



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, December 8, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

PRAYERS

Hog Industry
Marketing System

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

TABLING OF REPORTS

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table the following reports, copies of which have been previously distributed: the Annual Report of the Office of the Provincial Auditor, Operations of the Office, for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1999 and the Summer 1999 Report of the Office of the Provincial Auditor, Value-for-Money Audits.

I am also pleased to table the following reports: the 1998 Annual Report of the Ombudsman Access and Privacy; also a Special Report of the Ombudsman, a Privacy Snapshot dated September 1999.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the gallery where we have with us today from Sisler High thirty-six Grade 11 students under the direction of Mr. Chris Bandfield. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale).

Also, from Maples Collegiate, eleven Grades 9 to 12 students under the direction of Mr. Murray Goldenberg. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub).

From Sandy Bay School, fifteen Grade 9 students under the direction of Mr. John Paramor. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Ste. Rose (Mr. Cummings).

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

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) indicated that she is prepared to move back to the single-desk monopoly system of marketing hogs in our province, provided that it was the wish of a majority of producers.

My question to the Premier is: is this the policy of Today's NDP government in Manitoba?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of Today's NDP to listen to the people of Manitoba.

I recall almost three years to the day that we were proposing that there be a referendum for the sale of public assets after a government had broken its promise. Today's NDP will be bringing in legislation so that tomorrow our children and grandchildren will have the ownership of Crown corporations and will have a direct say if a government is going to break its word and try to sell those Crown corporations against the public will. That is Today's NDP, Mr. Speaker, not like yesterday's Conservative Party.

On the issue of hogs, our position was that there should be a vote of the producers to determine whether the marketing system would be the proposed system of the former Minister of Agriculture or the marketing system that existed in the past. The minister, yesterday, indicated clearly that she will be in consultation with the producers, and obviously we believe in consulting with the people most directly affected, and that is the hog producers themselves.

* (1335)

Mr. Filmon: Mr. Speaker, I point out to the Premier that the single-desk monopoly system that was brought in place in this province by a former NDP government was brought in place without any referendum approval of the hog producers.

Yesterday, during his remarks on the throne speech, the member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) indicated that he is opposed to dual marketing of hogs, so since the Premier did not answer the question, is that the position of the New Democratic government that it wants to move back to single-desk monopoly selling of hogs in this province?

Mr. Doer: First of all, the minister yesterday said, we have always said, that it will be the producers that will decide what should happen. The Conservatives did not give the producers the opportunity to have a say.

I have met with a number of producers, and I would believe the consensus of the minister and myself, based on listening to those speakers, is that the present system is working for the majority of them. We hope the Schneider's operation, if it proceeds, will even increase the prices even further for those producers, notwithstanding the fact that many of them almost went under last January, but the position of the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) that we will listen to the producers, that we will consult with the producers, is still the position of the government. If the producers like and feel the present system is producing the best opportunities for their investments, we certainly will support that.

Mr. Filmon: The point, Mr. Speaker, is that the former New Democrat government that brought in monopoly marketing of hogs in this province did not have the vote of the producers to do that. I am sure that he is aware, the Premier is or he should be, that 20 percent of the producers in this province produce 80 percent of the hogs today in the province.

Given that Michael McCain on several occasions, including this article in the Brandon Sun from December 3, 1997, said: We would not have made this investment without it—referring to dual marketing of hogs, and the investment, of course, is the \$117-million invest-

ment that Maple Leaf made in the plant in Brandon. Given that situation, did the Premier indicate during his discussions with Mr. Dodds, the CEO of Schneider's, the other day, that his government is considering reverting to single-desk monopoly selling of hogs in the province?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the government did not express that view to Mr. Dodds, nor did Mr. Dodds ask about that issue.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) basically has stated that we are listening to producers. Mr. Speaker, we are not, in the answer to the question, changing the situation back to the single-desk marketing system, but we did say we would continue to listen to the producers here in Manitoba. I think that the Minister of Agriculture has indicated that in her question that was posed yesterday, and certainly it was not a concern of Mr. Dodds at the meeting we had Monday afternoon.

The concern Mr. Dodds had was that the \$11 million of provincial money that was placed in the Brandon plant be made available to a similar investment, in fact, a larger investment, for the Schneider's plant here in Winnipeg. His concern was that he and his proposed investment be treated in a comparable way to the investment that was made by Maple Leaf, which added up, between the City of Brandon and the Province of Manitoba, to be \$19 million. Those are the questions he raised to us. He had the numbers from the Granny's Poultry operation; he had the numbers from the Portage la Prairie operation that was supported by the previous government; he had the numbers from the Brandon operation. He did not raise the issue of the marketing system as an issue with us. The Minister of Agriculture said that we are listening to producers and will continue to listen to them.

I do not think the former Premier should be alarmed in any way, shape or form. We are going to do what is best for the total industry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition, with a new question.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In order to help him make a decision, a decision that could

impact on potentially another thousand jobs in the expansion in Brandon and another 1,200 jobs in the expansion of Schneider's, would he be willing to write to the CEO of Schneider's and ask him whether or not the reversion to single-desk selling would have an impact on his decision?

Mr. Doer: I am not sure whether the Leader of the Opposition heard the answer to the question he posed. The answer to the question that he posed, in terms of my meeting with Mr. Dodds, is his concern about the \$11-million cheque signed by the former government to the new proposed Maple Leaf plant in Brandon. He has the numbers, and we have the numbers. Those are the concerns he had. We have agreed—

An Honourable Member: Just ask him about this. Just would you ask him about this.

Mr. Doer: You know, you are making allegations that are not true. You are making allegations about—Mr. Speaker, the CEO—
[interjection]

* (1340)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

An Honourable Member: This is a simple issue.

Mr. Doer: Well, it may be a simple issue to members opposite: write a cheque for \$11 million and do not do anything else. For us it is not a simple issue. Writing a cheque for \$11 million is not a simple issue. We believe strongly—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: The CEO of Schneider's is willing to invest \$125 million—

An Honourable Member: Is he willing to do it with a monopoly or—

Mr. Doer: Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition would allow me to answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

It is a serious question, and I want to give a serious answer. The CEO of Schneider's is willing to invest \$125 million in a plant in Winnipeg subject to the provincial government and the municipal government matching the same public investment made by the previous government and by the community of Brandon. Those were the only issues raised by the CEO to us. He felt very confident. In fact, he has people right now working with hog producers all across Manitoba to ensure that he could have the supply of hogs, particularly when you consider the numbers of hogs required for the Maple Leaf plant.

Mr. Dodds and I had agreed to work in a co-operative way with the City of Winnipeg, something that has not happened in the past, by the way, for economic development and to have our phones available at all times to make sure that if there is any breakdown in the technical negotiations, that that would not be an impediment for this project going forward. If Mr. Dodds wants to raise any issue with us, we will respond, but the answer to the question that you raised yesterday is we will continue to consult with producers. That does not mean we are going to change and go back to the single-desk method and members opposite can fear-monger all they want; it will get them nowhere.

Mr. Filmon: We are not the ones who are fear-mongering. The member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) indicated his opposition to dual marketing. The minister herself said she is prepared to reconsider the issue of dual marketing provided a majority of producers wanted it. Mr. Speaker, the Premier just made my point. He said that the CEO of Schneider's indicated that they are working directly with producers in order to facilitate this expansion. If he went to single-desk monopoly marketing, then the CEO could not work with individual producers to assure his supply. They would be cutting him off from that option, so my point is: will he ask the CEO, Mr. Dodds, whether or not a reversion to single-desk monopoly selling will cancel their plans?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the CEO, who is willing to invest \$125 million in a plant in—
[interjection] You know, the last time I looked, you are not the CEO of Schneider's. If you want

to be the surrogate representative for a company, that is fine. That is your option. But I have the feeling that the CEO of Schneider's does not need the surrogate representation of the Leader of the Opposition. In fact, the CEO of Schneider's, all he wants is to match what he considers to be pretty generous conditions that were given to his competitor in Brandon in the Maple Leaf grants that were made for training and infrastructure and other matters in the city of Brandon. All I have been asked to do with the CEO of the Schneider's plant is to deal with the comparability as they see it, not necessarily as we see it with the plant. We are not reverting back to single desk—as alleged—as stated by the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) in this House yesterday.

* (1345)

Health Care System Bed Openings

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

During the election campaign, Today's NDP promised to immediately open 100 new hospital beds with 100 new full-time nurses. That did not happen. On November 22, they ordered hospitals to open 100 new beds and staff them, and again that did not happen. Yesterday the Minister of Health promised that today those 100 new beds staffed would be opened. Can he tell me whether the beds are opened and staffed?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Yes, Mr. Speaker, again I thank the member for that question because it allows me to clarify the confused thinking on the part of the member. First off, I appreciate the confidence the member showed in members on this side of the House when she thought that overnight we could deal with the 11-year mess which was created by her government. As the member recognizes—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The second point that I want to point out, and as I

indicated to the member yesterday is on November 22, and I will again read from the press release. I know the member is having trouble—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I remind all members that exhibits are not allowed in the Chamber. Continue with your answer.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we indicated, opening of 138 new permanent beds by the end of April 2000. Health authorities in Winnipeg, Brandon and Thompson will have the flexibility to open 100 acute care beds as soon as December 1. In addition, we said that this would be one step in a process that we announced only less than two months after assuming office, after 11 disastrous years of poor health care management and long-term hallway medicine that were inflicted on this province by members opposite.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, now that the three deadlines have passed that the Minister of Health promised and committed to, will he indicate to us now when the hundred beds will be opened?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, we also indicated during the course of our debate that one of the real difficulties would be the fact that we have trouble recruiting nurses, and I will quote from my press release: that it would be very difficult to recruit nurses, and when one considers that the former government fired over a thousand nurses, and when one considers that the former government closed 1,400 acute care beds in this province, it certainly is a challenge. But I want to assure the member that today in Manitoba there are more beds open than there were yesterday or the day before, as a result of actions and plans that we announced on November 22.

St. Boniface Hospital Bed Closures

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the Minister of Health.

During the election campaign, the now Premier—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. On a new question?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, on a new question.

During the election campaign, the now Premier said, and I quote: If it means having our nurses rehired to have beds that we have already paid for staffed rather than having people in the hallways, then we do it.

Can the Minister of Health explain why one of the first decisions that Today's NDP made upon taking office was to close eight permanent acute medical beds at St. Boniface Hospital, beds which had never been closed before and remain closed today?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting that the members opposite, who at this time last year had hallways crowded, had not opened any beds, would have the gall to actually come forward with a question like that.

But I want to indicate to the member opposite that today 25 additional beds have opened in Winnipeg as a result of needs. There are 25 less people in the hallways today than there were yesterday as a result of the action plan we put in place on November 22. Tomorrow, there will be more beds in place for people in the hallways, that have been in the hallways for 18 months in this province as a result of lack of activity on the part of members opposite.

* (1350)

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see he has finally recognized he has not lived up to his election commitment or his election promise.

Can the minister explain how he can open 25 new interim beds today and more tomorrow when he could not find the nurses to staff the eight permanent beds that were closed two months ago and remain closed?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that, as a result of disastrous policies, the morale affecting and the situation affecting nurses in this province has reached a very critical level.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When I went from hospital—and I am glad the member was able to visit a hospital yesterday to see what conditions are in the hallway—to hospital, I was told three things by the nurses: first, get rid of bureaucracy, and we have done that by molding the two and we are working on that by putting the two authorities together; second, they said: open more beds, and we announced on November 22 that we would make beds available. There are more beds open today, there will be more beds opened tomorrow. Thirdly, they said: you have to do something about the nursing shortage, and we announced both on November 22, both on the day we assumed office, and now there will be a plan to deal with the disastrous situation that had been produced in this province as a result of their neglect and their not-caring attitude towards nurses for the past 11 years.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Since Today's NDP guaranteed that no hospital bed will be closed until there is sufficient space in personal care homes to ensure long-term patients will be cared for, can the Minister of Health tell us whether there are any more than eight permanent beds that have been secretly closed under their administration?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the member has to go back to November 1. On November 1, St. Boniface General Hospital closed eight medical beds and November 2 opened 10 beds, medical beds, to offset the closure. I might add further, according to the advice that has just come to me, the issue we are facing in this province is the fact that for the first time in years the government of Manitoba has offered the opportunity of opening beds, a new concept for members opposite: opening beds. Today in Manitoba hospitals we have 25 more beds open, 25 less people in the hallways than we did yesterday and the day before, and tomorrow will be the same. We will continue to do that; we will continue to work towards the spring because we said we would have a short-term and a long-term plan to fulfill our election promise, something members opposite never

recognized at all in this province. We have a plan and we are taking action.

* (1355)

St. Boniface Hospital Bed Closures

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on a comment as part of the answer that the Minister of Health raised. The Minister of Health, in answer to the last question, very proudly told this House that the St. Boniface closed eight beds on one day and opened 10 the next. Would he not confirm today that those 10 beds were already scheduled to open, were part of the regular plan, and that the argument he gave was crafted by his own spin doctors and is an excuse for closing those eight beds in St. Boniface?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, on November 1 we were informed from St. Boniface Hospital: November 1, St. Boniface Hospital had closed eight medical beds on 5B, a medical unit, because it is unable to provide adequate nursing staff as indicated and which the press came to my attention and St. Boniface Hospital responded to. I am also advised that on November 2, St. Boniface Hospital opened 10 beds on E5 as medical beds to offset the closure of beds on 5B.

Whether or not members want to play politics with it, it is fine with me. If they want to--

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, today in Manitoba there are 25 additional beds open as a result of a plan that we announced on November 22, within six weeks after assuming office. There will be more beds tomorrow, something that is foreign to members opposite. I want to also add that not only did we promise on November 22 that we would make available these beds, we also put in place a plan to put additional money into Home Care, additional money for the home I.V. program, physician managers, which members opposite talked about but did not fund; geriatric

case managers, which the members opposite talked about and did not fund; as well as putting in place a fast-track emergency system to deal with the hospital bed situation.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the public of Manitoba can have confidence that there is a plan in place for the first time in years announced by a government in order to deal with this situation.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, a very simple question that the minister has totally avoided: will he not confirm today that the 10 beds that were opened at St. Boniface were scheduled to open, were supposed to open, and that he and St. Boniface were caught by surprise in having to close the eight beds and that they spun this out just as an excuse, rather than admitting that they had to close eight beds because they could not staff them? Those 10 beds were supposed to open. Tell us the truth, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, over 1,400 acute care beds were closed in this province under the regime that that member was a minister of. Over 1,000 nurses were laid off.

When we were elected on September 21, we said we would put in place a plan to deal with hallway medicine. We announced it on November 22. We said we would give the resources and the authority to the hospitals to open beds. They are proceeding in that process.

I noticed they are jumping off that track now, Mr. Speaker, but the fact is we did that for the people who are lying in the hallways who are the ones we care about, who are the ones we want to deliver the programs for, and we will continue to work on behalf of Manitobans in that regard.

* (1400)

Health Care System Bed Openings

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, the minister still refuses to answer the question for the people of Manitoba about those 10 beds. I ask him again, as I did yesterday, in the interests of clarity: will he commit to provide

to this House, as early as today, a list of the beds he says are to be opened, their room numbers, in what hospitals, their designations, or does he not know?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I am advised that four beds have been opened at Concordia, eight at Deer Lodge, six at Grace, two at St. Boniface, three at HSC, two at Victoria, for a total of 25. We are going to continue to open more beds as we go along because we have made for the first time, ahead of any kind of key crisis, ahead of the December season, and I ask the member opposite if he will explain to me why they announced 60 swing beds in the spring and did not fund them, why there is no funding for programs they announced. We recognized the problem, we funded it, and we took action.

Urban Shared Services Corporation Specialty Diets

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. I know the minister has given the impression that there were so many problems with the Tory frozen food system that if they were laid out they would stretch from here to Vancouver, but I would like to focus on one issue. One of the important aspects of hospital food is the need to have very specific and very different diets for different medical conditions. A patient with kidney disease needs a different diet from one with heart disease or phenylketonuria or diabetes and so on. Did the Tory frozen food system meet the standard of being able to provide such individualized dietary needs, which are so essential to a hospital environment? Have you commissioned a report to assess it, or is this what the Auditor is doing?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question because it indicates an analysis and an insight that was not undertaken by members on the previous government. That, in fact, is one of the more difficult issues that is actually being examined as we go along now.

Preliminary advice that has come to me indicates that one of the difficulties, one of the severe difficulties when ruling out this frozen

food concept at the major hospitals is that 25 to 30 percent of the meals are specialty diets—as referred to by the member for River Heights—that will have to be individually trayed, individually dealt with, that cannot be dealt with by a mass-produced process.

That is one of the major difficulties in this entire operation, which is one of the reasons for the pause and for our taking another look at the rollout that was promised by members opposite with respect to HSC and St. Boniface Hospital.

Mortgage Value

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): My supplementary to the Minister of Health.

Before purchasing the mortgage, was the value of this underperforming asset, this white elephant, carefully assessed before the decision was made to purchase the security on it, or is that what the Provincial Auditor is doing in his evaluation?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the Provincial Auditor is examining all of the intricacies with respect to the financial nature of that particular operation, all of the uncertain projections, all of the financial accounting, the tendering process, all of the related matters that, frankly, in my view, were related to a deal that I think, certainly from my viewpoint, was not a very well negotiated deal.

But with respect to the question as offered by the member, we did a thorough analysis. We did a very thorough analysis. The Department of Finance did an analysis with respect to the value of the asset and the like, negotiated it very thoroughly—and utilized due diligence to that—and were informed that, in fact, ended up purchasing it at a saving rather than at the market value.

Mr. Gerrard: My supplementary. Given your comment about the analysis, I would hope that you would table that in due course.

Was the decision, and why was the decision made, to spend \$24.5 million? The Premier has said that it is not a simple matter to spend \$11

million. Why was that decision made before there was the analysis from the Provincial Auditor?

Mr. Chomiak: Two points in that regard, Mr. Speaker. As I indicated to the member yesterday, we were in debt. We were on the hook for this money regardless of what happened, because the deal was between centres that are 100 percent financed by the Province of Manitoba. Their debt and their structure was on the line. So we had owned that anyway, and it would have been a burden to the province regardless of whether we bought the mortgage or not.

