



Second Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
AGLUGUB, Cris	The Maples	N.D.P.
ALLAN, Nancy	St. Vital	N.D.P.
ASHTON, Steve, Hon.	Thompson	N.D.P.
ASPER, Linda	Riel	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky, Hon.	Inkster	N.D.P.
CALDWELL, Drew, Hon.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave, Hon.	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard	Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary, Hon.	Concordia	N.D.P.
DRIEDGER, Myrna	Charleswood	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry	Lakeside	P.C.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean, Hon.	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GERRARD, Jon, Hon.	River Heights	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KORZENIOWSKI, Bonnie	St. James	N.D.P.
LATHLIN, Oscar, Hon.	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
LEMIEUX, Ron, Hon.	La Verendrye	N.D.P.
LOEWEN, John	Fort Whyte	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord, Hon.	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MAGUIRE, Larry	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McGIFFORD, Diane, Hon.	Lord Roberts	N.D.P.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn, Hon.	Minto	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie	River East	P.C.
MURRAY, Stuart	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
NEVAKSHONOFF, Tom	Interlake	N.D.P.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PENNER, Jim	Steinbach	P.C.
PITURA, Frank	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack	Southdale	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric, Hon.	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Carman	P.C.
RONDEAU, Jim	Assiniboia	N.D.P.
SALE, Tim, Hon.	Fort Rouge	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Wellington	N.D.P.
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SCHULER, Ron	Springfield	P.C.
SELINGER, Greg, Hon.	St. Boniface	N.D.P.
SMITH, Joy	Fort Garry	P.C.
SMITH, Scott	Brandon West	N.D.P.
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STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin-Roblin	N.D.P.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 14, 2000

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Health Centre

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): I beg to present the petition of Mary Bodnar, Tony Manitowich, Anne Peiluck and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) and the First Minister (Mr. Doer) instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Health Centre

Mr. Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable Member for Charleswood (Mrs. Driedger), and it complies with the rules and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: Will the Clerk please read.

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba, humbly sheweth:

THAT the Health Centre, located in downtown Transcona at 108 Bond Street, is an important government service to the community of Transcona and surrounding areas; and

THAT the said Health Centre is centrally located, close to major bus routes, and therefore convenient to the people, with its community based services of Pre-natal and Post-natal care,

Public Nurse consultations, Immunizations, Vaccinations, and Mental Health services; and

THAT the said Health Centre also contains the administrative support for home care in the area, with home care workers reporting in and out of the centre; and

THAT the loss of the Health Centre would be a major economic set back to the commercial well being of downtown Transcona and the entire Transcona community; and

THAT the people of Transcona were not consulted prior to the Provincial Government making the decision to relocate the Health Centre and that the plan for its relocation to a 'strip mall district' runs contrary to all concepts of community development; and

THAT there is plenty of space in downtown Transcona for the construction of a permanent facility or for the leasing of new space or for the expansion and renovation of the existing facility.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY THAT the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request that the Minister of Health and the First Minister of Manitoba immediately instruct the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to end its plans to remove the Health Centre at 108 Bond Street from Transcona and instead direct the WRHA to consider finding existing space in downtown Transcona, since much space exists, for both their short term and long term facility needs.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Flood Conditions—Roseau River

Hon. Oscar Lathlin (Minister of Conservation): I have a statement to make regarding the flooding on the Roseau River. I rise this afternoon to provide the House with an update on the situation on or near the Roseau River. As you know, heavy rains in early November resulted in flows and levels in the

Roseau River that were record highs for this time of the year. The river peaked in late November and had declined about one and a half feet earlier this month.

* (13:35)

Unfortunately the continued high velocity of the flow has resulted in unusual ice conditions. The firm ice is not able to form in certain areas. Instead, frazil or slush ice forms, and when this meets solid sheet ice which has formed at some locations, ice-jams occur. This is what has happened just downstream from the village of Stuartburn and has caused river levels in this vicinity to rise between two and three feet. This exceeds the flood stage, and the basements of two homes have been flooded. Additional homes could be flooded if the level continues to rise.

Although the level has only gone up a few inches overnight and our forecasters feel that it may not rise much further, there remains a degree of uncertainty in predicting under these circumstances. River flows are declining at the international boundary so that within a week or so the potential for further problems should have abated. In the meanwhile, the situation is being closely monitored so that if any further ice-jamming occurs, it can be identified as early as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization is working with the local municipalities to assist their response to this situation and to co-ordinate the input of Manitoba Conservation and other provincial agencies. The local governments and riverbank property owners are on alert should conditions change. Thank you.

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): I would like to thank the honourable minister for providing this information to the House today. It is noteworthy that this is indeed an unusual occurrence. The Roseau River has always been an unpredictable river, and we have seen much flooding go on on the Roseau River but mostly during the summertime and/or during the springtime of the year. Never have we witnessed this kind of a situation where ice buildup has occurred at this time of the year and the heavy floes that we have seen come down the Roseau River at this period

of time. It has caused a huge amount of anxiety amongst the farm community and indeed the residents of Stuartburn and many other residents along the river.

The concern that is there has been expressed time and time again by local councillors to the minister's office on various occasions. Again the flooding was raised at the AMM meeting. The municipal councils have wanted to impress upon myself and others the importance of an answer from this Government regarding remediation and compensation. Mr. Speaker, the human element and the anxiety created amongst the community members over there cannot be measured. Therefore, I think it is important that this Government should immediately make known to those people and the municipalities what level of compensation will be offered and what the level of assistance would be.

Secondly, I think it is also important to note that local governments and representatives in that area had recommended to the department better than a week ago that they could alleviate the flooding by blasting the ice bridges that were forming as long ago as a week and a half. We are a bit disappointed in the minister and his lack of direction to the department in this regard. Had immediate action been taken, we believe that much of the flooding that is occurring there now could have been alleviated.

We thank the minister for this information. We hope that he recognizes that, in future, actions can be taken and will be taken along the river to avoid this kind of a situation again.

* (13:40)

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to make a few comments on the minister's statement.

Mr. Speaker: Does the honourable Member for River Heights have leave? [*Agreed*]

Mr. Gerrard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the minister for his statement. I rise to express concern for and sympathy with those who are in the area which is affected by this untimely flooding, and to hope that the minister will have in place in the future, plans for rapid action

should this sort of ice-jam and problems arise at any time again. Thank you.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Greg Selinger (Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table the following reports, copies of which have been previously distributed: the Manitoba Hydro-Electric Board Quarterly Report ending June 30, the same report ending September 30; the Annual Report '99-2000 for Enabling and Other Appropriations; the Manitoba Foundation Annual Report for the year ended March 31, 2000; the Manitoba Hospital Capital Financing Authority Management Report, March 31, 2000; the Annual Report, '99-2000 of Finance, Special Operating Agencies Financing Authority for March 31, 2000; the Annual Report of the Debt Retirement Fund for March 31, 2000; the Annual Report of the Fiscal Stabilization Fund for March 31, 2000; the Department of Finance, '99-2000 Annual Report; and finally the Annual Report for Government Information Systems Management Organization, otherwise known as GISMO, for March 31, 2000.

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the 1999-2000 Annual Report of the Department of Highways and Government Services, including Emergency Expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to table the 1999-2000 annual reports of the following special operating agencies under my jurisdiction: Fleet Vehicles Agency, Materials Distribution Agency, Land Management Services Agency, Mail Management Agency. All of these annual reports were released prior to September 30, in accordance with intersessional procedures.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table the following annual reports for the fiscal year 1999-2000, copies of which have been previously distributed: The Manitoba Industry, Trade and Mines Annual Report, the Cooperative Promotion Board, the Co-operative Loans and Loans Guarantee Board and the Industrial Technology Centre, as well as the Manitoba Development Corporation report.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the gallery where we have from George McDowell School 61 Grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Brenda McDermid, Mrs. Marie Wolkowski, Mr. Al Primmatt and Mr. Dean Rigeaux. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for Seine River (Mrs. Dacquay).

Also seated in the public gallery from Maples Collegiate 20 Grade 9 students under the direction of Ms. Sheryl Peltz. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Member for The Maples (Mr. Aglugub).

Also seated in the public gallery from Garden Grove School 24 Grade 5 students under the direction of Mr. Jim Lapp. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett).

Also, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today Mr. Jonathan Dowdall of Miles Macdonell Collegiate. Mr. Dowdall is participating in the work placement program and will be working with the caucus offices.

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

* (13:45)

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Labour Legislation Binding Arbitration Amendments

Mr. Stuart Murray (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, in mid-November we learned that the Labour Minister had a change of heart concerning her controversial labour legislation, Bill 44. While that bill currently states that binding arbitration can be imposed if either side asks for it, in a scrum with reporters the minister stressed how unfair that was. The minister stated, and I quote from an article in this newspaper: In order to go to binding arbitration, both sides would have to agree to it. Binding arbitration, she went on to say, is binding, and in order for that to work, both sides have to agree to binding arbitration.

Will the First Minister please advise the House when amendments will be introduced to bring fairness to the act by ensuring, as his minister stated, that both sides must agree before it goes to binding arbitration?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to report to the House and to the people of Manitoba that so far there are some disputes in this province that we would like to see settled and we are working very hard in conciliation with a number of major disputes in the province of Manitoba, but so far this year it looks like in the year 2000, the days lost to strike and lockout are going to be quite a bit less than in 1999.

Mr. Murray: Mr. Speaker, it was the Premier's hand-picked minister, the hand-picked Labour Minister who stated, and I quote again: that it would be very unfair—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I quote from the Labour Minister who said: It would be very unfair if only one side agreed to binding arbitration and the other side did not.

I ask the First Minister again: When will his Labour Minister be introducing amendments to the act to bring fairness to the process by ensuring that both sides agree to binding arbitration?

Mr. Doer: I was disappointed the member opposite failed to recognize positive news with a close to 50% reduction in days lost to strike and lockout. Surely the member opposite would agree, or perhaps he would not, given his hand-picked nature of being leader, that the most appropriate, the most important goal in labour management relations legislation is to reduce the days lost to strike and lockout. Surely the member opposite would agree that the most important purpose of Workplace Safety and Health legislation is to reduce the numbers of deaths and injuries at the workplace. We look at the results instead of the politics, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Murray: Well, Mr. Speaker, in the last 14 months we have seen a Finance Minister admit that their health election promises were

irresponsible, an Agriculture Minister who has refused support to family farmers, a Gaming Minister resign, another Gaming Minister inflict unnecessary expenses and stress on the residents of Headingley and Swan Lake First Nation, a Conservation Minister who repeatedly missed important meetings, cancelled meetings or flat-out refused to meet with Manitobans, and now we have a Labour Minister who, after spending the entire summer trying to defend anti-democratic labour legislation, is now finally starting to see the light.

* (13:50)

Mr. Speaker, the Labour Minister has not just changed her mind about binding arbitration, she also said that a strike or a lockout would have to be in place for six months before the Manitoba Labour Board could be asked to intervene instead of the current 60 days. Will the Premier tell this House when his minister will be amending her legislation to reflect her new positions?

Mr. Doer: The member opposite went on with a litany of so-called alleged admissions that were allegedly made by this hand-picked group of people in the province of Manitoba. It would be a very fortunate day if some day we could get some real admissions from members opposite of what happened in the 1995 election campaign. The member—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite likes to throw around allegations, but yesterday when a serious conviction was made by Elections Manitoba, an unprecedented principle or precedent, the member opposite said: I knew nothing. I knew nothing about what happened.

Perhaps what we need is admissions from members opposite someday.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, taking into account the leader's latitude but also

Beauchesne's 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Mr. Speaker, if we—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. May I remind all honourable members that a point of order is a very serious matter and should be heard in silence.

Mr. Laurendeau: To continue, Mr. Speaker, if we were to pose a question under *Beauchesne's* 410(17): "Ministers may not be questioned in respect to party responsibilities," if we were to pose a question on responsibility for party affiliations over there, they would be ruling us out of order. We should not be taking cheap shots across this House and impugning motive on other members. I only hope you will call the First Minister to order.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Honourable Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, if there were a rule against cheap shots in this province, I would be on my feet half of Question Period.

Mr. Speaker, there is a long-standing practice in this House about leaders' latitude, and if one side is going to get up and say, well, all of a sudden the strict requirements of *Beauchesne's* are to be applied to leaders, then I will raise 409: The question must be brief.

I just heard a doozy; I think it was a record. I think that that one broke the record for time. I think it surpassed the questions by the former Interim Leader of the Opposition, which really means this new leader is going to set some records in here and it is not on the high road.

* (13:55)

Mr. Speaker, there is no point of order here. There is leaders' latitude. That is the practice in

this House. The question was asked about admissions and the issue of admissions was what was addressed by the Premier.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, it is not a point of order. We have leaders' latitude in Manitoba practice, but I would caution all members to be careful with their questions and with their answers.

Political Employees Training

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the Premier (Mr. Doer) some questions that are of great concern to my constituents at the Sagkeeng First Nation, particularly those people who are fighting for honesty and integrity in their community and to ensure that there is accountability. I would like to, at this time, ask the Premier if he could tell this House—because the issue I will be raising involves political staff, I would like to ask the Premier, in the hiring of the political staff when they came to Government, what training did he put in place for that staff in how they dealt with matters that were raised with the public?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): The question is broad based, and I would suggest that all members who are working for the public are responsible to provide good service in an open and honest manner, be forthright, just as we expect all people to be.

Mr. Praznik: I would ask the Premier what policy or direction does he give to his political staff when they meet with members of the public who raise with them allegations where a public official has received payments, a kickback in essence, in their work in actually furthering a sale of a property, even when that may not be—it is not within the provincial government but within a public agency. What direction do political staff have for dealing with that information when it is brought to their attention?

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, the

member opposite is raising questions and making very serious charges against a particular individual it appears. If he is making allegations of a criminal nature, he knows the proper authorities to make such investigations. To raise this in the House I think is an unfair use of the parliamentary privilege that is extended to this House and the protections that are afforded. Let us be mindful of due process. I ask that you draw the attention of the member to the proprieties of this House and the kinds of questions and charges that are appropriate and which ones are not. This one is not.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on the same point of order.

Mr. Praznik: I have not given a name of any individual, Mr. Speaker. I have never raised a name of an individual at this point in my questions with respect to an allegation of extortion, nor have I named a political staffperson.

I am asking the Premier of this province a very legitimate question on the standards that he sets for his political staff when a matter of this importance is brought to their attention. We all know that political staff in each department deal with the public on a regular basis. I am trying to establish if the Premier of this province believes that that information should be sent to law enforcement agencies. What instruction does he give his staff when this matter comes to their attention? I am asking a question of policy on how these matters are handled by the Premier of our province.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Government House Leader, I thank all members for their advice. I will take the matter under advisement to peruse Hansard and consult the procedural authorities, and I will report back to the House.

* * *

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to provide more information to the House so that we can respond to his accusations and innuendo. If you have something, please bring it forward and proper investigations will take place, but putting this on the table, all of

these suggestions are leaving a serious cloud in this House. I would ask the member to come clean and provide the information.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter from the Premier's Office. I have blanked out the particular name of the person who has levelled this accusation. I will provide, though, to the Premier an unblanked copy of this in fairness to him.

* (14:00)

Mr. Speaker, in this particular letter, the Premier acknowledges that this individual has contacted their office and has in fact been forward. The Premier indicates that he is sympathetic to the issues they raise, and he has directed them to the office of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson).

I would like to ask the Premier if he recalls this particular person raising these matters with his office.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, no, I do not, but I certainly will follow up on the details.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, on a new question, and I have some material that I would like to table.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to table a letter that was sent to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs (Mr. Robinson), although I can indicate clearly that the envelope which enclosed it was drawn to the attention of his assistant, Mr. Steve Courchene, so I am not in any way indicating that the minister in fact received the letter. It went to his assistant. I have blanked out the names, but I will provide to the First Minister, because I think this is very important, a complete copy of this letter in which—if you could give that to the Premier, please.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular letter is an allegation where an official of the Sagkeeng First Nation requested \$2,500—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Government House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Mr. Speaker, *Beauchesne's* is clear, both in terms of preliminary questions and supplementary questions, 409(2): The question must be brief. A preamble need not exceed one carefully drawn sentence.

Would you please draw the member's attention to that rule?

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet, on the same point of order?

Mr. Praznik: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was tabling documents that are necessary for the question. I had to identify those particular documents. Now I am prepared to put my question to the Premier that arises from these documents.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, I would just like to remind all honourable members of *Beauchesne's* Citation 409(2): A preamble should not exceed one carefully drawn sentence.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: I would ask the honourable Member for Lac du Bonnet to please put his question.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, there is one further document that I would like to table at this time. I believe the Premier may have a copy in his package. That is a letter to me from the people who raised this matter that involved the political staffperson involved.

