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Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
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DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
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GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Ind. Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Ind. Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
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MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
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MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
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TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 27, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

At 1:30 p.m., all members and guests standing, the Sergeant-at-Arms, carrying the Mace shoulder high and followed by the Speaker and Clerks of the Legislative Assembly, entered the Chamber and proceeded along the west side. The Speaker took post on the east side of the Chamber, the Clerks took post on the west side of the Chamber and the Sergeant-at-Arms returned along the east side of the Chamber to the main entrance where he stood and awaited the arrival of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Premier, members of the Executive Council, military and civil aides, and officers comprised of the officer escort met in the Lieutenant Governor's reception room.

The Premier, members of the Executive Council, military and civil aides, and officer escort accompanied His Honour from the reception room to the Chamber in the following order:

*The civil aide on the right;
the military aide on the left;
the officer escort;
the members of the Executive Council;
the Premier; and then
the Lieutenant Governor.*

At the main entrance, the military and civil aides, the officer escort, members of the Executive Council and the Premier halted and turned inward to allow the Lieutenant Governor to advance to the head of the officer escort where His Honour was met by the Mace.

Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms (Mr. Garry Clark): His Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

The Lieutenant Governor then, preceded by the Mace carried shoulder high, and followed on his left by the military aide and on his right by the civil aide, proceeded along the west side of the Chamber to the throne. The Premier proceeded along the east side and stood on the floor on the east side of the Chamber. The members of the Executive Council took their places.

The military aide took up his position on the east side of the throne, and the civil aide took up his position on the west side of the Chamber.

The officer escort was positioned on the west side of the throne.

The Lieutenant Governor seated himself on the throne; the Mace made obeisance and retired to the east side of the Chamber.

The civil aide advanced from the position he had taken on the west side of the Chamber and, after the usual obeisance on each step, handed the Lieutenant Governor the Speech from the Throne.

The civil aide then retired, step by step, backwards and took up his position on the west side of the Chamber.

The Lieutenant Governor seated the House.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Hon. W. Yvon Dumont (Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Manitoba): Madam Speaker and members of the Manitoba Legislature, I welcome you to the Fourth Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba.

I am in the final year of my term as Lieutenant Governor of our great province, and in the normal course of events, this will be my last opportunity to participate in the parliamentary tradition of the reading of the Speech from the Throne when our government advises members and citizens of its proposals for the coming year. In fulfilling my duties as Lieutenant Governor, I have particularly enjoyed the countless opportunities to meet Manitobans engaged in their daily activities. As a province we have much to be proud of, and I compliment all members of the Legislature for their commitment to serve our citizens and uphold the principles of democracy based on a constitutional monarchy.

I was honoured to represent the people of Manitoba in welcoming His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh to our province earlier this year. A few

months ago I had the sad duty to open the Blue Room in our Legislative Building to some 10,000 Manitobans who came to write personal messages of condolence on the tragic passing of the Princess of Wales.

Throughout 1997 we have enjoyed good economic news and have witnessed continuing strong economic expansion. Over the last decade our economy has undergone a remarkable transformation and renewal. That process is not yet complete, but with only two years left before a new century begins, Manitoba is recognized across the continent and abroad as one of the top provinces in Canada for new investment opportunities and sustained growth. This spring, however, the people of our province faced one of our most difficult challenges: the second worst flood in recorded history and the worst flood this century. Manitobans worked together, with the help of Canadians from across the country, including agencies such as the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and religious groups. The efforts of our Canadian Armed Forces were outstanding. Together we met that challenge, proving once more that the true spirit of Manitobans comes to the fore in times of adversity. Our civil service displayed outstanding professionalism and commitment in fulfilling their role.

* (1335)

No one was prouder than I, as your Lieutenant Governor, to witness the bravery, stamina and determination as Manitobans fought to protect their homes and livelihoods. The visual images of the flood-ravaged Red River Valley stand as a testament to our human spirit. Special commendation must go to the many thousands of young people who, day after day, worked side by side to save homes and neighbourhoods. At such a young age, they have left a lasting contribution which we will all remember with pride.