With regard to the specific question, one of the first things upon assuming office that we did is we said: Now let us make the contract public. Do you know what? We could not get permission. We could not get permission for a \$26-million contract to make it public, with public money, because of the deal that was entered into by members opposite, and that is a disgrace. That is an absolute disgrace.

Health Care System Hallway Medicine Reduction

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Mr. Speaker, on a weekly basis the Minister of Health receives a report dealing with health system indicators, and in that report there is a section that deals with Winnipeg hospitals where there is admitted patients in the hallways. We all have agreed that having people in the hallways in our hospitals is something that is unacceptable. In the month of September, the first week of September, the average number of people in Winnipeg were five across all Winnipeg hospitals. The second week the average was three; the third week the average was four people across all Winnipeg hospitals in hallways. Today in the Winnipeg hospitals, as of today, there are 27 people in our hospital hallways, a five-fold increase over what was occurring just a few months ago in the month of September.

I want to ask the Minister of Health: will he acknowledge today that he is not fulfilling his hollow promise to end hallway medicine, just

like he has not fulfilled his promise to open a hundred net new hospital beds?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I can indicate to the member opposite that the information that is provided to me today in fact has the number today at 13, firstly. Secondly, in looking at comparisons for the week preceding this last year, last year at this time there were 30 people in the hallways.

Health Care System Information Tabling Request

Mr. Eric Stefanson (Kirkfield Park): Well, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Health is so confident with the progress he is making, even though we have seen evidence where he has not fulfilled various promises like the hundred new beds being opened, would he start to table the same weekly report that he receives to all members of this House and to all Manitobans so we can judge on a weekly basis just how he is performing in fulfilling those promises?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, two points I would like to indicate to the member opposite: firstly, that in fact we are undertaking to do that and will be doing that on a regular basis. Something, I might add, members opposite refused to do on a regular basis. We are in fact in the process of making those arrangements because we want people to have knowledge and ideas as to what is happening in the hallways, because not only did we think it would help enlighten Manitobans as to the situation but I think it would inform all Manitobans as to what the situation is, and we are going to do it, rather than the previous government that refused to do it.

Mr. Stefanson: The Minister of Health is wrong, and obviously his memory is failing him because he knows we released a quarterly report just a few months ago, outlining all of this information about waiting lists in a whole range of areas. So I want to ask this minister: will he carry on with that tradition of doing quarterly health reports, and when is he going to start releasing the weekly reports? Give us a date. When is he going to start releasing them so we can all hold him accountable for the promises

that he made that he is not fulfilling to Manitobans?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, just over 60 days ago, the previous government was refusing to make those reports public. Secondly, I have already undertaken the process to have those reports released on a regular basis. You know, for members opposite who did not do much for 11 years, it sort of strikes me as passing strange that now the member is asking for everything to take place today. But I have already started the process. Those reports will be made public on a regular basis. I thank the member for that question because we are doing what the previous government refused to do.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable member for St. Norbert, with a very short question.

* (1410)

Health Care System Hallway Medicine Reduction

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, my question, of course, is going to be to the honourable Minister of Health because the information that he is bringing forward today is not accurate. We had, this morning, an inspection of the hospitals, and at the Grace we had nine people in the hallways; Concordia, six people in beds, two in wheelchairs; the Victoria, eight people in beds. Those are the actual numbers. We were there to do the physical count.

Can this minister confirm these numbers?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the member is aware, but there was a process that was put in place by the previous government where every single day a bed count was taken and a weekly report was prepared. That practice has continued unchanged under this regime, although we are going to be making those reports public.

But I want to indicate to you, Mr. Speaker, that one of the difficulties that I think was being dealt with is one of the reasons that we are reviewing and asking them to make sure that we get accurate results is there are variances as you

go through the day and different situations, different circumstances, whether one is actually waiting to be admitted, whether one is actually waiting for a bed, whether one is actually waiting for ER service. But the information that is provided to me, which was the same information that went to the government on a regular basis, is that as of today there are 13 admitted patients in the hallway waiting for admission.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Misericordia Care Tree Campaign

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin-Roblin): Mr. Speaker, this morning I had the privilege of joining a number of volunteers and board members at the Misericordia Health Centre to take part and represent this government in the 1999 Misericordia Care Tree campaign. It is not too often that somebody from this House gets to don a pair of angel wings and a halo, so I thought I would take that opportunity and help out a good cause.

I want to begin by thanking Mr. Don Brownell, who is the chair of the foundation, and a number of other board members, staff and volunteers who braved the weather this morning, which, compared to other years, they tell me, was not too bad, and actually helped in giving out coffee, hot chocolate and a newspaper from the Free Press—Tim Horton's coffee to everyone who gave a donation of at least \$10.

The Care Tree Campaign consists of three parts that the health centre is doing. There is a holiday card mailing; there is the Angel Squad, which I took part in this morning, and the tree of Angels. There are two reasons why they are doing this campaign. One is to raise a little bit of money for the foundation, but more importantly, I am told that they are going to try to raise awareness of the Misericordia Health Centre and the services that the health centre provides for people across the province. I want to encourage members here and members of the public to get involved in this worthwhile campaign. Yesterday morning the Angel Squad

met, was out on Maryland. They were there this morning, and tomorrow morning between 7:30 and 9 the angels will be back on Maryland collecting the donations and handing out the goodies, so I encourage everyone here to participate. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Education System—Enrollment

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I feel the issue of declining school enrollment is a pressing issue today, particularly the fact that this could lead to closure of schools here in Winnipeg and across Manitoba. The Winnipeg Free Press recently reported that numerous school boards are looking for ways to cope with declining enrollments.

Today's NDP has to develop concrete plans, and the effect of the implementation of these plans needs to be understood prior to any shifts. The people of Manitoba want to know where their children will be learning and will this shifting affect the current government's Grade 3 guarantee. This concern puts added pressure on school boards and parents throughout Manitoba. Parents in Assiniboine South are anticipating bad news as they wait for a list of schools that could be closed within the next two years.

Currently, the Fort Garry School Board is holding community meetings and asking the community and parents of enrolled children for possible solutions. Parents and residents are meeting in gymnasiums across Manitoba to look for ways to boost the schools' enrollments. I would like to congratulate school boards that have taken the issue to the community, to those who are most affected by school closures, in search of possible alternatives and solutions. Thank you.

Personal Care Home Construction

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring the attention of my honourable colleagues to the January 4, 1999, commentary from the Winnipeg Sun. As so clearly stated in that column, Manitoba health-care planners can only be thinking about one thing as they grapple with the most recent emergency room crunch. Why did the Filmon

government not proceed with plans in 1995 to open hundreds of new nursing beds?

The Tories promised voters during the 1995 provincial election to spend some \$600 million on capital health care projects, including several hundred new personal care homes. Within months, the Filmon government scrapped the plan. Had the plan proceeded, there would have been some 200 to 300 more acute care beds available today, absorbing most of the influx of patients into hospitals. The main reason ERs are overcrowded today is because hospitals were forced to cut some 600 beds between 1992 and 1997 when their operating budgets were slashed by the province. The result: patients with acute illnesses like heart attacks or kidney failures regularly wait days in draughty hallways, with no privacy, before getting a bed.

* (1420)

During the 1995 election year, the province increased hospital funding slightly, by only about \$2 million, but during the next two years, hospital funding was chopped by almost \$70 million, a cut of almost 8 percent, while costs were rising. It is not as if the Filmon government had no money. The province socked away over \$500 million in its rainy day fund over this period. Manitoba is going to need more personal care homes than originally projected because the number of people in this province that are getting older is growing quickly, especially in Assiniboia.

In closing, I ask my honourable colleagues to recognize the work and commitment of Minister Chomiak and the people in his department as they implement policies and measures to correct the penny-wise, pound-foolish—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member's time has expired.

Budget Consultations

Mr. Jim Penner (Steinbach): As members of this House know, the budget document is perhaps the most important piece of work a government creates on an annual basis. Its contents affect the lives of virtually every

Manitoban. The previous government recognized this importance and, as part of its annual exercise of drafting the budget, held consultation meetings with Manitobans well in advance of the budget so that their input could be reflected in the budget itself. In fact, in my own constituency, we hosted a budget consultation meeting on November 18, 1998, over five months before the budget was announced.

It appears that Today's NDP know better than average Manitobans when it comes to managing the financial affairs of this province. We are now approximately three months away from this government's expected budget and not one meeting has been announced. Perhaps the government is limiting its input to those who could afford the \$200-a-plate advice session it held recently, or is that Today's NDP's commitment to reacting to average Manitobans?

If this government expects to bring down a March budget, we can only assume that at this date any consultation meetings to come are simply a weak public relations maneuver which will have no bearing on the actual budget or that Today's NDP believe preparing a budget is a last-minute activity like cramming the night before for a big exam. In just over 60 days, members opposite seem to have forgotten they were elected to represent all Manitobans. Manitobans expected more and were promised more from this Finance minister (Mr. Selinger) and from Today's NDP.

First Nations—Unemployment Rate

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I want to address briefly a very serious concern in this province, and that is the concern of very high unemployment rates in our First Nations communities. This was highlighted in a story in the Free Press this morning. In the Cross Lake community, where the unemployment is exorbitantly high, there are huge problems with suicides and other social conditions. The previous government hid their heads in the sand. They continued to quote the numbers which suggested that the overall unemployment rate in Manitoba was around 5 percent. A more accurate assessment would suggest that the rate of unemployment, if one really takes Manitoba as a whole, is much

higher. This is a serious issue. The real number may be double that. The real number for unemployment in this province may be as high as 10 percent. I hope that we will see, under the new government, a move to look seriously at what this real number is, to measure it and report on it on a regular basis, because only when we can, in fact, look after the needs of all Manitobans, can we really make a difference for Manitoba as a whole. It is a very important issue. It needs consideration and it needs action.

Point of Order

Ms. Nancy Allan (St. Vital): I would like to bring to your attention, Mr. Speaker, that yesterday afternoon in the House, at 5:45 p.m., you left your Chair and asked the MLA for St. James (Ms. Korzeniowski) to sit in your Chair. I would like to bring to your attention a gender-biased comment that was made by the MLA for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) that was substantiated in this House and is documented on page 394 in Hansard. The statement was: "You know, they always get prettier at closing time."

I would just like to say, Mr. Speaker, that I find these kinds of comments that are directed towards women in this House totally unnecessary, and I would like to request an apology from the MLA for Springfield.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I have just turned my book over to page 394, and I read that it says "An Honourable Member: You know, they always get prettier at closing time."

This does not refer to any member in this House, and I take offence that this member would say that it is any one of my members when this statement clearly states that it says "An Honourable Member." So, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe she has got a point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Well, first of all, just to deal specifically with the issues raised by the Opposition House Leader, as I understand it from the statements of the member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), it was a matter within her personal knowledge that the member for River East (Mrs.

Mitchelson) was the person who uttered the statement that is at page 394—

An Honourable Member: Get the facts straight there first.

An Honourable Member: Springfield.

Mr. Mackintosh: Springfield. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The second point that I wanted to raise is that the statement is clearly gender motivated and is denigrating and harmful. I think it is important that we remind ourselves to be respectful of each other as honourable members. It is for that reason, I understand, that the issue was raised.

I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you or the member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) could provide some direction to the House as to how to get this matter dealt with and behind us.

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, I hesitate greatly in rising. I do not want to use the word "debate." It is unfortunate the member for, I believe, St. Vital (Ms. Allan) wants to play, if you want, political gamesmanship on this issue.

I was present yesterday, Sir, in the Chamber when the remark was said. Granted, I do not know exactly where the comment came from. Sir, for clarification, I will tell you that the comment was said by somebody, and I am uncertain at this time who it was, but I will now put on the record that the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen)—

An Honourable Member: Burrows.

Mr. Rocan: The member for Burrows (Mr. Martindale) cracked up. He said: Extremely well done. He said: That was put at the perfect right time.

I have no idea exactly where it came from on this side, Sir, but I mean if we are going to call the pot black I think each and every one who participated somehow in that round of remarks would dearly have to pay the same price.

So for you to raise this and try to pinpoint somebody on my side, my party for this, when you—and he was very clear about it. I will tell you that he was so clear. That is one of the few things that I did hear. People know I have difficulty hearing, but this, I had no problem, and for you to stand there, this self-righteous place that you do stand, to pinpoint one of these members on my side because we are seen as Conservative—that we are, and proud of it—and to keep one of your members out of it, I have a great deal of hesitation in calling you an honourable member.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would like to thank all members—[interjection] Order, please. This is a very serious matter. I would like to thank all members for their contribution. I will take this under advisement, and I will return to the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Resuming debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), the amendment thereto proposed by the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Filmon), standing in the name of the honourable member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire), who has 20 minutes.

* (1430)

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, at the close of the session yesterday, we were talking about the situation of marketing grain in the prairie provinces and particularly here in Manitoba. I just had referred to the fact that the now president of the Canadian Wheat Board had acknowledged their own internal survey that had revealed that the majority of farmers did not want the monopoly marketing mechanism here in Manitoba. To me this was an amazing recognition of the changes that are taking place in our economy today in Manitoba, particularly given the fact that the federal Liberals took away the Crow benefit in 1995 on August 1 and forced farmers into diversifying.

That is a problem as we move forward for the citizens of Arthur-Virden because we are in the highest freight area of Canada today and are forced to make those changes faster than perhaps any other region. We are in the process of doing that, as I have pointed out, but having had the severe weather that has undergone our area this year, that tie to capital has been severed, and I tried to make that point earlier. Because of these issues and because of hopefully a short-term problem, we need to develop safety nets that work. As I mentioned earlier, AIDA does not work.

The farming community requires a long-term, dependable safety-net program that is predictable and effective, and of course the Net Income Stabilization Account, or NISA as we know is more informally known, needs to be revamped and include all farmers. We also require a revamped crop insurance program. The crop yields for 1999 from the disaster areas should not be included in our 1999 IPI for the long-term yield base for the farmers in those disaster-torn regions.

Point of Order

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): There was a point of order brought up earlier that a statement was made in this House. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it was myself. It was meant as a compliment, and I believe it was taken as a compliment. However, if it did offend some people, I wish to apologize, and I know that the individual sitting in the Chair at that time was smiling from ear to ear. It was meant as a compliment, and certainly I wish to put that on record. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: I thank the honourable member for withdrawing the statement, and that has dealt with the matter that was raised.

* * *

Mr. Maguire: Mr. Speaker, as well, I believe that the federal Liberals have forgotten Manitoba farmers. This Manitoba government must realize that farming is the third largest driver of the economy in Manitoba. As I have said, that long-term plan should be to eliminate subsidies, but until that happens the short-term support is

needed, and that may come in direct cash forms to farmers and to other small businesses or in support of new-generation-style projects like the Prairie Pasta Producers plant that was proposed for Melita in our region at one time. We need more value-added ventures in our farming industry for a stronger future in our farms and rural communities. Our present marketing structure cost our constituency an investment in processing local grain of over \$100 million. While that impacts our constituency most negatively, it is a sign that it is an income or an investment that was taken away from the whole province of Manitoba. We had an opportunity to advance and provide the opportunity to forgo the freight rates for moving our product out that our farmers are being faced with today.

While we all know that that support is also needed in our health care and education systems, most realize that this is only part of the equation. Sound management of the budget, including no deficits, is what our citizens have become accustomed to and is what all parties had as part of their election platforms for a brighter future in Manitoba.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Think about what we could do for our youth and those in need of medical care if we could direct that \$480 million that we are spending today on interest on the provincial debt towards their needs, not to mention security of our communities, highways and culture and heritage. I would like at this time to mention that I know constituents in my region have been talking with the honourable Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) regarding issues around the policing and RCMP locations in some of the communities that we are very short in at the present time and dealing with the issue of mat leave in some of those towns, particularly in the community of Melita at this point.

I urge the provincial government to augment this throne speech with a strong budget commitment towards returning tax dollars to citizens as our Manitoba economy continues to grow as it has. Oh, sure, we could forgo tax cuts and widen that predicted tax gap. Mr. Deputy Speaker, within the last few weeks, Mr.

Stockwell Day, the Alberta Treasurer, suggested publicly that at some time in the next 10 years Alberta might be able to eliminate personal income tax, as has already been done in at least six of the U.S. states today. This government must develop a long-term plan to compete with such ingenuity so we may maintain and build our children's future here in Manitoba.

I will reiterate what my colleague the member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) had to say in this House recently: it appears that the NDP are on a serious diet when it comes to putting forth new ideas. Indeed the diet this government is offering Manitobans is most unpalatable. The thin gruel of ideas served up in the throne speech is already leaving Manitobans looking around the table for seconds. Managing the province's finances requires a deft hand and a sound menu plan. This sound menu plan was laid forth year after year by the previous Conservative administration. The cupboard was well stocked with sound ideas and proven recipes for managing the province.

The present government need only follow these tried and true recipes like bread dough rising and, like bread dough rising, the Manitoba economy will continue to grow and prosper. The dearth of ideas put forth by the NDP in their throne speech would unfortunately suggest Manitobans would be placed on a starvation diet. I do not believe that this is what they ordered when they looked at the menu.

I appreciate that we had the emergency debate on the status of Manitoba agriculture. I only hope that the ideas brought forth in this important debate are given serious consideration by this government, a more serious consideration than the throne speech gave to the many issues facing rural Manitoba.

Another matter that is of paramount concern to Manitobans is the preservation of our environment. As the Environment critic, I hope to bring forward a number of concerns about how our resources will be managed in this province. Particularly worrisome to me is the fact that today's government does not seem to realize the inherent conflict of interest that now exists with the merger of the Department of

Environment and the Department of Natural Resources. The Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) is the advocate and the judge for both conflicting departments. I forecast heavy rains on the horizon, thanks to this decision.

Manitoba's economy has shown one of the best growth rates in Canada in recent years, with a low rate of unemployment and increased levels of diversification. The previous administration was committed to the principle of sustainable development, where development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations.

