlake are very, very productive, very astute at being able to try and do something to provide better economic development for their areas.

During campaign time I was asked if I would continue my dialogue with the new Minister of Highways (Mr. Findlay) to discuss, to work with him, for him to work with me on the issue of roads in the Interlake constituency and other rural areas, too. There are many roads in our area that need the upgrading. Some need new development. Some need expansion.

I will continue to do that. The minister knows that I will. I would expect and hope that the minister's door will be open to not only meet and discuss it with me but also with the community leaders who are saying, if you want us to do something in one way or the other, whether it be farming or whether it be fishing or whether it be tourism, we need the infrastructure, and the roads in the Interlake, rural Manitoba, northern Manitoba need to be improved. I think we should be working at one set goal together, and that is to improve infrastructure and improve living in rural Manitoba, and roads in the Interlake is one important issue.

There are some other issues, Mr. Acting Speaker, which I would like to put on record. On the east side of my constituency there are some proposals that are put in place and have been put in place in the last couple of months, and we had the opportunity to meet today with

two of the ministers in discussing this issue, in discussing this proposal. I want to say that I am hoping that we can work together with the government and the proposal to be able to take it to the people and say this is how we are going to try and help to improve the Interlake area and other areas, if so be it.

* (1620)

Well, Mr. Acting Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome all the new members who have been elected on both sides of the House, not only on our side, of course, on the government side, and welcome back some of the ministers again that have returned to their portfolios—the honourable member from Gimli, my neighbour just south of me. I want to just pass on to our new members that it is a tough go and we must work together. We must continue to tell the government of the day what the problems are in our areas and work with them. If we do not then things will not get done. So we need to do that. We need to work with the communities, with the leadership in their areas. We have to do that so that we can do everything that is possible to do for the Interlake and for other areas.

I have always been up front with government. I have always tried my best to co-operate with the government, and I would like to see the co-operation returned to this member for the next four or five years, whatever mandate. We must work together, with each and everyone of us, and I hope that we have a productive, not a downside but a productive province for the next four years.

I say that with some hesitancy, but I know that with members on this side of the House that we will continue to do our best to make sure that our government operates and does what is necessary for the betterment of all Manitobans and for of course the community of Interlake.

I would also like to say that I have issues that I do want to bring up over a period of time, and I will be bringing them up. I will be at the minister's door. I will be meeting with him as much as I can to bring forth the issues that come to me. I also would like to say that first and foremost I would like to see further

co-operation, if I may use that word, between the community leaders and the government and an open-door policy to not only myself but, of course, the continued open-door policy that I hope the ministers and the government have with the communities. [interjection]

The Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Driedger) says it will drive right over me. Well, on an issue that will be of concern to me, I will tell you, it will take a big, big truck to get over me, Mr. Acting Speaker. So I hope the minister is prepared for that.

I would just like to, again, add a few more concerns that I have in the Interlake. One issue that came up before election time that perhaps is not so much a provincial matter but involves a provincial issue, and that is fishing. The fishing industry in the Interlake is very big. Commercial fishing in the Interlake is very important to the whole community, right from Riverton to Vogar to Ashern, and one of the issues that was brought up and was taken and brought to me was the situation about what the federal government wanted to do with the freshwater fish. The message was sent loud and clear during election time about freshwater fish in my area and, I am sure in some of the other commercial fishing areas in rural Manitoba, when it came to the bottom line on election night on April 25.

One of the issues that is of great concern, and I hope to work with the Minister of Natural Resources on this, that we maintain the status quo and improve the viability of freshwater fish and improve the situations that we have in the commercial fishing area.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I just would like to close in saying congratulations to Madam Speaker (Mrs. Dacquay) and to wish her well and Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Laurendeau). I wish them very well and yourself and all the members here and hope that we will have the opportunity to further improve the quality of living in the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to debate today by beginning by echoing the comments I was fortunate to make not only on my own behalf but also on behalf of our caucus, indicating our own thanks to our former Speaker for his excellent

efforts when I stated for the record that I believe that our former Speaker was not only one of the best Speakers we have seen in this House but probably one of the best, certainly by reputation, in this country and also probably in the commonwealth because, in fact, our former Speaker was active in the CPA on the international level.

I really indicate my appreciation to him for his efforts in the past seven years, and I can indicate that the former Speaker, someone I consider not only as a colleague but a friend—and I wish him well in his current endeavours in the House and certainly thank him for those years as Speaker.

I also wish the new Speaker (Mrs. Dacquay) well. I have had the opportunity to work with the new Speaker as well, and I have every confidence that the new Speaker will be fair and impartial and live up to the high office. Certainly, Mr. Acting Speaker, there is ample evidence of that thus far.

I also, in beginning my comments today, want to start where I have always started, Mr. Acting Speaker, with what I would consider the most important thing, and that is to thank my constituents for the opportunity to represent the Thompson constituency once again.

I would like to thank each and every one of my constituents in the eight communities in the Thompson constituency, Thompson itself, Wabowden, Nelson House, Split Lake, York Landing, Ilford, Thicket Portage and Pikwitonei, and I want to commit as I did when I first rose in this Chamber in 1981 when I was first elected representing then the city of Thompson—

An Honourable Member: "Landslide", as we called you.

Mr. Ashton: —as "Landslide", as I was called at the time, as the Deputy Premier reminds me, having won by 72 votes at that time. I said then and I will say it again, my top priority is the Thompson constituency.

(Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair)

I will be speaking out throughout this session and upcoming sessions of this Legislature on behalf of each and every community in the constituency of Thompson and each and every person that is a resident of that constituency.

You know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the fortune throughout those years to be in various different roles, certainly being elected the first time to government with a 72-vote margin, of which I was reminded on occasion by members opposite. I was reminded of that more often than not.

I have been fortunate to win, this time in fact with the highest margin we have had in the Thompson constituency, and I say that knowing that election results are fleeting in some sense and that those that dwell on their support in the last election often find themselves having some difficulty in the next election.

I must admit that one thing I have always felt is important is to speak out regardless of the situation you are in, not only in terms of the support you receive but whether you are in the third party, which I have been, official opposition, status government. There are different roles that you must take, but you must never, Mr. Deputy Speaker, never forget your constituents, and I think that is absolutely vital.

I do want to also, before entering the political part of my speech, thank not only my constituents but particularly to thank my family for their continued support: my wife, Patty; my daughter, Niki; and my son, Alexander.

I had a rather interesting experience this time, because this is the first time that my kids have really been at the age, they are 12 and 10 currently, at which they, shall we say, are, I would not say they are aware of politics, but where their friends are aware of politics, because my kids have probably been as aware of politics as any children of MLAs now or in the past, of politics since they were yay high, but it was interesting, particularly my daughter in Grade 7 getting into some of the political discussions back and forth. CBC North interviewed them on what it was like to be in a family where they were running for political office.

* (1630)

I must admit, I was awaiting her comments with some interest because I anticipated some of the questions that might be asked. One of the questions, though, was whether they might run for politics themselves. Well, it is interesting, because I have always thought that kids of people elected to public office are often the first ones to say, no, never. But, you know, both of them said they might, and in a way I considered it perhaps a compliment in the sense that I think they both understand that I have to be away from home, as many other rural members have to be.

For the members opposite, I believe you may, if you were listening to some of the other comments in the interview, I think you would know which party they were running for. It is definitely, I think, going to be the NDP.

Regardless of what they do, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was I think a comment of the fact that they recognized certainly that there are sacrifices that we all make, particularly rural and northern members, being away from home. I think the fact that they comment in that way was what I would consider really significant.

I would also, by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, like to comment on the new members to this House. I have had the opportunity to listen to a number of speeches by new members both from the opposite side and our side.

I must say that in some cases I have also had the opportunity to review in Hansard the speeches where I have been unable to hear the comments. I am very impressed by the calibre of the speeches made by new members, some of the comments, and I think they are going to contribute a lot. In fact, I hope that one thing that we can achieve in this Legislature is perhaps some shift, I am not saying a dramatic shift necessarily, but some shift in the way we do business, whether it be in terms of rules or even in terms of the type of discussions that take place in this House.

I think that is where the new members have not only a role to play, probably a key role, because they come into this House with new ideas and new directions in

terms of the way they wish us to proceed, and I think that blend of those members of the House who have returned and new members could be very significant.