Mr. Speaker, I will now put my question to the First Minister. Given that a very serious allegation was brought to the attention of a political staffperson, Mr. Steve Courchene, and that that individual was alleged now to have told them that they would take no interest in it; that the person making the complaint was in fact being derogatory against a particular community, and no comment was made to forward it to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh), is this the standard that this Premier accepts for political staff members in his Government? I would point out—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question has been put.

Ms. Mihychuk: Mr. Speaker, I will take all the information that has been provided to the House. As the member across the way knows, there is a review of—

Mr. Speaker: Order. The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on a point of order.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): The minister has stated quite clearly in her opening remarks that she would take it under advisement. I do not believe there is a reason for explanation.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable Official Opposition House Leader, he does have a point of order. When ministers take questions as notice, there is no postamble to taking the question as notice.

* * *

Mr. Praznik: I forwarded this information to the office of the Minister of Justice today when it was confirmed to me. But I would ask, again, the Premier, because this is a staffperson of this Government, will he undertake to personally investigate this matter, which is very, very serious, and how his staffperson reacted to this very serious allegation being brought to his attention?

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, it would be totally inappropriate for a matter that may be allegedly a matter dealing with the Criminal Code for, quote: the Premier, a political individual, to investigate a potential criminal matter.

Obviously if there is any information the member has that may contribute or not contribute to a criminal allegation—I note that there are letters to the former chief of the community way back in '96 and there is a trail back in '96-97 and dates that precede obviously us in Government. If it is a legal issue, it should go to the police. If it is a matter of the conduct under The Civil Service Act, it should go to the Civil Service Commission. Those are the

independent people who investigate these types of matters.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, the Premier does not understand the point. The allegation is not against his staff member but how that staff member handled this matter which was a very serious allegation.

I ask the Premier again: What standard does he impose on his staff, his political staff, in this case a high ranking member of the New Democratic Party, what standard does he impose on them when information like this is brought to their attention? What process should they follow ensuring that there is a proper investigation? I ask the Premier how does he deal with his own political staff.

Mr. Doer: The political staff are expected to follow the law of the land.

Community Economic Development Committee Hiring Process

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines told the House that a national search was done for the position that was filled by Mr. Steve Courchene. She also indicated that after a screening Mr. Courchene emerged as the most qualified candidate and was given the position, in essence increasing his salary from \$42,000 to \$68,000.

My question to the minister: Can the minister indicate what national papers this position was advertised in, since in our search with her department, with the Civil Service Commission, the *Free Press*, *The Globe and Mail*, no indication of a national search was identified for this position?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): I am pleased to say that the search was conducted by a private firm here in Manitoba who helped us do an executive search. In fact I would like to, for the record, indicate that the individual being discussed has a BA and a Masters in Public Administration and is fulfilling his duties completely.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, will the minister please then table for the House the name of the head-hunting firm that she refers to that did the national search? Would she also indicate to the House the prescribed duties and the terms that were given with regard to the national search, and would she also give to this House the number of people who applied for that position?

* (14:10)

Ms. Mihychuk: I guess this comes to the point where I have to question what the purpose of the question is. Are you suggesting that a due process has not occurred? This misleading or putting a cloud on a certain individual without having an investigation completed is unfair. What I am requesting the Opposition to do is allow due process to take place. So the members opposite can stop the witch hunt and allow an independent body to look at the situation and come back with a report.

Mr. Derkach: I wish the minister would stand in her place and answer the questions that are being asked of her instead of posing a question to members of the Opposition.

My question to the minister was straightforward. She was the one who indicated that this was a national search. She indicated to the House today that a head-hunting firm was hired to do the job. I am simply asking for her to table that information which I have asked for in this House, as is my right as a member of this Legislature.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite asked questions related to process. Normally I have no problem providing information. It is the innuendo and the continuing—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you. I think the point here is that the Opposition has a certain agenda

and they wish to make this a political issue. What I am trying to—

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Point of Order

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): Mr. Speaker, we are raising legitimate questions on behalf of the people who live at Sagkeeng First Nation. We are asking legitimate questions on behalf of the people of the province of Manitoba. We have a right to. We bring documentation to this House which members opposite ignore.

The member now imputes motives to us, to the Member for Russell, for doing a job which she and the Premier (Mr. Doer) should be doing with their own staff. I ask you to call her to order. She is imputing motives to the Member for Russell (Mr. Derkach).

Mr. Speaker: The Government House Leader, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Well, there is no point of order here. Motives can be imputed, unworthy motives, Mr. Speaker, you can consider. That is not what we are talking about here.

Mr. Speaker, we are simply looking at *Beauchesne's* Citation 416: The minister may decline to answer a question without stating the reasons, and so on. A member may put a question but has no right to insist upon an answer.

They want everyone to hear the questions. They do not want people to hear the answers. They are getting up on points of order that have no basis in *Beauchesne's* or in the rule book.

Mr. Speaker: The honourable Official Opposition House Leader, on the same point of order.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On the same point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The honourable Government House Leader has quoted *Beauchesne's* 416 which states the

minister may decline to answer a question without stating the reason. He is absolutely 100 percent correct, but that minister should also not be rising.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, I thank all members for their advice. I will take the matter under advisement to peruse Hansard and consult the procedural authorities, and I will report back to the House.

* * *

Ms. Mihychuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to answer the question. The member has asked for the name of the firm that we used to do this executive search, the number of candidates. I would be glad to provide that information, but I am just suggesting that these types of questions seem to have another agenda. So I would be glad to provide the information.

Gasoline Taxes The Pas

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Premier (Mr. Doer), and it concerns a situation in The Pas, the application of sales and gasoline taxes in The Pas, a situation some local businesspeople have referred to as terrible, chaos, a joke, a little short of a circus. In August of 1999 during the provincial election campaign, the Premier indicated he would implement changes to give a level playing field with respect to sales and gasoline taxes in The Pas.

Why was this promise not mentioned in the Throne Speech, and why has this commitment not been implemented?

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question. One of the things that we are currently addressing with the Town of The Pas and with the OCN is a sales tax that would level the playing field with the town of The Pas and with OCN.

What the answer is to the question is that the OCN is currently working on a First Nations tax that would make it equal to the PST paid on the

south side of the river. So the work is currently underway.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, typical NDP government, uncertainty in the middle of the major retail season of the year. Typical NDP government.

With the present chaotic situation in The Pas seemingly created by the Premier's policies, or lack of them, and in part by the decision of the Premier as to what part of the policy he will enforce or not, I ask the Premier to clarify both the policy and his enforcement plans so that residents of The Pas will know what the situation is as they are doing their Christmas shopping.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, in terms of tax policies, I recall the member opposite promising to abolish the GST in 1993. As the residents of The Pas get ready to do their major Christmas purchases, perhaps the member opposite would like to accord and account for the failure to follow that promise.

As the minister said, we have met with the mayor before the election, the OCN community, the Chamber of Commerce. There was, in fact, a large discussion of this issue at the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce meeting. The keynote speaker was the member from The Pas in I believe it was June of 1999 in that same community. We have been working on a provincial basis with the Manitoba Chamber and on the local basis as the member has indicated.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, I would like to table a letter from the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) which even fails to acknowledge that there is a problem here, and it should have been addressed indeed before we get into the major retail season, the Christmas shopping of this year.

* (14:20)

Political Employees Training

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): I want to come back to a question to the Premier (Mr. Doer), Mr. Speaker. In the document I tabled,

the allegation was made that an official of the Sagkeeng First Nation asked the complainant to take \$2,500 in a commission, a kickback, for the sale of the building when that person was a public official working for a public agency. Also included in what I provided the Premier with were copies of the cancelled cheques. I ask the Premier: Is it acceptable that when this letter came to his political assistant in his department that that assistant basically told these people to get lost and did not forward it to the Department of Justice for investigation? Is that acceptable to this Premier?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated previously, we are taking the information. We will assess it; it will be referred either to the proper authorities, the police, which I would urge the member to do if he has some information or evidence, and other information that pertains to staff members is going to be referred to the civil service review commission.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the Premier again if he thinks it is appropriate when an individual, a member of the public, brings a letter to their attention that makes serious allegations about a kickback, extortion, where they have to pay money to a public official to have something done, and their political staff sends them away. I ask if that is acceptable. The minister now says they are going to investigate. Why was that not referred to investigation by your political staff when it was brought to your Government's attention?

Ms. Mihychuk: I just urge the member to allow us some time to investigate the situation and report back. Allow the process to take course just as any other allegation.

Mr. Praznik: I would like to ask how much time the Government needs, given that these people brought it to the Premier's attention, to the minister's office's attention and were told to go away. I want to ask the Premier today if he is prepared to meet with these people to hear their story. We have provided them with a copy of a cancelled cheque for the kickback. I want to ask him again: Is he prepared to meet with these people to be able to hear their story so that he

can decide what he is going to do with the political staff that he hires in his Government?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): I am prepared to say that if there is any matter alleging any criminal activity, that material and the people that the police should interview should be interviewed by the police not by the Government. There is a separation between the criminal justice system and the Government of the day whether it is that government or this Government, Mr. Speaker. I do not even begin to assume the responsibilities of the police forces. That is why we have a separation. Obviously, if the member has any information, he is immediately required, as we all are, to refer that matter to the police if there are allegations that can be supported.

So I have had a very quick look at the material that he forwarded to us. It goes back to '96. It looks like some of that material was referred to the former chief. It looks like a dispute between the Sagkeeng community and the owners of this business, but beyond that, obviously the terms being used by the member opposite, "extort," "kickback," those are criminal issues.

Disaster Financial Assistance Assiniboia Constituency

Mr. Jim Rondeau (Assiniboia): During the July 7 torrential rainfall over 1100 homes were damaged by overland flooding and sewer failure and sewer backup in Assiniboia and surrounding areas. I understand approximately 300 households have received compensation to date. My question to the Minister of Highways and Government Services is: What is the MO doing to clarify areas of questionable coverage such as the differences between sewer failure and sewer backup, and what steps are being taken to inform Manitobans about what their responsibilities are in terms of obtaining appropriate insurance coverage and what different insurance companies do cover or do not cover?

Hon. Steve Ashton (Minister of Highways and Government Services): I thank the member for raising the concern on behalf of his constituents.

I am concerned that of 1500 private applications for DFA going back to this past summer, in excess of 900 will not be eligible. I understand 60 percent of those will be receiving some insurance coverage, but we are running into a number of areas of interpretation.

I will be raising those with the federal minister. I think there are some very legitimate cases that have been rejected under interpretation of DFA guidelines, but, quite frankly, there also have been some difficulties with people who were unaware of the fact that insurance was available from other insurance companies and assumed they could not purchase insurance, which is one element there. I will follow up, and I will raise this with the insurance industry. I am very concerned that there are that many Manitobans who did not have either coverage under DFA or private insurance.

Political Employees Training

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): My question is to the Premier. This letter I tabled today was presented to a political assistant, Mr. Steve Courchene, and it says, and I quote: In April, when the individual who the allegation is against gave me a signed offer to purchase, at the same time she made me sign a letter stating that \$2,500 would be paid to her as a commission when I received final payment. She is an employee of the company. That is a kickback, sir. Since the promise was never made, numerous times I have had to advance \$800 to that individual.

This was given to a political assistant of this Government, and that assistant said go away. Is that the standard that this Premier sets? Why was it not referred to the Department of Justice, as I had to do today, when his Government failed to act?

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): Again, I would like to inform the member that we will look at all of the documents he has provided today just in the last hour, review them, and see what the appropriate action is. We will take action as quickly as possible.

Sean Kocis
Employment Status

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): I would also like to present some information that was requested from me yesterday, with your indulgence. The information requested was on an individual, Mr. Sean Kocis. This individual had a 10-day contract with EITC for the Northern Economic Strategy, was a contract position. His listing is unexplainable.

Political Employees
Training

Mr. Darren Praznik (Lac du Bonnet): My supplementary again to the Premier: Why would the Premier say today they are going to look into it when they had this information given to their political staff some time ago and that staff member said go away, I will do nothing?

I ask the Premier again: Is that the standard that he sets for his political staff, and is he prepared to meet with these people to take action? It is about this Premier.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): If there are issues raised by the member, we will investigate them. Having said that, the Civil Service Commission has only investigated one individual minister that I can recall and removed their hiring authority after an independent investigation, and it was the member from Roblin-Russell.

* (14:30)

I sign thousands of letters, and I know the members opposite fully understand that. Let me also talk about a standard, because the member opposite should recognize that in 1997 the audit that he tabled partially yesterday was conducted. He was the minister responsible when the function of funding this centre \$50,000 a year was moved from the AFM to the Department of Health. He was the minister that brought in a bill to continue the funding of \$50,000. What kinds of standards did he have?

Mr. Praznik: I ask this Premier again the standard he sets for his political staff. This is an

individual who is a high-ranking member of the New Democratic Party and comes from that community.

I ask him: Will he meet with these people to hear what they have to say, to look at what was put before his political staff member and to decide whether or not this staff member meets his standard for the people who work in his Government?

Mr. Doer: The allegations by the member opposite are that there were criminal matters alleged to have taken place with the dispute between whether it is a commission or a payment or an extortion, as the member alleged. That is a criminal matter. I am not going to interfere in any way, shape or form with a matter that is alleged to be criminal in nature. It must and will be referred to the appropriate police force.

Mr. Praznik: On a new question. The Premier continues to dance around his responsibilities as Premier. The question here is: What do his political staff do when a very serious allegation of extortion is brought to their attention? Of course it should be forwarded to law enforcement agencies. I tell members I have forwarded all the material to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Mackintosh) today for investigation. I did what his Government should have done.

I ask him again: Is it acceptable to this Premier, who said our people should stand by the law, that when this information was brought to their attention, is it not correct that it should have been forwarded to the appropriate Justice people for investigation? Why did this failure take place, and what will the Premier do about it?

Mr. Doer: The matter should be referred to the police just like the audit in 1997 was referred to the police.

Mr. Praznik: My supplementary to the Premier: If the matter should be referred to the police, which I agree, I ask him why, then, did the political assistant, Mr. Steve Courchene, not refer it to the police, as the Premier said should have happened.

Mr. Doer: I am saying the member opposite should have referred this matter to the police, and we will.

Mr. Praznik: Mr. Speaker, I have done what his assistant should have done months ago. I ask him again: Is that the standard that this Premier sets for his political staff, that they can ignore these issues and contradict this Premier as they are doing today? What action will this Premier take to ensure that his staff are meeting the standards he talks about in the House?

Mr. Doer: The allegations will be referred to the police.

Sean Kocis Employment Status

Mr. Leonard Derkach (Russell): Yesterday I asked the question about Mr. Sean Kocis in this House. I asked it of the Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines (Ms. Mihychuk). She said she had no knowledge of that individual working for her. She obviously does not know what is going on in her department, because today she tells us that in fact he did work in her department.

Mr. Speaker, it does not matter whether he worked in her department for a day or 10 days or 10 years. My question to the minister is: Is this—
[interjection]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Derkach: Mr. Speaker, I want to ask a serious question, and that is this: Is this individual the same Sean Kocis who was a senior administrator at the Sagkeeng solvent treatment centre in 1996? I will copy a c.v. of this individual for the records.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): There were allegations made in the Chamber dealing with the "political assistant," the allegation that was made by the member opposite. I have received a copy of a letter from Mr. Thomas Moody, assistant to the Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs, indicating that the matter is an issue of jurisdiction between the federal Indian and northern affairs department and refers the individuals to that department, dealing with this matter, Mr. Speaker.

They also allow the individual to—and this is January 31, 2000, so the individual they were dealing with, in terms of paper, was Mr. Moody. I will table the letter.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Time for oral questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Stop Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Program

Mr. Gerard Jennissen (Flin Flon): I rise today to bring attention to one of our Government's many initiatives in northern Manitoba.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is very, very difficult to hear the honourable member with a member's statement. I would ask all honourable members, if they want to carry on a conversation to please do it in the loge or in the hallway.

The honourable Member for Flin Flon has the floor.

Mr. Jennissen: I rise today to bring attention to one of our Government's many initiatives in northern Manitoba, the latest being our commitment to expand an effective program dealing with fetal alcohol syndrome. The Stop Fetal Alcohol Syndrome program has proven effective in Winnipeg and will be expanded to Thompson and The Pas in January, with funding of \$264,000 from Healthy Child Manitoba.