Manitobans also came to the aid of those outside our province. In April, when our American neighbours were coping with the flood and were also trying to restore their electrical transmission systems from a severe wind and ice storm, Manitoba Hydro sent more than 100 personnel and 100 vehicles to aid in the effort. Our Crown corporation supervised and co-ordinated the efforts not only of its own crews but of those from

several other electric utilities, acting in our typical spirit of good neighbours.

Significant financial resources were spent in fighting the flood and even more are being spent reconstructing and rebuilding our communities, as well as for flood proofing communities and property against future floods. While the great majority of those evacuated are back in their residences, there are still those who, unfortunately, have more work to be done before they too can return to regular activities and to their homes.

Emergency staff were able to respond faster than ever before in meeting the needs of flood victims with temporary housing, financial assistance, trauma counselling and other services working out of flood recovery offices. We recognize that the recovery is a long-term process, and my government is committed to continue working with the people of Manitoba to rebuild and restore our communities. These have been extraordinarily difficult times, but together we are working through them. The assistance package offered to flood victims has been modified and improved. More than 4,000 private claims for flood damage compensation have been processed to date.

We await reports from the independent Manitoba Water Commission and from the International Joint Commission, which was charged by the Governments of Canada and the United States of America to review aspects of trans-border water flows and flooding. Components of the water management developments proposed by our neighbours to the south warrant ongoing monitoring and review. Those water projects, while initially designed to benefit local residents, may create serious problems for Manitobans and Canadians. My government will continue to work with our national government to protect our interests.

My ministers advise me that the total cost of eligible expenses under the Disaster Financial Assistance arrangements will be in excess of \$200 million. Our government will be cushioning the impact on the most severely impacted municipalities by absorbing a greater than normal proportion of their costs. In keeping with our May 1 flood agreement our federal and provincial governments announced an initial \$24 million Flood Proofing Program for those residents and communities of the Red River Valley most negatively affected by the

flood. Recognizing that individuals needed financial assurances to make important decisions regarding the protection of their properties, my government added \$34 million to the Flood Proofing Program to include many more of the residents affected by the flood. More than 1,700 individual applications have been received. We are awaiting further decisions from the federal government on their cost-sharing in this program.

Recently, the governments of Manitoba and Canada announced the Jobs and Economic Restoration Initiative designed to provide \$26 million in financial assistance to affected businesses, farm owners and not-for-profit organizations to help restore operations to pre-flood conditions and for the repair of rental properties.

Despite the flood, our Manitoba economy is strong, performing among the best in the country. Our province continues to enjoy among the lowest unemployment rates, experiencing seven consecutive months with an unemployment rate below 7 percent. This is the best performance since 1981. More Manitobans are working than in any previous year.

* (1340)

Our growth in exports to the United States, our largest trade market, has been recorded in double digits for six straight years. With total merchandise exports now exceeding \$6 billion annually, Manitoba is well positioned for continued economic progress.

My government has set out a vision for our future based on a sound framework that recognizes the diversity and balance in our economy and the vast potential of our human and natural resources. As we near the end of this century, it is appropriate to reaffirm our vision and goals for the next century.

My government's vision for the future is one of shared and growing economic prosperity and providing and protecting essential services of health, education and family support for Manitobans.

My government believes that it is important to maintain a sound financial base to preserve, enhance and fund essential services and to support long-term,

strategic investments. A fair and competitive tax system complements that financial base.

* (1345)

We are in our third consecutive year of budgetary surpluses and will, in the next fiscal year, enjoy our fourth consecutive surplus budget. Our provincial debt is being repaid and the rewards and benefits of our balanced budgets will become even more apparent.

My ministers are consulting Manitobans to ensure that as many citizens as possible can provide their suggestions on how to share the benefits of fiscal diligence and financial responsibility equitably and to direct the benefits to the highest priorities. Spending taxpayers' money wisely will continue to be a priority.