I also want to comment for the record, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just how pleased I am with our new members. We have got five new members from all areas in the province, and I just want to state this for the record as well, because whoever wrote the throne speech seems to have forgotten, when they indicated the government represents all the areas of the province, about northern Manitoba. There are four northern representatives, four of whom are from the New Democratic Party. I just say that to the speechwriter for the government next time, they have a long way to go before they represent all Manitobans.

In fact, that is why I want to lead off in terms of my more political comments today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I believe that there is some real significance of what has happened in the election results, particularly coming from my own constituency in northern Manitoba.

Once again northern Manitobans returned four New Democrats to this Legislature. In fact in Thompson, and I say this more in terms of political comment, because I think it is something the government should reflect on, the Conservative vote in this election was the lowest in 26 years. We in fact received one of the highest percentage of votes we have received, but the Conservative vote dropped very, very significantly in the constituencies.

You know, if you were to look at what has happened across this province, what I would suggest is that there is a growing gap, a political gap, that has occurred as a result of this election.

If you were to look at the voting results, in the seats that were won by the Conservatives on the one hand or by the NDP on the other hand, there are in fact very few close results. Most of the province has tended to go one way or the other. We have returned to some of the days that certainly the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) will remember, when this House was essentially dominated by a two-party system. I realize they still do not vote for the Liberals.

I say that I am not going to get into semantics about independence. In this House they are no longer an officially recognized party, but I realize it has been difficult because of what has happened. I would say that I think increasingly what has happened in this province is, after the situation in 1988, where the Liberals did have a breakthrough and did have some opportunities to build on that breakthrough, I think people have increasingly turned either to the New Democratic Party or in some cases, some areas of the city in particular, to the Conservative Party. [interjection] I hear the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in the background, and I wish him all the best.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

I certainly congratulate him on surviving the defeat of so many members of his party. Having gone through 1988, I can say that it is an honourable thing to be a survivor. It could be tough at times, but it is certainly a personal challenge. I wish him all the best. I really do congratulate him and the other two members of the Liberal Party on being survivors. I know it was not an easy election for them, and they certainly deserve personal credit for their efforts.

We are in a situation where I think there is a growing gap in this province. There is a gap between regions, northern Manitoba, you take the north of the Parkland, in terms of Dauphin and Swan River, the Interlake. There is a divide that runs through rural Manitoba, where the more northern parts of what I would consider rural Manitoba and northern Manitoba have clearly felt ignored by this government, and we are seeing the same thing in the city as well.

I look to some of the members listening today and at some of the significant support they have received, whether it be in St. Johns or Point Douglas. Seats that have traditionally been held by the NDP received very significant support.

The member for Osborne (Ms. McGifford), elected in an area that was very back and forth, this time received a very significant vote of confidence, certainly in her own abilities to represent that constituency and in terms of the NDP, but you know that gap goes

beyond simply the electoral map. I think it became evident in the campaign and it has become increasingly evident in the days that have come since the campaign.

I will start with something that disturbs me greatly, and that is the growing gap between this government and the First Nations of this province. My constituency consists of eight communities. There are four First Nations communities, three Northern Affairs communities. By the way, Madam Speaker, many of the residents of those communities are First Nations members. In Thompson, once again a very significant number of residents of Thompson are First Nations.

What struck me about the election was the growing gap between this government particularly—I do not like to personalize this, but I am going to because I believe the responsibility, the buck stops at the Premier's office, particularly with the Premier who went out of his way in the debate to say that, yes, we have the highest rate of child poverty, but somehow that was because of First Nations child poverty, and somehow that was not something that the province was concerned about nor should it be concerned about. That concerned me, but you know, if you talk to anyone in my constituency you will see the same thing on other issues.

The provincial parks—this government went and announced four provincial parks. There was no consultation with First Nations. The only consultation was a letter, one letter, that was sent out. The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), I realize, does not know this, but if he would care to talk to some of his former contacts in Nelson House and Split Lake, he would find that they were completely ignored.

Now we are seeing increasingly just how much of a gap that is developing. This is something that goes back a number of years. This government, in looking for ways to cut, cut the ACCESS programs, cut the friendship centres, cut aboriginal organizations. There is a pattern that has developed, but now we are seeing increasingly just how far that this government is willing to go.

Within days of the election, we found that the government had a new priority that was not expressed in the election. It was for saving the Jets through a

major contribution to the arena. I want to say, Madam Speaker, that I have been to Jets games. I consider myself a Jets fan. I support the efforts of people in the city, and also there are people I know in my own community who have contributed toward savings the Jets. That I believe is the kind of effort that should be supported—the private efforts of private business people to purchase the Jets and citizens supporting the Jets as a team.

But I am offended, and many people in my constituency are offended, and particularly people in the remote communities of my constituency are offended by the fact that this government within days after the election has contributed not \$10 million, the amount that they said they would in the election, but they are now contributing \$37 million towards the construction of an arena in Winnipeg for one purpose and one purpose only, for the Winnipeg Jets, for the professional hockey team.

I want to give you the kind of reaction that I am getting from my constituents. I represent eight communities. Four of those communities have no all-weather road. A significant number of the communities have no sewer and water. A number of the communities have no line power. Now, Madam Speaker, I ask you this. We are in 1995. We are headed into the next century. Do you really believe it is acceptable for communities in this province not to have sewer and water in the year 1995?

You know, I remember the great developments of the 1950s and '60s of the Campbell and later Roblin governments, the great developments of the '70s with the Schreyer government, the Pawley government in the 1980s, first with rural electrification, then with the extension of roads and basic infrastructure to many a northern community. In fact, many of the things that we have in northern communities today are the results of the efforts of the Schreyer and Pawley governments, whether it be airstrips, whether it be many of the roads, housing.

You do not have to take my word for it, Madam Speaker. You can just talk to the residents of the northern communities. They remember and that is one of the reasons in fact why the North has supported the

NDP so strongly. They remember what it was like under the NDP and they have seen what has happened under the current government.

* (1640)

You know, there are communities with no infrastructure whatsoever, and where is the funding going to be coming for the new arena? It is going to be coming in part from the infrastructure agreement. Certainly that is where the federal government has indicated it will be finding money. In fact, it may even indeed come from the Winnipeg Development Agreement. By the way, as I mentioned in this House in Question Period, we have no northern development agreement and there is no sign of one in the immediate future. Certainly, the government should be focusing on that.

I asked the question: Is it acceptable, and I asked this really rhetorically to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), for the priority to be an arena in Winnipeg, a new arena, instead of roads, sewer, water? In fact, how about the recreational facilities that are needed in many northern communities? [interjection]

It is interesting that the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) starts talking from his seat, Madam Speaker. It is interesting, because he had the opportunity as Minister of Northern Affairs to negotiate a northern development agreement to continue to put infrastructure and did not do it. He has had the opportunity as the Deputy Premier to put money into infrastructure in northern Manitoba, and he has not made it a priority. In fact, much of the responsibility stops at his door as well.

I must say that I find it interesting, because the minister has taken a personal interest in the Thompson constituency over a great period of time. Thanks to his efforts, their vote dropped significantly to the lowest point in 26 years. [interjection] Well, he is passing it off to the current Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Praznik). I will let them share the blame. They can decide who is most responsible. The fact is, the people spoke very clearly.

I want to focus not on the political side but on the reality that many northern Manitobans face. I want to

run through some of my communities so that people will understand on the Conservative side and particularly to the Premier, because I remember a speech the Premier gave in this House, Madam Speaker, when he went off to the global summit in Rio and came back in this House, and I remember sitting here listening to a speech in which he talked about going to remote villages that had no sewer and water, where people were living in poverty, where there were many health problems and social problems and economic problems.

I remember saying at the time, why does the Premier not come up and see us some time, not to come up for a short visit to speak to a northern meeting of leaders followed by a Conservative pre-election campaign rally as was his last appearance, but come and spend some time in any one of the remote northern communities in the 1990s and see how people are living and then be able to stand in this House and be able to say that he represents all Manitobans?

I have written to the Premier; in fact, I wrote to the Premier following the election. I take pride in speaking out for all my constituents. The day the election is over, it does not matter how people voted, my responsibility is to speak for them all.