The Stop Fetal Alcohol Syndrome program has provided important supports for high-risk mothers so that fewer children are affected by alcohol and drug abuse. Now, with the expansion of the program to these two northern communities, northern women at risk of having a child born affected by alcohol will also be able to access the supports of this program.

The program provides mentors for a three-year period to women struggling with long-term drug and alcohol addiction. The program gives these women a better chance in succeeding with treatment, in parenting their children, in

connecting with positive community supports and in obtaining stable housing and employment.

Issues facing drug and alcohol-addicted women are complex, but, Mr. Speaker, our Government's program will help mothers access the supports they need to maintain sobriety and build positive healthy lifestyles. I commend the minister and our Government for expanding the Stop Fetal Alcohol program. Thank you.

Ralph Henry Fauschou

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): It is with great sadness that I rise this afternoon to pay tribute to the father of the honourable Member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou). Ralph Henry Fauschou will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by all who knew him. He will be remembered for his endless involvement in agriculture, in industrial development, his role in his community through commerce, education, politics and the involvement in groups such as his beloved St. Mary's Anglican Church where he spent countless hours making sure that the parish was in fact in such shape that services could be rendered every Sunday morning.

* (14:40)

From a very young age, Mr. Fauschou committed himself to many tasks involving hard work and demanding hours. At the age of 20, he went into service and enlisted in the Royal Canadian Air Force. He defended his country for the freedom and the rights of all Canadians. He received the Defence of Britain Medal for service in the Battle of Britain prior to returning home in August 1945. After the war, he attended the University of Manitoba, earning his diploma in agriculture and applying his knowledge to the family farm's pedigreed seed operation. The Canadian Seed Growers' Association, who awarded him the Outstanding Service Award, recognized his commitment to the production of higher quality and cleaner pedigreed seed, and I think all of those who are in agriculture have benefited from his work.

He played a key role in the development of Manitoba's special crops industry, and is highly, highly regarded within the Manitoba sugar beet industry where he was a grower and a member

for many, many years, contributing to the success of the industry. Mr. Fauschou's contributions, achievements, dedication and personal sacrifice were recognized through numerous other awards from such associations and individuals as the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney the Prime Minister of Canada, the Honourable Gary Filmon the Premier of Manitoba and the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Manitoba.

His dedication to his community, to his fellow man will always be remembered. I would like to extend my condolences on behalf of all members of this House to the Member for Portage la Prairie, his family and his friends for their loss.

Physician Recruitment and Training Strategy

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): I, too, would like to offer my condolences to the Member from Portage la Prairie and the Fauschou family on behalf of our caucus.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring attention to the Government's many initiatives in rural and northern Manitoba, the latest being our physician recruitment and retaining strategy. I realize that competition for graduating physicians is intense and rural areas such as the Interlake have a difficult time recruiting and retaining doctors. This action plan, in combination with more training positions for physicians in Manitoba, lays the foundation for a long-term solution to the problem.

Our Government will restore Manitoba's medical enrolment at the university to 85 first-year positions from the current 70. This increase to 85 represents the enrolment level that existed before the cutbacks instigated by the previous government.

The five main points of our action plan are: First, our Government will encourage students from rural and northern backgrounds to pursue careers in medicine and provide academic and social supports for those who do. Research shows that students with a rural background are more likely than urban students to make a rural community their home upon graduation. Secondly, we will increase opportunities for

undergraduate medical students to train in rural and northern communities. Thirdly, Mr. Speaker, our Government will expand rural and northern training opportunities for residents in family medicine and medical specialities. Fourth, we will improve the capacity to provide advanced skill training programs to rural and northern practitioners. Finally, our Government will fund the Office of Rural and Northern Health to ensure co-ordination between medical education programs and community needs.

The recruitment and retention initiative will result in 53 new residency positions being filled over the next five years, many of those in the Interlake. The state of rural and northern Manitoba has been and will continue to be of great importance to this government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Alexander McInnes Runciman

Mr. Larry Maguire (Arthur-Virden): Mr. Speaker, I rise before the House this afternoon to say a few words about Mr. Alexander McInnes Runciman who passed away on December 6 at the age of 86. Mr. Runciman, known throughout western Canada as Mac, was an outstanding leader who used his foresight, wisdom and statesmanship to inspire many within the agricultural sector.

Mr. Runciman was president of the United Grain Growers from 1961 to 1981, overseeing its operations during perhaps the first turbulent era, when disputes over transportation and marketing issues threatened to bring the industry to a halt. Mac also served as the first president of the Rapeseed Association of Canada, now the Canola Council, as well as the founding chair of the Canada Grains Council. Prior to this, he had served his country in the Second World War.

In over 20 years in the grain industry, Mac gained the respect and admiration of virtually everyone in the Canadian agricultural industry, regardless of which side of the ideological debates they were on.

Beyond the grain industry, Mr. Runciman served on the boards of directors of a number of major Canadian corporations, including Canadian Pacific Limited, the Royal Bank and Great-West Life. Mr. Speaker, he gave

instinctively of himself in a large number of public service roles, including the Victoria General Hospital here in Winnipeg and the University of Manitoba, where he served as chairman of the board of governors from 1983 to 1988.

Mr. Runciman will be remembered for his humility, his kindness and the respect he gave to everyone, in addition to the contributions he made to agriculture both provincially and nationally.

Also, I wish to note that Dr. Paul Earl wrote an editorial on Mr. Runciman's life that is in today's *Winnipeg Free Press*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bond Street Health Unit

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I want to address concerns raised in this House about the Transcona Bond Street Health Unit. I want to put some information on the record to clarify the situation.

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority were made aware by myself, as well as the MLA for Transcona (Mr. Reid), about the importance of trying to keep the temporary relocation of this office in the central Transcona area. They investigated a number of real estate options in the Transcona area and were looking for a certain size of building to accommodate this service. They must not delay any longer in moving the staff as they are currently in an overcrowded, unsafe building that is not wheelchair accessible, and with the addition of more staff for mental health services and the nutritionist they have to move sooner than later.

I also wrote an article on this matter in the September *Transcona Views*, saying that every effort was being made to keep the office in the central area.

Winnipeg Regional Health Authority staff met at the Transcona Retired Citizens Centre on November 2 with residents to discuss this at a meeting and they met again with residents on December 4.

Most community members involved now recognize that this temporary move is short term

and are focussing their attention on the long-term plan to have a community health access centre in Transcona. This will have the existing 23 staff and more doctors and nurses in a comprehensive health service. There is a commitment by the minister and the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to work with the community to plan for this new health access centre, and the new Transcona Neighbourhood Network will be holding meetings in co-operation with the WRHA very soon.

The Member for Transcona and I remain committed to revitalizing older neighbourhoods in Transcona and the plan is for a new facility to be part of that revitalization. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: Adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable Member for Dauphin-Roblin (Mr. Struthers), and the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray), and the debate remains open.

Mr. Tom Nevakshonoff (Interlake): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise today to respond to the Throne Speech. As a back-bench member on the Government side, I do not always have the opportunity to make a contribution to the debate so I welcome this occasion to do so.

Let me first of all congratulate you, Sir, and your Deputy Speaker, on guiding us successfully through the first session of the Thirty-Seventh Legislature. I realize it must at times be a trying experience for you when tempers flair in this Chamber, and I thank you on behalf of all of us for being patient and ruling over us with impartiality and good judgment.

Just as an aside, I want to make a brief reference to an ancestor of mine, a man by the name of Curtis James Bird, who was a Speaker in the first Legislative Assembly in Manitoba here. Perhaps one day he did not exercise good judgment. It was on the debate over The City of

Winnipeg Act. The people were very unhappy with him, and the mob got a hold of him one day. They actually tarred and feathered him. He returned to England and died shortly thereafter. Good judgment certainly is in order as a Speaker of the House.

My compliments also to the Clerk of the Assembly and her assistants, as well for the high degree of professionalism that they display in their work. Our ship of state would quickly founder were it not for the sound guidance and advice that she and her people provide us.

I wish to welcome the new pages to the Chamber and I commend them for their academic efforts which were instrumental in bringing them here. I hope that they find the experience enriching, and I wish them well in their future endeavours when they leave us. I would be remiss if I did not also welcome the two newly elected members to the Legislative Assembly and congratulate them on their victories. I do so now.

* (14:50)

To the young lady representing the Tuxedo seat recently vacated by Gary Filmon, I wish her success, and I want to compliment her on the decorum and restraint that she has shown so far during that raucous 40 or so minutes that we know as Question Period. Perhaps over time some of this will rub off on some of her immediate seatmates. The members for Springfield (Mr. Schuler) and Fort Whyte (Mr. Loewen) come to mind.

To the new Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray) who inherited some pretty big boots to fill from Eric Stefanson, I offer my congratulations both on his election victory and on being anointed as the new leader of the provincial Conservative Party. Truly you must be a gifted individual, sir, to have leapt ahead of your compatriots in the Conservative caucus, many of whom have served in this Chamber for many years and who also aspired to fill the chair that you have taken.

I hope this coronation orchestrated by the backroom good old boys at the expense of the democratic process is not a sign of things to

come in your party. If I may offer you some advice at the beginning of your tenure, sir, I suggest that you rein in some of your more rebellious caucus members and discourage them from practising smear tactics, character assassination and muckraking as some of them are prone to do. Just because they are protected from prosecution within this Chamber does not give them licence to abuse this privilege. Having experienced this personally in the election campaign in the Interlake, I can attest to how destructive this tactic can be to the political process and how it poisons the potential for amicable relations between parties and personalities here in this Assembly Chamber. I hope you, sir, are above this sort of thing and will elevate your caucus to a higher level.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to dedicate a large part of my speech here to the topic of agriculture. I would like to pass on some information particularly to the Member for Emerson (Mr. Jack Penner) that just recently I acquired a farm myself just outside of Poplarfield, so when he rises to condemn us for not having any farmers on side here, I hope he bears that in mind. I know for a year now we have sat here and we have listened to all kinds of criticism from the opposite side on how we are handling the farming industry, so I would just like to put some of this on the record, how our Government is going to approach all of this.

The first point I would like to make is that we are totally committed to the diversification of agriculture. We strongly believe in value-added processing over and above the primary industries and we feel that this will be the solution, this will be the route that our farmers should take in order to survive in this very competitive industry. For instance, in the Interlake in particular, we have a well-established cattle industry which has been doing quite well in comparison to the grains and oilseeds, for instance. The hog industry is starting to develop there as well.

I want to go on the record in saying that this Government, and myself in particular, have no opposition to the hog industry whatsoever. It makes a lot of sense to put your grain through a hog, as they say, and add considerable value to your product. So I have no problem with this

whatsoever as long as it is done in an environmentally sustainable manner, and that is primarily what our objective is on this side of the House.

I would like to say that it was unfortunate how the previous administration chose to implement this industry. One of the first actions that they took was to do away with the single-desk entity where all farmers had access, that everybody no matter how big or how small was guaranteed that they could take their hogs to market. I am not saying we are going to turn back the clock. We have to continue to look forward and to try to improve upon this. It is just unfortunate, in my opinion, that the previous administration had to focus all of their attentions on the large processors and the large operators at the expense of small farmers who could have capitalized from this industry if they were given the chance to do so. Unfortunately, without the single desk the large processors now have the option of supply contracting. Usually they will do that with the large producers, and the small producers, as a result, are being pushed out. I find that a most unfortunate occurrence, and it will be part of our objective to try to rectify that situation.

Secondly, as I had mentioned a few moments ago, environmental responsibility is one of our objectives, long-term sustainability. A first step that we have taken along this path is the creation of the Livestock Stewardship Initiative, which has gone around this province and done extensive public consultations which is a process that we respect highly on this side of the House. Once this committee has reported to us, then we will be coming forth with further advice.

Now as far as the industry goes, I would just like to point out a few of the steps that this Government has taken. One in particular, Bill 35, The Planning Amendment Act, effectively, Mr. Speaker, put an end to the practice of staged licensing which was endorsed by the previous administration. A person has to look at this approach, staged licensing. For instance, when you look at a new development you have the barn first of all, which as it is classified as an agricultural building, as a farm building, required no building permit or environmental

licence. The second stage in any development would be the building of the lagoon, which does require an environmental licence. Thirdly, they need to have their manure management plan approved.

Now as far as I am concerned it only makes sense that all of these environmental licences should be put in place before construction begins. That is just common sense, Mr. Speaker, very logical, and yet, unfortunately, this was not the case under the previous administration. What you had was quite often barns, lagoons were being built, massive investments in capital, and once this was complete, then they would come to the Government for their licences, and, you know, it is very difficult to refuse them at that point in time. So I commend the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs (Ms. Friesen) for making this change. It was long overdue.

The bill also made technical review committee reports mandatory for projects. Prior to this, the municipalities had the option of asking for a technical review. To have this become mandatory I think also is a positive step forward, as is the public input and scrutiny that is now part of that bill as well, so my hat is off to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in that respect.

Another initiative this Government is undertaking is to upgrade the water table maps in this province, the ground water pollution hazard maps. This is something that is very much long overdue, and we have committed to go ahead with that. I know in the Interlake, in particular, my seat, we have some of the best water in North America, quite possibly in the world. However, it has minimal protection in terms of overburden, not much clay cover. The formations are limestone or dolomite, highly fractured, so very vulnerable to aquifer contamination.

* (15:00)

I think it is very noteworthy, Mr. Speaker, that of the large number of large-scale hog operations that have been built in the Interlake, in the R.M. of Fisher in particular, it is noteworthy that these ground water pollution hazard maps never were completed in this area,

and yet we have barns worth millions and millions of dollars going up, producing high volumes of effluent, and we are basically operating blind. So it is just simple responsibility that this Government is committed to upgrading these maps.

Another thing that this Government has done is to reinstate the provincial subsidy for people to test their private wells. What could be more logical than that? This was a program that was in place previously and was cancelled by the now Opposition party. How irresponsible can you be? You have numerous private wells out there. You have a lot of fertilizers being spread, manure as is the case in an agricultural community. I am not complaining about that, but the fact that they would cancel such a program just shows their callous disregard for the people who live out in those areas, but this Government has committed to reinstating some financial assistance in that respect.

Now I would like to move to another topic, the drainage issue. This is something that has been ignored by the previous administration, and even more than ignored. If they had just left the system in place as is that they inherited from our Government, everything would have been relatively okay at this point in time. Unfortunately, they did not do so. In 1991, after an internal study was done, I think roughly 70 percent of the staff in Water Resources were terminated, and the budget, just, for example, the capital budget that we left them in 1988, roughly \$10 million, when we came into office in 1999 here, it was in the neighbourhood of \$3 million, one-third of what we left them 10 years ago when we left office.

Mr. Harry Schellenberg, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, here they are, supposedly representatives of the farming community and all that and yet taking action like this, cutting water testing, incomplete water table maps and letting the drainage system crumble. How they can deign to represent themselves as the protectors of farmers is beyond me.

Another issue, when the Province took action after the Hildebrand case, passed Bill 15,

The Water Rights Amendment Act, there was vocal opposition on the other side here, something so logical, something so necessary, and yet they would rise up and speak against this, very irresponsible and misrepresenting the needs of the agricultural community.

It does not take a rocket scientist to realize that provincial drains are built to a certain CFS standard. They can only handle so much money, so quite obviously the Province needs to have jurisdiction over the municipal drains that run into the provincial drains. What could be more obvious than that? Yet when we took the necessary steps and reconstituted provincial control, they rose up in arms. I have to wonder what the logic was here, to be frank.

Possibly large farmers like the member from Emerson, for instance, might benefit from something like this. If he has carte blanche to dig his own drains wherever he feels like and can run water off of his land onto his neighbour's land, then I am sure that survival of the fittest would appeal to a man of that mentality. Fortunately this has been now rectified, and I congratulate the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) for taking this very necessary step.

I also, on behalf of the people of the Interlake, want to thank the Minister of Conservation for paying very close attention to drainage concerns in my constituency. I would like to just highlight one particular problem that people in the R.M. of Armstrong have had to face for close to 50 years now. There is an inland lake called Dennis Lake there with no natural outlet. The water has been building in this lake for years due to the construction of a road, and, Mr. Acting Speaker, successive administrations refused to acknowledge the need to rectify this problem until the member from The Pas became Minister of Conservation and put our money on the table. On behalf of Interlakers, I thank him.

Another issue that deserves to be brought to light is the whole concept of unseeded acreage. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has recently constituted the excess moisture insurance program, which is now part of the crop insurance system. It is automatic, there are no additional premiums, something long overdue and something that would have benefited the

farmers in the southwest that these members purport to represent if it had been in place at the time of the flood last spring.