My ministers have previously stated their firm belief that a genuine partnership approach to shared challenges can and will strengthen and unify our country. My government remains committed to pursuing partnerships with our national government, provincial governments and others to forge the links necessary to promote sound economic and social progress.

Strong partnerships are a key to the unity of our country. The national unity initiative of nine provincial Premiers and two territorial leaders is but one such example. The decision by members to participate in an all-party approach to unity is further evidence that nonpartisan co-operation serves Manitoba's best interests. Our success with two previous task forces has shown the merits of that approach, which has given our province a strong national voice.

My ministers are proud to be Canadians and to defend Canadian interests. However, they will also speak with a clear voice to defend Manitoba's interests within our nation and to ensure Manitoba receives fair and equitable treatment in all respects on all matters.

New co-operative partnerships have been developed over the past year and more are anticipated in the future, particularly as our federal and provincial governments work together on such ventures as the Team Canada trade missions, infrastructure invest-

ments, health care and the design and implementation of the new national child benefit system. These past successes are all excellent models for more positive co-operation in the future.

My ministers believe in the importance of sharing the economic benefits we are enjoying amongst all Manitobans in all regions. Inclusion of all Manitobans in our economic progress and the resulting social benefits is a worthy goal. Our aboriginal population is speaking more effectively than ever before, and their aspirations are at last being recognized as important national priorities.

Our government is pleased to have completed the negotiation of treaty land entitlement settlements in Manitoba to fulfill outstanding treaty obligations, with all 26 bands in Manitoba with validated outstanding entitlements. The implementation of these agreements will fulfill a sixty-five-year-old obligation of the provincial government.

These settlements will eliminate uncertainty regarding land access and security of land tenure, which in turn should encourage increased northern economic development.

My government is on schedule to meet our commitment to help northern communities become self-reliant while providing an acceptable standard of living to their citizens. We are currently working with communities on a plan to provide more local autonomy and individual self-reliance in order to foster economic, social and environmental development through community action.

Earlier this year, four northern communities dependent on local diesel generation were connected to the central hydroelectric grid with five more communities expected to join the grid in 1998. The completion of the project will enhance the quality of life, provide economic infrastructure benefits and significantly reduce the consumption of nonrenewable diesel fuel in these communities.

Four of the Northern Flood Agreement First Nations have ratified comprehensive implementation agreements.

In recent years, provinces have had to take strong action to deal with systematic and very significant unilateral reductions in federal transfer payments. Canadians who grew up believing that the national government paid half the costs of health care and other social programs are often very surprised when they learn that the federal share is now under one-fifth when actual cash payments are counted and around a third when tax point transfers are included. Manitobans want a more equitable partnership restored.

Now it is time to look to the future and to strengthen the arrangements which exist between the two orders of government. Premiers from all provinces have pledged to work together, and with their federal counterpart on the redesign of the financial arrangements underpinning major social programs in Canada. This work will complement efforts to develop an overall framework agreement for planning, managing and delivering social programs more effectively. It will also ensure ongoing co-operation and will rebuild trust in the federal-provincial partnership.

In addition, in the year ahead, my government intends to:

- propose a strengthening of the national equalization system as we work toward renewal of that vital program beginning in April 1999;

- propose measures to strengthen federal support to health, education and training and family programs, current federal transfers not being adequate for present or future needs in any province;

- reinvest funds expected to be freed up as a result of the introduction of the National Child Benefit, to better assist children in need and especially those in families of the working poor;

- support principles to avoid discriminatory federal tax and expenditure policies in the future; and

- support the development of a new long-term national infrastructure agreement, based on the best features of the first program, which is nearing completion.

My government reaffirms its commitment to education renewal initiatives aimed at improving the

quality of education for the benefit of Manitoba's students. The education system will continue to be strengthened by increased emphasis on the core subjects, establishing regular assessment to measure student performance and giving parents and the community a stronger voice in school decision making. Manitoba will pursue collaborative efforts with other provincial and territorial governments to enhance curriculum development.