Manitoba's current economic growth can be maintained if the province continues to employ the practice of sustainable development. The previous administration undertook the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy, and subsequently established the Sustainable Development Co-ordination Unit to ensure the proper application of sustainable development practices here in the province of Manitoba. The Sustainable Development Co-ordination Unit has worked toward the implementation of progressive programs such as sustainable development round tables and Capital Region initiatives. These actions are ensuring the continued success of Manitoba's economy and helping to manage the province's resources for future generations.

I would strongly encourage the current minister to maintain and build upon the sustainable development initiatives of the previous government and be mindful that attention must be paid to the long-term consequences of the environment and economic decisions you are planning to make.

* (1440)

Speaking briefly to economic issues, Manitobans should seriously consider how a budget deficit would affect the province's credit rating, its ability to attract business investment and to enhance employment opportunities. During the election campaign, the NDP committed to uphold the balanced budget law. To simply cry foul and run a deficit would result in the NDP's first major broken promise, only mere weeks into their term.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I may be a farmer, but I am not prepared to clean up the messes made by the Chicken Little financial managers across the way. The NDP should not even consider raising taxes or postponing tax cuts. We already pay a high percentage of our income in taxes. Manitoba cannot afford to fall behind the other provinces, as I pointed out earlier, in the race for lower taxation.

A few days ago, it was announced that the province has retained its credit rating from the Moody's Investors Services of New York. The retention of this credit rating is in no small part due—it is a pleasure to see that the honourable members opposite realize that the previous government's efforts to restore positive financial performance and to diversify the provincial economy following the years of neglect at the hands of the previous NDP administration that increased Manitoba's debt threefold to over \$5 billion from 1983 to 1988.

Manitobans overall are feeling particularly buoyant about our economy today. Repeated balanced budgets and sound fiscal management, sound fiscal policies practised by the former administration have paved the way for record growth.

The previous administration exercised a well-managed plan to make sure Manitoba's economic platform was moving along, sailing smoothly. We have clear evidence of how well that plan works. We need only look at Manitoba's diversified economy and at that low unemployment rate that I mentioned earlier. Consecutive surplus budgets, no major tax increases and a plan to pay off Manitoba's accumulated debt all serve to send a message that Manitoba was open for business. Let us hope that Today's NDP will continue with the fine fiscal plans charted by the previous administration. Perish the thought that yesterday's NDP, well known for the fact that it had no directional purpose, should seize control of the wheel and wreck Manitoba's current buoyant economic highway through fiscal mismanagement.

In closing, I want to reiterate my thanks to constituents, to campaign workers, and to my family for their support in making this possible for me to be a part of this Legislature. Every

MLA needs the support of his or her partner and family. Over the past 20 years, my family has grown to expect me to strive for a brighter future and have supported me extensively. To my wife, Beryl, a physiotherapist, and to our son Tim, who is flying in Matheson Island, and our wonderful daughter-in-law Barbara, who have provided us with two wonderful grandsons and a third one on the way next June. I take my hat off to my daughter, Laura, because of the hours that I have not been able to spend with my family over these years, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it is their understanding for that sacrifice of time with them that has driven me to be allowed to offer my services on behalf of the constituents of Arthur-Virden to try to balance our future and make it better here in Manitoba.

For every ending, there is a new beginning. About a year ago, last October 23, my father had an accident that turned out to be eventually fatal. At least he got to see and hold our second grandson who was born just two weeks prior to that particular time. To my family, to my mother and father, I also owe that gratitude of support over the years. I only hope that I can continue to work hard and meet their expectations and those of my fellow constituents in Arthur-Virden as we move forward to provide more opportunities in the fine province of Manitoba and continue to develop opportunities in a hard-stricken constituency at this particular point that has many other opportunities, that of Arthur-Virden. Thank you very much.

Hon. Drew Caldwell (Minister of Education and Training): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise in this historic legislative Chamber for my inaugural speech. I feel very privileged and feel very humble to be in this august Chamber where so much history in our province has taken place.

I think from the outset, I would like to thank my family, friends, members of my party in Brandon East, supporters in Brandon East, the people of Brandon East generally, for seeing fit to send me to the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba in the provincial election of September 21.

I should also recognize and congratulate Mr. George Hickes for being elected Speaker in

the historic election that we had earlier in this session, and yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for becoming Deputy Speaker. I know that it is a very large privilege and an honour to have that position bestowed upon you by your colleagues in this Chamber. I know both of you personally, and I know you as men of integrity and men who will do excellent work for this particular Assembly.

Also, although Mr. Remnant is not here right now, this is Mr. Binx Remnant's last session, and I wish him well as he retires from many years of dedicated service to this Assembly.

Also, I would like to thank at the outset the Sergeant-at-Arms, the legislative clerks, the interns and the staff of this Legislative Building for the fine work they do on behalf of the people of Manitoba day in and day out. I know in the last month or so since I have been a cabinet minister, I have gained a very keen appreciation about how hardworking the civil servants are of our province and what good work they do on behalf of the people of Manitoba. I want to acknowledge that and recognize their hard work.

Before I finish, I would also like to thank my colleague Scott Smith from Brandon West. Brandon went entirely New Democrat this particular election, and I know that we will work very, very hard to ensure that Brandon continues the fine record of representation it has had over the last, well, 30 years, since 1969 when my predecessor, Len Evans, was first elected. I know that Mr. Smith will translate that hard work into a long term of service in Brandon West, as well. I very much appreciate having a colleague that is just across 18th Street from me in Brandon.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the September 21 provincial election, it marked the ninth consecutive victory since 1969 for the New Democratic Party in Brandon East. That constituency, Brandon East, has been held by the New Democrats since the constituency was formed in 1969, and we achieved in September 61 percent of the vote, which was our best performance ever. I also wanted to note that the margin of difference between ourselves and the Conservatives has risen steadily from 1,540

votes in 1990 to 1,787 votes in 1995 to 2,760 votes in the 1999 election. It is a real credit to the supporters of Len Evans and now myself in Brandon East that we have been able to increase that margin of difference substantially in every successive election campaign.

The large number of people who helped in the election and the very large task that they took on in seeing that Brandon East remained a New Democratic seat is something that filled me with a great sense of humility. I gained a true appreciation of truly how little the candidate matters and truly how much the team matters in election campaigns.

* (1450)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to talk a little bit, as is the tradition in these inaugural addresses, about my family history. In Manitoba, my namesake my great-grandfather Andrew and his family came to the province at the turn of the last century. They settled in what was then the Prairie Rose School District, the area around Pipestone, Reston, in southwestern Manitoba. My great-grandfather Andrew and his wife had a large family. Caldwells now are scattered throughout southwestern Manitoba, and I feel truly humbled to be able to be in this Chamber, the first one of my family to be elected to such office. I know that I feel very proud in that regard.

Also, I should acknowledge my mother's family, the Rands family and the Wright family from Portage la Prairie, the Lavenham area. So my roots really come across all of southern Manitoba now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Caldwells in western Manitoba, the Rands and Wrights in Portage la Prairie and area. I am going to recognize a relative Val Eros who is in the gallery today and has been watching me stumble through this inaugural address. [interjection] Some of my colleagues will pick me up if I stumble too much.

My own experience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was born in 1960 in Brandon, coming through the 1960s and early '70s as a child gaining an awareness, I recall, of the importance of political action, particularly as it took place in the country to the south of us in regard to the antiwar

movement and the freedom of speech movement. The campus activity that took place in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s, I recall making an impact on me as a young boy watching television, particularly the antiwar movement.

My father, Boyd Caldwell, who passed away a decade ago, was a great formative influence on me in terms of my sense of political activism. He was a World War II vet who lied about his age to join the army to go over to Europe during World War II. While in Europe, he was a dispatch driver in the Canadian Armed Forces. He subsequently spent a number of years in Ninette Hospital. His war experience did not end until many years after the Second World War ended. He lost a lung to tuberculosis as a result of his experience in the Second World War.

When I was a boy, he instilled a very strong value in me to pay attention to politics. His experiences as a young man taught him that there are going to be those who govern, and government can be used to either purposes of good or evil. There is going to be somebody or some party that does govern, and he instilled in me the awareness to pay close attention to that fact and take an active role in ensuring that those who govern are doing it for purposes of good and not evil. I think his experience during the war was very profound in his awareness of that, and, certainly, I recall many, many times with my father and my brothers watching various political conventions or watching various election campaigns on television and listening on the radio and watching in the print media for results of campaigns and conventions and always getting a sense that this was important activity that we were witnessing. That stayed with me to this day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that early awareness of politics that was instilled in me by my father back in the 1960s and 1970s.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I got a bit older in college, particularly in university—in the early 1980s, late 1970s, I was a member of the Brandon University Students Union in Brandon where I was doing my undergraduate degree, and I became very politically active at that time. In fact, 1979-1980 marked the first time I acquired a New Democratic Party card and at

that time as a student activist was made aware of education policy for the first time under the former administration of Sterling Lyon.

I was very politicized during that period of my life with regard to education policies and how it affected the university campus in Brandon, the Brandon University campus. I recall being very active in lobbying for enhanced library facilities at the Brandon University campus and in mobilizing students to work very hard for the Howard Pawley victory that flowed out of the Sterling Lyon years; also during that time period at Brandon University, upon the defeat of the Sterling Lyon government and the election of the Pawley government, being involved with Mr. Stanley Knowles and Mr. Tommy Douglas, two distinguished alumni of Brandon University, to create a student union building at Brandon University. I felt very privileged to be able to spend long hours with both Mr. Douglas and Mr. Knowles to get their support as patrons for the development of a student union building at Brandon University. Indeed, I think it was about 1982, we at the students union were able to get Mr. Knowles and Mr. Douglas to agree to have the student union building at Brandon University named in their honour.

I am still very proud of, as I visit the Brandon University campus which is about two blocks from where I live, three blocks from where I live in Brandon, the Knowles-Douglas Student Union Centre which is a legacy to those days and to the memory of both Mr. Knowles and Mr. Douglas at Brandon University.

I would be remiss at this time if I did not talk about another influence on me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of my politics, and that is Len Evans, my predecessor in Brandon East, and his wife Alice Evans. For 30 years Len Evans represented the people of Brandon East with diligence and integrity. He has been a mentor to me, a friend, a confidant and someone that I will continue to work to the best of my abilities according to the example that Len Evans set in our community, and that is a record of strong and diligent work on behalf of all members of the community. All of us in Brandon East owe a tremendous debt of thanks to Len Evans and his legacy in Brandon East, and, indeed, his legacy

in the province of Manitoba will live far into the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the constituency that elected Len Evans eight consecutive times, the constituency of Brandon East, has many notable features. My colleague Scott Smith from Brandon West spoke earlier about the characteristics of his particular constituency, and I think I should take a few moments of time to talk about the notable features in the Brandon East constituency.

There are many communities in Brandon East, the north end of Brandon which is the area north of the CPR rail line. It is a highly ethnic area. Over the course of the last century, it has been an area that many of our immigrant community in Brandon began in. The roots of our immigrant community in Brandon are very strong in the north end. It is a very colourful area with eastern Orthodox churches throughout. We see onion-dome churches in the neighbourhoods of the north end. It is a unique part of the city of Brandon of humble homes and strong, strong cultural roots.

* (1500)

The east end of Brandon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the area east of 1st Street in Brandon, east of 1st Street and north of Park Avenue, again a strongly working-class neighbourhood of, again, humble homes, hardworking families, a significant ethnic population, as well, but with a very, very strong sense of community and a strong sense of culture and self-identity; the south end of the city of Brandon, the area south of Victoria Avenue, east of 18th Street, where a lot of our historically English working-class population the city of Brandon came from. Green Acres, a newer post-1960s residential community that is south and east of 1st Street and Park Avenue, an area of bungalows, again, modest homes but with a very strong sense of identity.

My own former constituency when I was a city councillor in Brandon, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Rosser ward, the downtown Rosser ward, is really the historic heart of the city of Brandon with Victorian homes, Edwardian homes, a very strong sense of identity to this particular day.

We also have in Brandon East constituency the city of Brandon's industrial park, Simplot fertilizer company, Maple Leaf Foods, a wide variety of industry, really the heart of Brandon's industrial economy.

In Brandon East also, the Keystone Centre, the provincial exhibition of Manitoba, the Royal Manitoba Winter Fair, all these events take place on the Keystone grounds which is the area south of Park Avenue and east of 18th Street and north of Richmond Avenue. The Royal Manitoba Winter Fair event is second to none in the province, indeed second to none in western Canada.

Brandon East is also a home to a great many seniors in our community, and most of the seniors' homes in Brandon, the senior citizens' homes are in Brandon East. The seniors population in Brandon has been one that has been particularly kind to me. I have worked very hard on their behalf as a city councillor during the seven years that I was a Brandon city councillor in a previous political life, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I certainly appreciate the great wisdom and knowledge that the seniors have shared with me over the years in a great many areas.

I should also point out that Assiniboine Community College is a central part of the Brandon East constituency, as is the former Brandon Mental Health Centre, an area that we are looking, in this House and in the city of Brandon, to develop into the future.

I should, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talk about one more thing before I move along to the throne speech proper. That is to pay tribute to our current Premier, Mr. Gary Doer, and all the hardworking people that surrounded the Premier in this election campaign. I know he has worked very hard in this House, over a decade of hard work in this particular House. I know that the people that have worked with the Premier over the last decade have worked very hard to see the result that took place on September 21 in this province.

I feel very honoured to have gained his confidence to be appointed Minister of Education and very humbled by that appoint-

ment. Certainly, I did not expect such an appointment from the Premier, but I was very, very honoured and privileged to receive that appointment. I would like to thank him for that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the point of this particular exercise is to talk about the throne speech. I think I have got my copy of the throne speech in front of me here, and I am just going to go through it briefly in terms of making some comments on the document. First and foremost, I think that this speech was truly a people's speech. The people of Manitoba gave this government a clear mandate in the September 21 election. They expect improvements in our health care system. They expect our young people to be prepared for the challenges and opportunities of a new economy. They expect security in our homes and our workplaces and our community, and they have placed confidence and placed their faith in this government to fill those expectations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a new century is about to begin, and this new century will bring with it a great many new challenges. We have the advent of global trade and global competition opening up new opportunities for trade and wealth creation in our province as well as raising threats to the environment.

In my own community, the great benefits of the Maple Leaf Foods facility, the Maple Leaf hog processing facility in Brandon which is something that I worked very hard to bring to our community as a city councillor, also brings with it a great many challenges for the environment and for the people who live downstream on the Assiniboine River. We have some real challenges in making certain that we balance economic growth with sound stewardship of our environment, so that future generations in our province are able to share in the wealth that we are able to create today and not have a liability into the future. The constraints that economic development or the challenges that economic development bring with it are something that we, on this side of the House, are very conscious of and something that we take very seriously. I know that throughout this term and our future terms in office, it will be a challenge for us to maintain a good sense of balance in balancing

economic development with environmental stewardship.

I think it is also important right now to talk about our commitment to work with First Nations people in our province. The Gary Doer government has unprecedented diversity in it. We have the largest number of female MLAs ever to sit in government. We have in our caucus, in our cabinet, members of Inuit and First Nations communities. We have, Mr. Deputy Speaker, yourself a member of the Filipino community and my colleague Cris Aglugub, also, from The Maples, a member of the Filipino community. We have people in this government of Metis descent. We have Ukrainian-Dutch descent. We have the standard white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants, we have Scots, we have Russians, we have French. It truly represents, I think, this government is truly a people's government. I am very, very proud and feel very privileged that we have the diversity of Manitoba represented on this side of the House with this government.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, also, as someone from Manitoba's second city, Brandon, I also should acknowledge that as a representative from Brandon I am also very, very happy to note that the throne speech recognized formally our two major urban centres, Winnipeg and Brandon, and recognized the issues of core area renewal and revitalization and downtown commercial renewal in the city of Brandon.

In my former political life I was the city councillor for the Rosser ward in Brandon, the downtown ward of the city of Brandon. I know that I, along with my constituents, neighbours and friends worked very, very hard over the last number of years to bring a recognition of the need for concentrated efforts in the downtown core, residential core particularly, of the city of Brandon and the great need for revitalization of the downtown core in the city of Brandon.

Many of the problems faced by the city of Winnipeg are writ small in Brandon. The same challenges face us, the challenges of poverty, the challenges of substandard housing, the challenges that come with the declining infrastructure. I was very, very pleased to see in the throne speech a commitment to undertaking

some revitalization initiatives, not only in the city of Winnipeg but also in the city of Brandon. I know that my constituents particularly appreciate that commitment very, very much.

* (1510)

As I look through the throne speech, I know that major issues of health care, I know that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) is working very diligently and very hard to resolve many of the health care issues that are confronting this province today, issues of bloated bureaucracy, issues of lack of nurses, issues of bed closures and so forth. I know that in this government the people of Manitoba have a government that is committed to restoring health care excellence in the province of Manitoba. I know that the Minister of Health knows perhaps better than anyone in our province, any single person in our province, the many, many challenges that lay before us as a government in resolving the great concern and great needs in health care for the province of Manitoba.

In education, I know that it is something that my professional background as an educator is one that gave me a familiarity with some of the difficulties in education in this province before I came to this House. Now, as Minister of Education, I have a keen appreciation, a very keen appreciation of the great deficits that exist in our public education system.

Moreover, I have a great appreciation of the dedication of those many teachers, trustees, principals, superintendents, parents, the very stakeholders in our public education system. I have been singularly impressed at the dedication of those stakeholders in restoring our public education system.

I have had the opportunity to travel through a great percentage of this province over the last couple of months and met with hundreds of people in the public education domain. I am truly humbled by the commitment of these individuals in restoring our public education system. Certainly I share that dedication with them as the minister and share the desire to enter into a consultative process and a dialogue, an ongoing dialogue with those in our province who

are truly concerned about restoring educational excellence to our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am also very, very pleased and very happy to be able to be the minister who is charged with guaranteeing stable and predictable funding in investments in our public school system. I know, in concert with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger), we have had a number of discussions on managing support to the public school system, particularly in light of the fiscal challenges that the government is faced with, based upon the recent Deloitte and Touche fiscal review. We are committed to continuing to work with stakeholders in the public education system to reinvest in our school system and provide ongoing assurances of stable investments in the public school system.