As the member for The Pas (Mr. Lathlin) pointed out, my responsibility is to speak for all my constituents, whether they be First Nations, whether they be Metis, whether they be nonaboriginal. No matter who they are and where they live, I speak out for them. That is my role as a member of the Legislature, and I think it is very much the philosophy of the New Democratic Party to speak out for all Manitobans.

I wrote in the letter and I suggested that the Premier take some time to look at the growing gap. I do not just mean to measure it electorally, but go to the First Nations community, the communities in my constituency and see the reaction that they had to the Premier's comments in the election, which many found to be, quite frankly, offensive, and some have described it as worse, in which the Premier wanted to wash his hands of any responsibility for the First Nations residents of this province.

But, you know, it is not just the First Nations residents. Whether it be in the Northern Affairs communities, it is the same concern, or in industrial communities such as Thompson. I believe the Premier has an opportunity to go in one of two directions: He can either make some efforts to bridge the gap or he can continue on the same path as government has been on in the past, which is to not only not bridge the gap—and I look at the comments from the new member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) because I think he summed it up from his own personal perspective very well—but this government has, if anything, deliberately made that gap worse.

I want to give you a few examples and these are direct issues that are of concern in my constituency: the hospitals' situation. The hospitals in northern Manitoba have been targeted for the biggest cuts: Thompson, Flin Flon and The Pas. There is clear evidence that the cuts would result in unsafe situations. You do not have to take my word for it; you do not have to take the word of the hospitals. The College of Physicians and Surgeons has indicated on a number of cases the danger for significant mishap. This is a direct quote. Yet this government turned a blind eye to what was being said.

Education. It is interesting hearing the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) talk about ACCESS and New Careers. The minister does not understand that what has happened is that disadvantaged students who normally could receive assistance to get into the ACCESS programs are not getting that same opportunity. If they do not have band sponsorship or some other form of sponsorship, they are unable to get in. She should look at the intake and what is happening in terms of the ability of the disadvantaged to get in those programs. Education was another big concern. In my own school district, we are losing 25 teachers, the hardest hit by cuts.

You know, probably the most symbolic of them all was in terms of Highways, because in Highways we have gone from between 15 and 20 percent of the overall construction budget to less than 5 percent last year under this government, less than 5 percent. Does anybody wonder why 391 and 280 and 373 are in the shape they are, why there are people literally at risk on

those highways at some times of year? There was a recent accident once again on Highway 391. By the way, I was contacted by a relative of the person who was killed in that accident, and it is a very real concern to people in those communities. That sums up the gap more than anything, those issues.

You know, Madam Speaker, what I found interesting was that as the campaign progressed, there was consensus on one thing from all three candidates. The Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) might want to consider this. Even the Conservative candidate—certainly the Liberal candidate as well as myself—was saying that we were not being treated fairly. Now we disagreed on the route to take to deal with that, but even the Conservative candidate was putting out leaflets saying, the North is not being treated fairly.

It still did not make any difference to the election result because people obviously looked at that factor when they voted and gave the Conservative Party the lowest vote it has had in 26 years in the Thompson constituency.

You know, there was clear consensus across the board that we are not being treated fairly in northern Manitoba, period. What is interesting is—I mentioned about First Nations; I mentioned about northern Manitoba, but you know, add up across the province other people, and you will see what has happened. More and more people spoke. More and more people spoke about what has been happening from this government. The members opposite should be aware of that because it has not just been northern Manitobans or First Nations, peoples in various regions of this province, but clearly, many working people are very frustrated.

I can tell you, many public-sector workers raised the issue with me of what this government has done to the working people in this province and many other people. It has been a concern in terms of new Canadians, for example, who feel excluded by this government.

If you look at the voting results as one indication or if you just talk to people, there are an increasing number of people who feel shut out from the process of this government. If one looks across the province,

quite frankly, I think this government is increasingly retreating into the traditional Conservative approach of being a party that is speaking for certain interests in this province, some cases of privilege. Not strictly so, but it is certainly not speaking for the many people out there who are in poverty, the many working people who are concerned about their workplaces, about what is happening, the many people in northern Manitoba and rural Manitoba looking for fairness in terms of infrastructure—the many people across this province.

You know, Madam Speaker, in saying that, I do not want to leave out the Liberals. I know they are feeling somewhat left out recently, but I do want to say to the Liberal Party there were also some clear messages, what happened. I am glad the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) has returned to hear this, because the fact is, I would say that the Liberal Party better be on watch in the next federal election.

I went continuously and heard many people in my constituency talk about the fact that they—in fact many people voted for the Liberal Party federally who said they will not ever do that again. They certainly did not vote for the provincial Liberals. I felt I had some certain sympathy for the provincial Liberal candidate who had to carry the can for many unpopular policies.

The gun registration was extremely unpopular in northern Manitoba. So it should be. It is an onerous burden on many people. Many people have to use firearms for their way of life, to produce a living. The Liberal government turned a complete deaf ear to the concerns expressed by many people in rural and northern Manitoba.

* (1650)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Elijah Harper would not let that happen.

Mr. Ashton: The member for Inkster talks about our federal member. We are still hoping that our federal member will speak out against the bill, will vote against the bill. In fact, we are looking to see if any of the Liberal M.P.s in this province will follow their consciences and their constituents, particularly the rural and northern Manitoba representatives, and vote

against it, because believe you me, Madam Speaker, they are not going to be representing their constituents if they are northern and rural members and they do not vote against the registration portion of the bill. It is as simple as that. Period. No ifs, no ands and no buts.

I want to say that I think the Liberals—[interjection] The member for Inkster is giving me advice from his seat. I would give him a word of advice. That is, I remember sitting here when his Leader raised that issue in this House and was going at it time and time again. I said at the time, listen to rural and northern Manitobans, if you do not on this issue you will not win a single seat outside the city of Winnipeg. Madam Speaker, history will write that was the prediction. It came true. I think one of the reasons the Liberal Party is going to be in such difficulty is because it has not listened.

When I see three Liberal M.P.s being virtually drummed out of their caucus for speaking out on behalf of their constituents, when I see other Liberal M.P.s being hounded into voting for a bill they know they do not agree with, there is something wrong. When I see the provincial Liberal Party that could have said, we do not agree with this, but they came out front and centre supporting this and other unpopular federal Liberal decisions, I would suggest to the Liberal Party there are two reasons why I think they suffered as badly as they did in the election. One is because people voted for the parties that focused on issues. We focused on health. We focused on many other issues.

The Liberals' policy of supporting the federal government and basically trying to be on all sides of all issues just did not work. It did not wash. That is not the Manitoba tradition. I throw that out. When they are doing their postmortems I really say to them that I believe in the next federal election, particularly in the rural and northern areas, but I would also suggest in Winnipeg North and North Centre, a lot of Liberal M.P.s should be watching and listening to what people said in the provincial election, because they rejected in many areas the policies of the Liberal Party, both federally and provincially.

Madam Speaker, we have a choice. We have two roads to go. The government—and I am not talking

about 391 here, because if that was one of the roads it would be impassable. We have two choices that this government has to make.

Despite the fact that I believe the result might have been different if the true intentions of the government were made clear on the Winnipeg Jets issue, believe you me, and rural members across the way in particular but also city members should be aware—and if they are not listening they know there is a lot of reaction out there to the funding for the arena. I do not mean positive either. I am talking about a lot of negative reaction out there.

I talked to a lot of people who would classify themselves as strong Conservatives who say it is wrong to give taxpayers' money to the arena to save the Jets.

I throw that out and I put it aside because the fact is whether I can say in retrospect or anyone can say that the result might have been different if the Premier (Mr. Filmon) had been forthright and came forward and said what he really believed, what the real commitment of the Conservatives was on the arena, the fact is the election took place. The Conservatives, for whatever reason—

An Honourable Member: You do not like hockey.

Mr. Ashton: No, I think the member is misunderstanding me here. I like hockey. I do not like the government's duplicity in saying one thing before the election and another after the election. The fact is I believe that the people have spoken.

But you know, the people in the 31 constituencies across the way—and I respect this—have spoken, but I say to the government and I say to the Premier (Mr. Filmon), 23 constituencies have returned New Democrats. With the increasingly marginalized role of the Liberal Party, we have the tremendous burden of having to speak for the 57 percent of voters who have not voted for this government. I am not questioning the mandate. The people are always right. I believed that in 1981. It was a little bit easier to accept then. It certainly was easier in '86, a lot tougher in '88. Madam Speaker, '89 was not quite so tough, '95, it is still pretty tough to accept that, but I say that.

