



Third Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
CUMMINGS, Glen, Hon.	Ste. Rose	P.C.
DACQUAY, Louise, Hon.	Seine River	P.C.
DERKACH, Leonard, Hon.	Roblin-Russell	P.C.
DEWAR, Gregory	Selkirk	N.D.P.
DOER, Gary	Concordia	N.D.P.
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DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
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EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FILMON, Gary, Hon.	Tuxedo	P.C.
FINDLAY, Glen, Hon.	Springfield	P.C.
FRIESEN, Jean	Wolseley	N.D.P.
GAUDRY, Neil	St. Boniface	Lib.
GILLESHAMMER, Harold, Hon.	Minnedosa	P.C.
HELWER, Edward	Gimli	P.C.
HICKES, George	Point Douglas	N.D.P.
JENNISSEN, Gerard	Flin Flon	N.D.P.
KOWALSKI, Gary	The Maples	Lib.
LAMOUREUX, Kevin	Inkster	Lib.
LATHLIN, Oscar	The Pas	N.D.P.
LAURENDEAU, Marcel	St. Norbert	P.C.
MACKINTOSH, Gord	St. Johns	N.D.P.
MALOWAY, Jim	Elmwood	N.D.P.
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NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PALLISTER, Brian	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
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PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
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TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 12, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mobile Screening Unit for Mammograms

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Noelle Boughton, Brian Stone, Callie Mashtoler and others requesting the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba request the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to consider immediately establishing a mobile screening unit for mammograms to help women across the province detect breast cancer at the earliest possible opportunity.

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a report today under The Trade Practices Inquiry Act dated and effective March 11, 1997. I would like to table that report.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Personal Care Homes
Funding Formula**

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, yesterday I asked the Premier (Mr. Filmon) a number of questions about the increased funding to profit personal care homes in the last annual reports of the Department of Health, which of course was the '95-96 year over the '94-95 year. The minister undertook to look at those numbers and report back to the Legislature.

In fact, he did report back to the media and to the public, and he stated that the reason why the increases for private, profit homes went up as opposed to nonprofit homes was in fact that there was, quote, an increase in beds.

Could the Premier please advise this House why his minister would say there was an increase in beds in the personal care home area when in the 1995-96 year over the 1994-95 fiscal year in the annual reports there was indeed no increase in personal care home beds?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, yesterday in responding to the media I certainly speculated on what could be the difference in those numbers, because I was working off of a very limited amount of information that the Leader of the Opposition provided. When I have had the opportunity to check back in greater details, the member may know we have a mix of facilities in this province, but there are a host of factors dealing with each one, and the member's assertions before this House that somehow there is some special deal being cut are absolutely wrong. The factors that fit into the funding for each particular facility deal with variables such as the recognition of increased levels of care, funding of special needs units, wage—

An Honourable Member: Answer the question, Darren.

Mr. Praznik: Well, the member asked me to answer the questions. I am. Because the member does not like the truth or the facts is no particular excuse not to hear the answer.

As I said, in those calculations are things like the effects of inflation, new and expanded facilities, closed facilities and reduction in interest rates. All of those factors work into those calculations, and the member for Concordia should know that.

* (1335)

An Honourable Member: You are wrong again, eh, Doer?

Mr. Doer: Well, Madam Speaker, perhaps the Premier (Mr. Filmon) would like to answer the questions about the truthfulness of his Minister of Health.

I want to table the Department of Health briefing notes that would have been available to the Minister of

Health, would have been available to the Premier, were available to us, dealing with those annual reports which in fact report and record no increase in personal care home beds, belie the answers of the Minister of Health, and show that the Minister of Health was grasping at straws yesterday but grasping at the wrong straws in terms of the public.

I want to ask the Premier, how can his Minister of Health tell us there was an increase in personal care home beds when the Department of Health's own documents show the opposite? What kind of honesty and truth do we get from this kind of government opposite?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, yesterday in the House the Leader of the Opposition quoted numbers out of an annual report. I indicated to this House that I would go back and check out the factors that go into those numbers, which I have reported back today.