Mr. Acting Speaker, they have pointed over to the former Minister of Agriculture, the member from Lakeside, and said, well, he was about to constitute this program, that it would have been done if they had succeeded in being elected, but, quite frankly, I doubt the veracity of that statement. Given the fact that the member from Lakeside has been a member of this Legislative Assembly for several decades and was Minister of Agriculture for a number of years, he had ample time to put a program in place to deal with excess moisture and failed to do so.

Mr. Acting Speaker, this Minister of Agriculture on the Government side did, and I congratulate her and thank her on behalf of all farmers of Manitoba for doing so. In addition to that, the minister has expanded coverage to cover green feed crops for livestock, which dovetails in with our move toward the expansion of the livestock industry, open-pollinated corn and industrial hemp grain also will be covered by insurance now.

The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) has also taken into consideration the hard times that farmers in the oilseeds and cereal grains production side of it have had to face in recent times. We all know about the subsidy situation, the fact that the Europeans subsidize to a tune of some 50 percent, 54 percent, I believe, that the Americans subsidize to roughly 25 percent. Unfortunately, our federal government will only subsidize to 9 percent, which puts our cereals and oilseeds growers in a very difficult position.

This Minister of Agriculture has taken steps to rectify that situation. She came back from Ottawa with the CMAP agreement, which was a 60-40 federal-provincial split, which put \$100 million into the pockets of Manitoba farmers. Roughly 17 000 Manitoba farmers, to be exact, benefited from this program that our Minister of Agriculture implemented.

Mr. Acting Speaker, our Minister of Agriculture also reconstituted the rural farm stress line. Farming can be a very difficult

industry, and something like this is just a natural tool that will benefit all farming families. Mr. Acting Speaker, for the previous administration to have terminated such a necessary program like that was truly heartless.

* (15:10)

We have heard a lot of fuss from the other side on the elk industry. They accuse us of damaging the agriculture industry. I would question that. The elk industry is still in place here. I would make the point that when the elk industry was started up, there was no mention of eventually moving toward hunt farms. It was all for the production of velvet, and I assume eventually meat production, which is legitimate agriculture, and yet there seemed to be this impetus going toward hunt farms. As a hunter and a rural person, I find the whole concept, I do not think despicable is too strong a word, to be honest with you. There is nothing sporting about shooting an animal in an enclosure. This particular situation was rectified by Bill 15, the amendment to The Wildlife Act, another thing that the Minister of Conservation (Mr. Lathlin) did, and I applaud his high moral stand in taking this action.

There are a lot of negatives to the elk side, the hunt farm approach. Wild boars, for instance, were something that people were looking at. We have already had a number of examples of these animals escaping. They are very intelligent animals. Mr. Acting Speaker, they are also very destructive and inherently dangerous animals. Now our departmental staff have to deal with them in the wild. This is something that needed a serious look. It seemed that unfortunately the white-tailed deer was next on their agenda to expand into, and this would have been to the detriment of a well-established outfitting industry in this province. Why should people come to hunt in the wild if they have got something in a cage?

Another threat to the wild elk herd that I just want to put on the record—as I recall, when this industry was first started, the idea was to keep the domestic herds away from the wild herds to minimize the threat of disease. That was not done.

Also, it is notable that we have a unique subspecies here in Manitoba, the Manitobensis. As I understand it, many of these farms that we are looking at, hunt farms, they are bringing in Rocky Mountain and Roosevelt elk, which threatened the integrity of this very unique subspecies here in Manitoba. So we took steps to prevent the movement toward hunt farms and I think it was a good deed. The argument on that side of the House was that other jurisdictions are doing it, but quite frankly I do not think that two wrongs make a right. For the hunt farmers or people who want to practise this, I suggest they go further down to George Bush country, to Texas, if that is the game that they want to play.

I would like to speak briefly on infrastructure. We have had some criticism on the other side that we are not looking into infrastructure. Well, I know as an Interlaker that this is not so. We have taken rural gasification to task. Finally, after years, the Province put their money on the table and the Interlake natural gas pipeline is finally a reality, thanks to this Government. The communities of Arborg, Riverton, and also communities in the constituency of Lakeside, Teulon and Warren as well will benefit from this venture that was long overdue.

Highways in the Interlake, I thank the Minister of Highways (Mr. Ashton) from the bottom of my heart for projects such as the resurfacing of No. 7 highway, for finally committing to the reconstruction of 329 which will benefit the Mennonite people in the Morweena area, and also to projects such as paving the main streets in Moosehorn and Riverton, which is slated for 2001.

I think it is quite ironic that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) would criticize us. In his response to the Throne Speech he said, and I quote—I am sorry, this was on the expansion of information technology, actually—criticized this Government for enhancing this in rural Manitoba. The words that he used were "You cannot drive a grain truck down the information highway." That is very cute, is it not, but a very unfortunate statement I think. "You cannot abandon rural infrastructure and expect our communities to survive." Well, that is precisely what the administration of Gary Filmon did.

This administration is taking the bull by the horns, and in terms of infrastructure we are doing our job.

I would advise the Leader of the Opposition not to resort to cute little catch phrases like that: "You cannot drive a grain truck down the information highway." He is starting to sound like Stockwell Day more and more every day here with an approach like that.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to go on at length. I would like to talk about Crown corporations, for instance, but I understand that a lot of people have not responded to the Throne Speech yet, so I will try and wrap up.

I would conclude with this theme. The Leader of the Opposition in his response to the Throne Speech was making some comment about the fact that he was a roadie for a rock band, I believe Blood, Sweat and Tears. I think that is a very appropriate thing, and I would like to maybe close on that.

This was the theme of the previous Conservative administration and, I think, would have been the case if they had come to office. This is what the people of Manitoba would have inherited from this Government is simply that: blood, sweat and tears, blood from the continued collapse of the health care system; the sweat that was obvious in the regressive labour legislation, Bill 26, that they had put in place that thankfully our Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) has now rectified with Bill 44; and the tears that the general population of this province were shedding under their misguided tenure; higher property taxes through the education special levy, something that happened as they absolved themselves of the responsibility of educating our children; a stagnant minimum wage for years; crumbling infrastructure; a drainage system that had not been touched in a decade, farmers crying for roads and drainage in this province; environmental degradation which became apparent last fall with heavy rainfalls that we experienced; outright betrayal in the case of the sell-off of the Manitoba Telephone System after they swore to the people of Manitoba that they would not do so; and finally the corruption that people in Manitoba became, oh, too well aware of in 1995 with the vote-rigging scandal, this

cancer on the democratic process that became apparent. That, I think, was the final straw, and I think that the people of Manitoba realized that. On that note, I will take my seat and let others put their thoughts on the record as well.

Mr. Ron Schuler (Springfield): First of all, I would like to extend congratulations to the new MLAs. I had the opportunity to do so when I spoke to the parental leave bill, but I would like to do that again. To the new pages that we have working in this Chamber, welcome, and also to the new interns that will be serving us for this year, a welcome addition to the Manitoba Legislature. My first year here was a great learning experience, as I am sure it will be for you, and I wish you all the best. You will leave here having a better understanding of the way our democracy works and why we do some of the things we do, and there is a good explanation for it. So, again, welcome to all of them.

I would like to keep my comments fairly short. I will keep them to about 40 minutes. Insofar as the Speech from the Throne, this is now the second one that I have lived through, and I would have to say that this one, like the first one, was terribly weak. I have had an opportunity to listen to it. I had an opportunity to read through it, and I think what we have noticed in this Throne Speech is that it avoided a lot of the key issues, and a lot of those have been mentioned in the days that have gone by. I think what it shows is it shows a government that is basically lost. They are looking for a foothold. They are looking for something to hang their hat on, and they have not found that yet. There is no vision, and there is clearly no plan.

* (15:20)

The Throne Speech misses entirely on health care, does not mention it. The Throne Speech, as in previous throne speeches, really does not deal with the kinds of issues that Manitobans are looking at and asking to be addressed. In fact, it now being almost a year and a half year since the last election, I think what you have to come to the reality is that the Government opposite really won the election, to their own surprise. They clearly had no idea that they were going to be winning this election and did not really have the policy background. They did not have the

vision. They did not have their plan down tight and won the election and walked in basically with no ideas, and it gets me back to that. It shows that you have really a government that is lost out there insofar as a policy is concerned.

One of the issues that certainly concerns myself as one of the MLAs, and it addresses more the portfolio that I am a critic for, is that there was no mention of what the Government's agenda is going to be insofar as labour legislation. In fact, if we look at the first Throne Speech of this new Government, neither did they mention that they had up their sleeve this hidden agenda called Bill 44, a bill clearly anti-worker, a bill that was clearly anti-democratic, and unfortunately, one has to say it basically promotes violence because it does not take a strong stand against picket-line violence. It certainly concerned a lot of Manitobans. We had a government, a minister—and I give the minister a lot of credit, Mr. Acting Speaker—well educated, well spoken. They had their strategy down pat. What they were going to do is bring it in in the heat of the summer. Well, there was not that heat of the summer this year.

They thought that it was going to be like a normal Manitoba summer. It is going to be sunny and people would be out at the lake, and little did they know we were going to end up having monsoon season and people were not necessarily going out to the lake. I guess they thought that they were going to have an Opposition that was going to be sleeping at the switch. Boy, were they wrong on that one. They thought that the business community was not going to be concerned about what they were doing. Probably they felt, and the minister more than likely argued at Cabinet, that the Premier (Mr. Doer) had spun the business community into such a place that they certainly would not see this as something which it was, a very poor move on behalf of government.

Anyway, none of those things took place. To credit the minister, I think the strategy was there on Bill 44, but none of the components really worked for them. It ended up being a very bitter session. It ended up being a very divisive session. The minister during Estimates talked about bringing labour and management together—not. She talked about improving the climate

between the various interests in society—not. We ended up seeing the various groups taking out ads, attacking each other. Unless that was one of the hidden agendas of the minister and of this Government, then I would have to give them more credit. I do not think that was what they were looking for, but that is certainly what they ended up getting.

It ended up culminating when the current government brought in closure. They shut down citizens. They ran sessions until wee hours of the morning, limited debate, limited time to get the proper information that the committee needed. It was really a very difficult and trying time. There were members, and the minister being one of them, who are seasoned veterans of this kind of action. For the new MLAs of the day it was a shocking experience. We certainly had never seen such an anti-democratic bill being pushed through in such an anti-democratic fashion.

But, in the end, no matter how much we tried to convince the minister of the wrongdoings of her bill and of her Government, it was pushed through. I know on the last night we were here till about six in the morning, and we were trying to convince the Government to get off of their bad ways and get into the act of—not getting into the act, actually pulling the act, and it was to no avail. The bill did go through.

I guess the question has to be asked on that: To what purpose? To what purpose did the Government actually push through this bill at a political cost to themselves, at a cost to the community in Manitoba, at a cost to the long-term viability of our economy because during the whole process we voiced concerns to the minister that this bill did not make sense. It had a lot of areas in it that were proving to be very complicated, not just for those it would affect but also for the minister and her department.

Again, Mr. Acting Speaker, for the record, you have the minister very well educated. I in fact had a look through her Masters thesis; do not agree with the thesis, but it was an interesting thesis. She is well spoken, she is a good spokesperson for the department, and even the minister could not really lay out for us how Bill 44 was supposed to work.

In the dying days of the Bill 44 debate, we were in committee and the minister brought forward a flow chart. It was the most bizarre thing you have ever seen: the minister trying to explain the flow chart to us and quite legitimately not being able to explain to us how this bill was supposed to work. The Government had the majority, put the bill through, and you would have thought that was going to be the end of it. The minister then got herself into a Q and A with the media, and we found out that the minister was still having difficulty with her own bill.

Again, Mr. Acting Speaker, this does not speak to the minister, a well-educated, well-spoken minister. This speaks to the poor Bill 44 that was passed by this Government to the point where, and I quote from the *Winnipeg Sun*, November 11: "The minister said it would be unfair for one side in a labour dispute to be forced into an arbitrated settlement against its will." A statement that is contrary to the NDP's position throughout the entire debate over Bill 44. Quote by the minister: "In order to go to binding arbitration, both sides would have to agree to it," the minister told reporters. "Binding arbitration is binding, and in order for that to work, both sides have to agree that they will go to binding arbitration. . . . It would be very unfair," said the minister, "if only one side agreed to binding arbitration and the other side did not."

This is in direct contrast to what that whole lengthy, bitter, anti-democratic debate was all about, where the Government shut down the Opposition and the people of Manitoba. I mean it is amazing after we went through all of that, the minister reversed herself. We have asked, in this House, when are the changes going to be coming to Bill 44. She stated publicly, she stated in the media, that she herself does not have confidence in Bill 44, after we went through that whole process, that day after day of wrangling, and even the minister does not agree with her own bill.

Another article of December 3, and I would like to quote: "The Labour Minister may want to brush up on her labour laws. It seems the minister does not know her own legislation, telling reporters last month she believes

employers and unions should never be forced into binding arbitration without consent of both sides."

* (15:30)

I would like to give some advice to the minister and to the Government. Probably it is a good idea to pull Bill 44, let it go through a proper process, let it go through a proper consultation, through the LMRC, not the way that it was rammed through unfairly in the way all the shenanigans took place at LMRC. Let it go the right process and come forward with a bill that everybody including the minister can understand, and a bill that even the minister could support, because clearly she does not support her own bill by what she said in the media.

My last comment on the Throne Speech has to do with the hidden agenda. We have seen that this Government says one thing, goes in the opposite direction. They talk balance, and they do the exact opposite. They talk consultation. They set up the meetings; they cancel them. I mean it is exact opposite of what they do in regard to what they have said—[interjection] The Minister of Education (Mr. Caldwell) is willing to take the blame for it. Well, at least he is part of it. I will leave it at that.

I guess the concern we have, and I say this in all honesty to the Government, to the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett), is what is in store for us when we get back in February or March? What is really the hidden agenda? I refer to the letter that was sent to the NDP caucus, a letter that was discussed in the media, and I am sure a great embarrassment to the minister. In a quote out of the letter, it says "in our meetings with the Premier and the Minister of Labour, we were told repeatedly that it was preferable to amend The Labour Relations Act a couple of times in small increments rather than all at once."

We believe, and certainly the Throne Speech has not given us any comfort to help us believe otherwise, that there is another hidden agenda, and we would like to ask the minister: where is she going to go with labour legislation in the new session? Are we going to see a labour process, the death of a thousand cuts, Mr. Acting

Speaker? Is that what we are going to see in this Chamber? What is the hidden agenda? You know, what is in store for the province? Are we going to see another bitter divisive debate? Again, you know, we hear this, oh, we have to bring them together; we have to bring harmony, and they do exactly the opposite.

The minister and her Premier (Mr. Doer) came out of the last debate and admitted that things were done wrong. They admitted that the debate was very divisive and clearly had to take responsibility themselves. I would caution the minister, I would caution her Premier, and I would caution her Government, please do not do that again. Do not bring out your hidden agenda and try to sneak it through when you think you have an unsuspecting public and an unsuspecting opposition. We are clearly going to be watching this Government. We are clearly going to keep a check on them, because we know that there is this hidden agenda lurking out there and our concern is what they are going to do with labour legislation. Mr. Acting Speaker, we have seen the documentation from some of the labour bosses talking about death of a thousand cuts. That really does concern us as an Opposition, as Manitobans, as I know it concerns all Manitobans. It would have been best if the Government would have just come clean with it in their Speech from the Throne and all Manitobans would have known where this Government was going.

So we are going to be watching vigilantly. I know there is an amendment coming which I will have to support, because I cannot support this particular Speech from the Throne. It is weak. It lacks vision. It has no plan and our greatest concern, or my greatest concern as one of the MLAs in this Chamber is what is the hidden agenda and what is going to face us in the upcoming months when we come back into this Chamber sometime in the spring. Thank you very much.

Mr. Cris Aglugub (The Maples): Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues in welcoming the new pages and interns to the Legislative Assembly. I am pleased to note that one of the pages, Ms. Amber Sheshka is one of my constituents in The Maples. Congratulations to all of you on being selected for these

prestigious positions. I hope you will find your experience here valuable in whatever career you choose to pursue.

I am also pleased to welcome the newly elected member from Tuxedo and the newly elected member from Kirkfield Park, the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray). As I know well from my first year as an MLA, the learning curve for a rookie is very steep. Fortunately, I had a great deal of support from my constituents, my colleagues on this side of the House, and the caucus staff. I would like to thank them all for smoothing my way and helping me hit my stride.

Since the election, I have taken up residence in The Maples. This has enabled me to keep more in tune with the community and more accessible to my constituents. The many invitations to meetings, social events, and celebrations also kept me close to the people I represent. I am always honoured to be invited to these gatherings, and I do my best to attend as many as possible.