What I say to the Premier, and I do not normally do this, I want to sort of speculate ahead. This may or may not be the Premier's last term. I certainly could say that it may or may not be this government's last term. We do not know what the political circumstances will bring. For as much as any of us can refer to what may or may not happen, that is the bottom line. I say to the Premier, there is an opportunity to bridge the gap and please start with northern Manitoba. I am willing to sit down with anybody on that side.

When we get away from the cut and thrust of Question Period and debate, there are a lot of things that could be done, a lot of them do not take a heck of a lot of money. Some things do not take any money whatsoever. When there is such a large gap, I ask the question: Is it really healthy for the future development of this province when the North feels so alienated or First Nations or the Metis or anyone in this province? Is it really healthy for this province?

I do not think there is one person across the way who does not speak—is there anyone across the way really who does not attempt to speak for all their constituents in between elections? Even the member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Downey), who is probably one of the most partisan people on that side, and even though there were more New Democrats in his riding this time around in terms of votes than there were Conservatives in Thompson, I am sure he speaks for that growing number of New Democrats in southwestern Manitoba. He is their MLA. If they go to his door and they knock on his door, he is not going to ask to check their card at the door. We all do that, so I throw the challenge out, Madam Speaker.

Can we not at least attempt on issues where there are no partisan differences to do that as a province? Can we not bridge those gaps? I mean we disagree on the Jets receiving public money, but you know highways, health, education, is there not room to bridge that gap or are we in northern Manitoba and many other areas of this province going to be looking at the end of this government's mandate at a lost decade because the government will have been in power assuming it survives that long for a decade? I say that because, Madam Speaker, there is so much more that can be done in this province with that kind of approach.

We argue in different ways, but we are all elected for the same purpose. I think what tends to happen at times is that when we act as MLAs we represent everyone. When we come into this House, it is too easy to take the more political route. The former Minister of Northern Affairs talked about people not voting right. He has been tagged with that, I must admit, Madam Speaker. I heard that comment many a time in the election, the Deputy Premier. Many people felt we were being penalized in northern Manitoba for, according to the Premier, not voting right. Of course, we in northern Manitoba like to turn that around. We think we have been voting right; we are just trying to persuade a few other areas of the province to follow suit.

There is an opportunity here. There is an opportunity to bridge some of those gaps. Any time that happens, I will give the government credit. I have done it in the past. I will do it again. I think any member of our caucus will do it. There are going to be big political issues, big political debates, but there are communities in my constituency that do not have sewer and water. Anything we can do to get sewer and water in those communities, I will support it. I will work with whatever minister to get it done.

There are four communities without roads. The same thing goes. There are communities with inadequate roads. I will sit down, I will identify the stretches. The former Minister of Highways asked me to do that one time and a number of those stretches were fixed up. There is inadequate housing. There are people living in Third-World conditions. There are things that can be done about that. There are many other issues that we can deal with. Health—we can improve the health care system in northern Manitoba immensely. Education—we can do a lot more in terms of education simply by bringing the resources together as the Roblin commission recommended. There are many other examples of what can be done in a positive sense, and I said this in the letter that I wrote to the Premier and I say for the record here perhaps so that the Premier will have the opportunity to read it in Hansard, but I really believe that is the choice ahead of us.

I would like to finish my comments off by really suggesting we assess where we are at in this province.

I extend congratulations to the government on their election, but I hope they will recognize the growing gap that is occurring in this province between regions, between First Nations, Metis, northern Manitoba, between the privileged and many average Manitobans and many underprivileged people in our society.

I say, Madam Speaker, that as I enter these next four years that is the personal challenge that I see. I, quite frankly, am really proud to be part of this caucus because we are not only over the next number of years going to be pointing to the many faults we see in the government's policies, as we see perhaps for example on the arena, but we put forward a positive agenda. We are offering people a choice. I think one of the reasons that we are the official opposition with 23 seats, that we increased our support in this election, is because we offer people real alternatives.

* (1700)

That is the kind of debate we need because our party, as much as—[interjection] I am glad to hear the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) talk about other members across the way because I still remember some pretty red Toryish things that the member did such as when he voted on second reading to take over the gas company, and I give him credit for that. I hope he will take that as a compliment because I really believe he stood at that time for one of the traditions of the Conservative Party that is gradually being lost by the party as a whole. There is an example. We had a member of the Conservative Party vote on second reading for taking over the gas company, and I hope he will be equally as vocal in speaking out, those who might want to say, privatize the Manitoba Telephone System and other areas.

We have a real opportunity. We have put forward our agenda. We have a very clear credo as a political party. I have stated this before in the House because I think it sums up what the New Democratic Party stands for. I say this to new members, as well, who have seen us only in opposition and some of the returning members from that side and also from some of our new members, because the NDP can be a great opposition. We are not going to let this government off on anything, but I believe, Madam Speaker, and the record

I think speaks for itself, that we are an even better government.

I look at the Schreyer governments and the Pawley governments and many positive things that we did to bring people into the political process and the political system to give them the basic infrastructure, to develop opportunity for areas that have been ignored for years by the Conservative and Liberal parties. It is because—I have quoted this before; I think I have probably quoted this every throne speech I have spoken on in this House. It is what J.S. Woodsworth said: It is what we desire for ourselves, we wish for all.

That is what guides us in opposition. It is what guided us in the election campaign to put forward our platform for government, and when the time comes again, it will guide the mandate of the next New Democratic Party government.

I just say to the Conservatives: We are putting out this offer to work together. I believe we have got a number of years with a majority government. There may be ways in which we can bridge some of those gaps. Do not take your mandate for granted. Do not take anything for granted, because we are going to be a tough opposition on you. Our goal is not just to be a good opposition; it is to propose significant changes to our society, Madam Speaker, and that will be what guides us throughout the next whatever number of years in this Legislature. Thank you.

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, first of all, I want to say how great it is to be back with everybody in this Chamber, my friends, such as the MLA from Virden (Mr. Downey), and MLA for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings) and others. It is good to see your smiling faces again.

Really, Madam Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your appointment and offer you my very best wishes. I know it is a great challenge. It is a very difficult job to hold. At times, it is very, very challenging, and you are really on the hot seat, so to speak, but I am sure you will do a great job. I believe you are the third woman Speaker that we have had in the history of this Legislature. I stand to be corrected. Maybe my friend from Lakeside can correct me if I am

wrong, but I believe Thelma Forbes was the first female Speaker for this House. The second one was Myrna Phillips, and, of course, now we have the third woman Speaker. They have all done a good job. I am sure our present Speaker will do an excellent job as well. So I wish you the very, very best.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank our previous Speaker who I enjoyed working with very, very much. I know he is still a member of Legislature. I really appreciated his efforts. I really believe that particular member far—I told him this personally so I am not trying to say anything behind his back or anything, but he exceeded my expectations. I really thought, because he was a fair—quite a rookie himself. He was not in the Legislature that long prior to being appointed Speaker. He did an excellent job. I know members opposite and maybe members on this side did not always agree with his rulings, did not always agree with maybe some of his positions. Nevertheless, he did his best. I think, by and large, he served the Legislature well and he served the people of Manitoba well.

I would like to also congratulate all the members who have been returned. It is good to see a lot of you back. Of course there are quite a few new members. I think about 20 percent of the Legislature is changed. I think roughly one-fifth of the members are new members. I wish them the very best in the challenge that this Legislature poses to them and the challenge of representing their constituents.

I believe all members come here to serve their people to the best of their ability. We disagree on policy. If we all agreed on policies, we would not have party differences. We would not have political parties, because obviously the political parties are based presumably on different sets of policies.

If we all agreed all the time, we would not have political parties, we would not have the opposition on one side, the government on the other. We do have differences. We can fight over those differences. We can argue over those policies, but as long as we do not hold a personal grudge, as long as we do not attack one another personally, because I really believe all members of this House come to this Legislature to serve to the best of their ability.