Il demeure toujours très important pour mon gouvernement que les parents et la collectivité participent à l'éducation des jeunes au Manitoba. L'échange continu de renseignements avec les parents, la formation offerte aux enseignants, en milieu de travail, sur la participation communautaire et les forums destinés aux parents contribuent à la réalisation de cet objectif.

* (1350)

It is also important that our aboriginal youth realize their aspirations. My government will work with aboriginal communities and organizations to increase the graduation rate of aboriginal students, to increase their participation rate in training programs, to increase their overall labour market participation, and to ensure that the aboriginal perspective is incorporated in educational curricula and programming.

With aboriginal youth representing the fastest growing segment of the overall population, we need innovative strategies and initiatives to address their training and employment needs. Government can only meet these objectives through the development of effective partnerships and improved communications with the aboriginal community, other governments and the private sector.

Through consultation with teachers and school officials, my government will ensure that the results from the student testing program are utilized within schools to support the evaluation of individual student performance and within the department to review and revise the curricula as required to prepare our students for the 21st Century.

Earlier this year, my government accepted the opportunity to provide integrated employment

programs and services for Manitobans. The first new integrated employment centres are opening in several rural communities, with Winnipeg offices opening soon. This approach will help meet the needs of employers and communities in responding to the changing economy. Local participation in the planning and delivery of labour market development programs and services will be encouraged.

To ensure that our children have all the skills necessary to succeed in an increasingly technological society, my government will continue to implement initiatives to enhance access and availability of communications and information technologies. To help youth focus on the value of training and education, a new labour market-related Internet site accessible by students throughout the province will be unveiled. The site will describe information such as high-demand occupations and skills needed for specific jobs and will include research results demonstrating the value of training and post-secondary education.

To build a stronger connection between students in community colleges and universities and prospective employers, Manitoba will undertake a business mentorship project with the private sector by providing an incentive for employers to hire college or university students for part time work during the school year.

Making post-secondary education more accessible and encouraging greater numbers to pursue more post-secondary education and training are keys to our future. At their most recent annual conference, Premiers and territorial leaders pledged to work together and with the federal government to address student funding and debt. In the coming months my ministers will announce plans to assist in dealing with the debt-load problem confronting students.

My government will work with universities to ensure that their excellent record of research is maintained and that they benefit from the availability of research funding. Successful research programs at Manitoba's universities affect jobs and the strength of our advanced technologies available for Manitobans in the future.

My government has been working with Mennonite community post-secondary education institutions to develop a new university campus, bringing together

into one location the activities of several existing institutions. Enabling legislation will be introduced.

The revitalization of apprenticeship is an example of an ongoing commitment to achieving high standards in training excellence among government, management, employees and unions. Changes arising from the recent task force are being implemented.

In line with its commitment to enhancing education opportunities for women, my government will continue the highly successful Training for Tomorrow Scholarship Awards Program developed to encourage young women to enter training in mathematics, science and technology-based two-year diploma courses at community colleges.

Another challenge is addressing the multigenerational, special needs of Manitoba citizens. The greatest needs are those of disadvantaged Manitobans and at-risk youth. This challenge is being dealt with by partnering with community organizations, other governments, private and public sector agencies and businesses. An important instrument for meeting this challenge is the Child and Youth Secretariat which is co-ordinating the development of numerous prevention and early intervention initiatives, addressing issues such as nutrition, adolescent pregnancy, fetal alcohol syndrome, and generally at-risk youth.

* (1355)

Afin d'accroître la sécurité publique, nous augmenterons les ressources affectées à la prévention du crime et aux services destinés aux victimes. Par ailleurs, des fonds supplémentaires permettront la mise en oeuvre des recommandations du rapport sur la violence familiale au Manitoba.

To enhance public safety, the resources dedicated to crime prevention and to victims services will be increased. As well, new funding to implement the recommendations of the report on domestic violence in Manitoba will be made available.