I have been looking forward to responding to our Government's second Throne Speech because it speaks to a vision of Manitoba that reflects the needs and aspirations of my constituents in The Maples. A number of members opposite have claimed that they have found no vision in this Speech from the Throne. You have to wonder just what it was they were looking for. Mr. Acting Speaker, were they looking for a strategy for life-long learning for Manitobans, or environmental sustainability, or an inclusive society that respects all sectors of this economy, geographically and culturally a diverse province? Apparently not, because that is what our Throne Speech offers.

The Tories pretend that our Government has not offered a vision. What then is their vision? According to their own statement, their so-called vision is for Manitoba to be, and I quote directly, "a better place." If there is any foresight in this so-called vision, it eludes me completely. Our Government's vision of learning, sustainability and inclusiveness is what my constituents and most other Manitobans are looking for. They want a vision that speaks to the present and future concerns of their own families and

communities. Our Government has not only provided such a vision but also developed a realistic plan for attaining it.

My colleagues from this side of the House who have already responded to the Speech from the Throne have collectively touched on all of its highlights. What I propose to do is flag some of the initiatives that are of special consequence for the constituents of The Maples. The foresight of our Government comes out clearly in its commitment in the Speech from the Throne to lifelong learning. Lifelong learning, we believe, starts with infancy. As the 1995 Postl report and subsequent research has shown, the conditions for successful learning are developed long before a child enters kindergarten. Even prenatal nutrition plays a crucial role.

I am proud that our Government is now taking the lead nationally by instituting a Canadian first, targeted prenatal benefits for pregnant mothers, as announced in the Throne Speech. It has been demonstrated conclusively that such investments in child development are repaid many-fold over the course of a lifetime. Studies show that every dollar invested in early years can save up to seven dollars later in terms of improved school graduation rates, decreased crime among youth and lower reliance on social assistance, but not until our Government came into power did any provincial government in Canada act on this knowledge. We acted by establishing our Healthy Child Initiative.

The prenatal benefits are only one of the more recent undertakings in our Healthy Child Initiative. We also just introduced legislation to increase unpaid prenatal leave in our province from 17 to 37 weeks. As the Throne Speech noted, we are expanding our fetal alcohol prevention program and parent-child centres. In the last session, our Budget brought in the best tax credits for kids in Canada, tax credits which support the nurturing role of parents. The income taxes we announced will total about \$100 million annually by 2002, and the majority of these breaks will be going to people with kids.

* (15:40)

The Maples is home to young working families, a good proportion of whom are

struggling to get by on below average incomes. Our programs in support of early child development are highly valued by them. It is no coincidence that back in the 1999 election campaign the venue chosen by our leader for the announcement of Healthy Child commitments were none other than the Elwick Village Centre Project in The Maples. The parent-child centres work with parents who want to help their pre-schoolers develop the social, physical and learning skills that they need for success in school and later life. The parents are trained in parenting skills and nutrition and encouraged to make optimal use of existing resources for the families in the community.

Now in its fourth year, the Elwick Village Centre can already take satisfaction in seeing its alumni happily progressing through the first three years of school.

As a founder and former director of a day care centre myself, I am in a good position to talk about what our Government's additional \$9 million for child care is doing to help these young families give their children a healthy start in life.

In addition to creating more subsidized day care spaces, the investment has also boosted wages for child care workers. As a result, all the spaces in our training programs have been filled by students who now see early childhood education as a worthwhile pursuit. It was an NDP government that pioneered day care in Canada in 1960. Now we are reinventing the child care and restoring Manitoba's position as a national leader. It cannot be said too often that quality child care benefits all families, regardless of their economic status.

My constituents are also well aware of the long-term benefits of keeping school gyms and computer rooms open at night for our kids. Our Maples Youth Activity Centre has been doing just that. The centre provides our youth with opportunities to do something active and creative rather than hang out on our streets. We applaud the Government's announcement in the Throne Speech that it will extend such ventures and make a school resource base for parents of pre-school children as well. We are also pleased that the Throne Speech notes the growing

importance of public schools as community schools which have a place for seniors and adult learners as well. One of our hopes in The Maples is to set up English as a Second Language classes in the schools for the new Canadians in our community.

As a predominantly young community, The Maples welcomes the steps our Government has taken to make post-secondary education more accessible. Our young people and their parents have dreams, just as my father did for me, of developing work skills that will be valued in the future. The new bursary program, the 10% reduction in tuition fees and the investments in infrastructure will help them greatly in realizing their dreams. As someone whose career was boosted considerably by training at Red River College, I am very appreciative of the difference that more training spaces and increased affordability can make. When more Manitobans receive post-secondary education, the whole province benefits socially and economically. As our Government has said on a number of occasions, the best economic policy is an education policy. It is showing sound vision in making the concept of lifelong learning a cornerstone of its Throne Speech.

In the context of education and the economy, I would also like to say how pleased I am by the announcement that the Premier's advisory council will be continuing the dialogue begun at the Manitoba Century Summit among business, labour and community leaders. This council will be ensuring that strategic initiatives in training, immigration and investment are co-ordinated between the major players in our economy. The Speech from the Throne also assured us that the Government, in co-operation with business and community partners, would be seeking a new agreement with the federal government to increase Manitoba's share of skilled immigrants. This is good news, not only for the economy, but for the new Canadians who want to see family members join them here.

In support of such effort, I have introduced a private member's resolution this session calling on the federal government to adjust their criteria for sponsoring family members. These criteria should take into account the significant differences in the cost of living across Canada.

Currently, the financial criteria place of Winnipeg, one of the least expensive cities in which to raise a family, is in the same category as Toronto and Vancouver, which are known for their high cost of living. A number of my constituents have raised the matter with me, pointing out that, aside from humanitarian considerations, an adjustment in financial criteria would help shore up Manitoba's population and bring people with a diversity of skills into our workforce. It is my hope that this resolution will see the light of day and that the federal government will act on our suggestion.

In my response today, Mr. Acting Speaker, I have been able to focus on just a few features of just one part of our Government's vision for Manitoba. So I will pass the torch to my colleagues who will speak after me. Before closing, I would like to say that the honourable Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) is not the only one who has been out on the doorstep listening to Manitobans over the last few weeks. I have been there myself. While I have heard concerns about our health care system, particularly concerns about federal funding for health care, I have more often heard praises for what our Government has done to improve the front-line care and train more nurses. On the whole, my constituents welcomed the two-year diploma nursing program not only as a way to redress the shortage created under the Tories, but also as an opportunity for themselves or their children to pursue a career that might not otherwise have been open to them.

They are aware of the concrete steps that our Government is taking to rebuild our health care services and infrastructure. In particular they are appreciative of the new dialysis and oncology clinic under construction at the Seven Oaks Hospital. The \$7.4-million structure will be completed by January 2002.

Finally, I am proud to be a member of the Doer government, a government with a vision, a government that cares about people, a government that will continue to improve the lives of Manitoba families and offer them more opportunities. This, Mr. Acting Speaker, is my response to the Throne.

* (15:50)

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): Mr. Acting Speaker, it is always an honour and a privilege to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne on behalf of the people from the Carman constituency. To begin with, I would like to welcome our new pages to the Legislature. I am sure that you will enjoy your experience here in the Chamber. All members appreciate the assistance that you give us, therefore, welcome.

To the Speaker, who, I know for sure, is listening to these remarks that are being piped through the system, Sir, I welcome the guidance that you brought forth for us in the last session and indeed this short, little one that we have embarked on. With your guidance and due diligence, I know that we will eventually get through it.

To our new table officer, our Clerk, again with her staff, wonderful people that they are and how they interpret the rules of this Legislature and indeed *Beauchesne's* and *Marleau*, and everybody else who has written and taken the time to sort of justify what we do, I thank each and every one of them, along with the Journals clerks and the Hansard and office staff in the Clerk's office, who help us immensely.

To the six legislative interns, as a member of the internship selection committee, I have a tremendous appreciation of how valuable this program is not only to the members of the Legislature but to the young men and women who take part in this worthwhile program. I would just like to take a moment now to thank Professor Barry Ferguson, who has been the academic director for many years. We will miss Barry because we appreciate all his input that he was trying to make this program work really well. He will now be replaced by Professor Rais Kahn, who has served on this selection committee for many years.

It is also my pleasure to welcome our two newest members to this Legislature, the Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and our new leader, the Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray). Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to congratulate them both on becoming members of this Legislature, in a convincing fashion, I might add. I am encouraged by the direction our new

leader has set out for our party. I am looking forward to our policy round tables called Connect Manitoba. That will begin in the new year.

At the same time, we should also thank the former member for Kirkfield Park, Eric Stefanson, and our former premier, Gary Filmon, for their many years of public service.

This Speech from the Throne offered Manitobans very little insight into what plans, if any, this Government has for the province. The usual saying is "all style and no substance." This Government's Throne Speech had neither style nor substance. Many Manitobans have been suspecting that this Government has no real plan for our province and this speech removed all doubt.

I happened to be reading Hansard the other day, and I came across the remarks of the Member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) where he said: In 1999, when we won the massive support that we did, it was because we as a party reflected the vision and the aspirations of Manitobans. Then he also went on to talk about how the NDP's majority is larger than Filmon ever had. Well, two points that the member should consider. First of all, the NDP's majority is the result of less than 1000 votes in five constituencies, and that was a difference between a PC or NDP majority government. Secondly, the Tories have more seats now than the NDP ever had in Opposition and the PCs got a higher percentage of the popular vote in 1999 than the NDP ever did in Opposition.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

As a rural member of this Legislature, I have been very disappointed, Mr. Speaker, by this Government's absolute abandonment of rural Manitoba. Agriculture, highways, conservation, drainage issues, rural economic development and rural health care were not addressed sufficiently in this Throne Speech just as this Government has not addressed them adequately since they took office. Indeed, one area that this Throne Speech paid almost no attention to was health care, specifically rural health care. We realize that this is a sensitive issue for members opposite. They promised in the last election that

they had a credible and achievable plan to end hallway medicine within six months. Well, Mr. Speaker, they have been in power for some 14 months now, and they have failed to live up to their promises.

If I remember correctly, the Premier (Mr. Doer) also promised to put Grafton, North Dakota, out of business. The people of Treherne can tell you first-hand that the only health facility this Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has put out of business since the NDP formed Government was the Tiger Hills community hospital last summer.

People in rural Manitoba and in rural communities expect a certain level of service from their health care facilities. When a person from Melita has to have his neighbours drive him four hours to Winnipeg to have a cut properly treated, something is wrong with the system. This Government promised Manitobans that they would fix health care within six months. They said it was simple. They said they would spend another \$15 million and everything would be fixed. Well, they have spent the last 14 months and \$1.5 billion realizing that governing was a lot harder than they thought.

There is apprehension in rural Manitoba that this Government does not have any real plan to address the problems they are experiencing in obtaining health care. The Government has promised a nurse and doctor retention plan. Manitobans have been waiting and waiting, but this Government and this Minister of Health keep saying: We will have an announcement in the next few weeks. Manitobans have been waiting for the last 15 months now. Will this phantom plan really address shortages outside the Perimeter? If this Government stays true to form, I daresay that it will not. Part of retaining physicians and nurses in rural Manitoba is to help make it more attractive for them to make a home in our rural communities. Our rural economy has suffered since this Government has come to power. This Government has continually ignored the economic issues in rural Manitoba, especially in southern Manitoba, and this speech is no exception.

Under this Government rural economic development has been placed on the back

burner. This Throne Speech made no mention of the REDI program or Grow Bonds. Under the previous administration REDI was a tremendous success in helping rural communities diversify their economic activity. This Government has failed miserably when it comes to providing leadership and support to our rural communities.

They have also failed miserably to show our province's agricultural producers support. This Government pays lip service to our farmers by saying in the Throne Speech that they will continue to support the farm economy and the family farm. My question is how? This Government has done nothing to support our agriculture producers. They refused to address the situation farmers in the southeast part of the province have experienced due to the flooding this year. They still refuse to offer any support to farmers in southwestern Manitoba who were flooded out 1999. The Government talked about fostering new sectors of agriculture, including alternative crops, organic production and premium livestock options.

Those Manitobans already raising exotic livestock, such as elk and bison, might argue that this Government is bent on driving them out of business. The Minister of Conservation's penned hunting legislation will affect these producers, and the minister should address their concerns. This NDP government promised that they would have a better relationship with Ottawa and the federal government. The Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) would have, Mr. Speaker, a tough time defending her relationship to Ottawa to Manitoba producers. She has consistently failed to lobby Ottawa on behalf of our agricultural community.

* (16:00)

Our farmers needed this Government to stand beside them to get federal support. So far, they have failed to do this. An essential component of our agricultural economy is the maintenance of our rural infrastructure. Mr. Speaker, this Government failed to mention the national infrastructure program once in their Throne Speech. The basis of a strong rural economy requires a solid infrastructure. Our infrastructure system, especially that in southern rural Manitoba, does not seem to be a priority

for this Government. I would hope that the Minister of Highways and Government Services (Mr. Ashton) has more luck than the Minister of Agriculture had when dealing with Ottawa and the federal government.

One word that immediately comes to mind when discussing this NDP government is "mismanagement." From top to bottom, this Government has consistently mismanaged the affairs of this Province. Both the first minister that we had responsible for Gaming and his successor have completely bungled the entire Aboriginal casino project, and I am sure a soon-to-be-named third Minister of Gaming will not have any better luck.

This issue is obviously an embarrassment to the Government because there was no mention of this project in this Government's Throne Speech. Last session, this Government's hidden agenda became very clear to all Manitobans when the Minister of Labour (Ms. Barrett) introduced her undemocratic anti-business labour law, Bill 44. This Government promised to improve the relationship between business and labour. We will bring them together, they said. Instead, they drove business and labour further apart, just as we have seen with the Headingly issue.

This Government does not bring together communities; they drive wedges into them. Their mindset remains: Divide and we shall conquer. The Labour Minister later proved she did not fully understand the legislation that her Government passed this summer when she stated it would be unfair for one side to unilaterally force the other to arbitration. Well, if she feels that way, perhaps she should consider amending the legislation to reflect her newfound sense of fairness. The minister's friend at the Manitoba Labour Federation, Mr. Hilliard, may find that interesting.

Another plank of this Government's hidden agenda fell into place this fall, when this NDP government decided to take \$30 million out of MPI's surplus and place it into general revenue. Manitobans caught this Government with their hands in the cookie jar. This Government saw this surplus as their own slush fund. Rightly so, the public was outraged at this Government. I

must commend the minister for finally doing the right thing, returning the money to its rightful owner, their ratepayers and admitting that she had made a mistake.

She did not, however, say that her Government would not do it again. Manitobans will be watching. They will also be watching this Government very closely regarding their plan to reduce taxes. Mr. Speaker, this Government is failing to keep our province tax competitive with other provinces, even Saskatchewan. NDP Saskatchewan is leaving us behind. The Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger) has floated the idea of new taxes during his Budget consultations but failed to discuss further tax relief. Manitobans will be very interested to see whether this NDP government can contain their unshakeable desire to tax and spend.

The Premier (Mr. Doer) himself said they are looking for creative ways of getting around the balanced budget legislation. He tried it by raiding MPI. One has to wonder where he will try again.

The Throne Speech has also heaped a lot on the Minister of Conservation's (Mr. Lathlin) plate. I am not sure if he is capable of digesting all the material his Premier has in store for him. So far, it seems that the issues already facing this minister have overwhelmed him a bit. His Premier, Mr. Speaker, has talked about the importance of his ministers being accessible. The Minister of Conservation has not been accessible. He has made commitments to meet with municipalities and other stakeholders and cancelled them on a regular basis. I am glad to hear that he is trying to reschedule those meetings, but the fact remains that he made commitments and failed to meet them.

Just like most Manitobans, I was disappointed that this Speech from the Throne lacked any real substance. Throwing in a reference to the year 2020, does this mean that this Government has a plan for the future? I doubt it. This Throne Speech typifies this Government. They have no real plan or vision for Manitoba. Manitobans deserve leadership and good management from their Government. This NDP government has failed to offer them that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will conclude my remarks this afternoon by wishing all members of this House and Manitobans a very, very Merry Christmas and all the best in the coming new year. Thank you, Sir.

Hon. Jean Friesen (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to speak in strong support of the second Throne Speech of our Government. It is a speech which deals with many aspects of the lives of Manitobans, and it offers a vision of the shared strengths of our community which can be brought together to serve the next generation.