In the hallway, in dealing with the media, I speculated as to what those could be composed of and I indicated to the media, many of whom were there, that I would be checking back and I had to check the dates for which the Leader of the Opposition was quoting. In doing that, the factors are very clear as to what those different rates are, and the only dishonesty we have seen is the member for Concordia trying to stretch something into something it is not.

Point of Order

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable member for Thompson, on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 492 clearly lists "dishonesty" as being unparliamentary, and coming from a minister who just admitted that he went out of this House and speculated on a very serious matter, that is not only something that should be withdrawn but is absolutely unacceptable. The only person in this House who should be now telling the truth is the Minister of Health.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Although the word "dishonest" appears on both lists, I previously have ruled the words "dishonest" and "dishonesty"

unparliamentary on four separate occasions, and I have been advised that the former Speaker also had ruled the words unparliamentary. So I would ask the honourable Minister of Health to withdraw the word "dishonesty."

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I will withdraw that.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable Minister of Health.

* * *

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, yesterday I asked the question about the funding in private, profit homes versus the nonprofit homes here in Manitoba. The Minister of Health said he would go back and review his numbers. He went back to his department and reviewed his numbers and went out in the hallway and speculated on why the increases were greater when he stated that the beds had been increased.

Given the fact that the numbers of beds for the '95-96 fiscal year were available in the Department of Health, they were available to members of the opposition, why would the Minister of Health speculate in the hallway, rather than putting out the numbers that were accurate which would contradict what he told the public and what he told the media? Why would he do that?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, we see again how the Leader of the Opposition will take facts and try to link them in such a way that are not representative of the true situation. When I spoke to the media, I had not yet had a report back from my department. The information—[interjection] The member for Concordia was not in my office, nor did he speak to my staff.

* (1340)

Point of Order

Mr. Doer: A point of order, Madam Speaker. The Premier, just having refused to answer the questions that I posed to him, used the term "dishonest" again in this Chamber which you have just cautioned all of us to be careful in terms of its use.

Further to that, I have asked on three occasions for the Minister of Health to do the honourable thing and

correct the public record on his statement to the media and the public that the bed issue had increased. He knows the facts now. What he should do is the honourable thing, answer my question and state that he was wrong in his statement to the public and apologize to the public for being wrong to them in the hallway with his so-called speculation.

Madam Speaker: The honourable First Minister, on the same point of order.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): On the same point of order, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The Leader of the Opposition distinctly called the Minister of Health a liar from his seat. Now he thinks that is acceptable, but he sets rules for other people that he is not willing to abide by himself. That is what is unacceptable in this House, the kind of hypocritical, two-faced approach that he takes to this. He thinks he can say anything from his seat, but then he can jump up when he feels that somebody else has said something that is unacceptable. That is what we need, one set of rules that the opposition obeys as well as the government.

Mr. Doer: On the same point of order, Madam Speaker. I did say that that is a lie, and I withdraw it. I did not call the minister a liar, but I did say that is a lie; I withdraw it.

But I would like the minister to withdraw the facts that he speculated on yesterday, and I would like the Premier to withdraw his comments and do the honourable thing.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable Leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, on the same point of order. Having heard the member abide by the same set of rules that we all agree we should, I will withdraw the term "dishonest" as well.

Madam Speaker: I thank the honourable First Minister. That then concludes the matter regarding the point of order.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Health, to respond to the question asked.

Mr. Praznik: As I indicated yesterday, I would report back. There are a host of factors, as I have said in this House in answer to the questions, that affect the difference of funding of those beds, and it is clear from the numbers that I have before me. One factor, for example, that works into that that the member seems to ignore is that our proprietary homes carry a higher level proportionately of three and four care than our nonproprietary homes. There are a host of factors. Each one will affect each facility differently, which will give the cumulative total.

If the member would like to come to the Estimates debate on this matter, I would be pleased to get into intricate detail with the member for Concordia for each of the facilities involved.

Personal Care Homes Funding Formula

Mr. Dave Chomiak (Kildonan): Madam Speaker, the difficulty here is that we have major problems in the private personal care homes. We have the private personal care homes getting a doubling of the grants since '92-93. We have them giving over \$50,000 in 1995 to the Conservative Party, and we see that every single private personal care home in Winnipeg received an increase since 1992-93, whereas the public ones, 15 of them, received a decrease.