I believe public office is a high calling. It is one of the highest callings that you can obtain, that you can have. You are indeed a servant of the people. I know and I am confident that in the history of this Legislature MLAs have come here to serve their constituents, and, by and large, with very rare exception they have served their constituents to the best of their ability. The constituents may not have liked the way they served them, but nevertheless they have tried to serve to the best of their ability.

I must say, too, that the results in Brandon East constituency were very pleasant. I am very, very happy with the fact that our results this time were even better than last time. Our popular vote went up. This time I guess I had the second best margin since I was elected. The very best was 1981 when we defeated the Lyon government and everyone was very unhappy and they wanted a change, and the popular vote in my riding at least went up considerably.

This last time, although not as high as 1981, was the second best popular vote that I achieved as an MLA in Brandon East. I want to thank my constituents very sincerely for the confidence they have shown in me by re-electing me now for the eighth time. I know I have not met the record yet of my good friend from Lakeside, but I am right behind him.

I want to confess this was never a lifetime ambition of mine to be here so long. Frankly, I do not know why we are here so long, because when I first ran it was almost on the spur of the moment. Ed Schreyer was the new Leader. I said to my wife, who was rather concerned, do not worry, they always vote Conservative in Brandon, I will not get elected anyway, we will just have a little fun for the summer. Oh, mission impossible, the impossible happened and my life turned upside down. I guess it has been upside down ever since.

It was certainly no plan of mine to serve the people of Manitoba or my constituents in Brandon East for 25, going on 26 years now. I see the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) indicating that I guess he will be here about 29 years at least, as of this year. As he sort of indicated from his seat, it was not any grand plan of his to be here as long as he has.

I can just say, I know the member for Lakeside has done his best to serve his constituents, and I can assure you I have done my best to serve my constituents. As I indicated, I think all MLAs really try to serve the people of Manitoba, and their constituents in particular, to the best of their ability.

* (1710)

The results in the riding were very gratifying, as I said. I mention the popular vote, but I also look at the plurality. The margin of difference between myself and the next nearest candidate went up by nearly 250 votes. So I felt that we must be doing something right to get an even bigger endorsement from the constituents of Brandon East.

But one does not win any campaign by himself or herself. We depend on our party organization, upon friends, upon members, supporters, to do all kinds of work, whether it is knocking on doors, distributing pamphlets, talking to people on the phone or whatever we do. Whatever organizations have to do to wage a campaign, it would not be possible, none of us would be here, without the help of those supporters and workers.

Just one other observation I would make on the election before I pass on to a couple of other issues is, I have some satisfaction in noting that if Brandon city was one riding that the NDP would have won the city of Brandon constituency, because the combined vote of the NDP candidate in Brandon West, along with my vote, superseded that of the two Conservative candidates. So that is gratifying too, to think that the majority of people in the city of Brandon voted for the New Democratic Party.

I think they support the NDP for many reasons, our policy stands on health and education and social services, but they also remember the work that was done, the accomplishments that occurred in the city of Brandon during both the Pawley and Schreyer administrations. All kinds of developments occurred in infrastructure. The original Keystone Centre was built; 1st Street bridge; the development of the university, fabulous developments at the university; the new science building; the music building; monies for

dormitory; and then commitments latterly towards the library. In fact, we made a \$7-million commitment to the library, another expansion at Brandon University during the Pawley administration around 1987.

I think the people of Brandon recall that there was considerable development in the city. Not only did we place infrastructure on site in terms of the university, but also in terms of the hospital development, the significant developments in hospital care. There was the developments in nursing homes. Three nursing homes were built at a cost of \$18.5 million in the mid-to late '80s. There were other developments as well.

Nearly a dozen senior citizens homes were built. Indeed, many, many new programs were put in place that assisted the development of not only the size of the city of Brandon, because it certainly did grow by population, but also in terms of the quality of life by providing services. Whether it be a rentalsman service, whether it be human rights services, whether it be services provided by worker advisory office or whatever, those services were put in place as part of a general program thrust by the NDP both in the Pawley years and the Schreyer years, but nevertheless it did enhance the quality of life in the Brandon community. I believe people remember that and have shown their confidence in the New Democratic Party over the years for those accomplishments.

The constituency that I represent is rather a mixed constituency in terms of it being partly industrial and partly residential. We have the Brandon industrial park, of course, and all the major industries in Brandon are in the Brandon East constituency. We also have the business section in the constituency as well, the downtown area of Brandon. In terms of residences, we have people from low income groups, we have people from middle income groups and maybe some people that are a little above the middle income category. So we have quite a mixture of people.

I am very pleased to note that the support I received in the riding was generally distributed throughout the constituency. We won almost every poll. I think we lost two small polls and tied in the third one, but, generally speaking, our support was scattered evenly throughout the constituency. I am gratified by that

because not only people in the lower income areas gave us their support but people in middle and higher middle income areas as well indicated their confidence in us.

In terms of issues that this House is going to confront, I suppose there are going to be many, but obviously there are a couple that have come to fore already. One, of course, is the Jets' arena issue. I do not intend to take this opportunity to debate it, but I simply want to report that my constituency office in Brandon is open five days a week. Of course, we have an answering service and of course people can reach me at the Legislature on the 1-800 line as they can reach any MLA. Every single call we have received, and we have received many, many calls, has been very—well, I say very negative, not only negative but very strongly negative about the government's involvement in supporting the Jets' arena deal. People have written letters but they have also phoned and expressed their dismay at the government going beyond the original commitment that the Premier made before the election. So people are very upset about this and they have made their views known in no uncertain terms.

So I am convinced that, if a referendum were held in the city of Brandon, an overwhelming number of people would be against the Jets' arena deal. I also believe that if the referendum were held throughout the province of Manitoba you would generally get the same result. You would get the same result whether it be in the city of Winnipeg or rural Manitoba or northern Manitoba. I believe that people think that government dollars, which are very scarce these days, would be better spent in terms of health care, in terms of education, in terms of eradicating poverty and not on a business enterprise, the assistance for which some have described as being socialism for the rich.

I have listened to many commentaries on the radio analysing the Jets deal. There was one interesting one yesterday afternoon on Cross-Country Checkup on the CBC, and one professor of economics from an American university who was called on to the program to provide an analysis as a guest caller said in no way can you look upon local sporting teams such as a hockey team as providing any significant economic impact in the area. Unless you bring in a large number

of tourists, large number of people from outside the area, from outside of Manitoba, let us say, you are not in any significant way improving or increasing the level of economic activity in that jurisdiction. He was making this as a generalization. Winnipeg just happened to be coincidental, and he talked about other areas in North America. He talked about the results of studies that he has engaged in, not just one study but many studies. He said that—in fact the term he used—economic impact is benign. In other words, it is insignificant.

I think as we found last winter, when there was a strike people did not go to hockey games and they spent their money on other activities, whether it be other sporting activities, whether it be other recreational activities. If they chose to spend their money on leisure they spent it many other ways, and there was, of course, economic activity created by that spending just as there is economic activity from the Jets. I cannot help but also remember some of the comments made by analysts who said, well, if the people of Winnipeg and the Jets fans really love their team so much, why did they not go out and support them and attend the games? The attendance at the games left much to be desired. That to me is the solid proof of whether or not a team has substantial support. If you have sell-out crowds game after game, that is one thing, but when you have games that are very poorly attended that rings a rather negative message.

I also recall Bramwell Tovey, the director of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, pointing out, and he says, look, I am not against hockey. Incidentally, I am not against hockey. Nobody in this House who opposes this deal is against hockey as a sport. It is a fine sport, but we are talking about a business deal and the involvement of the public in this. As Bramwell Tovey said, yes, the Winnipeg Jets have 5,000 season ticket holders, but if I recall correctly, he said the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra has 12,000 ticket holders, almost two and a half times as many as the Jets. He also pointed out that one hockey player earns as much as it costs to pay the entire Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, including Bramwell Tovey himself. At any rate, I thought there was some significant insight into what he said to put this into perspective.

* (1720)

I also remember other people saying, well, if we really need more space, why not expand the old arena at a fraction of the cost of this new facility and get many more seats than we are going to get out of the new facility. My understanding is, there are only 500 more seats to be achieved from this very expensive new building, but how many more will be added? How many?

An Honourable Member: About 3,000.

Mr. Leonard Evans: The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) reminds me that about 3,000 more seats would be available from a modification of the existing arena at much less expense.