I would like to, as we all have I think, welcome the new pages. I know that they will work hard, they will have an opportunity to get to know each other from different parts of the province and to get to know all members of the Legislature, as well. They will also, I think, have the opportunity to learn about the jobs of different staff members around the Legislature and in the ministers' and caucus offices, the library, the Speaker's office, et cetera. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn, and I hope that it is an enjoyable one, too.

I would like to welcome you, Mr. Speaker, our first elected Speaker. I wish you well in your second session. Also, I would like to welcome the new Member for Tuxedo (Mrs. Stefanson) and the new Member for Kirkfield Park (Mr. Murray), the new leader of the Tory party. I gather that he has pledged to bring a new level of civility, a higher tone to the Chamber, and I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that will be good news for you. I certainly wish him well in that endeavour, although members will forgive me if, as I look at Question Period and the behaviour of certain members of the Opposition, I do not hold my breath on that one. There are ingrained habits in some of his caucus and long traditions in some of his members that ensure that political debate in this Chamber is deeply personalized and often offensive. So we will see. I wish him well in that direction, as I think we all do.

This is a place of debate, and it is a place of forceful debate. It should be a debate about ideas and about programs, not a place for unfounded allegations, for poor research, and for the kinds

of behaviour that we have seen in recent days as certainly we did in the last session, as well.

We have occasions of unanimity, as well, and consensus, but we also have the opportunity and the responsibility to reflect the diverse opinions that are all Manitobans'. Mr. Speaker, there are, indeed, individual differences, regional concerns, and there are political divides. This is the proper and orderly place for the expression of such different visions of the future of the province. The debate on the Throne Speech is one such occasion for two or more points of view on the general direction of government policy. I will say that our direction is clearly indicated in many, many areas throughout this Throne Speech.

We made, for example, a commitment to assist victims of crime. We will also be adding funding for policing, a strategy against drunk driving, support for citizen patrols, and a new community protection act. There are proposals for a graduated driver's licence, as well as for farm safety co-ordinators. There is a connection between all of those. They indicate a direction. They indicate the concerns of our Government for one particular area of government policy.

We also, for example, will be issuing a white paper outlining proposals for disabilities, a new plan for mental health treatment and support, and we have clearly made many changes in health policy in those areas.

Yet the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, seems unable to see a plan. That appears to be one of their constant themes. They cannot see a plan here. They do not see a connection between victim support, between concern for drunk driving, for strategies for the funding for policing or citizen patrols. They simply do not see a connection. They do not see that as a plan. I found that an interesting theme that recurred through many of their comments. Many of them, in fact, have spoken in exactly those terms.

They do not see, for example, a connection between proposals for a minister for disabilities, which we announced during the last session, and the new plans that we have for a white paper as well as for changes in health treatment and support for people with mental disabilities. That,

from their perspective, is not a plan. It is not something they see as connected one to the other. They do not see that as a government acting in one particular direction for the benefit of its citizens. So I assume in both cases they will be voting against that. Neither of these directions is apparently worthy of their support. Neither of these directions is something which they would see as constituting a plan.

Let us take another area, education. In the area of post-secondary education, for example, the Opposition is well aware that we have cut fees, that we have, in the past few months, announced support for the capital programs of universities; \$50 million, over a number of years, for the University of Manitoba to address the long-term deficit that the Opposition, the government of the previous 11 years had left. It will encourage private donations, and we anticipate that a hundred million dollars can be put into the deficit that was left by the previous government in post-secondary education. This they do not see as a plan. This is not a plan that will benefit Manitobans. This is something that they are going to oppose. This is not a direction for the economic future of Manitoba. They cannot see any connections between the decrease in fees, the increase in the enrolment and the attention to the deficit in physical capacities of the University of Manitoba, in this case, and see that this has an impact on all Manitobans.

* (16:10)

But it should not be surprising that the Opposition speaks in these terms. They were, after all, a government which presided year after year over fee increases in post-secondary education. Over a number of years, I think it was the last five or six years, fees rose in post-secondary education 179 percent. So is it any wonder that a government which deliberately chose to increase post-secondary education, to offload that cost of education onto families and onto young people, is it any wonder that they do not see a plan in a program which cuts the fees and increases the number of students? It does not surprise me in the least.

They presided over declining enrollments at all our universities. They presided, in fact, over declining enrollments in colleges. There were

years when I used to rise in Opposition and ask them about the actual shift, the actual decrease in numbers of students who were going into the colleges in spite of the fact that they knew, as well as everybody else in Manitoba, of the very strong significance that we all attach to the desire and the need for the economy of Manitoba, for the future of young people to increase those enrolments in the colleges.

At one point, they did have a report by a former Premier, Duff Roblin. They asked him to look at universities. He basically said to them your real problem is in the community colleges, and you need to double the enrolments in community colleges. Mr. Speaker, for how many years was it? It must have been five, six, seven years they ignored the recommendations of the Roblin commission.

We have in the Throne Speech, as we did in our previous commitments in the election, a plan and a commitment to double those enrolments in post-secondary education, and we are well on the way to doing that, but the Opposition sees no plan. They see no vision in that. That, to me, I find really quite horrifying, that they can see no vision in the expansion of post-secondary education. It really speaks very clearly to me to the vision that the Opposition has for Manitoba. It does not include the expansion of post-secondary education. It does not include the lowering of fees. It does not include affordability for young people to continue their education. It does not include the expansion of post-secondary education for the benefit of creating skilled workers, which are being so much needed and so much in demand across Canada, not just in Manitoba.

What it speaks to me, these themes and these constant speeches and references to no plans that I have heard from the Opposition, it speaks to me of a very, very poor sense of where this province can and should be going. They need to examine their own vision. They need to examine the very principles from which they are presenting these kinds of ideas.

Given the record of the Tory party, it is not surprising that their response to the Throne Speech has had very little mention of education, no acknowledgement of the creation of an

addition to a community college in downtown Winnipeg. I do not know that anyone mentioned Red River downtown. I do not think that anybody mentioned the expansion of post-secondary education through the colleges and through the expansion of enrolments.

It seems to me that there is a very concrete example of exactly the kind of program and vision that this party and this Government have for Manitoba. It has been well received. It is well received in the business community. It is well received in those people who are very concerned about the future of downtown Winnipeg. It is well received by those people who want to see nurses at the bedside and who see the replacement of that two-year diploma program. They see the connection between the expansion of post-secondary enrolments and a vision for the future of health care that was deliberately altered by the previous government.

It does not surprise me. I ought to be shocked, I suppose, that they can see no vision and no direction in those kinds of changes that have opened doors and opportunities for young people in Manitoba.

It is, however, hard to believe that with a new leader and in a new century that this Opposition cannot see the benefit in the expansion of post-secondary education. They cannot see the opportunities that it opens for young people and for their families. They cannot particularly see the importance that it has to the business community in Manitoba. I would have thought that they would have heard that message. It seems to me that everyone else in the community has. The high school students have heard it, the guidance counsellors have heard it. It amazes me that this particular Opposition, in their speeches and in their response to the Throne Speech, cannot see that as a vision for the future.

They are very fond, I think, in the circles that they move in in talking about the progress that, for example, I think the latest watchword that they are using is the Celtic Tiger, the case of Ireland, and the way in which Ireland has been able to expand its economy in recent years. They talk about the importance of the taxes in Ireland and the way in which that has helped. In part,

that is so. What happened in Ireland first of all was a very rapid and very large expansion in post-secondary education. They set clear targets, as we are doing, and they achieved it. After that, they had the trained workforce in information technology and in many other areas that could take on the new economy, and they did it. Yes, it is a Celtic Tiger. But never ever underestimate the importance of post-secondary education to what happened in Ireland, and yet they do, no mention of it in the response to the Speech from the Throne from the new Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray). That, to me, was a great disappointment. They simply, it seems to me, do not get it.

One of the reasons, I asked myself why they do not get it, well, in part, it is partisan. I mean, they clearly do not want to acknowledge any achievements that the Government might have in this area. It does in fact show up their own record. There is no doubt about that. So there is a kind of embarrassment about that, and I understand that, but why else? What other reasons are there that they would not speak of this and acknowledge the changes that we are making? I think it is because education is a root to opportunity. It is an equalizer. It is one of the great equalizers that we have within our own control within the public sector.

It also, I think, speaks to their lack of contact, to their lack of connection, which I spoke on many times in Opposition with universities and colleges. It does seem to me to be a foreign world to them. I would advise them that in fact these are very exciting times for universities and colleges. It is not just the growth in enrolment, but it is that there is a generational change in faculty, the tremendous number of new faculty in many areas throughout all of our universities in fact, but there really is very little connection with the Opposition in that, very little sense of that change and that shift that is happening in the colleges and universities.

They ignored Roblin after they had received the report. One of the other things that he had advised them to do was to get a fee policy. I used to, again, rise in Opposition many times and say have you got it yet. When are you going to get it? When will you have a fee policy that Manitobans can get a sense of security when

they begin a degree course or a college course that they know what it is actually going to cost them by the time they graduate?

* (16:20)

In all their years, 11 years of government, they were never able to have a written fee policy. I think they had an informal policy, and it amounted to 179% increase in fees. That was their policy. When we have a fee policy which reduces fees at universities and colleges, it is perhaps not unexpected that they would not comment on it, because it does point to one of the very strong signal failures of that party when they were in opposition.

We have restored bursary programs in education, something else that this Government cut, another equalizer, something else which opened doors for young Manitobans. We restored it. The first time in seven years that we have had a bursary program in Manitoba as Ontario has, as British Columbia has, as Saskatchewan has. No wonder there was a silence on that. They closed those doors just as they closed the doors to so many access students, just as they closed the doors to those people who had benefited so much and who came and spoke so movingly about student social allowance. No wonder there is no acknowledgement of the direction and the plan and the provision that we have for Manitoba. They simply do not get it.

I have often wondered why they wanted to close those doors, why they did it so consistently with bursaries, with access, with student social allowance. Why were all those doors closed? Well, was it dollars? They did go through a difficult economic time in the early '90s, although that in fact was not when all of these were closed, part of it was, but I think beyond that and the reason that it continued for so long and became the hallmark of their government, the closing of opportunity to young people. I think the reason is because it reflected so many resolutions at Tory conventions. It reflected that sense, that ideological sense of elitism, the policies of Reagan and Thatcher and Filmon, and they were all connected.

There was no society, Margaret Thatcher said, no collectivity, only individuals, and I think

fundamentally, if they ever examined it, that was where the Opposition, as they are now, stemmed from, no sense of a collectivity or of a common vision for Manitoba. We are all connected. We do have obligations and duty to strangers whose names we do not even know, but that was not the Tory view. It still is not the Tory view, and it shows in the kind of speeches which they have made in response to the Throne Speech.

Many of my colleagues have spoken about health care and of the progress that the Government has made in health care, in the recreation of the two-year nursing program, in the expansion of other nursing programs, the attempt to meet the deficit that was created in the years of Tory rule, the attempt to begin to rebuild the nursing profession in this province, to bring nurses to the bedside where they are needed.

Mr. Speaker, we hear many questions about health care from the other side, and quite rightly so. That is their responsibility to ask those questions. But I think those questions have to be based on a sense of responsibility, a sense of responsibility for the hundreds of nurses that they fired during their time in government, a sense of understanding that you do not create a nurse overnight. Yes, there are some eight-week training programs. There are some that are a year, but the basic RN nurse, needed so much in many health care facilities, not just in the acute care hospitals, takes approximately two years. We have begun that. It was one of the first things we did in government, and yet they are prepared to call that an absence of vision, an absence of plan. We will not have the nurses a year from now if we had not begun.

So it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, in the context of planning in health care, whether it is in the physician resource plan which was announced in the Throne Speech, whether it is in the expansion of nursing programs, whether it is in the amalgamation of the WRHA, whether it is in the reduction of waiting lists, whether it is in the absence of patients in the hallway, whether it is in the recruitment and retention plan, whether it is in the personal care homes that have been opened, some of which were begun under the previous government but which were delayed—our plan was to open them to ensure that we

could relieve some of the pressure in the hospitals and that has been done—all of this is connected with a wellness program, in particular a most immediate one which was very effective last year, and we hope that it will be as effective this year, and that is the shots for pneumonia and for influenza.

They are all connected. There is a vision of health care, and there is a plan, and the Opposition must take responsibility for their 11 years of government whenever they ask questions in this manner.

It is, Mr. Speaker, an opposition which sees no connection between many of these things, no connection between home care that began in the 1970s and the program that we now have in palliative care, which I think has been referred to nationally across Canada as the best in Canada. It began with those early attempts in the 1970s to bring home care to Manitoba.

But they are, of course, the party of Connie Curran, if I dare use that word. They are the party which tried to privatize part of home care, something which is connected to so many other parts of our health care system. They are the party of the frozen food fiasco. They are the party of SmartHealth. There is a reckoning for all of those, and there is a responsibility that the Opposition must take. So I would like to see when they are asking questions on health care that they begin with notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, the fiasco that we made of frozen food, notwithstanding the millions that we spent on Connie Curran, notwithstanding the number of nurses that we dismissed, notwithstanding—and I could go on.

So let us begin with responsibility, taking responsibility for the 11 years that they had, and then let us see if they can begin to see the vision, the connections and the opportunities that are being opened for Manitobans in the last Throne Speech and this Throne Speech.

The new Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray)—as I say, I wish him well—wants to rise above all of this. He wants to come pure as the driven snow, a clean slate, and it cannot be done. There is a record, and they must take responsibility for it. There is a great theme

throughout the Leader of the Opposition's response to the Throne Speech about accountability. There is a sense of threat to it. There is a kind of menace in the way it is delivered. We will hold you accountable, he said, on behalf of a, b, c and d. Fair enough. That is the job of an Opposition, but it is also the job of an Opposition to take responsibility, both for introducing their own ideas, of which I have heard none so far, as well as to take responsibility for the situation in which any new government would find itself after 11 years of neglect on their own behalf. They must take that responsibility; it is the other side of accountability.

I am prepared to be accountable if they are prepared to take responsibility. It is their job and it is our job in this situation. This is a government which, year by year, introduced fees for water testing, for patients for patient transportation, for seniors' fishing licences, and again the list goes on. They want to portray themselves as a tax-cutting government, and indeed there were some taxes they cut, but at the same time honesty must require them to take account and to be responsible for, to be accountable for the numerous user fees that they introduced, beginning with the 179% increase in student fees, the Northern Patient Transportation fee which we have eliminated, the water testing fee which they added which we have now again reintroduced support for Manitobans, the cuts that they made to the Foster Parents' Association and to the foster fee rates. They must be accountable and responsible for those changes. Yet I see none of that.

They must, of course, be accountable and responsible for the sale of the Manitoba Telephone System, something which many Manitobans spoke to them about. They had no excuse, I suppose, to say that they did not know where the people were on this. They were very clearly aware of where they were. The transfer of the Manitoba Telephone System I think symbolizes so much of what the previous government stood for. It was the largest transfer of public wealth into private hands. The Member for Arthur-Virden (Mr. Maguire) wants to talk about that as vision. That was their vision for Manitoba. Take the commons, take the public wealth and transfer it into private hands, over the

objections, over in fact many of the processes of this House. It was, I think, something which everyone will remember who was in this House at the time. It is also something every Manitoban remembers as their MTS rates increase.

It is no wonder that they do not want to talk about the plan in the Throne Speech for the equalization of hydro rates. I must admit I did not hear all of the speeches that were given. I have read many of them but not all of them. I did not hear anybody talk about the equalization of hydro rates. I particularly did not see it in the response of the Leader of the Opposition. It was not there. Mr. Speaker, it was not there in their press releases either. Did not talk either about the plans for Aboriginal unemployment or employment opportunities through a public corporation. Did not talk about the indications in the Throne Speech about the opportunities that Hydro has and plans to have for retrofit.

* (16:30)

What was it they did not like about it? Was it the jobs? I do not think so. Was it the public investment in Hydro? I actually do not think it is that either. I think what it is, it is about equality and it is about the public sector, and they do not see the connection between the two. They do not see that having public sector agencies such as the Manitoba Telephone System, such as a Hydro, enables the kind of equality for Manitoba which is a vision that has been there for many generations. It is one of the reasons I think, dare I say it, that they lost the election is that they do not see that as a vision. In fact, what they see is the very opposite: take it, transfer it into private hands, this wholesale, over-the-heads-of-the-people transfer of public wealth into private hands.