My question to the minister or the Premier is, why have the private personal care homes been treated better than the public personal care homes? What is the difference, Madam Speaker?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): When you try to stretch facts to create the appearance of truths that are not, you always get into, I think, the wrong kind of debate that the public would expect from us.

The member's information is wrong. In fact, I am pleased to share with this House that the cost of care in our proprietary facilities is actually, on a per-bed day basis when all the factors are taken into account, less than the other facilities.

* (1345)

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, perhaps then the minister can explain why last year when the province provided \$2.6 million in addition to personal care homes—that is '96-97—the private homes got \$1.5 million of that and over a hundred public homes only got \$1.1 million and the 19 privates got \$1.5 million. What is the difference from last year? And can the minister explain that difference?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, the personal care home system in our province, both proprietary and nonproprietary, is an evolving system. There are a host of factors that fit into it each and every year, things that I have mentioned, changes in levels of care, funding for special needs units, wage settlements, inflation, new and expanded facilities, facilities that may be closed, and that is going to affect the funding for each facility. The lines in the budget that the member referred to, I believe, are on totals. We will get into the detail, but for '96-97 our funded proprietary homes at Levels 3 and 4 cost us \$99 a day compared to \$102.30 per day in the nonproprietary. That is less, not more as the member would indicate.

Mr. Chomiak: Madam Speaker, perhaps the minister can try to explain to this House why, in 1992-93 when the Kildonan and River East private nursing homes, both great contributors to the Conservative Party, were opened they received a special increased rate for the per diem to pay off their mortgage of \$12 to \$14, which is greater than had ever been done in Manitoba, allows them to pay off their mortgage, end up owning the home and have a guaranteed clientele from the government.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, as the member may be aware—I would hope they are; I suspect perhaps not and still ask the question—in the funding for nonproprietary homes we do not calculate in that cost the cost of capital, and that is why in fact arrangements are made for capital. If you look at the straight cost of providing the service, as I pointed out before, in the proprietary homes that the member is referring to, the information that I am provided by our financial people says \$99 a day compared to \$102.30.

An Honourable Member: Plus \$14 a day for capital.

Mr. Praznik: Well, Madam Speaker, yes, but in every case, the other homes, the capital is also covered by the Province of Manitoba.

An Honourable Member: It is not apples and oranges.

Mr. Praznik: Well, Madam Speaker, we can debate this in Estimates.

Education System Funding Formula

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, school boards across Manitoba are faced yet again with many disheartening and even unconscionable decisions to cut programs and raise taxes, and every one of those tax increases must be laid at the feet of this government. Minus two, minus 2.6, zero, minus two and zero, cut after cut to public education. I would like to ask the Minister of Education why it is that she continues to ignore the advice of her own Educational Advisory Council, which says the value of provincial support as a proportion of actual total Manitoba pool public school operating costs should not be allowed to decline further.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member had a lengthy preamble which I do believe needs to be addressed in the answer because, if she is saying that the amount of money divisions have to raise depends upon the amount flowed to them by their provincial government, may I with respect point out that this year for example, in Winnipeg No. 1, they are having to raise about \$3 million on their special levy as an increase from last year, and while they were flowing abundant money to school divisions, "they" being the NDP government in power, sufficient supposedly to meet their needs in '85-86 for one example—and I will give them all if she would like—they had to raise \$13 million, an increase on the amount needed to be raised by the special levy of 28.9 percent.

I would table for the House the percentage change in the provincial average special levy. The amount that school divisions had to raise when the NDP were in power, in 1984 they had to have an increase of 10.6 percent; in 1985, 11.6 percent; in 1986, 15.7 percent,

then compared to ours of 3 percent and 5 percent, Madam Speaker. I table that for their edification. Maybe they are more cautious when they say all the money that flows is reflective of what the province provides.

* (1350)

Ms. Friesen: To the same minister: Could that same Minister of Education confirm that the bottom line for Manitobans is that when her government came to power in 1988, the provincial grant to public schools was 15.6 of overall expenditures? Today it is 14 percent and it is going down, and what that means is a long-term deficit for Manitoba children.