I just repeat, Madam Speaker, that the people in my constituency are very much opposed to this. If a referendum were provided for, I have no question whatsoever that the people of Manitoba, certainly the people of my constituency, would vote overwhelmingly against the government's involvement, at least the degree to which the Premier (Mr. Filmon) has indicated that this government will be involved.

I would urge the government, because it does make reference to a referendum, do you have guidance from the taxpayers of Manitoba? I realize the balanced-budget legislation proposed is on the tax side, but I would say the expenditure side is very, very important too. We are talking about a large amount of money.

If the government really wants to get an opinion from the people, because I am convinced, as my Leader said, that this Premier and this government does not have a mandate to spend the amount of money that is being proposed as an expenditure by the provincial taxpayers. They do not have a mandate. The election is gone; if you want the mandate, let us have the referendum. In fact, you could have a referendum—

An Honourable Member: We just had a referendum on the 25th of April.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, the referendum of April 25 talked about a different figure than the Premier is

talking about today. We were nowhere near the amount of money that we are talking about today, Madam Speaker, so I say, if you want the opinion of the people, put it to the people. Let us have a referendum.

In fact, we could even tie it into the forthcoming municipal elections this fall. There could be arrangements made to allow all municipal governments to put it on the ballot. In fact, legislation could easily be brought in to require that to be included in the municipal election vote. Everyone, at a very minimal cost, would be able to express their view on whether they believe that this government should spend the amount of money that it seems to be prepared to spend on the Jets arena deal.

An Honourable Member: Twenty-seven million in Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Leonard Evans: That is immaterial. That has no bearing on this debate.

An Honourable Member: That is immaterial? Twenty-seven million in Saudi Arabia is immaterial now?

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, Madam Speaker, we have interruptions here from the member from Virden. He can bring up any issue he likes, but we are talking about a specific issue, and I say that the arguments we are putting forth are relevant to this issue. His comments are totally irrelevant to this issue.

Another big issue that will be debated in this Legislature will be the whole concept of a balanced budget. The balanced budget sounds great, and everybody wants governments to pay their way.

Everybody wants governments to pay their way. In fact, we should really be more than paying our way. We really need to have a lot of surpluses to bring the debt down because—[interjection] The member for Virden, the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Downey) and many other things—let me remind members opposite—in fact, it is in the blue book—the debt per capita has risen under this administration.

In fact, since 1988 the debt per capita has gone up significantly. In fact, here it is. When you took office in 19—[interjection] Well, regardless, 1988-89, we will go to 1987-88 when we were definitely responsible, the net debt per capita was \$9,372. In 1995-96 it is \$12,272.

In the period of office I am talking about, the seven years of Conservative administration, the per capita debt has gone up by one-third. Now you have to take responsibility for that. If you thought the debt was too high, why did we not have surpluses over the years. The fact is, Madam Speaker—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your assistance.

The fact is that the government, if it so chose, could have had surpluses over the years if it wanted to through cutting back more, increasing taxes. Whatever you wanted to do, you could have brought about greater amounts of revenue or reduced spending and had surpluses and so on. The fact is, the interesting thing is an independent agency, the Dominion Bond Rating Service—which is no friend of the New Democratic Party, I assure you—has provided an analysis of your budget since you took office. They do say in 1988-89, the provincial government of Manitoba had a surplus of nearly \$60 million.

Now you had that surplus, but you did not show it as a surplus because you set up a new budget account, the Fiscal Stabilization Fund of \$200 million. You took that out of revenue, the Auditor criticized you for it, so instead of having a nearly \$60-million surplus, you had approximately a \$140-million deficit. But the Dominion Bond Rating Service knows you had a surplus. So whether you like it or not, you had a surplus of nearly \$60 million. [interjection] Okay, well, it has been raining for the last seven years.

According to the Dominion Bond Rating Service, you had deficits all those years and including this past year. They say, sorry, the surplus that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) announced in his budget was not a surplus, but it was a deficit—

An Honourable Member: No, they did not say that in fact. I will show you the letter.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, I have their table, and I will read the figures. The figure is a huge—

An Honourable Member: But you do not understand it.

Mr. Leonard Evans: Well, I do not understand—I can read their tables. I can read the statistical tables, the economic analysis of the Dominion Bond Rate Service and they say categorically, in those numbers, you have had a deficit in this current year.

They do not agree with your manipulation of numbers. You take all the Lottery revenues that you accumulated over some years and then you dump them into this year. Not only do they do that, they also pointed out that you have sold Crown assets which you received—I think it was about \$30 million which were received last year which you put into this year to make the books look good.

It is really, as the Free Press editorial said, I mean this is their term, they said, fudging the books, and really that is what it is about, it is juggling it. Now you see it, now you don't. It is like the shell game, we move things around. It really bothers me to read that you are going to continue on with the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, because again you are going to play around with the numbers, put it in, take it out, just to sort of make the current year look good, whatever that happens to be.

My problem with balanced budget legislation—and this was pointed out by the Winnipeg Free Press, they had an excellent editorial on this before the election. They said, fundamentally, forget whether it is Manitoba or Canada or Saskatchewan or B.C. or Quebec, whatever province, when you try to bring in or when you do bring balanced budget legislation which says this is the way it is going to be, this is what you must do for the next 25-30 years, and you must work within these constraints, they say basically it is undemocratic. Because what right do we have in this year of our Lord, 1995, as Legislatures and as electors, to tell the people, say, five, 10, 20 years from now what to do. It is up to

those people, 10, 15, 20 years from now, to make up their minds as to what they want to do.

The other point I would like to make is that this legislation is not fixed in stone. If you really meant business, if you really want to fix it in stone, you should go to Ottawa and ask for a constitutional amendment to the BNA Act for Manitoba so that this legislation, or the ideas from this legislation, are in the Constitution. This legislation— [interjection] Okay, so it does not mean anything. Well, what it means is it is more window dressing. It is more window dressing because two years from now, if the government is wringing its hands, oh, oh, this does not work, we are going to lose some cabinet pay here, so we better make some changes, who knows, you can change it. Any subsequent Legislature can change it. You can change it next year or the year after. That is democratic.

* (1730)

The point is, do not pretend to the people of Manitoba that you really have something solid here that every government for the next 30 years is bound by this legislation. That is absolute garbage. It is nonsense. It is more—

An Honourable Member: This is a silly, silly argument you are making.

Mr. Leonard Evans: What is the silly argument? I would like the Minister of Health (Mr. McCrae) to get up. Instead of interrupting from his seat, I wish he would get up and explain his particular position, and I will be glad to listen to the member.

The fact is, you are not fixing in stone balanced-budget regulations. You are not—[interjection] and the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) admitted it from his seat. Let us understand that.

Essentially what we have here is sort of a declaration of intent. It is a declaration of intent. That is fine. If that is what you want to do, that is fine. It is a declaration of intent, but do not tell anybody that, by God, for the next 10, 20, 30 years this is the way it has to be because it is not going to be—[interjection] I would suggest, even if you were government, God

forbid, for the next 20 or 30 years—you would not want to be government for the next 20 or 30 years anyway. Even if you were, you may find situations and circumstances change so that you would want to see this particular legislation change as well.

The other issue that will be coming up in this Legislature, as it always does, will be, in the length of this Legislature, in the next few months, even though we do not have a formal budget—I guess we will not be getting one, because there was one passed in the last session, but it will have to be reactivated because we are in a new Legislature.

The fact is economic issues are very important, and they will be debated as well. You know, people say, well, you are negative and so on, but the fact is, let us look at these facts, let us look at the economic reality and call a spade a spade and recognize what is happening. Regrettably, the economic growth of this province has been rather slow. In fact, in some years, it has been rather negative. Stats Canada, which comes out with the final figures—I know we have always got forecasts to play around with, the Conference Board of Canada. We sometimes take other forecasts of other agencies, and then the government averages them and so on, but then the final figure comes from Stats Canada. That is the authority as to what has actually happened.

In 1993, it was at one point said, well, we are going to have great growth, but instead of that, we had a negative situation. In fact, in 1993, our economic growth was negative. It was minus 0.6. It was the only province out of 10 provinces in 1993 to have negative growth.