My government recognizes the challenges posed by young persons who break the law, especially those committing violent crime. While the vast majority of our youth are responsible, law-abiding members of our

community, there is a clear need to act quickly and decisively where a young person does break the law. My government is committed to finding innovative and community-based methods to prevent crime from happening in the first place, and is equally committed to pressing the Government of Canada to amend the Young Offenders Act so that those youth who do break the law can be held accountable for their actions.

Crime prevention initiatives, including the development of an urban aboriginal diversion program, a community policing initiative in Portage la Prairie, enhancements to the Winnipeg Police Service Curfew Registry, additional sports camps, and restorative justice initiatives will receive new support.

Significant progress has been made in assisting Manitobans to enter the work force and achieve greater self-sufficiency. My government will be moving forward to build on the successes achieved to date. In co-operation with community and business groups, the Employment First focus in welfare reform has emphasized getting income assistance clients into jobs. In the coming year, my ministers will continue to build on the Employment First approach in the strong belief that employment is the best form of social security and the surest way of avoiding poverty in the long run. The availability of affordable child care is a critical factor in the successes to date.

My ministers advise that their efforts in welfare reform have generated positive results, with the number of single-parent and general-assistance clients decreasing by over 1,700 cases, with significantly fewer municipal assistance cases. As a result of these positive trends, single-parent and municipal-assistance caseloads have reached their lowest point since 1990. General-assistance cases are at their lowest level since 1980. In addition to those who have achieved financial self-sufficiency, some 900 provincial clients have reduced their dependency on income assistance through employment.

Work is proceeding towards the implementation of a single system of income assistance in Winnipeg which will reduce the administrative overlap and duplication involved in two levels of government providing similar services.

My government has been working actively with other jurisdictions toward the renewal of federal-provincial financial arrangements to support vocational rehabilitation programming for persons with disabilities. A new funding framework will place greater emphasis on activities which will assist Canadians with disabilities in getting and keeping jobs. Throughout the discussions my government has held ongoing consultations with representatives of the disabled community to obtain their views, which support a shift toward an increased focus on employability for vocational rehabilitation programs. My government will continue to rely on their active participation as related provincial programming is redesigned.

Projects are being implemented throughout Manitoba to support families at risk in seeking alternatives to the more usual interaction with the child welfare system. In these projects, families will participate in problem solving, care planning and decision making to encourage responsibility for developing healthy, safe plans for children.

In 1996, Canada's Premiers identified reduction of child poverty as a critical priority. Since then, my ministers have been actively involved in the development of the new National Child Benefit together with the federal, provincial and territorial governments. The National Child Benefit marks an important step forward for Canada's children. Its development is strong evidence that governments can work well in partnership when they direct their efforts toward a common goal. However, it is essential that the federal government's investment in the National Child Benefit continues to grow significantly in the future if the objectives of this important initiative are to be fully achieved.

* (1400)

Participating governments are acknowledging that children are the future of our society and of our economic life and that investments in a good start in life can ensure that children will become healthier, productive adults. In this spirit, all participating governments have agreed to the three objectives of the National Child Benefit, which are to help prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty, to promote

attachment to the workforce by ensuring that families will always be better off as a result of working and to reduce overlap and duplication through closer harmonization and simplified administration. By ensuring that families are always better off financially when they are working, the program will allow the income support paid on behalf of children to continue when a family moves from income assistance into the workforce. In the coming months, my government will proceed to introduce, as part of its National Child Benefit reinvestments, a range of benefits and services to assist families to enter and remain in the workforce.

Manitoba will continue to monitor the federal government's commitment that aboriginal children living on-reserve will benefit from the National Child Benefit reinvestments on the same basis as other Canadian children.

My ministers advise me that the newly announced, leading edge Winnipeg Blood Transfusion Service Centre is but one component of an improved and safer national blood system.

In our province, completion of the development of regional health authorities will bring a broader range of services closer to home. The Winnipeg Hospital Authority and the Brandon Health Authority have already begun to have a major influence on the way services are delivered. For example, there will also be upgraded neonatal intensive care services.