Also, in terms of the public school domain, I had a couple of challenges right off the hop upon assuming the ministry in terms of the Grade 3 testing that had taken place previously in the province of Manitoba, the end-of-year standardized assessment testing. I had some opportunities, before the decision was made, to stop that testing regime from taking place, and reinstated diagnostic at the beginning of the year. I had the opportunity to discuss this with a number of people in the field. I could not find, in my discussions with people in the field, anyone who could support the Grade 3 testing regime that took place at the end of the school year, and was very pleased upon making the announcement that a diagnostic procedure would be in place for September 2000 so that children could be assessed as to their literacy levels and a program of remediation be put into place in conjunction with the parent and the teacher to help that child grow in terms of literacy throughout the school year, that there is tremendous support forthcoming from the field for that initiative, and support that was based upon a real desire to help the child grow throughout the school year, and not to just, at the end of the year, have some sort of assessment made that did not really have any bearing on the child's ability to learn and to remediate his or her literacy skills throughout the school year. So I was very gratified in that regard to have the degree of support that I did have forthcoming from the field.

Another decision that was made very quickly upon assuming office was to end the Youth News Network's incursions into our public school system. The Youth News Network is something that has some potentials, but not at the expense of dedicating classroom time and curriculum time to a commercial network or to a commercial enterprise. I was very pleased in that regard to have had very, very positive support forthcoming from all levels of the field for that decision.

In terms of our post-secondary education system as well, this government is committed to restoring excellence. We have committed ourselves to a very ambitious program of doubling the college spaces in Manitoba over the next five years and to making post-secondary education more affordable and more accessible so that the hopes of our young people for a college or university degree are based on ability, not on financial ability to pay but rather ability and effort to take part in our post-secondary school system as young people and not just wealthy young people.

I have had the opportunity to meet now with all post-secondary stakeholders, the three community colleges in the province of Manitoba as well as the four universities in the province of Manitoba. The efforts of our government are widely recognized already by those in the post-secondary system as being one of partnership and one of working to create excellence in the system and working with the stakeholders in the system. I am very pleased that we are being so well received in the education field from both the public school system perspective as well as the post-secondary perspective.

There has been a lot of talk in the House in the last couple weeks, since this session began, about the deficit. I certainly appreciate and my colleagues on this side of the House appreciate the need to be fiscally responsible and to have a commitment to the good management of the finances of the Province of Manitoba and to be good stewards of the finances of the Province of Manitoba. I know that we are committed to that good stewardship. But there has not been that much talk about the social deficit that exists in our province.

I want to talk for a few minutes, not too long, but just a few minutes, to recognize that the social deficit is even more important than the fiscal deficit of our province.

We are a wealthy country, we are a wealthy province. I have had the opportunity to travel extensively in Third World countries, countries like India, Nepal, which have very low, low standards of living. I am always ashamed when I see people in our wealthy Canada or our wealthy Manitoba living in conditions of squalor and living in conditions of poverty. There is no good reason for it, no good reason at all.

* (1520)

In countries that are impoverished, there is some recognition that the needs of the country are so great and so severe that some people may fall through the cracks, indeed many people in some countries, Central American countries, Asian countries, where poverty is very much a fact of life, where standards of living are very low, where the live expectancy is very low. But in a province like Manitoba or a country like Canada, there is no good reason for it at all, and I am always ashamed for myself and for my society when I travel, whether it be in Winnipeg, Brandon or elsewhere in Canada, when I see conditions of poverty and degradation that people live under.

I know that while it is important to maintain a good fiscal sense and a good sense of fiscal responsibility, there is no excuse for poverty in our society in Manitoba. There is no excuse for people living in conditions of squalor and substandard housing. There is no excuse for having people dying for lack of health care. There is no excuse for not providing the quality of education that we can afford as a society. The only excuse is neglect, and that is not an excuse.

So I think it is important for all of us in this House, while we talk about deficits, to bear in mind the fiscal responsibilities that we have. I will not accept that we have that debate in a vacuum and we do not have the same awareness and the same concern for the social deficits of poverty, substandard housing, health care and the absence of quality education.

I am going to wind up my remarks here. I do not know how long I have spoken, but it seems to be enough. I really want to again recognize and thank my mother, Bea Caldwell, and my father, Boyd Caldwell, for raising me to care about the world that we live in and my more broadly extended family for supporting me through many years of my life and nurturing me and nurturing my awareness of my responsibility to this society. It is something that I value very much, the support of my family, and it is something that I feel very grateful to have experienced throughout my life.

I should also, while I am talking, it is going into the Hansard, I will recognize my brother and sister-in-law, Grant and Kelly, and their kids Stephanie and Kristie Jo, and my other brother and his wife, Craig and Laura, and their child to come. They have meant an awful lot to me as I have lived, and they certainly have been all the world to me.

So thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your forbearance, and all the best.

Point of Order

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): I would like to be recognized on a point of order.

I rise to apologize for my behaviour in the House yesterday. Another member made a sexist remark, which I believe he has apologized for today, and I would like to apologize for my response to that. It was inappropriate to laugh at that remark, and I apologize to all honourable members. Thank you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the honourable member for his comments.

* * *

Mr. Harold Gilleshammer (Minnedosa): I would like to begin my remarks on the throne speech by congratulating our new Speaker. I know that many have done that before me. Certainly it was a very auspicious day in this House when we met to elect a Speaker for the first time. I also congratulate others who put their name forward for that position. I think it indicates how important we regard that office. I

know the House will look forward to working with the new Speaker, and yourself, Sir, as Deputy Speaker. I know that you have had some experience before, and we all know how important it is to have someone in the Chair to moderate our discussions and debates, and to keep us on track from time to time.

Also a welcome to the new pages. I know that this is a wonderful experience and opportunity for pages to serve in this House. I have been here for some 12 years now and have had an opportunity to see some of those pages as they have gone through high school and university and on into their careers. In fact, not too many months ago, one of the young interns who was serving a few weeks in Minnedosa came to interview me, as part of his program was to talk about experiences in the Legislature and the way that we relate to the health care system. So I am sure that many of you will continue on to post-secondary education, and we look forward to your accomplishments in the future.

I also welcome back to the table staff who, of course, are a very dedicated and experienced group who help us to apply the important rules and regulations to the issues and the debates in this House. We all enjoy working with them, I know. Tomorrow we are going to have an opportunity to say a last farewell to Mr. Remnant who has served in this House longer than I have and certainly has always been there in terms of helping to make decisions and to give us direction. We hope that he has a wonderful retirement as he leaves this House here in the province of Manitoba.

I would also like to welcome the new members to the House, both on our side of the House and the other side of the House. I know this is an experience that I am sure most of you are going to enjoy. It is an experience like no other when you have the opportunity to be one of 57 members. We make friendships in here. We watch each other, evaluate each other, listen to each other. I tend to think that nothing new ever happens in here, but we do have an opportunity to make those new relationships. I think, as members have already commented to me in the brief time that we have been sitting here, some 10 days or whatever, that some of

them do not find the decorum in here up to what they expected it was going to be.

I can tell you from my experience that you tend to be treated the way you treat other people. I think that if they want to engage in some of the banter back and forth then they are going to be subject to some of the comments when they are on their feet. On the other hand, if you treat people with respect, that is the way you are going to be treated when you stand to make a comment.

I would also like to welcome my former colleagues back on both sides of the House. I know that all of you that have been here before understand the workings of this House. Even though we have had a change in government, the workloads are certainly going to change. We will work together for the betterment of Manitobans. We look forward to that.

I would like to thank my constituents for re-electing me to the House. This is my fourth election. One of the, I think, sad parts about it is the redistribution process that we go through. As a member of the House from 1988 onward, you develop relationships with people in those communities that all of a sudden are taken out of your constituency and placed in another constituency. We will not get to see each other as often.

Communities like Erickson and Sandy Lake and Oak River and Strathclair are now going to be represented by my colleague from Russell. I will miss those relationships and the times we had to interact with municipal councillors, mayors and reeves and citizens in those areas, but that is our process here and one that as Manitobans I think we should be proud of, that when redistribution takes place, it is done in a fair and equitable manner. Even though we do not like the results sometime, we have to accept them.

* (1530)

But I do thank not only my current constituents, but the ones that I inherited from the old riding of Turtle Mountain. I have come to know some of the people in communities like Souris and Wawanesa and Minto. I know that

we are going to be able to work together over the next four years to bring forward your issues and to help resolve any of the problems that you have.

I might also say that I think as Canadians and Manitobans we can be proud that when a government changes it is done here in a peaceful and dignified way, in an orderly way. The transition team, I think, was able to work with people who used to work on our side in a very professional way so that the change of government is very orderly. A lot of that credit goes to the professional civil servants that we have, the deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and other leaders within those departments, to bring new members of government up to speed on the issues. They know full well, as Manitobans know, that governments will change from time to time.

Manitoba always has, I think, a very close election campaign. I believe in this current one the government received the support of some 45 percent of the people. We as official opposition received the support of 41 percent. That is, in terms of elections, very close. We have seen other provinces where governments are changed very dramatically, where they go from government to a few seats. Here in Manitoba I think there is always a very moderate approach to government.

We know that as the new government comes into place and starts making decisions that affect the lives of Manitobans they start offending people, and that is just the natural way it is. In four years time there will be another opportunity for Manitobans to speak. The honeymoon stage that currently exists will soon dissipate as decisions are made and changes, both in the manner in which the government governs, the decisions they make, start to affect Manitobans and, in some cases, disaffect them.

I would like to now turn to the throne speech. Naturally we found the speech somewhat wanting. It was a very, very brief document, and I do not think that is a surprise. The government was only in office a few weeks. They wanted to rush back into the House, and they did. That is their prerogative, but it was not a very comprehensive document and one

which really spoke to Manitobans. I think there are issues in there with things that were not said, departments that were not recognized, issues that were not addressed. As a result we find that document somewhat wanting.

But I want to first of all talk about the Manitoba of today, which is quite different than it was in 1988 when I first came to this House, that there was a tremendous change in this province, I believe, due to the policies that were put in place in our term of office from 1988 to 1999. I would like to just document for you the way I see the province as it is handed over to the new government here in 1999.

We have a province of Manitoba where workers are well educated, highly skilled and are widely respected by employers for their enthusiasm, their creativity, their dedication and their loyalty. We think we have in Manitoba an excellent workforce. Manitoba offers an environment in which the costs of doing business are exceptionally attractive. Office space and industrial land are inexpensive and readily available, and electricity and long-distance rates are the lowest in Canada. These are things that new businesses look at when they want to relocate their businesses or when businesses want to expand within a province.

Manitoba's physical infrastructure of roads, railways and airports permit finished goods to be shipped very quickly and cost effectively to any destination in the world, and while we have concerns about that infrastructure and it is something that has to be addressed, we knew that in government. We knew that we needed a federal partner, particularly with our highway system. That has not changed, but the infrastructure is there for businesses to produce and to sell their products. We have been particularly proud of the amount of American exports and world exports that we have produced here in Manitoba.

We also have a state-of-the-art telecommunications infrastructure in Manitoba. It provides ready access to the information highway in virtually all areas of the province and is a particularly important advantage for technology-based businesses. I noticed in the paper today the Premier (Mr. Doer) cutting a ribbon at a

significant call centre in Selkirk, a line of work that he used to condemn for what he called McJobs. I think, as he gets a better understanding of the call centre industry and the 8,000 or 9,000 Manitobans who work in that industry—this is a very solid industry, one with some good-paying jobs in it, one with some entry-level jobs, but again, it is part of the Manitoba of today that I am sure he will come to appreciate.

The affordable cost of living, competitive levels of taxation, excellent recreational and cultural amenities and very attractive quality of life in Manitoba make it easy for companies to attract and keep employees at all levels. I know as a previous Minister of Culture that Winnipeg and Manitoba can be very, very proud of the fact that we have cultural activities here that are part of our quality of life that do not exist anywhere else in Canada, and it is part of the attraction of Manitoba in the late 1990s.

We have the presence of post-secondary educational institutions in Manitoba ensuring the companies have ready access to a supply of highly qualified younger workers. Manitoba's universities and colleges also offer valuable resources for employee training and research and development projects. We have seen the tremendous numbers of Manitobans who have acquired jobs over the last number of years, the training and the retraining that takes place, and it is one of the very important aspects, I think, of our society and of previous government decisions to have institutions in Manitoba which provide this valuable training and move people into the workforce.

We also have a business-friendly attitude at all levels of government in the province and has removed many of the barriers to doing business effectively that continue to exist in other jurisdictions. Public sector officials are willing to work together with business leaders in a spirit of co-operation that is intended to help private sector companies get things done. We think this business-friendly attitude is very, very important and one that the current government should look at very clearly, that decisions that they make, comments that they make, initiatives that they embark on, can very much affect this business-friendly attitude that exists here today.

From Question Period today, we heard about the dual marketing of hogs. We know that that has had a tremendous impact on what producers are doing out there. It has an impact on companies wanting to come in here and invest in Manitoba, and comments that were made yesterday by a new member for Interlake (Mr. Nevakshonoff) on hog marketing, the fact that the Premier (Mr. Doer) was dodging the question today is very, very significant and it sends a bad signal to people who want to invest in this province.

We think that it is not too late to rethink that and make some very clear statements that will allow Schneider's and other companies to not only enhance their business here but others will relocate here because Manitoba is a place, and has been over the 1990s, where the hog industry has very much prospered. It is due to a decision that was made in 1995 to get away from the monopoly selling of hogs and into a dual marketing system. I advise the government not to tinker with that. They do so at their own peril.

The last thing I would mention about the Manitoba of 1999 is the attitude of entrepreneurs in Manitoba. They have a can-do attitude that is a central part of Manitoba's business culture, and it provides a tremendous stimulus for innovative and creative solutions to important issues and problems. Those of us who have observed over the last decade have seen a tremendous change in the way Manitobans feel about themselves and the way businesses have been created and thrived here. It is a change from the 1980s, and all of us would like to see that continue.

I think it is important that Manitobans recognize the economic indicators that are out there and that government officials are apprised of on a weekly and monthly basis. We are very proud of the fact that we have an extremely low unemployment rate in Manitoba. It has gone down to one of the lowest in the country and it has stayed there—the regular unemployment rate, plus the student unemployment rate. It means that there are jobs here, there are opportunities here, and we have seen a reversal of the outflow of Manitobans now to the point where more people are staying and more people are entering Manitoba.

There have been close to 40,000 new jobs created in the last four years here in Manitoba, and that is a testament to the businesses that have located here, to the workforce that has been educated here and the fact that people have confidence in this economy. The capital investment that has been recorded in Manitoba has increased over the last seven consecutive years, year over year. Capital investment is investment that can flow almost anywhere in the country, but a lot of it has landed here in Manitoba. Again, it shows the confidence that business has in our particular province.

* (1540)

Exports to the United States have outpaced the national average for the fifth straight year. Again, whether it is furniture or windows or agricultural products or buses, these exports mean jobs here in Manitoba, and we think that the trade conditions have been enhanced over the last decade. Again, I would caution the government not to tinker with that so that we can continue to create jobs by exporting good products from Manitoba to the United States and to other parts of the world.

Manufacturing shipments rose by some 7 percent last year, again a testament of the economy. In 1998, house builders in urban areas showed a growth of almost 12 percent over the previous year. Again, whether it is here or in Brandon, there has been a tremendous increase in the number of housing starts. Average weekly earnings were up 3.3 percent, and in 1998, more Manitobans were working—almost 550,000 people—than ever before in our history. So the climate here in Manitoba for the creation of jobs has been excellent. We think that a lot of this has to do with the policies that were put in place by our government and I would hope policies that are continued by the new government.

I would like to talk about the balanced budget legislation and the adherence to it. We know that, when this was passed in 1995, many members who are now in government spoke very strongly against it, that they believed it was a foolish thing for government to do. I do believe that a number of them have changed their stance on that and only time will tell. They

certainly indicated during the runup to the election that they now believed in balancing the budget and would do so. We hope that commitment is a solid one and it is still there. Because those balanced budgets and those surpluses, the debt repayment and the priority spending have been a large part of making Manitoba the way it is in the late 1990s, one where people have a good degree of confidence in the economy and where jobs have been created.

I am aware that the Premier (Mr. Doer) has not committed to accepting and keeping the balanced budget legislation the way it is. He is talking about making some minor changes in reference to Crown corporations. I do not think we see that as a problem. But if he starts tinkering with it any further, I think it is a sign that he is backsliding on a promise that he made during the campaign that Manitobans expect very strongly that he is going to commit to and follow through on.

I would like to speak briefly about the Deloitte and Touche report that has been in the news for much of the last three weeks. We believe very clearly that this is a politically inspired document. I can tell you that every year, if you look over the report of our budgets over the last five years—they are called budgetary Estimates—in most of those years, the budget was overspent as we reacted to pressures within departments. Some years it was underspent and money was lapsed. We also did have increased revenues. Part of the role of government is to keep that balanced. That is why Treasury Board meets every week to make those decisions, to look at the expenditures that are necessary, to look at the ones that are not. Sometimes it is just very important to say no, that we do not have to do that now; that could be left to another year. We believe, and we have said, that if we were in government we would have a balanced budget at the end of the year, and I believe that very strongly.

Having said that, there are a number of challenges I think the new government is going to face that were not necessarily addressed in the throne speech. It is one of the areas that I think was lacking; very little mention of rural Manitoba, where we have seen a tremendous change over the last decade. I know that the new

Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) was in Brandon at the AMM convention. I congratulate her for spending the time there that she did, talking to reeves and mayors and councillors. I know that it is very important to them to have the ear of government and the opportunity to speak to cabinet ministers, and to be able to put forth their ideas and the challenges that they see, and to have a government that works with them.

I would like to also congratulate my colleague the member for Russell (Mr. Derkach), who was the previous minister of Rural Development, for many of the exciting programs that were introduced under his stewardship and allowed communities out there to grow and to thrive. You only have to travel to places like Brandon and Steinbach and Winkler and Morden to see how they were able to use government programs with their own ingenuity, their own initiative and their own resources in many cases to create jobs within their communities. I know that all of us in this House want to see all of Manitoba thrive. I think the growth that we saw in rural Manitoba is one of the legacies of this government that we can be very, very proud of.