Now there are some basic reasons for that. It was a poor farm economy. I would be the first to say that is the reason, you know, but that is a situation. We certainly improved in 1994. The budget makes reference to 3.6 growth occurring in 1994, but according to the final figures now from Stats Canada it is only 2.6, one full percentage point less than what the budget document made reference to.

I am concerned that the government in its mid-term projection of budgets—it has got a three-year budget

projection here of expenditures and revenues. I am afraid they are on the optimistic side so that what may be projected here as possible balances or surpluses in the future may be rather difficult to obtain, Madam Speaker.

In fact, there was even reference by the Conference Board about this after the budget was brought forward by our Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) saying that the Manitoba growth usually lags behind the national average especially when there is an economic downturn. This was a report in the March 11 issue of the Winnipeg Free Press on the business page.

What it is saying is that the growth rate that may be anticipated or that is anticipated by the budget document will not be achieved. Therefore, the government is going to have a very difficult time in obtaining the revenue, realizing the revenue, that it is projecting itself to receive in the next year or two.

If that is the case then the projected surpluses will not materialize unless of course there is a change in policy, an increase in taxes or another major cut in spending, whatever area that you may want to cut. At any rate, Madam Speaker, I mention this as another issue that will be taking front and centre from time to time.

During the election the government made a great to-do about job creation, about how many more jobs we have obtained in Manitoba. There has been an improvement in the job situation in the last half year, eight months or so, which is good. But let us not pretend that we have had a huge growth in jobs in this province under this particular government because if you go back to 1988 and take a look right up to the end of 1994, take a full seven-year period, you find that the job increase has been minuscule. It is 0.6 percent increase in jobs between the year 1988 and the year 1994.

If you look back to 1990 when the government obtained its majority in 1990, and I am looking at figures that are given to us by different statistical agencies, we had 518,000 jobs in 1990, and the year 1994 we only had 511,000 jobs. In other words, there were 7,000 fewer jobs in 1994 than in 1990.

So where is all this great economic expansion? Yes, you can look at the last few months; oh, there has been an increase. Fine, that is great. We need the jobs, Lord knows, but the fact is that in this longer period of time, seven years of office, there has been practically stagnation, and as I said, since 1990, we have actually declined.

Anyway, if you look at other economic statistics, you find some rather disturbing news as well. In fact, between 1988 and 1994, private investment in Manitoba declined by 14.7 percent. Now I know the forecast for this year is positive, and that is good. It is encouraging, but that does not take away from the fact that we had a drop of 14.7 percent in private investment between 1988, when this government was first elected, and 1994. Similarly, we could look at other statistics and find that the economy at best has grown very minimally. In fact, at times, it has shown a great amount of stagnation.

Our population growth has been very small, Madam Speaker, and that is, of course, primarily because of the exodus of people from Manitoba. We lost 50,000 people, unfortunately, since this government was elected, 50,000 people. That is on a net basis. That is after you take everybody who has left the province and then subtract everyone who has come into the province, and the bottom line is minus 50,000. Those are the latest numbers that we had from Stats Canada. So there are all kinds of indicators that would show that the economy has done poorly under the administration of this government.

Now, the government will say in its defence, well, we have had a recession, and it is partly because of that. That is true to some extent, but we suffered a recession in the Pawley years as well, between '81 and '88, and the real truth, of course, is found out by comparing the rate of growth in Manitoba with the rate of growth in Canada in those periods of time.

You can go down the list, and I can show the figures and give you the charts if you want, Madam Speaker, if members like, that Manitoba performed relatively better in the Pawley NDP years than it has done in the Filmon years, relative to the Canadian average.

Canada has experienced recession as Manitoba has, so we are comparing apples with apples. We are saying, how did we do relatively in the Pawley NDP years and how did we do relatively in the Filmon years? I will say categorically, looking at the 10 or 12 basic economic indicators that we have, that Manitoba did far, far better during the NDP in office.

* (1740)

Madam Speaker, there are a lot of issues. The people of Manitoba, yes, they made a decision, but there is always another day of reckoning. There will always be another, and the people will pass judgment then again and we will see what they happen to say.

I guess I have spoken longer than I actually intended to. Initially I intended only to speak for a few minutes, but with the prompting of some members opposite I guess I got a bit carried away. So, Madam Speaker, there are a lot of interesting issues that I know will come up, and I do certainly look forward to the debate in this Legislature. I trust there will be more light than heat, and under your guidance I am sure we will hopefully have more light than heat. So thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise to add my comments along with those of my colleagues with respect to the throne speech. I will add my comments about the throne speech in a few minutes. I am sure you will have patience to wait for those.

First I would like to start, Madam Speaker, by congratulating you on your appointment to the position of Speaker. We look forward to your guidance as we move through the various legislative sessions and your assistance as we attempt to perform our duties. So we congratulate you on your appointment.

I would also like to congratulate the election of the new members of the Legislative Assembly. It is indeed gratifying for us on this side, I know for sure, to welcome our five new members to this Legislative Assembly, and judging by the speeches that they have given here in this Chamber already it is going to be very interesting times here. We have noted that at least

several of our colleagues have had the opportunity to speak for the full 40 minutes and have run out of time. They had so many points to raise that their constituents had raised with them. So we look forward to their comments in the future as well.

We also congratulate the members opposite, the new MLAs, on their election as well. I am sure that they will work on behalf of their constituents' interests, and we look forward to their comments not only on the events of the House, Madam Speaker, but on their own government's legislation that is going to be coming forward in this Legislative Assembly. So we look forward to their comments and hope that they will represent their constituents' interests and they will comment at every opportunity on their own government's legislation. We look forward to that.

I would like to welcome the other members of the House, Madam Speaker, on their re-election. There are many new members. I believe one of my colleagues has already pointed out that it is one of the rare occasions in this House where we had such a small turnover in the election process that we have seen over the number of years. I know my colleague the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is commenting from his seat. Of course, we all know what happened to some of his colleagues, but we will not comment any further on that matter.

We also welcome back the table officers, the Pages and the other staff of the Legislative Assembly, Madam Speaker. We look forward to their efforts and thank them for their efforts in the past. They have been quite helpful in support of us in the performance of our duties.

In this provincial election I want to comment for a few moments on the events that transpired in both the 1990 and 1995 provincial general election in which I had the very good fortune and opportunity to take part. In 1990, Madam Speaker, we had the opportunity to gain some 50 percent of the support of the vote cast in the 1990 general election when we were able to achieve some 43,063 votes of support. In the 1995 general election we increased that support through the hard work of many, many volunteers within the constituency of Transcona. We increased from 50 percent up to

about 59 percent of the vote cast, a 9 percent increase election over election. We were able to achieve through the efforts of many a total vote count of just under 5,200 votes which is a significant increase, some 900-vote increase in those times, so we would like to thank the electorate of the constituency of Transcona for their continuing and ongoing support. We will pledge to continue to work diligently on their behalf to represent their interests in this Chamber and within the province of Manitoba as well as in the constituency, so I thank the constituents of Transcona for that continuing and ongoing support.

I want to raise a few points. I know there are several of my colleagues who would like to comment here today, but I want to talk about some of the election issues, things that I encountered on the doorstep throughout the election campaign. I had the opportunity to talk to many thousands of my constituents not only before the election campaign, because I was canvassing door to door, but also during the election campaign where we talked to several thousand constituents as well.

One of the issues that stands out in my mind the most in this election campaign is the number of people that I encountered on the doorstep who were without work. It is a very serious issue within my constituency. Whether I was talking to people who were parents with children without jobs, or young people themselves that were looking for work and could not find work, they were to the point of frustration, not being able to find that employment.

I have here in front of me today a resume for an individual who said to me the next person that comes knocking on his door and he has the chance to talk to he is going to give them his resume, because he was so frustrated in his efforts to find employment.

This is typical of several people I encountered on the doorstep. I also talked to several young people who were in the process of packing up their household belongings, loading them into a moving truck and leaving the province of Manitoba. They did not have that much time to talk to me. They just said there were no economic opportunities for them in this province, no prospect of jobs. They had exhausted all of their

avenues for employment and were leaving Manitoba and were moving west. That was frustrating to me because these were young people that the province of Manitoba is resting its future on, and we thought that we would have had opportunities for them to remain within the province. They were frustrated that they could not achieve the employment and they were leaving.