My ministers are working with the new hospital authorities on a plan to better utilize and enhance high technology diagnostic equipment. Additional resources will be available to ensure that waiting lists can be reduced just as recently announced measures will reduce waiting lists for knee and hip surgery.

The Winnipeg Community and Long Term Care Authority will pull the spectrum of community health services together under one umbrella to deliver more effective approaches in the priority areas of mental health community alternatives, home and continuing care services, and long-term care.

Mes ministres m'ont informé de nouvelles approches en matière de prévention des maladies transmissibles. Les lignes directrices modifiées concernant le vaccin

antipoliomyélique administré aux enfants de la province illustrent bien ces nouvelles approches. Nous améliorerons également les services de prévention et de traitement des dépendances chez les adolescents.

Investing in the fundamentals also means that capital projects will be focused on those areas of highest priority such as cancer care. In keeping with the new regional structure, regional priorities for capital investment will also be taken into consideration.

Increased emphasis will be placed on preventing illness, protecting health and promoting wellness. For example, my ministers will emphasize such measures as diabetes prevention and aboriginal wellness. A complementary strategy to promote physical activities will also be put forward.

Because of the limited size of the Canadian market, Manitoba's producers who have traditionally been traders must have access to larger world markets. The progress made over the past decade in opening world markets has been of exceptional benefit to Manitoba businesses. Our international exporters have enjoyed remarkable success, with total exports from our province doubling over the past five years.

My government remains committed to the full implementation of the Agreement on Internal Trade. Impediments to trade within Canada impose an unnecessary and unacceptable burden on our economy and counteract our efforts to ensure more open and secure access to world markets.

Our province and representatives of a number of Manitoba companies and organizations will participate in the January 1998 Team Canada Trade Mission to Mexico, Brazil, Argentina and Chile, which offers a unique opportunity to promote the 1999 Pan American Games. The high level of recognition and support for the games in Mexico and South America will provide our province with an increased profile in these important Latin American markets.

The Manitoba agriculture and agri-food sector is achieving significant success in both diversification and adding value to our primary products. My government will continue to encourage crop diversification and value-added activities as grain producers successfully

adapt to the challenge of change in the post-Crow Rate era.

Research and development are keys to continued success and prosperity. My government is responding aggressively with the Agri-Food Research and Development Initiative which will support development and research in all sectors of the industry.

To support sustainable agricultural diversification and the continued expansion of the livestock industry, new regulations setting high standards for the management of livestock wastes will be enacted.

My government recognizes the importance of transportation in facilitating trade and investment with our largest trading partners. My ministers have developed a three-year strategy to promote the Mid-Continent Trade and Transportation Corridor extending south to Mexico. They will work with our southern neighbours to develop trade and business linkages, to reduce regulatory barriers and to promote increased safety through the use of technology. The Churchill rail line with its northern terminal at the Port of Churchill is an important link on the north-south corridor. There is good reason to believe that, under new management, both the port and the line should have a far better chance to demonstrate their value and potential.

My government will co-operate with the federal government in its promised review of all the outstanding issues affecting the grain handling and transportation system.

My government is also continuing to lead the provinces in their efforts to convince the federal government to support a National Highways Program. Such a program is urgently needed to upgrade and maintain our national highway infrastructure. It is essential to enhance Canada's competitiveness and promote sustained economic growth. We must convince the federal government of the benefits of reinvesting a reasonable share of the money it receives annually from Manitobans through federal road use fuel taxes in our highways of national and strategic importance.

Manitoba Hydro's announcement of no rate increase for next year continues the proud accomplishment of

having the lowest electricity rates in North America, thereby contributing to ongoing productivity and economic growth. The sustainable development of our renewable hydraulic resources offers us a permanent supply of low-cost electric power without the global warming concerns of coal-fired and gas generation or the many concerns of nuclear power. During the last session, legislation was approved giving Manitoba Hydro the flexibility to operate in the future as a stronger Crown-owned utility. The results of this initiative are positive and significant. My government is confident that the legislative changes will enhance Manitoba Hydro's ability to increase the export of renewable energy, providing economic benefits for our province.