I would urge the new Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs to pay attention to that part of her department, and to see that those conditions that are out there that are created by entrepreneurs, by councillors, by citizens will continue, and that many of the programs, whether it is the REDI program or the Grow Bonds program or others, remain in place. Some of them need to be reviewed. Some of them need to be changed, but I think there is a place for the government of Manitoba to assist those communities to realize their dreams.

I would like to also mention the state of agriculture. We did have an emergency debate, a two-day debate, on agriculture earlier in this session, and I think it is valuable for all members of the House to recognize how important that industry is in Manitoba and the difficult times they are going through. I know that prior to the election and during the election it was the No. 1 issue in my constituency, as producers were in somewhat desperate straits as the amount of moisture in southwestern Manitoba and other

parts of Manitoba made it impossible for them to get their crops in.

I know that producers, rural people, farmers are very independent people, very proud people, and they do not like having to come to government for assistance, but these were very unusual circumstances. Probably more important to all producers is the fact that the price that their commodities are getting in many cases in the grain sector are just completely and totally inadequate. The province does have a role to play here in lobbying the federal government. It has a role to play in providing whatever assistance that it can to these producers. I would ask the new government to work very closely with organizations like the Keystone Agricultural Producers to hear what rural people, farm people have to say. I would urge you to respond in whatever way you can to assist them in dealing with the issues that prevent them from making a living from something that is part of their way of life. I know members opposite have often said they want to save the family farm, as we all do, but it is in some ways a misnomer. Recently a producer in the Brandon area tried to make very clear to readers of the Brandon Sun that farms come in all shapes and sizes, and in some cases one or two farm members have created a corporation and that does not make them bad people.

A number of families make their living off the land, and they need to be heard too. I would urge you to recognize the fact that there are different farm corporations out there that are not run by some industrialist from Toronto or New York; they are run by a family but they have incorporated, and they need your time and your encouragement and your assistance as much as anybody.

The government certainly will have their challenges, and their challenges in health care are being visited these days, as the new minister who had so many of the answers when he was in opposition is now finding that this is a big system, that there are very difficult issues to deal with. Certainly we wish him well. We want Manitobans to continue to have a quality health care system that is accessible, but the same issues have been around for a long time, whether it is people in the hallways, whether it is waiting

lists or whether it is staffing and contracts. I know that he has taken many years to study these issues, and now he has an opportunity to meet those challenges head-on, and we would simply ask that he be forthright with Manitobans and work with the various groups out there. I know that there was one day when he sort of threw up his hands and said everything was out of control. Well, we expect he will have some bad days in that department, but we encourage him to keep trying and to see that he can meet those challenges and improve the situation in whatever way he can.

* (1550)

The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell), we asked him some questions a week or so ago. He declined to answer a lot of them, but I can tell you that there are many teachers and superintendents and trustees out there who are asking about this guarantee that the minister is offering to students. I mean, it resonates out there. A lot of parents like to think that the minister is going to guarantee that their children can read and write. Much has been made of the fact that he has done away with the standards tests, but I can tell you that not all Manitobans agree with that. I would ask him to take another look at that.

The guarantee, of course, implies that there is a standard that must be reached or exceeded, and we would like him to articulate that standard. I know teachers are asking for that because they feel that this is a rather impossible situation. They are the ones who are going to be on the front lines, and they are the ones who are going to have to explain to parents that, yes, there is a guarantee and that guarantee is made by the minister, but your student, your child, still cannot read or write at the end of Grade 3 and maybe at the end of Grade 5. That is unfortunate, but that is the reality that is out there.

If there is, in fact, a standard that has been set that he is going to articulate, then it follows that there must be some standardized test that is going to be put in place at the end of the Grade 3 year to see that that guarantee is met. So we would encourage him to come forward with those details as soon as possible, so that

Manitobans can know exactly what it is he is guaranteeing. We would urge him to be very clear on that sometime in the near future, and we will have an opportunity to revisit it.

The gaming issue is another one that Manitobans are certainly asking questions about. I know that the mayor of Brandon back in the spring was very, very clear—and two of his councillors now sit here in government—that there was not going to be a casino in Brandon. I presume he spoke for all of council at that time, yet we hear at this time that there are thoughts of creating one in the area. I would hope that all councils, reeves, mayors are informed of that and given an opportunity to have that discussion and have their input.

I know we have gone to having referendums now on VLTs in communities. It would only follow that if there is going to be a casino created in the city of Brandon or the municipality of Cornwallis that local people have a chance to have their say on that. We will be following that up at a later time.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think at this time I am going to conclude. There are many issues which the government will face. Certainly we recognize that they do have an opportunity to make decisions, that people will be patient with them in the short run, but we think by rushing in with this throne speech they have left many things out of it, and we will be voting against it.

Hon. Tim Sale (Minister of Family Services and Housing): It gives me great pleasure, as it has all members, I believe, to rise in response to a very fine Speech from the Throne, a speech that I think is somewhat different from the federal speech to which we listened not that long ago and to a number of speeches in this House to which we have listened over the years.

It was short, it was declarative, it said what we are going to do, it said what we were committed to do, and it said it in simple English. It allowed us to adjourn that day in a much speedier fashion than sometimes we have done when we have listened to a great deal of rhetoric and flowery language which took a great deal of time but did not signify a whole lot.

I want to wish our Speaker very well. I must admit that the moment at which he was elected, I felt a great deal of emotion, I guess, and pride to be a member of a House, the first provincial Legislature to elect an Innu Speaker. I wish him well. It is certainly an onerous duty keeping all of us in line on both sides of the House. I know that he is increasingly making it clear to us that he expects us to abide by our own rules. He, I think, will prove himself to be a very fine Speaker. But I think it was a great moment when we chose him and when we for the first time elected a Speaker to this Chamber that has the support of all members. So I wish him very well.

I also want to pay tribute to our Deputy Speaker, who I believe has carried that position before and has chaired Public Accounts committees and is a very able chairperson with a profound commitment to the democratic process. Many of his speeches in caucus remind us of some of those democratic traditions and principles that I think are extremely important to all of us. I know that he feels passionately about that, and I wish him well in his job as our Deputy Speaker in this Chamber.

Finally, I want to thank the pages who each year we have a new group and they come. I am sure that there must be days when they are amazed that adults could behave so badly.

An Honourable Member: Now, now.

Mr. Sale: I know of course that would never apply to the member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns), who is always a perfect gentleman in this House.

But I would say to the pages that there are some reasons why things get heated here. Some of those reasons are that the things we do here are extremely important. As you know from your own studies, every single aspect of your life and our lives is framed by the laws that are passed in this Chamber and in the House in Ottawa: the hospitals in which you were born, the schools which you currently attend, the degree to which you feel safe on our streets, the opportunities you have for recreation, the protections you enjoy as a person, whether it is a young person, an older person, a person of colour, a person whose sexual preference, whose

orientation, whose poverty or whose nationality or whose religion is different from some dominant majority.

Every single aspect that makes our life worth living has been debated in this Chamber. There are very fundamental and difficult choices to be made in that process. So it is probably not hard to understand, although I am sure in your early days here you must wonder. It is not hard to understand why we get passionate, because we care deeply about the values we represent as we speak here on behalf of our constituents. We care deeply about the ideas we present representing different, decidedly different, political understandings of the nature of a civil society. We do get passionate, and I would apologize to you in advance for sometimes appearing to be perhaps less than civil from time to time, but I think that it is important that we also have the right to be passionate about the things that we care about and to represent those values and views as strongly and energetically as I know all members do from time to time. So I am glad of your presence, and I want to thank you for volunteering to be here in the House and to share your time with us, because I know that you also have to do extra work to keep on top of the academic part of your lives, so thank you for being here.

I want briefly to speak about the new riding of Fort Rouge. Mr. Deputy Speaker and members, I am the only member of this Legislature that spends virtually 100 percent of his waking hours in his constituency, so if presence in your constituency is any sign of service, I am the MLA, because I spend 100 percent of my waking hours in my constituency. I want to offer it to members opposite, if you have any problems. You are all in my constituency, so you know, feel free to beat your way to my door. I represent the Legislature as well as all of the areas surrounding it. No voters in here, right?

* (1600)

Well, I will tell you, it is in all seriousness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a great privilege to represent an area as historic as Fort Rouge is. If you look in the early history of Winnipeg, this area is where the Upper Fort was first

established over by The Forks. I have the immense privilege of representing the meeting place for, I do not know, 6,000 years, 9,000 years, certainly 6,000 years. The Assiniboine River I understand flowed into the Red at many different points, but at any point in history where it flowed in, that was a natural junction. So I am privileged to represent the place where it flowed in at least for the last 1,500 years or so into the Red.

I have the privilege of representing The Forks and all the history of our transportation, where the first steam locomotive came ashore, coming up the river on a barge from Minneapolis in order to help the CPR continue its railroad building efforts east and west from Winnipeg. I have the privilege of representing the area where the largest corporations in Manitoba are headquartered in terms of the corporate sector represented on Portage and Main, and Broadway and Osborne, those areas which employ thousands and thousands of Manitobans in very good jobs and important jobs, and they are businesses that have linkages all over the world.

Most people outside of Winnipeg do not realize that two of our biggest corporations in the finance world in this country are headquartered in our city. Great-West Life and Investors corporation being the two companies in question, both of which of course have many other subsidiaries across the country, so I have that community.

I have also the historic community of Osborne Village, which was perhaps the first of our older urban communities to get redeveloped through the process of three levels of government working together, and it became a place where young people have a lot of fun, where there is some very fine food and good furniture and good clothing and wonderful opportunities for people to be on the streets of our city at night, making the streets safer and making our communities more vibrant, so I represent the village.

Virtually every aspect of my riding to me is quite astounding in its very variation. I have, for example, Villa Cabrini, a wonderful Italian senior citizens home right beside the Southeast

Tribal Council's medical receiving home. We have the medical receiving home from the Northwest Territories on Stradbrook, which is across the street from one of our great seniors homes that has served seniors so well in our city. I have the wealthiest condominiums in the city on Wellington Crescent. I have some of the deepest poverty in the city on Mayfair. I have many, many new Canadians.

I was astounded when I was canvassing through those highrises. I recommend to anybody who is into fitness, if you want to improve your fitness level, then canvass a 22-storey highrise each night and work up from the bottom and your fitness level will get better, I promise you. I was amazed at how many new Canadians live in the area around Donald Street and Hargrave where virtually every second apartment had someone who was unable to vote, but I usually spent a few minutes talking with them anyway, although my campaign manager was never happy about that. I spent time talking with them and always left them with our material because they will be voters, and they do want to be fully participating in our society.

I met Bosnians and I met people from the various pieces of the Yugoslavian peninsula or area, Herzegovina. I met people from Albania and people who have come to our country out of great terror and fear, Central American people, people from Russia, from Poland. So our community is also a place where new Canadians come and new Manitobans get their first experiences of living in this great province.

I also, Mr. Deputy Speaker, am privileged to represent the area around Mayfair which has in it Fort Rouge School. I would just note for members opposite and for our members, as well, that one would never think that Fort Rouge School which is comprised of largely aboriginal children—and an interesting statistic, not one child in that school lives in a house. Not one child lives in a house. They all live in either public housing or apartments. There is not one single child who lives in a house. So all of the literature these kids see that talks about living in houses is a foreign experience to them.

That school topped the city in the Grade 3 math exams, an amazing, amazing performance.

It is an incredibly welcoming school with a great parent group involved in it, a wonderful staff of people, very concerned about gang recruitment which is going on in our community, but providing a high quality of educational experience for children whom we might normally think were challenged academically, but, in fact, these kids are doing very well with very good programs. I want to commend Winnipeg School Division No. 1, the public school system's largest division, and the teachers and parents of that school for the outstanding work that they do.

So I consider myself immensely privileged to represent one of the most varied and interesting ridings and, of course, to represent the riding in which this amazing building is located. I would just say to the newest members of the House, I am sure that some of them still feel the way I still do, that simply coming into this building and working here, I am still amazed every day when I come in, that it is a great privilege and there is a feeling of awe every time I have the opportunity to do something in this place. I think we were amazingly well provided for by governments long past who put this Chamber and this Legislative Building in place.

Let me turn now to the most recent election and the commitments that we have made as a new government. You know, it was very interesting, when I first went out canvassing just before the election and immediately after the call of the election when the writs were dropped, it was clear from day one that Manitobans had decided that it was time for a change. They decided that, I think, out of their experience, a collective, growing experience of disillusionment that things that they had hoped would be protected had not been protected and, increasingly, as I talk with more and more people, a sense that the government of the day could not be trusted. That is a sad reality and it is one that all governments are prone to, and ours will be no exception to that because all of us I think can fall prone to the kinds of errors that make for a cynical electorate.

In particular, I was struck by the degree to which people still remembered the incredible debacle in this Chamber when MTS was sold over the protests of so many Manitobans and without the government of the day having the

confidence to put the question to a vote, to put the question either to an election or to a referendum, so that Manitobans might be heard, might have a chance to understand the issue and make a decision, give some guidance to a government that had no mandate.

It was amazing to me at the door how often that still came up. Three years later, four years later people were still saying to me, that was an awful thing that was done. Some of them even said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it may have been the right thing to do, it may have been, I do not know, but the way they did it was just terrible. They particularly felt that the way in which the House was conducted during that time was not respectful of the democratic tradition. So that formed a kind of subtext to the election, that broken promise.

The second thing, of course, that came up day after day at the door was health care, and it came up out of the concern that government simply had not been able to steward this system in an effective way. People understood that over 11 years when you lay off a thousand nurses and you close 1,500 beds and yet there are no savings and the people are crowding the emergency wards and they have long waiting lists for treatment that something has gone fundamentally wrong with the stewardship of that important department.

* (1610)

So people understood that whether they knew much about health care or not, they knew something had gone fundamentally wrong. For them, the symbols of whatever had gone wrong were the waiting lists, the corridors and of course the frozen food, because by then people had realized that the frozen food debacle was going to cost us far more money, was going to waste employment that could have been here in Manitoba, was going to ship capital to Ontario, and then laterally after the merger of Newcourt with Citibank to the United States, was going to purchase food from Ontario.

Essentially for people the frozen food debacle became a kind of symbol of the former government's understanding of economic development. You ship out jobs, you ship out

capital, you buy stuff from somewhere else, and you pay too much for it. This is their understanding of economic development. So waiting lists, crowded corridors and frozen food all became symbols for people of the mismanagement of our health care system.

An Honourable Member: You got their attention.

Mr. Sale: Finally got their attention, eh? Yes.

Well, I think that people also understood that there are difficulties in the health care system. They understand that it is not a simple system. But you see, the difficulty that the former government got into was that people remembered that in 1995 promises had been made in the election to build personal care homes, and \$625-million worth of personal care homes over five years were going to be built. Not six weeks later the government cancelled their promise—cancelled the promise. In fact, they had to say that they could not proceed, and they then tried to give a reason why they could not proceed. The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) will probably remember that the reason that was given was that the federal government had cut funding. That was the reason that the Minister of Health got up and said: we cannot proceed with building these new personal care homes, because the nasty federal government has cut our funding. I think the member for Lakeside will remember that.

The only problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was they knew that before the election. They knew that in February. They promised to spend \$625 million in March, and they cancelled it in April. They cancelled their promises to Manitobans, and it is that cancellation which has caused the problem we have in our hospitals, because the assumption, not an unreasonable assumption, was if we build the personal care home beds in 1996 then we will be able to close some hospital beds and move some nurses. You did not build the homes, but you did close the beds, and you did lay off the nurses. Surprise, surprise. Manitobans saw the hypocrisy in the cancelled promise. They saw the crowded waiting rooms. They saw the emergency wards full of their loved ones lying on stretchers, and they said mismanagement. They said: we are going to try

something different. So the election, you know, was fought on trust; it was fought on health care; it was fought on broken promises; and Manitobans made a very significant commitment to a new government.

Now, the new government made five major commitments because we understood something that the Mike Harris-led former government of Manitoba—using their imports from Ontario to shape their election strategy, I notice they accept that. That is interesting because I know that is what happened, but usually we hear a reaction to that. They thought that they could buy Manitobans with a billion dollars.

I remember the member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) coming in just after the election. The member for Emerson, of course, has a great sense of humour even if it is sometimes misguided, but he has a great sense of humour. He laughed, you know, because he is one of the people in the House, who understands that what we do in the Chamber sometimes is not necessarily what we do in the corridors when we talk to each other quite civilly. He laughed when he said: you know, you won the election with a \$15-million promise to help deal with the waiting lists in the corridors and the people on gurneys, and we offered a billion and they would not buy it. Well, they would not buy it because they did not believe it. It was not credible. It just simply was not credible.

So we made five commitments because we know that Manitobans' expectations are simply that we will provide sound, stable government and that we will do what we said we were going to do. We will not promise the moon and the stars. We will perform as a stable and thoughtful government and keep our commitments. What were those commitments? We will end hallway medicine. This Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has done more in 60 days than all of those failed ministers did in 11 years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have announced measures that will shorten the number of people in emergency wards because they will not have to be there in the first place. We have announced that we will open beds, and most of them are now open, the announced beds. We have announced long-term approaches to the

questions that have bedevilled this health care system. We will keep the commitment that hallway medicine will not be an everyday feature of life in Manitoba in the future. Of course, there will be times when there will be the odd person in the hallways, but not 60 and 70 people day after day after day in the hallways of Manitoba hospitals. We will end hallway medicine as the commitment was made.

Let us take a look at the education side of our mandate, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You know, former Premier Roblin, under the direction of the previous government, took a very useful look at our post-secondary education system. His commission said Manitoba has a shockingly bad record, particularly at the community college level. Year after year the statistics came back that we had the lowest level of enrollment of our Grade 12 students moving on to community college of any province in Canada. Not just in the middle of the pack but the worst, and not the worst by a little bit, but way down there at the bottom after years and years and years of neglect of our community college system.