I also encountered people in my constituency who raised the issue about the benefits, and I use the term benefits in the sense that it is monies that are paid to people for foster families to look after foster children. I encountered families themselves that were struggling to survive but cared for foster children and were not being adequately compensated by the government departments for the care of those foster children, and they raised this issue with me on several occasions.

It was also interesting to note that health care was an important issue in my constituency and still is an important issue. I had many people, not only seniors but young people as well, that were very concerned and still are concerned about the health care issue. They were concerned that the services were not going to be there for them when they felt that they may have to make use of those health care services. They were very worried that there is going to be a continual or further erosion of health care services. We listened to the comments that were made here in Question Period by my colleagues with respect to the erosion of health care services.

I would like to thank the seniors of my community, many of them who assisted me throughout the election campaign raising the awareness of the health care issue not only with their own colleagues in the facilities where they were living but also other members of the community. I would not be standing here today if it were not for their support throughout the election campaign and through the previous five years that we have had the opportunity to be here.

I also had a chance to talk about issues relating to the environmental matters that have been affecting my community. I know the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings) who is here with us this afternoon has had some input into this process over the last five years

because I have raised this matter with him a number of times. It is one of the furniture manufacturing plants within my constituency who, in fairness to them, have made some efforts to resolve the environmental issues.

An Honourable Member: Do you want to close them down, Daryl? Do not be silly.

Mr. Reid: No, I am not going to close them down. The plant representatives—I know the Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey) thinks that because that is his perception when anybody raises the issue of environmental matters. This is an issue that was very, very important to my constituents and has been that way since March of 1990. It was an issue in the 1990 campaign, and it has been an issue every year since. It was an issue in this election campaign.

* (1750)

To the plant's credit and to the credit of the hard work of the residents group, TRAP, this operation has now moved into the position where they are going to be installing some biofiltration equipment and have come forward with a target completion date which is going to go through several steps starting May 31 and concluding by August 10 of this summer when there is going to be a commissioning and start-up of the pollution control equipment.

An Honourable Member: That is community action.

Mr. Reid: Community action solved this problem. When I asked for, and we had numerous meetings with the Environment department officials, wrote letters to the Minister of Environment (Mr. Cummings), nothing, absolutely nothing was done to help the residents of my community. Even this past week when I had meetings with the residents group in the community they still tell me today the biggest stumbling block to this whole process has been the Department of Environment and the minister responsible. That is still their position to this day.

I must say that even when we are moving to the stage of resolution of this matter, the Department of Environment stuck their fingers into the pie and delayed the process so that this plant could start up the

environmental emission equipment. After five years of the Environment department washing their hands of this process, they now say they want to have some involvement, and their only involvement was to delay the process further, something that I find appalling. I do not know how the minister can sit there and not make some comments with his department officials and find out why they would delay this project when they did not want to have any involvement for the last five years. This is an issue which I hope will be resolved through the hard work of the constituents, the residents group TRAP and the many, many residents within the community of Transcona.

One of the issues that is still lingering—and I find it very strange that this government will talk and put money into the Winnipeg Jets and into a new arena and fight to put that money in there, and we had in 1990, a \$60-million budget for the CN Transcona Shops which is now down to \$40 million annual budget, and they will not fight to save that budget and the jobs that we have associated with that budget for the city of Winnipeg and for the province of Manitoba. You will fight as a government to put money into a new arena and the Jets, but you will not fight to save a budget from leaving the province and the jobs that are associated with it. I do not understand the logic of that. There are jobs that are associated with it. There are real people involved here, but perhaps, as my colleague says, they do not vote right. Maybe that is what the government's thoughts are in this matter.

The government said when the CN announced in October '94 that they were going to bring the customer service centre to Winnipeg and that it is going to mean 300 jobs for the city of Winnipeg and for the province of Manitoba—and what have we seen since then?

An Honourable Member: Hot air.

Mr. Reid: Exactly. Hot air. We lost 108 rail Traffic Control jobs to the city of Edmonton right after that announcement was made for the customer service centre here. Then, a day after the election campaign was over, the announcement came out for the loss of over 200 jobs, more jobs lost from the Transcona plants. Just a coincidence, I suppose. So here we are, there were supposed to be 300 jobs for the customer

service centre coming here, and already we have lost more than that.

I do not understand why the government is not actively interested or involved in trying to save those well-paying jobs for the railway employees of this province and the budgets that are associated with it. You all know over there—you are all supposed to be astute fiscal managers—that for every dollar you have in the province here there is a three-to-one spin-off for those. So, if you have a \$40-million budget, you are going to lose \$120 million from the provincial economy.

Why you do not want to take action to save that is beyond me, but I will continue to fight on behalf of my constituents and the jobs that are associated with those budgets.

An Honourable Member: Do they play hockey?

Mr. Reid: Some of them do play hockey but in the minor leagues, in the sense that they have employee teams. Maybe that is what we need to do. Maybe we need to give all those rail employees hockey sticks and put them on the ice, and then the government will come forward with the money to help them.

I want to make this my last comment here in this Throne Speech Debate, Madam Speaker. I make reference to a constituent of mine, Mr. Darcy Bruce. Mr. Darcy Bruce is now deceased. He was a supporter of mine and our party in Transcona for a long, long time. Darcy was a rail worker. He was a colleague of mine for a number of years. He had a heart condition. His heart surgery was delayed, was postponed. In his last wish that he had, even though he did not know he was dying—he thought he was going to have the surgery—he asked his family to take him to the advance polls so that he could vote, because he thought he was going to be in hospital on election day. Because his surgery was postponed, he did vote in the advance polls, but he died before election day came about.

Here was an individual who was concerned about the health care system, yes, but he put the concerns that he had with respect to his right to vote in an election as an equally important thing that he wanted to do. It turned

out to be his last major undertaking, because he died just shortly after he had voted.

I would like to extend to the family of Darcy Bruce, to his wife and to his daughter our sympathy and our thanks for the support that they have shown over the years. We will continue to work to raise issues like these, to show there are health care situations that are occurring and that are affecting real people out there. We need to make sure that those services are available so that that surgery is not postponed, so people do not lose their lives as a result of those decisions.

I have other comments that I would like to put on the record as well, Madam Speaker, but I will save them for another day to give others of my colleagues here today wishing to speak the opportunity to do so.

With those few comments I would like to thank you for the opportunity to raise these thoughts here today. Thank you.

Mr. Oscar Lathlin (The Pas): Madam Speaker, I just have a couple of minutes left. Perhaps afterwards I can be allowed to come back and finish the rest of my remarks.

Let me start off by bringing greetings from the good people of the riding of The Pas, the town of The Pas, Opaskwayak Cree Nation, Grand Rapids, Easterville, Moose Lake, Cross Lake, Norway House, Cormorant and Wanless.

Madam Speaker, I am, of course, grateful to be here to return for a second term. People in The Pas right after the election suggested that I change my name. I wanted the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) to hear about those people who wanted me to change my name. I did approach Vital Statistics and really wanted to change my name. The people in The Pas wanted me to change my name to Landslide Lathlin. I think I will just leave my name the way it is.

I want to thank also those constituents who reside in my riding, the communities that I just mentioned, all of those constituents who have supported me for four and a half years now and going into my second term. In my

speech on election night, Madam Speaker, I made remarks to the effect that I was grateful for my return to the Legislature, and also I made a pledge to those constituents including the ones who were present on election night at headquarters that I would continue to try to represent my riding the best way I know how.

Next I want to, of course, congratulate you, Madam Speaker, in your new position as Speaker of the House. I know because I have been here four and a half years now and have been able to observe what the previous Speaker had to go through, all the sensitivities that he had with respect to the job, particularly those new members. I remember when I first came here in September 1990 I was nervous and did not know quite what I was getting myself into. I always remember that day when I was asking my first question, the Speaker

was very, very accommodating and allowed me to make some mistakes.

So I guess what I am saying here this evening is I hope that you will carry that tradition and that sensitivity, particularly to new members, and that we will have decorum in the Chamber and that there will be fairness. I congratulate you. I wish you well in the new job. I know you have had experience for the past four and a half years, so the job is not entirely new to you.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., I am leaving the Chair with the understanding that we will reconvene at eight this evening, at which time the honourable member for The Pas will have 35 minutes remaining.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Monday, May 29, 1995

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