Manitoba will continue to do its part to help Canada meet its international obligations to address climate change. As citizens of the world, we will be completing an action plan to first stabilize and then reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases in Manitoba. This challenge is seen by my government as an opportunity to strengthen the competitiveness of our industries, to build upon our abundant hydroelectric resource and to create a legacy for future generations.

Close to 100 years of exploration and mining success have spurred the growth of major mining centres such as Thompson, Flin Flon, Snow Lake and Lynn Lake. From these hubs a strong infrastructure spreads across the north in support of increasing exploration and mining activity. As well, new frontiers await development in the northeastern part of the province, with its extensive tracts of underexplored mineral deposits.

* (1410)

Mining continues to rank as Manitoba's second largest primary resource industry, with the value of mineral production at nearly \$1 billion. In southern Manitoba revenue from Crown oil and gas rights leases reached an all-time record high in 1997.

During this session, amendments to The Cooperatives Act will be introduced to ensure that co-operatives continue to develop within our province. Current restrictions limiting the raising of capital will be removed to facilitate the development of new

generation co-operatives which require significant amounts of capital to meet their operational needs. Tremendous potential exists for co-operatives in developing new opportunities for value-added processing in the agricultural sector.

As Manitoba's economy continues to grow in all sectors, the immediate benefits are reflected in the expansion of existing and new businesses. The creation of new employment opportunities and the expanding and specialized labour market requirements must be met through local, national and international recruitment. While Manitoba's unemployment rates have declined and the number of career options have increased for the youth of our province, offshore recruitment of highly skilled immigrants will continue to be required and will be facilitated through the Canada-Manitoba Immigration Agreement.

Projections for 1997 reflect an increase in the number of immigrants selecting Manitoba as their future permanent residence, continuing the positive trend started in 1996. My government will continue to promote and market Manitoba as a preferred destination for immigrants.

My ministers continue to explore new opportunities for growth in the rural economy and, in conjunction with the Rural Advisory Committee, will engage rural Manitobans in strategy sessions at the 1998 Rural Forum to set new directions in the areas of youth entrepreneurship and leadership, rural information technology development and use, an expanded economic renewal role for local government and special issues facing northern community economic development. This will ensure that future activities and initiatives reflect the priorities of rural and northern Manitobans.

Manitoba, in co-operation with the other western provinces and territories, will develop and launch new regional action plans for northern economic development. All jurisdictions have confirmed their commitment to working as a region with aboriginal organizations, northern business and community leaders to advance northern development.

My government's support for conservation districts led to the creation of two new districts this year,

bringing the total to nine, with another district expected to be formed in the coming year. Approximately half of the province's agri-land mass is now included in conservation districts and is part of a plan to conserve soil and water resources for future generations.

My government will be bringing forward amendments to The City of Winnipeg Act during this session, consistent with Winnipeg City Council's decision to reorganize the city's administration. In the coming year, announcements will be made on new urban initiatives related to neighbourhood infrastructure, housing for high risk groups and commercial revitalization of Main Street.

With the federal government withdrawing from the ownership and administration of social housing, provinces are being asked to assume responsibility for the entire social housing portfolio. Final decisions are yet to be made; however, the province's future role and responsibilities in the management and operation of the portfolio could change significantly.

An Employment Standards Code will be introduced to consolidate three existing statutes, The Employment Standards Act, The Payment of Wages Act and The Vacations with Pay Act. The unified code will simplify and clarify the existing laws and bring them up to date.

Manitobans and Canadians have always valued our democracy and the basic rights and freedoms we enjoy. Next year, in 1998, the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly will be celebrated. The commemorative year of the Universal Declaration begins on December 10. My government joins with other governments across Canada in commemorating this special occasion. While we enjoy unparalleled human rights and freedoms in our country, we must remain ever vigilant to protect and promote them.