I have thought a great deal about the attitude of the Progressive Conservative Party, as I assume it is today, and they seem to have two objections to public agencies, and I think we may have opportunities to talk about that at a later time. But it seems to me that Hydro, just as Manitoba Telephone System does, just as MPI does, belongs to all of us. It conveys no privilege or elite status. It is ours. We built it, we paid for it, we manage it, and it delivers in most cases a kind of equality. There must be something

fundamental about the kind of equality that it delivers that is so offensive to the Tory party. No mention in the response to the Throne Speech of equalization of hydro rates.

Mr. Speaker, we talked about this during the election. We committed to it in our second Throne Speech. We lay out the direction as we move toward that. It was a commitment, it was predictable, and we are now making those plans for those changes, and yet no mention of that in the response to the Throne Speech. The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray) talked about the Berlin Wall, talked about the teachers' union, one of the usual slights of this Government. They cannot stand MTS for some reason, and they make no bones about it.

An Honourable Member: They cannot stand either MTS.

Ms. Friesen: That is right, either MTS. In this case, I am referring to the Manitoba Teachers' Society. The Leader of the Opposition seemed to take the opportunity of his first response to the Throne Speech to a gratuitous slight. It seemed to me quite unnecessary. It was based purely upon—well, I will not say that. It certainly took me by surprise but seemed very typical of the kinds of comments that we have often seen.

Mr. Conrad Santos, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it seems to me that much of the response to the Throne Speech is about, well, it is about two things, I think, but one of the things that I think the Opposition is drawing upon is a sense of injury about the last election. I mean, I just listened to the Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan). A great deal of his speech dealt with the election, the fact that they had lost it, lost it by a thousand votes I think was what he said, in so many ridings. Well, you know, it is a long time since the election. One would have thought, and I really would not want to bring this up except it is a response in so many areas of the Opposition's speeches, and it certainly is one I think of the golden thread or the binding gel or whatever you want to call it, of the response from the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Murray), hard to ignore, I think,

in my response to the speeches that have been made on the other side of the House.

I have a young friend who lives in Vancouver, and one of her sayings I always enjoy—I have used it many times—she said it rains in Vancouver; get over it. Governments change. The electors have spoken, and here we are, 14, 15 months later and this is really what galls them. This is really what I think is a tad—*[interjection]* No, it is not that. *[interjection]* It is. It is indicative of certain mental attitudes and a sense that they really have not yet taken to their job of being a responsible Opposition.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, governments do change. The electorate makes its mind up in different ways, and I think that it is time for the Opposition to, in fact, begin to change some of its language. I notice in the Leader of the Opposition's throne speech, too, that there is an attempt to use the language of the election, not the language of the Tory election pamphlets but the language of other parties. He talks, for example, of bringing hope to young people. He talks about community and society and yet to me, I must say, it does not ring true. This is a government which had 11 years to do it and instead, I think they abandoned many parts of our society. I have mentioned already the cuts to the ACCESS program, the parent-child centres, something which they did almost immediately upon taking government, the Student Social Allowances, et cetera, all in the name of a radical ideology of Reagan and Thatcher and Filmon, and they did, I believe, cut off hope for young people.

* (16:40)

So I think, although the Opposition may want to pepper their speeches with hope for young people, with community, with family, with collective common goals, the record of 11 years of the Filmon government cannot be erased. They may want to speak of what they point to with pride, and I am sure they do have elements of that government which they will want to point to with pride, but they cannot at the same time erase the memory, erase the impact, and I would say particularly on many of my constituents. They cannot erase the social

deficit that they created in many parts of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition's speech does not seem to have grasped what the Throne Speech was about, what really was the purpose of his response? When I say his response, I think they kept to a single message, so it is a collective response as well. In part it was, I think, to lament the election. I think that is why they keep talking about "plan." It is to remind us of, is it not, of that 50-50 plan that they came out with halfway through the election, the one that people seem to have rejected across the province. I think it is, in part, to lament that but, secondly, it is also about to assert the divine right of the Tory party to rule. You find that in so many areas of the speeches that they made. *[interjection]*

The Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) seems to think we were surprised by victory. That is a very interesting assumption.

An Honourable Member: They were surprised.

Ms. Friesen: Mr. Deputy Speaker, my colleagues are saying, it was they who were surprised, and I think that is true. The Leader of the Opposition's speech talks about the detour that Manitobans took. It was just a little detour, a little detour on what was right and proper, which is the continuing power of the Tory party. It was not a rejection of a different vision. It was not a different political choice that Manitobans made. It was not that electors had taken a different political path that the Opposition now accepts and moves on. No. It is a detour, a mistake. The Opposition was clearly surprised. It should not have happened, and soon all will be right with the world, the deity will be in his heaven, and the Tory party will return to power, where they truly belong. That is the assumption. It is an incredibly arrogant assumption. The more often that the Opposition reiterates, in whatever language or whatever form they want to choose, the more difficult it will be for Manitobans to accept them. So I give them that advice.

There is a second theme that I noticed in the response to the Throne Speech which I want to talk about for a minute, and I think it is connected with that divine right to rule. There

was a sense of an attempt, I think, in the Leader of the Opposition's speech to align the history of the Tory party with the history of Manitoba. He had to go back to John Norquay to do it, and it was a funny little phrase about Norquay. What did the response to the Throne Speech say about John Norquay? I think the researcher thought, well, this was a long time ago so he must have been an explorer. So I think he is argued as an explorer. Do you know what the real truth about John Norquay is? I think he was apprenticed as a tailor. He was a farmer. He was a politician.

An Honourable Member: Trapper.

Ms. Friesen: No, not a trapper. He worked for the Hudson's Bay Company, but he was a clerk. Do you know what else he was? [*interjection*] Maybe hunting, maybe not trapping.

An Honourable Member: What else was he?

Ms. Friesen: Oh, I am glad you reminded me. He was a teacher. If John Norquay was alive, he would have been a member of the Manitoba Teachers' Society. That is the real truth about John Norquay. I do not think they know that. Anyway, what they tried to do was to align the Tory Party with the history of Manitoba in an attempt, I think, to argue that this was basically the only legitimate option for Manitobans. It seemed to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is a party with three heads, and what it is trying to do—the only reason I could see for so much time—usually they only have a line on quilting bees. This time, there were a couple of pages on history. So what they are trying to do is to bind together a party that has three heads, trying to remind themselves that they are Progressive Conservatives, that they do have the divine right to rule and that in fact their history is consistent and is part of the history of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have heard much about the real rulers, we have heard much about the Progressive Conservative Party, but I want to remind them that they must take responsibility for their 11 years of government, and that they must acknowledge that in this Throne Speech—as there was in the election which they so like to talk about—that there is a government which has cut taxes, a government which has balanced its budget, a government which has begun to meet

some of the priorities to which we committed during the last election. There is commitment, there is consistency, there is a plan and there is a vision, and it was supported by Manitobans.

Mr. Harry Enns (Lakeside): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly count it a privilege to have the opportunity in engaging in my 132nd Throne Speech debate in this Chamber. I want to do the traditional thing by, through your office, extending to you and the Speaker, all the table officers, our pages who serve our Assembly all the very best and an expression of appreciation for the service that they render to making democracy work in this Chamber. I certainly have never lost sight of that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will acknowledge right at the beginning that I am fading on into history, and old traditions are moving on. There is a long-held parliamentary tradition that it is against the rules to read from notes while you are addressing this Chamber other than if you are making a formal ministerial statement. I know that is passé now, but I just remembered fondly in making the very first speech in this Chamber from the seat right beside the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale) when the venerable and honourable former Premier of this province, D. L. Campbell, rose from his chair on a point of order, because it was my maiden speech in this Chamber and I was referring and reading from notes which in his mind and at that time was also something that you simply did not do in this Chamber.

It has always put me at a handicap because I still hold to that view, and subsequently, as a result, my speeches when I read them back in Hansard sound terrible and disjointed as compared to when you read into the record those carefully crafted speeches by researchers and helpers and speech writers and spin doctors. They do read much better and for posterity would make a person look more accomplished in this Chamber.

One of the other things that it, of course, does is we all come, particularly on speeches like debates on the Throne Speech, with a preconceived idea of what you want to contribute and what you want to speak. I make the error and the mistake, although I do not

consider it, of actually listening to members as they speak in this House. As a result, even those thoughts that I came prepared with to speak about, I am detoured and led astray by the last speaker I happen to hear, who happens to be the Deputy Premier of this province, the honourable member from Wolseley.

I simply want to say that I listened to her and she makes a valuable contribution. She particularly strikes a note with me when she speaks about educational matters, which I know are high in her priorities, but I want to put on the record the Conservative Party of Manitoba needs no lecture on education matters in this province, absolutely none. I want to tell her that I was a teacher among a previous government, a government that saw Grade 11, Grade 12ers with six weeks education becoming teachers, and we had 500 or 600 of them in this province. They were called permit teachers.

It was the Conservative Party, under Duff Roblin, that brought education into the 20th century in this province. It was the Conservative Party that abolished with the stroke of a pen 1460 school divisions to put into place the school divisions that are now in place. It was the Conservative Party that created the University of Winnipeg. It was the Conservative Party that created the University of Brandon. It was the Conservative Party that created the community colleges that we are all very proud of. It was the Conservative Party that brought teaching education to the professionalism that it now enjoys. I am very proud of that. We no longer expose our youngsters to hiring teachers, 17 or 18-year-olds with six-week summer school courses and present them as teachers, as we did in years gone by. It was the Conservative Party that did all this.

What the honourable Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen) blindly ignores in her comments—she talked a lot about us not being able to tie-in consequences, actions, plans—what she blindly ignores, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that the best of intentions, the best of plans come to naught unless the country is economically healthy, the province is economically healthy.

By the time when the Filmon government took over, we had to accept the responsibility of

putting our fiscal house in order. That was not just the Filmon government, it was administrations throughout this land. She disparages former Prime Minister Thatcher. Prime Minister Thatcher saved that great and historic country from becoming a third world country, and Tony Blair is the first one to acknowledge. Prime Minister Blair has not reversed a single major policy that Madam Thatcher brought into being. Madam Thatcher cured England of what was commonly known throughout the international business community as the English disease, inefficiency in business fraught with labour strife, fraught with all the difficulties that consecutive labour governments have brought to that island.

So I have to acknowledge that what the Deputy Premier (Ms. Friesen) is talking about is that she has and they all have that privilege of 11 years of hard work that I was privileged to be part of that was the vision and the focus of Premier Filmon that put our province back into some reasonably good economic health physically so that we can do some of the things that we are talking about.

* (16:50)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what do we see in this Throne Speech? The Member for Carman (Mr. Rocan) was absolutely right when he talked about no vision. What we see instead is a callous payoff to special interest groups.

An Honourable Member: Which ones?

Mr. Enns: That is the only way you can describe it. Well, organized labour to begin with.

An Honourable Member: Chamber of Commerce, are they a special interest group?

Mr. Enns: No, no. In all these issues we see no vision. We see no vision—I see the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). We are approaching the new millennium, the year 2000. Has she, for instance, once, is there any mention, acknowledgement that Manitoba faces, as I had to acknowledge, following 1995 and the disappearance of the Crow just where we are going to put and where we are going to position Manitoba agriculture? There are nostalgic

references back to yesteryear, there is every effort made, no real enthusiasm for cranking up those opportunities, the diversification that we require.

I will applaud the honourable member and this Government for the announcement a few days ago in Portage la Prairie. If the honourable minister wants to be fair and honest she will also recognize that in fact late in August, just prior to the call of the election, these same officials from Simplot were in my office, in the Minister of Agriculture's office, room 165, conferring with her senior officials about the probabilities and possibilities of expanding potato processing in Manitoba. I am not saying look, let us not play that game. I applaud the honourable minister. I applaud this Government for doing that. That is great, but alongside of that comes the need for considerable expansion of irrigable acres in Manitoba.

We often talk about Alberta and its economic success. We only point out to the fact that they have more oil and they have more gas than we have. Let me tell you something else. Let me tell my urban friends something else. Alberta, in that southern portion of their province, which otherwise would be near to an arid desert, they have a million acres of irrigated land. That represents 4 percent of their total agricultural acreage. That 4 percent produces over 27 percent of the very significant total agricultural contribution to that province.

Now, we have to do something about it. Well, the honourable Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) says: What are we going to do about that? I will be the first one to acknowledge, look, we all come to this Chamber. We have private hopes or dreams or ambitions. Some, if we are lucky, we see succeeding and actually helping to formulate into policy, but we certainly also all have to acknowledge that we have failures. I want to put on the public record a disappointment, a failure, if you like, that I have not been able, despite the fact that I have served at least for 15 years and 2 administrations, to convince my colleagues about the tremendous benefits that would accrue if we provided a major water impoundment area in south-central Manitoba, namely on the Assiniboine River.

I want to talk to the Minister of Industry (Ms. Mihychuk) and to the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk). I will tell you that I will do my very best to generate the kind of support from the caucus that I am part of if it is this Government's will and intent to provide those additional irrigable acres that can only come from a major development. I am suggesting it could be on the Assiniboine River at or near the town of Holland. The Minister has some very good plans for it, and we had plans for it. That is what I call having a vision for it.

This Government does not really have any vision for industry and job creation in this province. They just roll along. I can remember hearing the catcalls and all the nonsense that came from the other side about when we recognized that with the growing technology that there was a real opportunity in Manitoba for call centres. They all laughed at that. Those were McJobs. They were not the kind of jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we should be providing for Manitobans, not recognizing that Manitoba was uniquely centrally located. Language-wise we had a diverse workforce, we had a bilingual workforce, and we are employing now, I do not know what the figures are—where is the Minister of Industry (Ms. Mihychuk)? But I think it is upwards to 7000 or 8000 or 9000 or 10 000 people that have chosen Manitoba for these jobs. I understand certainly in the last fourteen months there have been a few additions. This Premier and these ministers have been very happy cutting ribbons at those occasions where these McJobs were being offered. But there was a strategy on the part of the former government. What we see from this Government is a bowing to special interest groups, more restrictive labour legislation. There simply is not an idea from them of where you want to be.

I say they have no vision despite the honourable Deputy Premier's (Ms. Friesen) comments. They have no vision, they have no plan for education other than throwing more money at it, which in itself is admirable, I suppose. You may fault us for our actions, but we were concerned about inputs and outputs. We were concerned about children learning something in their schools. We were concerned about the standards in their schools, so we called for a provision of testing. The Teachers' Society,

their special interest group and the lobby group that supports them were against it so automatically they are out. That is what I call a callous payoff and payback to those who electorally supported them.

In the field of transportation, look, I have argued. I have been a former Minister of Highways and Transportation on two occasions. In my opinion, we do not set aside enough resources to maintain that important infrastructure, particularly after 1995 when again, as a result of the loss of the Crow, we are going to move much more grain in heavier trucks and bigger loads over longer distances. The only plan or vision the Government has: more roads for the North. That is fine, but is that not a payoff to a special interest group? Where is the economy being generated but throughout southern Manitoba? It is a payoff.

On the subject matter that takes up so much time in this Chamber, the important issue of health. Again, whatever you want to say, remember that all things had to kind of be put on hold to get our fiscal house in order. I can remember—members opposite know, I, having some heritage in that part of the country—the Soviet Union had the best public health care system in the world under Communism except, of course, that when you looked into it there was no health care system. If you get sick in a Russian hospital today, if you do not have your children, your mom and dad, coming and bringing you food, you do not get fed.

An Honourable Member: Under capitalism.

Mr. Enns: No, that is the system that operated forever in Russia. If you do not have your children or your mom and dad coming, you do not get your hospital bed sheets changed. But on paper, on record, they had a marvellous health care system. Why was it in shambles? Why is Russia today a basket case economically speaking? Because the system could not provide, could not generate the necessary wealth that is required if we are going to have modern hospital systems, modern health care systems, modern educational systems.

* (17:00)

So the Government that I was part of, we introduced some fundamental changes. I am not saying that they are entirely right, but instead of having hundreds of local regional health districts, we brought in the regional health districts. I am sure there are still some problems with them, but I note this Government is in no hurry to change it. Absolutely none. We brought the nine major hospitals in the city of Winnipeg under one authority, the Winnipeg Health Authority. This Government is not hurrying to change it. In fact, that is a compliment to me and to the former government and to all of us that served. We were at least heading in the right direction in bringing about a better use, a rationalization of the billions of dollars that we spend on health. That is a direction that we had to take.

I had some pleasure. I attended our local health district's third or fourth annual meeting in Stonewall. The now-Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) was the guest speaker. It was kind of comforting for me to sit back and hear him acknowledge that the regional health system that is now operating still has actually, as I readily acknowledge, some problems but certainly no suggestion of turning back the clock, none at all.