Roblin said at least you might try to double the enrollment. That is what we are going to do. We are going to pull out all the stops to make sure that the training opportunities in the jobs of today and tomorrow are there for young Manitobans. So we will be able to offer positions to Manitobans to stay in this province, to help contribute their wealth of experience, their knowledge, their energies to building the kind of society we all want to live in.

I am immensely proud that my department will be working with the Education department, with the Intergovernmental Affairs department, with the Justice department, with the Health department, with all of our ministers to reach the objective that we have set for ourselves. A very challenging objective, but we will work as hard as we can to meet that objective, to give opportunity and hope to our young people.

What else did we say, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well, we said that we are not going to sell Hydro. You know, that is where that billion dollars was going to come from. You promise a billion, you know it is not there, so what do you do? You do MTS, second time around. You

just say: you know, we have got to cut taxes, we have got to find some money to spend. We do not have it. Well, we will just sell Hydro. All the money that came from MTS was wasted—well, not wasted, it was spent. It is gone. There is no money there anymore. It is gone. It is just spent, as though you could finance your home by simply selling off the silverware, and then you wonder what you are going to use to eat. Right? You would sell off the silverware and say that this is current income.

Now, the members opposite say that they are business people. What business person would count the sale of capital assets as current income? I do not know anybody who could read a balance sheet and say the sale of assets constitutes current income. But that is what they did. They are also the same government who forced their Finance department to show transfers from the rainy day fund as though that was current income too. You know, you have got yourself a great, big, fat deficit. No problem. We will just transfer money from the Fiscal Stabilization Fund and call it current income. Well, the Auditor has said: no, it is not. The Auditor has said that presentation is wrong. It fundamentally violates accounting principles. It is not a correct way to show transfers from savings accounts.

So this previous government set up a situation where they actually pulled into last year's budget \$315 million of nonrecurring income, and they treated it as current income. They did not show that it was not recurring. They did not put forward the fact that this was going to put us into a deep, deep, deep hole next year. They just said: oh, Manitobans, trust us. We have really got all this money, and it is there for us next year. Well, surprise, surprise, \$315 million of it is not there for next year.

* (1620)

They took a three-year commitment from the federal government to increase spending in the health centre, and they spent it in the first three months. They took \$184 million out of the rainy day fund, and they did not just spend it in the first three months, they have overspent it now, according to Deloitte and Touche, by a

minimum of \$262 million, overspent in addition to the \$184 million, in addition to the \$131 million, another \$262 million. Incredible.

The government of fiscal responsibility not only turns the tap on, they broke it off so it just kept running. Commitment after commitment after unfunded commitment. Spend anything that is required to keep the public quiet and happy. We will skate through the election. Who cares then if there is a deficit? We will deal with that later. That was their attitude from the passing of the budget of last year through to the end of the election. Spend whatever it takes to keep Manitobans happy for that period of time.

Well, that is not good enough. It is not good enough to spend scarce resources simply to get yourself re-elected. They call it the government of bulimia, right, the binge government that purges and binges and purges and binges. How can you as a system function on that kind of model of spending?

So that is why we have said that we will never sell Manitoba Hydro. We will make it a requirement of the laws of this province that before any government sells Manitoba Hydro or any other Crown corporation, there will be a referendum, people will have a chance to express their views on a clear question, and the voices of Manitobans will be heard in a way that, had they been heard on MTS, we would not have sold that company. We would still be making profits from it. We would still be in a position to leverage our technology for the people of this province. Instead, as soon as they have paid off their debt, we can imagine where the ownership and control of that company will move and in fact already has moved to a very significant extent.

So I am proud to be part of a government that has made a commitment that Crown corporations will not be sold unless the people of Manitoba have been consulted. I trust that this former government, these members opposite will support that legislation when it comes forward, that they will vote unanimously for that legislation so that no government has the right to strip away those kinds of assets from our people without the people's consent and consultation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In the area of taxation, we made a commitment to live with the reductions that had been put into the new budget that we voted for. We voted for it, of course, because they finally began to spend some of the hoarded money on the health care system. We just did not know how much they were going to spend. We thought they were going to spend what was in the budget, but they spent another \$230 million as well. We did not vote for that. We did vote for the tax cuts and they will be honoured, but we are very concerned about property taxes, and that is why we will be acting to bring under control our property taxes in this province.

Key to doing that, of course, is to do what the former government never did do, and that was to put in place stable, predictable funding for our public school system. A school system that spends about \$1.1 billion a year, Mr. Deputy Speaker, cannot be expected to deal with governments that arbitrarily give zero, minus two, minus two, plus two, zero, whatever, on an electoral cycle instead of on the basis of the needs of children in the system. So that is why we will be funding our school system at the rate of growth of the economy per student, and that will give them a predictable base on which to plan, and if we are able to do more, of course, we will probably do more. They at least know that they can count on a minimum base. They can plan; they can forecast; they can do their staffing. They can plan their capital plans and so forth and know what the basic financial situation is going to be for them.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to speak about the disgraceful neglect of the inner city of Winnipeg by the previous government. We used to joke that the previous Minister of Housing had to get a map to find his way downtown. While that is probably a little unfair, it is not far off the mark in terms of the abysmal neglect of the inner city and the horrible working relationship between the City of Winnipeg and the previous government in terms of its elected officials. We have made a commitment to work in partnership with the city and with the many inner city agencies which desperately need the commitment and energy of both levels of government and hopefully of our federal partner, as well, to address what is close to a catastrophic situation.

Members opposite from suburban Winnipeg will have this brought home to them in spades when the next reassessment takes place in 2002 and they suddenly find that much of the former assessment of the older city of Winnipeg has shifted to the suburbs because of the collapse of property value in the inner city of this capital of our province.

I am told and have seen figures from the Assessment Branch that would confirm that property values have collapsed by more than 50 percent in the last two years, and those members opposite who are familiar with assessment know that when reassessment takes place, the tax demand does not decrease but the assessment has to shift to produce the same level of taxes. What is going to happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that there is going to be a massive shift of tax burden to our suburbs reflecting the collapse of inner city property values.

So chickens will come home to roost. The previous government spent 11 years ignoring the inner city, and they are going to reap in the few seats they still represent in this city the harvest of that neglect when property taxes in the areas of Southdale and St. Norbert and Charleswood and St. James and the west end and Kirkfield Park skyrocket following the next reassessment.

But what is even more devastating than the shift of property taxes is what has happened to human beings in the inner city, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have more children in care per capita than any province in Canada. We have deeper poverty in the area around Main Street and Sutherland and just north of the CPR tracks than any other federal riding in Canada.

The poorest federal riding in Canada is the riding represented by the former member of this House, the Honourable Judy Wasylycia-Leis. It is the poorest riding in Canada. Incredible situation. Housing in that area of our city is frame stucco housing, and it is at the stage of its life where if we do not invest substantially, it will be lost. It will simply be lost because much of it is 100 years old, and frame buildings of that age simply cannot last much longer.

It troubles me deeply when I see the number of families in deep poverty. We talk about the

fact that Manitoba is now third in its percentage of poor families, most of whom live in the inner city. Well, we are third, but the difference between us and the first province in terms of the depth of poverty is only .6 percent. We are 22.1 percent and the worst is 22.7, not much difference between worst and third worst.

That poverty represents wasted opportunity on the part of the children who live in poverty. It represents wasted economic potential on the part of our province for children who will never contribute or very few of whom will contribute to their maximum potential. It represents every day in our schools immense challenges to our teachers and teacher aides to hold these children in school, to provide food for them often, not infrequently to provide clothing. It provides immense challenges to our Child and Family Services agencies, our daycares and our police forces, all of whom are faced with the outcome of child poverty.

* (1630)

If there is any priority in this nation today, surely, surely, surely, it is to address the burden of child poverty. The burden on the children is inhumane. The burden on the families is unfair. The burden on society is unaffordable. We cannot afford as a society to have 22 percent of our families living in poverty and say that we are going to compete with nations of the world that have 5 percent of their families in poverty. We cannot afford that burden, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so I implore the federal government and I implore all members opposite to bring to the federal government's attention the priority for antipoverty measures in the next budget. The restoration of the Canada Health and Social Transfer and targeted measures at child poverty are surely the best investment we could make in competitiveness into the 21st Century, as well as, into building a civil and humane society.

I ask all members in the most nonpartisan spirit, talk to your federal MPs, talk to your federal leader, implore them to make child poverty a focal point of the next budget. A nation whose federal government has a \$95-billion surplus occurring over the next five years can surely afford to invest \$10 billion of that \$95 billion in antipoverty measures that will last and

will have a lasting payoff for all of us. I ask all members to support all of us as we work to focus the federal government's energy. Now that the budgets are balanced and now that our fiscal situation is in reasonable shape, let us do the right thing and focus on children in the next budget.

Finally, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to make a couple of comments about the situation facing rural Manitoba, particularly southwestern Manitoba. I was out there several times personally on personal business but also just as someone who grew up in a rural area and is concerned about agriculture. I am very concerned that the federal government has abandoned any hope of maintaining western family farms, but let me say to the federal government that it is curious they do not seem to be abandoning eastern family farms in Ontario and Quebec. There are still lots of small farms in that part of the country. It seems only in the west where the issues of support for our grains, particularly in oilseeds, is such that family farms cannot continue to exist.

I want to add my voice to that of our Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) and many members opposite who expressed concern that our federal government has abandoned the family farms, not of all Canada, but of western Canada. I think that is profoundly unfair and ill advised in terms of our future food security, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

In conclusion, then, I am proud to be part of a New Democratic government that has five core commitments which we will keep and that will rebuild the trust and faith of Manitobans, that government can operate effectively within its budgets, meet the human needs of Manitobans and help to build a society that is progressive and competitive and is the best we can be in the 21st Century. Thank you.

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is an honour, and it gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to address the members of the House, the people of the province and the people of Charleswood in response to the new government's Speech from the Throne.

I want to begin by offering my most sincere and generous congratulations to our Speaker as he assumes the responsibility of presiding over this Chamber. As the first elected Speaker of the Manitoba Legislature, he really has made history. Being of Inuit heritage, he also brings this special perspective with him.

I had the pleasure of visiting Nunavut, his birthplace, during a trade mission earlier this year and developed a great appreciation for the uniqueness of this incredible new territory. We also spent several days with his brother John and had an opportunity to learn more about his family. I look forward to the opportunity one day of visiting Nunavut, and hopefully I will have that opportunity at some point in my lifetime. I know that our Speaker will serve this Chamber with great dignity and distinction, and I sincerely wish him well.

To you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your appointment in your role and wish you well in carrying out your duties.

I would like to welcome all of the honourable members back to the House. I would particularly like to recognize and welcome the new members of the Legislature. I am sure that we all look forward to representing our constituents' interests well and earnestly within the Legislative Assembly.

I would also like to extend a sincere welcome to our new pages. I know their services will be much appreciated by us all. These positions provide a wonderful opportunity for these young people to witness first-hand the business of this Chamber. I hope this experience leads to a lifelong interest in the legislative process.

I also want to offer my best wishes to the table officers and wish them well with their many challenges. They have a daunting role to play, and they do it very well.

I have only known him a short time, but I would like to wish the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Binx Remnant, the very best in his retirement. During my time in the Legislature, I have come to appreciate Binx's

dedication and commitment to his role in the House. His expertise has served the members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly well through 17 years. We will miss him, but I am sure that he will enjoy his retirement with the same vigour that he approaches his job here.

I too want to congratulate our Leader, the member for Tuxedo (Mr. Filmon), for his outstanding contribution and commitment to the people of Manitoba. It is a real honour and a privilege for me to serve with him to date. He and his wife, Janice, have contributed immensely to our province and made it a better place for all of us and our children.

Finally, I would like to thank the people of Charleswood, who gave me a strong vote of confidence in electing me to this House for the second time. It is an honour to serve them, an honour and a responsibility that I take very seriously. Throughout the provincial election, I had the opportunity to speak with a great many of the residents of Charleswood, and they shared their hopes for the future with me. They told me what they want from their government. In co-operation with my colleagues on both sides of the House, I intend to work to ensure that their expectations are met and that their concerns are dealt with effectively and expeditiously.

Since my election as the MLA for Charleswood, I have been tremendously impressed by the enthusiasm and community spirit shown by the people in my constituency. They have shown a willingness, in fact an eagerness to work together on projects to enhance our communities. The most meaningful and significant change is the change we effect ourselves, and the people of Charleswood truly exemplify this. I strongly believe that the most vibrant communities are those which strengthen themselves with the participation of local residents.

I would like to share a little bit of Charleswood's interesting history with the House. Charleswood developed as a farming community on the outskirts of Winnipeg. Farmers in Charleswood produced grain, hay, cattle and poultry, but they are probably most well known for their successful mink farms.

Charleswood became an incorporated municipality in 1912 and remained a separate municipality until it became part of the city of Winnipeg in 1971. During my tenure thus far as the MLA for Charleswood, I have worked in co-operation with dedicated local citizens to introduce or participate in programs and activities for youths, families and seniors. I adhere to the philosophy that partnerships make a healthy community, and I will continue to work to forge stronger partnerships throughout our community.

Ensuring that seniors in the constituency are informed and aware of options and activities is a community priority for me. Last fall, I brought together a group of seniors from Charleswood and we established the Charleswood Seniors Advisory Committee to advise me on ways in which we could celebrate seniors during International Year of Older Persons. Our committee has been incredibly active, taking part in Charleswood In Motion Days in June, publishing a quarterly newsletter and holding a sold-out seniors barbecue at the Charleswood Legion in August.

* (1640)

I am pleased to be able to take this opportunity to commend my Charleswood Seniors Advisory Committee for one of their most outstanding achievements to date, the creation of a seniors centre at Royal school in Charleswood that will be opening soon. I want to personally thank all of the members of the Charleswood Seniors Advisory Committee for their outstanding efforts over the past year. They have truly fulfilled the spirit and intent of the International Year of Older Persons.

Another group that deserves recognition for its contribution to Charleswood is the Winnipeg Police Service. With the support of the previous government, the Winnipeg Police Service has opened police athletic centres at Westdale Junior High and Charleswood Junior High. These centres run sports activities for youths during the evening. They have been very well received. In fact, Westdale Junior High was at one point supporting a nightly attendance rate of 80 young people. I simply cannot say enough about this tremendous initiative and the healthy options the

Winnipeg Police Service provides for the young people of my constituency.

Another organization in Charleswood that cannot go unmentioned is the Westdale Residents Association that was formed in July 1998 with the major goal of ensuring community safety. Following its formation the association received a Citizens on Patrol grant from the Department of Justice.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this group of people serves as an excellent example of community empowerment. Comments from community police show that there has been a drop in crime statistics since the association began their patrolling efforts. They are to be commended for their commitment to their community and for all the work they do to ensure that their community remains a safe place to live and raise a family.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know that a community best strengthens itself from within. That is one of the reasons I have been bringing community leaders together for quarterly networking luncheons. The meetings have been attended by people representing community groups, schools, churches and businesses in Charleswood. These meetings have turned into very useful information sharing sessions where people connect and share ideas about future opportunities for strengthening our constituency.

It is also encouraging to see people with a genuine interest in their community gathered together to make plans for the future. The NDP could take a page from the people from Charleswood when it comes to sharing ideas and developing a plan for the future. I am disappointed, as are many of my constituents, that the NDP did not share their plans for the future with Manitobans in their Speech from the Throne.

After being in opposition for 11 years, I thought that the NDP would at least have a substantive plan for the future. In fact, this speech tells me that they do not. They are quickly becoming known as the party with no direction or plan.

One of the main concerns people from Charleswood shared with me throughout the

election is their desire to see Manitoba's economy continue to grow as it had been under the Filmon government. My constituents realize that without a healthy, thriving economy, they will not be able to continue to enjoy the social programs to which they have grown accustomed. Right now, more people in Manitoba are working than every before in this province's history. Our unemployment has been among the lowest in Canada throughout 1999. Furthermore, 593,600 Manitobans have jobs because the previous administration put this province's financial house in order.

The Filmon government brought spending under control, started paying down the debt and tabled five balanced budgets. This was all accomplished in spite of facing the worst recession since the Great Depression and the harmful federal government cuts in transfer payments to the provinces. We know that strong fiscal management is an essential component of any successful government, yet yesterday's NDP have not shared their economic plan with Manitobans. They barely even referred to the economy in their throne speech.

One tends to question the credibility of a new government that barely gives reference to one of its key campaign promises in its first throne speech. The credibility of that promise is also brought into question. Furthermore, the new government only made cursory references to tax cuts. They will carry through with a 1.5 percent cut in personal income taxes the Progressive Conservative government delivered in the last budget. Beyond that, they have not told Manitobans how they will keep our province competitive. We must continue to attract more people to Manitoba, but we will not be able to do so if our taxes do not continue to go down.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the throne speech is a source of disappointment for me on another important topic as well. We know that farmers throughout Manitoba are experiencing extremely trying times right now, and this government has not made reference to the crisis they are facing in the throne speech. Speaking as a daughter of a pool elevator agent who grew up in what is now the constituency of Swan River, I can

identify with the frustration farmers are feeling as their livelihood is threatened.

I grew up in the farming community of Benito and most of my relatives were farmers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I spent a large part of my childhood on the various farms of my relatives. It is interesting to think back on my relatives in Saskatchewan who worked so hard to run successful grain farms. Even when they had to deal with poor soil conditions and unfavourable weather conditions, they never gave up. It is also interesting to note that even back then my Manitoba relatives had started to diversify their farms, and they did very, very well on their land.

I knew all the farmers in the area because my Dad had me working in the elevator. Whether it was sweeping grain, cleaning his office or chasing the rats out of the annex, I did it all. On Sundays, we would drive around the countryside checking out the crops, whose were good and whose were bad. We would stop and talk to the farmers and listen to their voices. At a young age, I came to appreciate the value of our farming communities and the struggles that farmers face. I gained a first-hand perspective from my childhood experiences about the immeasurable contribution that farmers make to Manitoba.

Farming and related value-added agricultural activities are the backbone of Manitoba's economy. Our province's farmers are facing an acute crisis that the federal government needs to address. It cannot continue to go ignored by the federal Minister of Agriculture and his cabinet colleagues in Ottawa. We all need to work toward a solution to the farm crisis, and it needs to be a solution that ensures that Manitoba farmers are in business over the long term.