Early in this session, members will have placed before them amendments to The Elections Act and The Elections Finances Act based on recommendations from the Chief Electoral Officer.

Public sector reform and renewal continues. Our Service First Initiative is proceeding, with hundreds of

civil servants participating in our Better Methods and Better Systems projects. Technological improvements will enable our government to improve and enhance the service it provides to our citizens.

Across our province our citizens are eagerly looking forward to more opportunities to showcase their communities and their talents. Prestigious national and international sporting events will once again be hosted within our province, specifically the Grey Cup, the Canadian Curling Championships and the World Junior Hockey Tournament. The Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra will be celebrating its 50th season, while the Royal Winnipeg Ballet will be touring internationally, thrilling audiences as they have done for decades.

My ministers will continue their policies of prudent spending, strategic investments in our future, and pursuing policies that enhance the quality of life in our province.

In the course of this session, my ministers will lay before this Legislature a number of specific proposals for review. Members will also be asked to consider Estimates for the requirement for the public services of the province in the next fiscal year, as well as the most recent Public Accounts.

Je vous laisse maintenant aux nombreuses tâches que vous allez être appelés à accomplir fidèlement. Que la divine Providence vous éclaire au cours des délibérations nécessaires à l'exécution de ces tâches.

I leave you now to the faithful performance of your many duties and trust that, in meeting them, you may benefit from the guidance of Divine Providence in all your deliberations.

* * *

The civil aide advanced and, after obeisance, received the speech from the Lieutenant Governor and retired to the west side of the Chamber.

The Mace then made obeisance before the Lieutenant Governor and preceded him along the east side of the Chamber to the main entrance, accompanied by the Premier, the aides and the officer escort. All members and guests stood.

God Save the Queen and O Canada! were sung.

* (1420)

The Speaker proceeded to the Chair after His Honour retired from the House.

The Premier proceeded to his seat in the Chamber.

The Sergeant-at-Arms proceeded to the Speaker who was standing before the Chair. The Mace made obeisance and returned to the table.

Madam Speaker: O Eternal and Almighty God, from Whom all power and wisdom come. We are assembled here before Thee to frame such laws as may tend to the welfare and prosperity of our province. Grant, O Merciful God, we pray Thee, that we may desire only that which is in accordance with Thy Will, that we may seek it with wisdom, know it with certainty and accomplish it perfectly, for the Glory and Honour of Thy Name and for the welfare of all our people. Amen.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill 1—An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey), that leave be given to introduce Bill 1, An Act Respecting the Administration of Oaths of Office; Loi sur la prestation des serments d'entrée en fonction, and that the same be now received and read a first time.

Motion agreed to.

House Business

Madam Speaker: I wish to inform the House that in order to prevent mistakes, I have received a copy of the address of His Honour which was read.

I am also pleased to introduce to the House the six young people who have been selected to serve as Pages at this session. They are, beginning at my extreme right: Robyn Beninger, Boundary School Division; Sophia Radwanski, Seven Oaks School Division; Sara Katz, Winnipeg School Division; Melody Drolet, Winnipeg School Division; Andrea Stevens, St. James-Assiniboia School Division; Dave Grabowski, River East School Division.

Mr. Filmon: I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings), that the Votes and Proceedings of the House be printed, having first been perused by the Speaker, and that the Speaker do appoint the printing thereof, and that no person but such as the Speaker shall appoint do presume to print the same.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Filmon: I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Family Services (Mrs. Mitchelson), that the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor be taken into consideration tomorrow.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I move, seconded by the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae), that this House do now adjourn.

Madam Speaker: Before putting the question to the House, may I inform all present that a receiving line composed of Their Honours the Lieutenant Governor and Mrs. Dumont, the Premier and Mrs. Filmon, and the Speaker and Mr. Dacquay will form shortly in Room 200 at the north end of the building, and that refreshments will be served in Room 254 at the south end of the building in five minutes time.

Motion agreed to, and the House adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Friday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, November 27, 1997

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