In fact, the only way, Mr. Deputy Speaker and colleagues, that we can come to a resolution of trying to match our available resources to the demands on the health care system is if we get smarter about how we use those health care dollars. While it is a regrettable fact that we were not able to bring the smart card into fruition, do not fault us for trying. We had a vision. We were going to make it so it was in the long run, with this computerized age, more possible to—if I am going to an office today to get a certain number of tests, and I decide because I have freedom of choice that tomorrow I will go to another doctor for another number of tests, that there could be a correlation there and that these tests need not all be repeated at great public expense. That was the vision behind that, and if we did not succeed, I challenge this Government to succeed because that is the direction we have to go. That is the direction we have to go.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to tell this Government that it is now 14 months that they are government, and it was fair enough in the

last session to constantly refer to the previous administration, constantly refer to what was not done or what was done, but that is wearing thin. They now have been Government for 14 months. When next we meet, it will be closer to a year and a half, well into their mandate, and if there are things that they will still like to shout at us about and talk about how terrible it was, the decisions that we made, they have had a better part of a year and a half to correct that.

Let me talk about the one correction that they want to make. We heard it again from the Deputy Premier. If the selling of MTS was such a terrible thing for the province of Manitoba, buy it back. Change it. You cannot have it both ways. But that is utter nonsense and you know it, because the monopoly is not there anymore. There will be no copper wire. It will all be satellites. It will be, Lord knows, Motorola, British, but it will be hand-held Dick Tracy little operators that will have the communication systems.

Now, do you want to spend billions of dollars? Do you want to fight with that? No. You are just playing cheap, very, very cheap politics with it. You are playing very cheap politics. It is the same way as the Minister of Agriculture (Ms. Wowchuk) likes to refer to bringing back the Crow. Well, bring back the Crow. *[interjection]* I did not do anything about that. It was the Liberal government, Mr. Goodale, that did that. You want to bring back the single-desk selling of Manitoba Pork. If you think it resonates well with your audience, you preach that, but that is not responsible government. That is not responsible government.

Do you want to take \$400 million or \$500 million away from the Minister of Family Services (Mr. Sale)? No. *[interjection]* I will tell you exactly what they are doing, except they are not as gracious. They will do exactly what Tony Blair did, the British Prime Minister, accept all those basic and fundamental reforms that were brought in by Margaret Thatcher. He at least has acknowledged, publicly acknowledged, that they were good; they were right and good for the country. That is why he remains a popular prime minister.

This Government, this group of public administrators do not have that grace, and they

will pay for it because the people of Manitoba will see through it in due course, and the people of Manitoba will make this a one-term government.

Hon. MaryAnn Mihychuk (Minister of Industry, Trade and Mines): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is a real pleasure for me to rise today and have an opportunity to put a few comments on the record on the Throne Speech. Before I do that, I do wish to welcome the new members who have come to the House. I wish them well. To the new interns and our pages, I wish them a good experience as part of our team and hope that they have a good season. *[interjection]* Well, perhaps the new members will last longer than a season. I was speaking of the pages. But the new leader has been showing his stuff, and I know that it has been tough, as we all remember as new members coming in. It is a learning experience, and I am sure he will get better with a bit more practice.

I do want to talk somewhat at length about the economy because that is something that we are very proud of and something that I think all members of the House can take some ownership in. It is built on a long effort by Manitobans, including the members on the other side of the House, but clearly a continued process by our Government. I will be talking about some of the indicators that show that the trend is projected to continue.

Now, just before I get into that, I would like to talk a little bit about my own riding of Minto which is traditionally and better known as the west end. We have seen considerable developments in our area over the past probably about six years. I am very pleased to recognize this Government's efforts to secure additional green space for Greenway School, although it is now in my honourable colleague's riding of Wolseley. It was a project that I felt very passionate about, lobbied for, and I am very pleased to say that we were able to increase the amount of parkland in an area that has intense development and an area that has a very short supply of green space. So I do want to recognize our Government's commitment to older neighbourhoods in Winnipeg.

* (17:10)

In addition, I would like to recognize the good work of the Orioles Literacy Program, a program that I initiated a few years ago, and now we are actually looking at expanding it to include a program which will enhance literacy programs for children. The program is designed to provide books to families with preschoolers from the age of zero to four or five when they enter school, so that families can start a library in their own homes. It encourages reading, book ownership and the importance of reading. So I am very much looking forward to that program.

In addition, I would like to recognize the retail development that has occurred along the Polo Park area and the work that has been done through that process on Omand's Creek. We had a close call with Home Depot, but with a petition that I initiated in '95 and then the strong support from the Friends of Omand's Creek we have been able to turn what could have been a disaster into a greening of that corridor. I am very pleased to say that the private sector has come onside, as well as city government, and the provincial government, I know, are regularly helping projects in that area.

Specifically for Omand's Creek, I want to recognize our Government's commitment thereto as we were able to turn over a parcel of land that was owned by the Province to the creek development. It was formerly a parking lot, so that will enhance that area. I want to recognize that it was this Government that continued the work and actually turned it over to the creek.

In addition, I would like to recognize the people who are working on Isaac Brock Rocks, a program I initiated which will allow young people to develop their entertainment, their musical ability in creating rock groups. We have provided an amp system, the equipment, the wiring, the musical instruments, and they are able to use a facility at Isaac Brock Community Club to practise and then, we hope, stage a number of teen dances and hopefully build on the legacy that is well developed here in Manitoba of our musical talents.

In addition, we have just created the West End Development Corporation. It was a project that I initiated this past fall and have to recognize the members of that committee that

cover the spectrum of non-profit, private. The business groups in the west end have all come together to work to develop and enhance the west end. I wish them all the best. I am very pleased to be a member of that committee.

In addition, we have seen in the riding house values go up, sales of homes moving a lot quicker than in the past. Our schools are at maximum capacity with waiting lists. So we are seeing a renewal of the older parts of this city. I think that is a sign of optimism and people having a glimmer of hope finally. During the '90s, we saw house prices drop dramatically and people moving out. It was quite a bleak time. I think now we can really see some positive enhancements in the community. Hope has come back to the people.

So I know that the optimism is real and I also know that, for instance, the Calvary Temple, which is a personal care home, was a facility that was first announced in 1994 by the previous government, one of those projects announced and announced and announced but there was never any follow-through. I am proud to say that we actually opened the doors of that facility this year, the year 2000. The project has been completed and done. It is a very worthwhile project, where the seniors in our community can stay where they would like to remain, and that is in their own home community.

Now I would like to just touch on the Throne Speech and how I am very proud of it. I think it shows a strong commitment to an economic plan that is going to see prosperity, wealth and hope. It is based on what I think is recognized as the No. 1 driver, and that is a commitment to education. That is something that the previous government never got. They never figured out the way to drive the economy effectively was to invest in young people and invest in education, invest in R&D. Now we are going to make slow and steady improvements, because the challenges are enormous. I am very proud to be part of a government that recognizes that. We have seen over and over again best practices of other jurisdictions that have turned around their economy. Their major platform is the investment in education. We are doing it, and

I think that we are starting to see some very positive results.

We have also made a commitment to restore public health care in all regions of our province. I know from the people in my riding that they are very aware of the positive enhancements in our health care system and are supportive and understand that we are held back by critical shortage, staffing shortages in the health care system.

Safer communities, we have initiated a number of initiatives in this sector and have seen crime rates drop dramatically. I am very pleased to recognize the good work there.

Reduce taxes, of course, is important, and maintaining a balanced budget, as we know it is important to remain competitive. I am proud of the record in that component.

Also, our fifth commitment during the election was to keep Manitoba Hydro. The Opposition is critical of us because we did not sell Manitoba Hydro. In fact, we are using it to drive our economy. I think, of particular note, given the Opposition's focus on what was not mentioned, as if this is somehow an indication of a lack of commitment, I would say let us review what the Tory's position was on Manitoba Hydro, which was no position. No mention of Manitoba Hydro was made during the provincial election and why was that? Obviously their agenda was one of privatization, of selling off Crown corporations, a divesting of public assets. So they would not talk about something that was obviously very sensitive and important to Manitobans.

It is noteworthy that it was not discussed in the election. Now they sit on the other side. I cannot tell which way they are going, flip-flop, flip-flop. They want to spend more. They want to cut more. On Manitoba Hydro, it will be a very interesting exercise to see if this Alliance-Conservative amalgamation is going to vote to keep Manitoba Hydro or not. The test will be put before them, and I hope to see some positive message for Manitoba Hydro and their position on that issue.

* (17:20)

It is a challenge on the other side because we know from the past federal election that there is a serious split in the Opposition. As they try to deal with the internal fighting and bickering, members of their own team are attending fundraisers for Stockwell Day, the leader of the Alliance party. I know that the member from Minnedosa and the member from Ste. Rose feel a strong alliance to the Alliance party, and yet they sit here and claim to be a unified group. I think that the fact is that, in fact, you see an Opposition that is clearly split.

Mr. Speaker in the Chair

It is also very interesting when you look at the federal PC candidate and former provincial PC caucus member, David Newman. What did David Newman have to say about the Canadian Alliance party? This is a voice from a very recognized and notable member of the previous government and he called the Canadian Alliance party the loony right. This is from a person who is very reserved in his words, the loony right. So, we have got an Opposition created of a mixture of the loony right and the rest, which are perhaps not so right or loony. I am not sure.

We do know that the member from Fort Garry, who is enjoying heckling right now, likes to point out that heckling is inappropriate during a member's Throne Speech, but this is part of the experience, and I actually do not mind. It is part of the ambience of the mode of the Chamber. The member from Fort Garry, I would like to know where she sits. Does she sit with her leader? I believe she was the campaign manager of Stockwell Day, or is she now on the Progressive Conservative team? It is hard to tell where the Opposition sits on any issue or any political agenda, because they are obviously a caucus that has much healing to do.

Now I want to talk a little bit about our economy. It is very interesting, as I have heard a number of speeches from the other side that suggest that Manitoba is losing people. The numbers show that that is clearly inaccurate, that, in fact, we have now seen two years in a row where we have had net immigration, net migration into the province of Manitoba. Does that happen overnight? No, but it shows a strong

commitment to Manitoba. This is the strongest net migration to the province since 1985, and the members across the way refuse to acknowledge it, look at doom and gloom, and are suggesting that Manitobans are fleeing. The opposite is true. Manitobans are coming home, and I am proud to say that we will be bringing in more Manitobans in the Welcome Home program as well as a strong immigration policy which the other side refused to implement and one that we are going to see is strongly supported by the business community.

Now what does the business community have to say about our Throne Speech? Well, let me just recite for members if they perhaps forgot. Let me see. This is from a Mr. Graham Starmer of the Manitoba Chamber of Commerce, a person who is known to be actually quite critical I think of the New Democrats, and what does Mr. Starmer have to say: Overall, we are very positive about the Throne Speech. Oh, that is a very good, I think, a very sound statement, a person that is representing a large sector of the business community.

Now what does Dave Angus of the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce have to say about the Throne Speech: We do like the fact that the Government is talking about the year 2020. We need to have a long-term vision. Well, is that not a nice statement. You know, Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce then had the opportunity to have our Premier address their audience, a sold-out event, standing room only, and they were very, very positive on the message that our Government is presenting them.

What did Jim Carr have to say about the Throne Speech? He was pleased with the plans to address, and I would like to put in a comment, finally address Manitoba's skill shortages through increased immigration, something that that government, the previous government refused to look at. He also gave a thumbs up to a training strategy that gives special attention to Aboriginal youth. Those are good comments from Mr. Jim Carr.

Over and over and over again, which must drive the Opposition absolutely wild, the business community is buying in. We finally have a government that is able to bring all

members of our society together to look at a strong economic strategy. It is working, and the business community is recognizing it.

Now I would like to note that on November 1, 2000, the city's economic mix is No. 1. You know, diversification is a great thing but it is also important to look at strengths. October 31, in the business section: Manitoba's economy saw the fastest growth in the region in 1999, StatsCan reports. Now is that a biased report? I think not. I would like to suggest that the members opposite have a look at the good-news stories. I know it is hard for them to acknowledge, but in fact the sun is shining on Manitoba. You know, the clouds have lifted. People have hope.

Now: Soaring aerospace sector and a rapidly expanding hog industry help propel the Manitoba economy to the highest growth rate in western Canada last year.

You know, it is often our own doom and gloom. Let us just stop that negativity. Look at the facts. The facts indicate that we have strong growth. We have exceeded expectations over and over again of the economic forecasters and we will do that again.

Now, let us have a look at the December 2, 2000 article: "The Plan: full speed ahead" A new survey revealed high expectations for sales, profits and expansions. Perhaps I should give copies. Now, if they can find a doom-and-gloom angle to any story, they are going to dig in there and find it, but the numbers would indicate that the picture is bright and positive. Get outside with the good news.

"Winnipeg businesses expect the economic good times to continue for at least one more year," That is from the Chamber of Commerce, not exactly a biased group of individuals. They show optimism.

Now, let me see. Chamber President, Dave Angus said he was not surprised by the high level of optimism among these year's respondents. Obviously, this is something that business is talking about. Maybe the members opposite should go and talk to business. We have been out there working with business, and we

see a number of projects that are creating jobs, wealth and hope.

In particular, I would like to talk a little bit about the wonderful announcement that we just made in the city of Portage La Prairie. This is a project that is going to lay the foundation to move Manitoba's agricultural community into a new generation. We did not see that planning and vision by members opposite. They refused to deal with the situation of needed irrigation and expansion in the area of the Assiniboine basin. Well, we are ready to tackle those tough issues. We are ready to handle those tough decisions and move Manitoba forward.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, this is an important time that we have right now before us. It is an opportunity to debate the Throne Speech. This member has gone on now for 30 minutes, and her speech sounds like the Throne Speech, empty, just like these pages.

I would only hope that you would ask her to come back and be a little bit relevant towards the empty pages that we received within her Throne Speech.

An Honourable Member: On the same point of order.

Mr. Speaker: It will have to be very brief. The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order, very briefly.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): The Opposition House Leader is wrong. We are debating the ill-advised motion, the amendment to the Speech from the Throne. That is an empty piece of paper. The Throne Speech is full of vision, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised, there was not a point of order.

* * *

* (17:30)

Mr. Speaker: 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 Official Opposition (Mr. Murray); 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?

Some Honourable Members: Yes.

Mr. Speaker: And the proposed motion

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

BUT this House regrets

(a) the government's inability to fulfill the promises outlined in its Throne Speech of November 25, 1999, including the following failures: not ending hallway medicine; not addressing the province-wide shortage of health professionals; not strengthening the home care system; not making math and reading skill assessments available to parents at the beginning of the Grade 3 year; not creating positive alternatives for youth who may be at risk of committing crimes; not ensuring a viable future for the family farm in Manitoba; and, not forging a new strategy for economic development; and

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

(b) the government's failure to address the challenges facing all Manitobans and their health care system; and

(c) the government's failure to guarantee to Manitobans that it will not raid Crown corporation surpluses, as was attempted with Manitoba Public Insurance; and

(d) the government's failure to release long-term strategies for economic growth which include meaningful tax reductions for families and business, thereby making Manitoba less able to compete in the national and global economy; and

(e) the government's failure to provide any meaningful measures to maintain economic growth and stimulate job creation, thereby

making Manitoba a less attractive place in which to live, work, invest and raise families; and

(f) the government's failure to address Manitoba's participation in the national infrastructure program and how these projects will take shape around the province; and

(g) the government's failure to set forth a plan with clearly defined timelines to address flood protection needs for the Red River Valley and beyond; and

(h) the government's failure to address the issue of providing adequate and timely compensation to Manitobans affected by the flooding and excess soil moisture conditions in the spring of 1999 in southwestern Manitoba and the fall of 2000 in southeastern Manitoba; and

(i) the government's failure to arrive at a national farm safety net program that adequately addresses the needs of the province's farmers; and

(j) the government's failure to address the issues raised by its complete mismanagement of the expansion of gaming through the creation of five First Nations casinos; and

(k) the government's failure to provide a vision and a plan for the future of this province.

AND has thereby lost the trust and confidence of the people of Manitoba and this House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some Honourable Members: No.

Voice Vote

Mr. Speaker: 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.

Formal Vote

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

Mr. Speaker: Call in the members. A recorded vote has been requested.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Murray). 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? Dispense.

Division

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

Yeas

Cummings, Dacquay, Derkach, Driedger, Enns, Faurschou, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, Loewen, Maguire, Murray, Penner (Emerson), Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Praznik, Rocan, Schuler, Smith (Fort Garry), Stefanson, Tweed.

Nays

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

Madam Clerk (Patricia Chaychuk): Yeas 21, Nays 30.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): Call it six o'clock, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock? *[Agreed]*

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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 14, 2000

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