I was pleased with the agreement that was reached with all members of this House. We were able to set aside two days of debate on this important issue and reached an important consensus. Our farmers need our support in their struggle to survive. In particular, the federal government needs to be convinced of its responsibility to Canada's farmers. Ottawa has abandoned the farm community and this is unacceptable. Our farmers are a proud group of

people. They do not want handouts, but they do need support through this time of crisis.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the NDP ran their election campaign on five very simple promises. So simple, in fact, that I am disappointed there are already musings from their ranks about not being able to keep one of their promises to balance the budget this year. Manitobans want their government to live within their means and balance their books.

The NDP supported our last budget. I wonder why a party that now says it is in favour of balanced budget legislation would adopt a budget that they did not think they themselves could fulfill. Again, I have to question the credibility of their election promises. If they cannot balance the budget, I certainly do not know how they will fulfill other promises they made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it contemptible the way some members opposite, particularly the Premier (Mr. Doer), are misleading Manitobans into believing that the Deloitte and Touche financial review is an audit. We know and they know that it is not an audit. It is a seven-day financial review of the province's books. Certainly, questions have arisen about the nature of the information in the review. It is so vague that the credibility of the information itself is called into question. I have to wonder why the government is so secretive about the numbers forwarded to Deloitte and Touche.

At a time when Manitobans are feeling particularly confident about the economy, the NDP should do everything within their means to balance the provincial budget. Repeated balanced budgets and the sound fiscal policies practised by the former administration pave the way for record growth and development in this province. The previous administration and the former Premier had a concrete plan to make sure Manitoba's economic ship was enjoying a smooth ride. We have clear evidence of how well that plan works. We need only look at Manitoba's diversified economy and its low unemployment rate. Consecutive surplus budgets, no major tax increases and a plan to pay off the province's accumulated debt all serve to send

a strong message: Manitoba is open for business.

*(1650)

This Speech from the Throne does not tell us anything about the NDP's plan for the province's economic future. Let us hope that the NDP will continue with the fine fiscal plans charted by the previous administration which inherited by the way a province burdened by spiralling debt, high unemployment and low investment and turned it into one of the greatest success stories in the country. Perish the thought that yesterday's NDP, well known for the fact that it had no definite plans, should seize control of the wheel and wreck Manitoba's currently buoyant economic ship on the rocky shores of poor fiscal management.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it contemptible that this government would come forward with a Christmas wish list of items from their departments. They are already throwing up their hands in despair. The NDP are already throwing up their hands in despair and declaring defeat. Oh, well, this year, we will not be able to balance the budget.

That is not what forming government is about. It is about balancing demands and establishing priorities. One of the priorities that the NDP promised to Manitobans was maintaining balanced budget legislation. They were very clear on this in the election. There were no caveats attached to their promise. Manitobans voted for them because they believed the NDP would keep this basic, simple promise. That means balancing the budget each and every year.

Had we been re-elected to government, there is absolutely no question that we would have balanced the budget. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as a nurse, I know from first-hand experience that health care also represents an issue of great importance to many Manitobans. It is unfortunate that the members opposite are taking credit for a plan set in motion by the former government. All we need to do is look at some of the newspaper clippings from the 1980s when the NDP were in power. There was a declared health care crisis of massive proportions.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We cannot hear the speaker. The member for Charleswood has the floor.

Mrs. Driedger: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know there is probably sensitivity across the way when we come to looking at the NDP's health care of the 1980s, but I would like to share these headlines with you because I was a nurse in the 1980s in a city hospital, and these headlines were very, very real.

Bed shortage cited in death of four patients. Hospital forced to limit admissions. Heart surgery wait worries doctors. People going blind waiting for eye surgery. Intensive care beds short. Doctor shortage plagues rural areas.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I did work in the hospital system under these conditions and under an NDP government and I recall it vividly. It was horrendous. I shudder to recall those days. For the sake of Manitobans, I can only hope that the NDP have learned something in opposition and that they will be better managers of the health care system this time around than they were in the 1980s.

I find it interesting that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has publicly stated twice already that our government got 85 percent of health care right. As a nurse I will be watching very carefully to see how he will handle the remaining 15 percent. I also find it interesting that Today's NDP are already distancing themselves from the health care term that they themselves coined. Not once in their Speech from the Throne do they use the term "hallway medicine." Perhaps it is because that was a term they used to create crisis and incite fear among Manitobans.

As a recent Winnipeg Free Press editorial noted, the NDP has to stop creating crisis and start acting like government. Nevertheless, the NDP is playing fast and loose with the number of beds that are really in the system. They have already announced plans for 138 new beds. They said those beds would be above and beyond the beds set in motion by our government. That is what they have said, but that is not

the reality of the situation. The reality the NDP should be telling Manitobans is that they have only put 18 new beds in the system in addition to the 120 provided for by the previous government. Let us face it, they are not new beds.

I also find it shameful that the NDP has not yet told Manitobans how they plan to staff the new beds they claim to be putting into our health care system. There is a nationwide nursing shortage. Where will they get the nurses to staff their beds? What I find most disappointing is the apparently low priority patient safety has for the new government. It certainly should not be announcing that it has opened new beds without first having the staff to care for the patients in those beds. Maureen Hancharyk, the head of the Manitoba Nurses' Union—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Driedger: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Maureen Hancharyk, the head of the Manitoba Nurses' Union, is even questioning how the government intends to staff the beds that they are announcing and ensure patient safety when opening beds without adequate nurse staffing. I hope that they will provide the details of their plan to Manitobans in the very near future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this throne speech is also very short on detail. Granted, throne speeches are not traditionally documents that outline precise programs or policies; however, they should set the direction and general plan of a government. This throne speech does not tell Manitobans how this government will ensure that they are getting people off of social assistance and into the workplace, especially in light of this government's decision to scrap Bill 40, legislation that would ensure that social assistance recipients move into the dignity of a job.

With all due respect to the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) who said he has never met an able-bodied person who did not want to work, I must ask where he has been living. He obviously has a view of the world

that is altered by the tint of his rose-coloured glasses. He needs to take a better look at the cycle of poverty and dependency that is created when generations of families are allowed to remain on social assistance without any expectations in return for the support they are given.

Social assistance was never intended as a long-term means of supporting able-bodied individuals. It is a short-term measure to help people while they are getting back on their feet, yet this government, through its recent actions, is telling Manitobans that social assistance recipients should not have to give anything back to their communities for the support that they receive from the taxpayers of Manitoba. I had hoped that the throne speech would outline some kind of plan for the long-term jobs the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) wants to give people on social assistance, but it does not.

* (1700)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was pleased to note that this government will follow the Filmon government's lead and if necessary encourage the federal government to use the notwithstanding clause if the Supreme Court chooses to uphold the B.C. court's decision regarding the Sharpe child pornography case. The Filmon government committed to ensuring that the possession of child pornography remains illegal in Canada and wanted to see the federal government implement the notwithstanding clause if it has to.

It goes without saying that all children have the right to be protected from sexual exploitation and abuse. In order to ensure that right is preserved throughout Canada, it is incumbent upon all legislators to take all steps necessary to see that the possession of child pornography remains an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada. We know that the creation and distributing of child pornography has extremely detrimental effects on children. Surely the possession of such illegal materials must all remain banned throughout our country in order to prevent the spread of this unlawful activity.

This is a wheel that our government put in motion, and I am glad that the new government

is following through on the plan we put in place to deal with this very important issue. The protection of children has been the focus of both my professional and private life, and it will continue to be a focal point for me in my role as Family Services critic. It is important that the government is always working in the best interests of the children.

I hope that the new government will keep the best interests of Manitoba children in mind as they develop programs and policies for the new millennium. I hope they will stick to their word and keep the things that the former Premier and his government got right. The ChildrenFirst strategy is one of the many things we got right. I encourage the new government to be true to their word and maintain the integrity of ChildrenFirst and all of the programs that fall under its umbrella.

To close my remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to call upon the new government to live up to all of the promises that it made to Manitobans during the provincial election.

An Honourable Member: Indeed we will.

Mrs. Driedger: As the Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) likes to remind the members on this side of the House, the NDP won the election. We do not need to be patronized by the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell).

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

I would like to remind the member for Brandon East (Mr. Caldwell) that winning an election and running a government carries with it enormous responsibilities. It is not about glib, arrogant, irresponsible commentary.

One of those responsibilities is to ensure that the Manitoba that they hand over to those who follow them is in as good a shape as they received it, if not better. We pray that Today's NDP does not squander away the good economic fortune that eleven and a half years of good government helped create in Manitoba. That is the challenge that I am issuing to all members opposite. For Manitoba's sake, I hope they can rise to that challenge. The new government must continue to build upon and strengthen what is

working and have the courage and commitment to change what is not.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to conclude by thanking the people who supported me in this last election: my campaign workers, my volunteers, my executive, my election team, all of the people of Charleswood. I would also very much like to thank my family for their ongoing support and commitment. Their support allows me to work at a job I truly love. I am honoured and privileged to have the opportunity to represent the people of Charleswood. I thank you for the opportunity to make these few comments.

Hon. Diane McGifford (Minister of Culture, Heritage and Tourism): It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to address this throne speech. I have not had many opportunities for speaking, and so I am looking forward to the next while as I do respond to the speech and to some of the remarks made by members opposite.

It has been interesting to be in the House and hear the ranting and the hectoring and the complaining and the cavilling from members opposite. Of course, these remarks are all directed against the throne speech and the vision in the throne speech. Now, I do remember being in opposition and I do remember constantly being told: can you not say something positive? Do you not have any vision?

So, I turn that back and say: can you not say anything positive? Do you not have any vision? Is your only reason for being in this House to rise up and hector and cavil and to carry on?

I have heard several complaints about the throne speech. One of the things that I always thought characterized the throne speeches of the former government was this overblown, blowzy, purple, connotative prose that said nothing.

An Honourable Member: If it was a dog you would call her Fluffy.

Ms. McGifford: Yes, if it was a dog, as my colleague says, we would call it Fluffy. In other words, a throne speech and a dog. Well, Mr. Speaker, I do digress. I did hear the member opposite say that he did have a dog named Fluffy

and to compare his dog to a Tory throne speech was to besmirch his dog, and I totally agree.

One of the complaints that I have heard from members opposite is that we voted for their budget, and we did vote for their budget, but what we did not vote for was the pre-election spending, and it is this pre-election spending that has created a \$261-million deficit. It is the pre-election spending that we do not support, so I do want to point that out.

I know the members opposite were keen on pointing out to the Premier (Mr. Doer) that a financial review and an audit were very different. Well, I would like to point out to the members opposite that a budget and money that is not in the budget but is spent to try and get yourselves re-elected are also very different. So consider and ponder on that.

Now having dispensed with those preliminaries, Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of this House, the first elected Speaker in the province of Manitoba. Obviously, your election to this office reflects the respect and the confidence of your colleagues in this Legislature. I know that the role of Speaker is a time-honoured one and is very integral role to parliamentary democracy, so my sincere congratulations. I know we are all grateful to you for undertaking this very demanding and very sensitive work. We have great respect for your fairness and for your impartiality.

I also wanted to recognize your mother, Jenny Tootoo. I know she was here in the Legislature the day you were elected, and I know from speaking both to your mother and to yourself, there is great affection and caring between the two of you. I know that your mother has been a very powerful influence in your life, and so congratulations to her because she certainly is responsible to some degree for the human being that you have become.

I also want to, as other members of the Legislature have done, I would like to congratulate the pages, our eight young people. You do provide extremely valuable services to the Legislature. You facilitate the workings of

the House. I know my colleagues agree that you all merit our appreciation and our thanks. I hope you find it an enjoyable and valuable experience working in the Legislature. I hope it stimulates what must already be an interest in politics. Who knows, one of you or all of you may be here sitting as an MLA one of these days.

Congratulations to our Premier (Mr. Doer) on his election as Premier. Certainly, this side of the House agrees—I do not know about the folks opposite—that he is a breath of fresh air, that he brings dedication and compassion to government. He also brings fiscal responsibility, and he has a zeal to include all Manitobans in the decisions and the practices of his government. With the Premier as the Premier, we will do away with the marginalized people. Our idea has always been to be inclusive, to bring outsiders into the circle, to regard all Manitobans equally whether those people be from labour, whether they be from business, whether they be aboriginal people, immigrants, visible minorities, disabled, northerners. We want to be a government for all of these people and create a circle that includes everybody.

* (1710)

Let me also extend my congratulations to all members, those who have been re-elected and those who are newly elected. I think that the call to public service is a noble one, and I think that public service can be demanding. I know it can be demanding. I know that members opposite will appreciate that, as well as members in this caucus, but it also can be rewarding. We know that some and sometimes all of the actions that we take make a difference and make a difference for the citizens of our province and positive differences. So let me reiterate. I think we all share the idea that public service, political life, can be extremely rewarding.

I am very proud of the caucus, Mr. Speaker. I think it reflects the inclusivity that I mentioned earlier. In this caucus, we have a mix of rural and urban people, northerners and southerners, men and women, and let me just stop with women for a minute. I am very proud of the fact that in this caucus we have nine women, and I think there are four women among members opposite. So out of 57 members of the

Legislature, we have 13 women, and that is not good enough because we are going for a much higher number. All men take notice. We are going to improve those statistics next time. But meanwhile, I am very pleased with what we have achieved. I am also pleased that there are five women in cabinet, which I think is more women than have ever been in cabinet before.

As well, I am pleased that we have aboriginal and Metis people in our caucus, Inuit, Filipinos. I think it is a sound mix of people. As well, Mr. Speaker, we have a sound mix of professional and employment backgrounds in this caucus. We have teachers, lawyers, social workers. We have clerics, community activists, former school trustees, former city councillors, community workers and business people. We have individuals who have balanced budgets, devised and argued public policy, promoted progressive programs, made informed decisions at their various councils and on their various committees. We have people who struggled to deliver sound education during those years when government appeared to be at war with teachers and, as well, during those years when government turned a blind eye to escalating university tuitions and virtually ignored community colleges.

So the point that I want to make here, Mr. Speaker, is that I am proud of our inclusivity, our range of knowledge, our learning and our diversity of skills. All of these characterize our caucus and mean that we are representative of Manitoba people.

I just want to digress here for a minute, because one of the things I have heard from members opposite in their speeches is—I think, Mr. Speaker, I can best describe it as anger at not being re-elected. I think one of the reasons, and I give you some advice, one of the things that you might consider is that you do not have the kind of inclusivity that I have been talking about. You do not represent all of Manitobans. So there is something that you might consider.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate and recognize our Clerk, Mr. Binx Remnant, who will soon retire. Mr. Remnant has a long tradition of service to this Legislature. As well, I know from him that he has a history

of service in the Northwest Territories. I think it is fair to say that all members of the Legislature respect Mr. Remnant and admire him for his integrity, his fairness, the knowledge he has brought into this Chamber and the dignity with which he has always conducted himself. I think that he has always maintained the neutrality so important to his office, a neutrality without which his job would be impossible.

I would like to say to Mr. Remnant on the record here that not only is he well respected, but I think that he is regarded with great warmth and affection, and we will miss him. His unflinching good cheer, his sense of humour, his enthusiasm for work, all of these, Mr. Speaker, are contagious. He has offered sound legislative advice unstintingly. He has offered us his personal charm and friendship, and I think our lives have been enriched by him. In the best sense of the word, Mr. Remnant is a real character, and may he have the wonderful retirement that he so richly deserves.

I would like to turn for a few minutes to talk about my constituency of Lord Roberts. I am the first MLA for Lord Roberts. Lord Roberts was a newly created constituency in 1998 when the boundaries were redrawn. I am very grateful to the constituents of Lord Roberts for their confidence in me, and I thank them.

Lord Roberts was formed out of the former Osborne constituency. I was the MLA for Osborne from 1995 to the election on September 21. Lord Roberts was formed from part of the Osborne constituency and part of Crescentwood. Its boundaries on the east and south are the Red River. On the north, the boundary line runs down the middle of Corydon to Stafford, down the middle of Stafford to Fleet, down the middle of Fleet to Cambridge and down Cambridge to the railway tracks, where houses simply are not built any longer.

The character of the constituency, Mr. Speaker, is that it is a constituency that is very rich in community clubs, community centres and in schools. There are three very fine community centres: Riverview, which is closely associated with the Riverview Ashland Child Care Centre. It has a wonderful newsletter that is prepared by volunteers that circulate it throughout our

community, that really keeps people informed about events in the community. It is also a very strong community centre when it comes to sports, a very strong community centre when it comes to involving all the youth in the community in the activities of the centre. So I am very proud of the work that is done at Riverview Community Centre.

I would also like to mention Lord Roberts Community Centre, where, under the tutelage of Larry Shenkeveld, a very, very active citizen, Lord Roberts was successful in obtaining the funding to create a youth drop-in centre. You can go to Lord Roberts just about any night of the week and find youth who would probably otherwise be walking the streets or perhaps in some cases doing things that were not necessarily productive, in the youth drop-in centre, associating with their peers, learning computer skills. They even have a pool table, which is a real drawing card, as you can imagine.

The Lord Roberts Community Centre also has a very fine preschool child care centre. These two components work very well together, as they do at other community centres. I also want to mention the Earl Grey Community Club, which is very famous for its exceptional sports teams, I understand, also famous for its Earl Grey safety committee. It is a wonderful community centre in terms of the number of seniors who belong to this centre. It is a very productive seniors group, and I have had the opportunity to celebrate the International Year of Older Persons with these seniors. There was a dinner put on for all the seniors who have lived in the community for 50 years. The community centre was packed, which I think indicates not only fondness for the centre, but the fact that this is a very traditional neighbourhood, that people move there and stay and love their community. They are very, very committed to their community.

Since I am talking about community centres, I know that everyone will agree with me that community centres are very dependent on volunteers and that the volunteers at our community centres are by and large dedicated, tireless. They are united by a common purpose, and that is to knit the community together, build

a stronger future for themselves and for their children. So I will take this opportunity to congratulate not only my volunteers, not only the volunteers in my community centres, but volunteers in community centres throughout the province. They are certainly providing an extremely valuable function.

* (1720)

I could talk about the schools in my constituency. There are nine schools. I think I will not go into details about those schools, but that is quite a liberal number, I think, for a small constituency. What I do want to say is that I am very proud to have attended three schools in the community which I represent. I attended first of all Rockwood School for kindergarten to Grade 6, Earl Grey School for Grades 7 and 8, and then Grant Park School. So it is quite accurate, totally accurate to say that Lord Roberts is home to me.

I lived as a child and adolescent in the west part of my constituency. I can remember life in the west part of that constituency long before the Grant Park School and the Grant Park Shopping Centre and even Grant were created. I can remember the railway lines in the bush. Never you mind how old I am, but I do remember this, and I have even got pictures.

My constituency is also famous for its great restaurants, and I intend to try all of them. I welcome members opposite and members of my own caucus to join me and to eat a meal at some of the wonderful restaurants in the Lord Roberts constituency. As most of you know, one of the central streets in Lord Roberts, Corydon, is bustling and dynamic with all kinds of wonderful shops and restaurants, just an interesting place to be, an interesting place to stroll on a warm summer evening or to do your Christmas shopping. So I welcome people to the constituency.

One of the initiatives that is taking place in my constituency right now is the extension and development of the Churchill Park. The Churchill Park is currently being augmented and developed, and it will eventually connect to The Forks. While we are talking about the Churchill Park development, I want to congratulate a newly found group called the Friends of

Churchill Park, who have established themselves to, well, nudge the city here and there and make sure that the work that is taking place is environmentally sound and in the interests of all constituents.

My constituency is home to child care centres, to seniors' complexes. We have a leisure centre. It is home to the Osborne branch of the Winnipeg Public Library for which citizens fought hard, I might add, when funds seem to be in short supply. I also have several thriving legions, and I was happy to attend their Remembrance Day services on November 11.

Mr. Speaker, the point that I am making here is the same point that I was making when I discussed the composition of our caucus and the composition of our cabinet, that it is a mix that is reflective of the population of our province. One thing I did not mention and I would like to add here is my constituency has greatly benefited from immigration, from the talents and skills, customs and rituals, from the cultural representations and the languages of immigrant populations. Certainly, my constituency is all the richer for this.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that you are signalling to me that my time—no, you are not. All right. I thought you were. Four minutes, okay.

Let me then say a few words about my election experience, a similar experience to that in many ways that was delineated by my colleagues. First, I would like to congratulate all the candidates for the integrity of their campaigns and for the mutual respect that characterized our interchanges. The other candidates—Maggie Nishimura, Lyle Ford and Allan Mills—were extremely respectful, and I enjoyed all my dealings with them. I hope they will run again and the results will be the same.

We were fortunate to have three public debates. I was fortunate to meet with other candidates at various teas and various shopping complexes on the street. As I said, all the exchanges were extremely positive. As I went door to door during the campaign, the messages that I heard at the door were clear, and they were

unequivocal. I might add that they very closely paralleled the NDP's five election commitments.

First of all, I might add that many residents were disgusted with the degeneration of our health care system. Everyone either had or heard a horror story. I heard of death in hallways, impossible waits for services, disruption in services, shortages of nurses. What I heard from my constituents was that we had a health care system that was in crisis, one which was not working for Manitobans. The question that I asked and I know my compatriots asked is: who do you trust to end hallway medicine? I think we got the answer on the 21st of September. The party that the electorate in Manitoba trusted and trust to end hallway medicine was the NDP, which is one of the reasons I am so proud of the work that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has undertaken. He has been tireless. He has been visiting hospitals.

I know members opposite have developed that haranguing strategy when it comes to the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak), but we who work with him on a daily basis and hear about the things that he has been doing know that he is dedicated, know that he is going to do what you folks could not do in 11 years and, in fact, not only what you could not do in 11 years, which you caused. So perhaps I will now say congratulations to the Minister of Health.

As well, residents, particularly those with young children or those with children who were planning their post-secondary education felt that the former government had failed when it came to education, and these folks were very vocal about their complaints. Some of the things that they evinced in the conversations I had with them were the erosion in the classroom, the huge size, tattered and dated textbooks, the paucity of resource teachers, the demoralization of teachers.

Actually, my constituency is home to many teachers. I think I currently have a mailing list of about 200 teachers, and I do not think one of those teachers was pleased with the former government. I do not think one of these teachers was going to vote for the former government. A lot of them put up signs for the NDP.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Pursuant to subrule 43(3) I am interrupting the proceedings in order to put the question on the motion of the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Filmon), that is the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Do members wish to have the amendment read?

* (1730)

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

That the motion be amended by adding to it after the word "Manitoba" the following words:

BUT this House regrets that this government has failed to meet the goals and needs of Manitobans by its

(a) failure to provide a plan or vision for the Province of Manitoba to ensure we continue to enjoy the economic successes of the last decade; and

(b) failure to commit to fiscal responsibility by not committing to balance the budget this year and every year as promised in the recent provincial election; and

(c) failure to commit to maintaining all provisions of the toughest balanced budget legislation in Canada; and

(d) failure to provide any meaningful measures to maintain economic growth and reduce taxes; and

(e) failure to provide a jobs strategy so that Manitoba continues to lead the country in job growth and low unemployment; and

(f) failure to help people help themselves by proclaiming workfare legislation that would assist welfare recipients to find jobs;

AND HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion? All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Mr. Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: In my opinion, the Nays have it.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

Formal Vote

Mr. Speaker: Call in the members.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Filmon), that is the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: THAT the motion be amended by adding to it after the word "Manitoba" the following words:

BUT this House regrets that this government has failed to meet the goals and needs of Manitobans by its

(a) failure to provide a plan or vision for the Province of Manitoba to ensure we continue to enjoy the economic successes of the last decade; and

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(e) failure to provide a jobs strategy so that Manitoba continues to lead the country in job growth and low unemployment; and

(f) failure to help people help themselves by proclaiming workfare legislation that would assist welfare recipients to find jobs;

AND HAS THEREBY lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Division

A RECORDED VOTE was taken, the result being as follows:

Yeas

Cummings, Dacquay, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Faurshou, Filmon, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Penner (Emerson), Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Reimer, Rocan, Schuler, Smith, Stefanson, Tweed.

Nays

Aglugub, Allan, Ashton, Asper, Barrett, Caldwell, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Friesen, Jennissen, Korzeniowski, Lathlin, Lemieux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Nevakshonoff, Reid, Robinson, Rondeau, Sale, Santos, Schellenberg, Smith (Brandon West), Struthers.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 22, Nays 29.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I declare the motion lost.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), the honourable member for River East.

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today in the House to add some comments to the throne speech that has been moved by the government.

I want to say at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that I want to congratulate you on your elected appointment as Speaker of this Legislature. It

was a proud moment for you, I am sure, that day, and just a vote of confidence in your ability to be a very impartial and unbiased Speaker for this Legislature. So I congratulate you, and also the Deputy Speaker on his appointment.

I would also like to congratulate the pages who I know already have proven that they can and will do their job in a very professional manner. So congratulations to all of you and to the interns that have been appointed to serve the caucuses in this Legislature.

I want to also pay tribute to the table staff and specifically to Binx Remnant who will be retiring, and I believe we will be celebrating with him tomorrow as he finishes his term here as service to this Legislature.

I would like to also congratulate all members of the House, those who have been re-elected and those who are elected for the first time. It always is an interesting combination of individuals that do provide for the make-up of all 57 representatives in the province of Manitoba, and I do want to say that I think we share a lot of similar feelings as we take our places in this Chamber and debate serious issues that do impact the lives of all Manitobans.

I want to congratulate the government on their election. I do know that governments change from time to time in every province and every Legislature. The people of Manitoba speak when they cast their ballots, and we now have the opportunity to watch Today's New Democratic Party govern. So I wish the Premier (Mr. Doer) well. I wish members of his cabinet and his caucus well as they make the decisions that will impact the lives of Manitobans over the next four years, maybe three and a half, maybe four and a half. That will be determined by the governing party today in this Legislature.

I do want to, at the outset, certainly speak about my 13 years as an elected representative of this Chamber and speak to the first two years of elected office for me when I was very much a novice and shook in my boots a few times as we moved into debate and discussion, as I became familiar with the political process and began to ask some questions and grow and learn and then moved on, of course, in 1988 to government and

had the privilege of being appointed to cabinet by our Leader, then Premier, for the Department of Heritage, Culture and Recreation at the time.

I do know that it was a very proud moment in my life, and I do want to thank our Leader, the Premier of the day, for giving me the opportunity to serve in cabinet and in that position. Subsequently, after five years in the Department of Culture, Heritage and, then, Citizenship, I was appointed as the Minister of Family Services and spent the last six years of my time in cabinet as the Minister of Family Services.

I want to indicate, because I know my honourable friend the new Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) will certainly have his challenges and will have the opportunity to fix all of the problems in Manitoba for all of those that require the services and support from the Department of Family Services. But I really was not quite sure six years ago whether I was happy about that appointment when people in the community started to give their condolences rather than congratulations to me upon that appointment.

* (1740)

But I do want to indicate that I want to thank my Leader and my Premier because, Mr. Speaker, I have to always, I will have to say to Manitobans that the Leader of the Opposition today will always be my Premier. So I want Manitobans to know that, and I want Manitobans to know that I thank him today very publicly and very personally for the opportunity that he provided to me to serve Manitobans and to make the decisions that impacted many, many lives in our province.

I also do want to pay tribute to another very special person, Mr. Speaker, and that is Janice Filmon. Janice Filmon was very much an integral part of the leadership team under Premier Filmon. I know that they made a great combination and they were great ambassadors for the province of Manitoba. So I do want to very much pay tribute to her, because we all do know that the spouses and others that are involved in our lives make a significant contribution in supporting us and ensuring that we

can do the jobs that we are elected to do and appointed to do.

I know that, as we have moved now to the opposition benches after the last election, I have much more time on my hands. I do not think I ever could have imagined 11 years ago when I was first appointed to cabinet the responsibility and the time commitment that it does take to be a member of a government and a member of the cabinet in the government. Your time all of a sudden does not become your own. There is a significant learning curve and a significant challenge for all of you to try to do and understand all the complexities of your departments and your responsibilities as you move forward, also, recognizing and realizing that being appointed to a cabinet position does not make you a cabinet minister in that position for life. Your responsibilities will change from time to time, and you have to accept those challenges and move on.

We are all vulnerable in the positions that we hold, and none of us should expect to make all of the decisions and all of the right decisions as we move forward. I just want to indicate that in my time as the minister responsible, especially for the Department of Family Services, over this last six years, I attempted to do my very best to serve the people that needed the support from the Department of Family Services.

I want to talk a little bit about that, too, because being a minister responsible and having choices and decisions to make does not come lightly, but you have to really depend on the people that surround you to give you the very best advice possible. I do want to indicate quite publicly today that I felt that we had the very best team of bureaucrats in the Department of Family Services that gave me good advice and gave me good support. As a result, I think we made many decisions that were the right decisions at the right time for many people.

The challenges will never end in an area of government or in a department where there is always a demand for more and a need for more. The reality is that there are many, many people that need support and services from government and from the taxpayers of Manitoba. The one

area that I focused on and one area where I am proud to say we have been able to have an impact and a positive difference is the support and services for those with mental disabilities which we have a responsibility for in the Department of Family Services.

You know, I think that Manitobans to a person would agree that we need to support those within our society and within our community that cannot support themselves. I know that many of the programs that are in place and the supports that are there today are as a result of knowing that Manitobans do endorse and wholeheartedly support moving in the direction of providing taxpayers' dollars to those in need.

But there is a difference between wants and needs. There are many people that walk in the doors of government offices from time to time that want more and demand more and are advocates, in their own right, for what they believe should be supported or funded. The challenge for governments is to try to ensure that you separate or differentiate between the wants and the needs and provide the kind of support that is needed. Those are not easy decisions to make. Sometimes they are very difficult decisions to make, because everyone that receives support through taxpayers' dollars, through government, honestly believes that their cause is the most important cause.

Part of the challenge for government is to try to balance the resources that are available, resources that basically or ultimately come from the taxpayer of the province of Manitoba, with the programs and supports that are needed right across a broad range of services, and there comes the challenge for governments. I believe that our government, when we were in power, tried through some very difficult economic times to balance our approach. We have always taken very seriously the need to ensure that we were not spending beyond our means, but we were dealing with the priority areas within government. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and proud to have been part of a government that brought in balanced budget legislation and lived by that balanced budget legislation for the last five budgets.

Mr. Speaker, I know that we were a government that would have continued year after year to balance the budget, because we know how very important it is for the people of Manitoba to ensure that we are not putting extra burden on them by the way of increased taxes when in fact things are doing very well in our province. I think we have seen unprecedented growth. We have seen more job creation, more economic activity and not government job creation but the private sector job creation. We all have to recognize and realize that the public sector is not the area that is going to grow jobs into the future. It is going to be the private sector. We need a strong economy and we need businesses growing in the province of Manitoba and creating the jobs for the new millennium.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that we set the groundwork with many of the policies and the encouragement of the private sector to come to Manitoba and invest in Manitoba. I would encourage the new government to try to ensure that they stay along that path and do not put disincentives up to detract and chase business out of the province or not attract them to the province because ultimately Manitobans will be the people that suffer.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely disappointed that the new government has thrown its hands up already and has broken the one election promise that I think was so very important and that was the election promise to balance the budget. We all know that dealing with money and financial issues is not always easy. I think about my own household and I think about many of my neighbours and friends and acquaintances that on a yearly basis have to determine how much income they are going to have and then determine how they are going to spend that income. You budget and you do long-range planning and you may have a mortgage or you may have a loan that will be paid off over a certain number of years, and you budget accordingly to try to live within your means.

Mr. Speaker, that budget is not set in stone the moment that you develop that budget. As you move along throughout the year, things change. You may not have budgeted for that hot water tank that burst. That might not have been in your budget, because maybe it was not due to

burst for another couple of years, but you have to deal with the issue as it presents itself. So you get your new hot water tank, you pay for it, but that means that you are short a few hundred dollars in your budget for other things, so you manage within the resources that you have. I think everyone—[interjection] That appears to be the common-sense approach to managing things, so things change and they move on an ongoing basis and governments have to look at the same kind of activity.

* (1750)

There are certain things that you plan and prepare to spend for, and for some reason or other it does not materialize. You do not go out and spend the money because you have that resource, just for the sake of spending it, but you look into other areas of your priorities and see whether money should be shifted into another priority area. You have to manage. We all do it on a regular basis within our households, and people expect governments as stewards of their taxpayers' dollars to do the same kind of thing. So it disturbs me considerably that a new government coming in with almost half of the year left could throw up its hands and say: we cannot possibly balance the budget this year.

I mean, give me a break, Mr. Speaker. What they need to do is take control and govern and make choices and make decisions that will help them live up to their election promise of balancing the budget. I say shame on this government if in fact they do not manage in the manner that Manitobans believed they would when they voted for them based on their election promise and their election commitment.

Mr. Speaker, I also do want to speak a bit about my responsibilities as Health critic and indicate that, you know, again, it is so very easy when you do not have to make decisions and all you have to do is criticize to be critical and to promise the world to everyone, because you know you do not have to deliver.

But, Mr. Speaker, we now have a government in place that must deliver on their election promises. So far, I have not seen the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) deliver on anything that he has promised. Now, he has made announcements and he has put press

releases out and he has tried to spin things in a way that would lead the media or Manitobans to believe that he has delivered on his promises. Well, we know that that is far from the truth. When you try to get a straight answer out of the Minister of Health, we hear nothing but rhetoric. I think he has forgotten that he is not in opposition anymore. He is the member of a government and a cabinet minister responsible for the health care issues in the province of Manitoba, and he has to start to act like a person that is in control, has the ability to manage and will make the right decisions.

They were the party that promised during the election campaign to end hallway medicine in six months. [interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I am having a very difficult time hearing the honourable member for River East.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP led Manitobans to believe during the election campaign that the health care issue was an easy issue to fix, that they could just come into power, and I think I remember the Premier (Mr. Doer), then the Leader of the Opposition, saying, well, if it takes a few more nurses or it takes a few more hours or a few more beds, well, we will just do it. You know, that is the Nike slogan, just do it, so easy. It is a very simplistic approach. They criticized us for 11 years because they felt the health care system was in crisis and was in turmoil, and they knew that, they felt that they knew that, but they also said at the time that they would be able to fix it all within six months of taking office.

Well, Manitobans will be watching and will be waiting. Because I know that the patients that I saw in the hallways in the emergency department yesterday were people that were counting on the NDP to fix the problem. So we will be watching with great expectation to see whether in fact that promise is delivered on or can be delivered on.

I think, well, the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) today probably did not ever think that he would have to manage the system and deliver on his promises. But Manitobans will hold him accountable and will hold the Premier (Mr. Doer) today accountable for the billboards that

said elect us, we will end hallway medicine. Well, we will be watching. My job now, as the Health critic, will be to hold the government, the Minister of Health and the Premier responsible for their election commitments.

Mr. Speaker, I know that time is running. What is the time? Anyway, I do want to indicate to the constituents in River East that elected me to this Chamber gratitude for their support and their continued belief that I have the ability to represent them here in this Legislature. It is a community that I think is second to none, whether it be our education system, through the River East School Division; our health care system, through the personal care home beds that have been built in our community; and Concordia Hospital, which is my community hospital; whether it be the community club, the only one community club, Gateway community club, which I represent. By the way, the Premier's daughter plays soccer at the indoor soccer facility in Gateway.

I even hear a rumour that the Premier (Mr. Doer) is looking at a house to buy in my constituency, so I may have the opportunity to represent him in the Legislature in the not too distant future.

Anyway, I want to again express my gratitude. If the people of River East did not have the confidence in my ability, I would not be here today. I want to thank them for that and I want to ask them to continue the good work on behalf of the people of Manitoba, because, Mr. Speaker, we have many, many families within our community that contribute in a very significant way to the tax base of the Province of Manitoba. They expect me to be a good steward and to be constructively critical and hold the government accountable for the decisions that will be made on their behalf over the next four years, and I intend to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? [agreed] When this matter is again before the House, the debate remains open.

The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

December 8, 1999

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