Mrs. McIntosh: The member knows that the percentage will reflect the expenditures as well. The member knows that between '85 and '95, which is the last year we have the full stats available, the funding for education went up from the government to the school divisions by some 38.6 percent. Inflation, at the same time, was 39 percent, running roughly parallel through that time. School division expenditures, on the other hand, climbed by 54 percent, 15 percent higher than the rate of inflation. School board spending outstripped inflation by 15 percent. So, naturally, the percentage of the money funded by the province will show as a lower amount.

The fact remains we are currently funding education to \$115 million more this year than the year we took office, and school divisions have been able to hold as a result—you can see by the paper I tabled—their tax increases and their percentage changes on the special levy down for their taxpayers compared to the massive increases they were compelled to impose upon their public when the NDP say they were flowing enough money to them to meet their needs. They were not, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Friesen: Madam Speaker, has the minister, who is now facing resolutions at conventions, deputations and petitions from very, very concerned parents on a daily basis, something I do not think we saw during the NDP years, has she considered the long-term consequences of her double attack on Manitobans, the cuts to public school funding and the long-term deficit for children and her increases to property taxes leading

to serious injustices across the province for those people who are on declining incomes under this government and those people who are on fixed incomes?

Mrs. McIntosh: I do not accept the preamble as I accept very little of the member's preambles in most questions. Sometimes I accept them but not often, and that is usually because they frequently contain incorrect information or insinuations or allegations that do not hit the mark.

Winnipeg No. 1, for example, has an average operating expenditure that is 13.2 percent above the provincial average, so we have those kinds of anomalies for spending. I am not questioning how they are spending their money or why they are spending their money the way they do, I am just stating that as a fact. The member, I think, has to acknowledge that school divisions have been able to contain their tax increases, their special levy changes far more admirably under our governance than they were ever able to when her government was in power. The record is clear, a 28.9 percent difference, increase in the amount having to be raised by special levy the last year they were in full governance. That is a disgraceful record. Ours compares very well by comparison.

Province of Manitoba Revenue Forecast

Mr. Leonard Evans (Brandon East): Madam Speaker, the Urban Affairs minister has announced a \$6.3-million increase in unconditional grants to the City of Winnipeg. As I estimate it, this is a 19 percent increase over last year and comes from a program set up by the Schreyer government back in the 1970s whereby—based on 2.2 points of personal income tax and one point of corporate income tax and indicates that income tax revenues are up considerably.

Would the Minister of Finance confirm that his revenue increase for 1996-97 is much higher than he has been willing to admit so far and that the government's draconian cuts to health and education programs are not justified?

* (1355)

Hon. Eric Stefanson (Minister of Finance): I will admit to part of what the member referred to, and that is that our revenues are up. I am sure he has taken the time to read our Third Quarter Report, which was released several weeks ago, which does show that our revenues are up by in excess of \$100 million primarily because our economy is performing very well here in Manitoba. We have over 20,000 new jobs; we have amongst the highest growth in retail sales, amongst the highest growth in exports, amongst the highest growth in many aspects of our economy. Our revenues are up.

We are the only province in Canada that shares our personal income tax and our corporate income tax with our municipalities, and that is good news for our municipalities because, as announced today, the City of Winnipeg will receive an adjustment of in excess of \$6 million and the rest of the municipalities in Manitoba will receive an adjustment of about \$4.4 million. So all municipalities are sharing in the growth in our economy.

Mr. Leonard Evans: More specifically, will the minister confirm that his revenues could be close to \$200 million greater than forecast and that the minister really seriously has understated the provincial revenue situation in this province?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, obviously the member has been reading Frances Russell and listening to the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) too much. No, I will not admit that. It certainly would be nice for all Manitobans if what he is suggesting does come through to be ultimately the fact. I think we all take pride in exceeding our budget targets, unlike what happened during the NDP days when the news was always progressively worse each and every time a budget came out.

We were budgeting a surplus of \$22 million. The good news is that we are going to have a budget surplus of about \$56 million. Even though our revenues are up \$118 million, there are some pressure points on expenditures. We are putting \$80 million more into health care for the Home Care program, for the Pharmacare program, meeting the needs of Manitobans. That is something we should all be proud of in this House, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Leonard Evans: With my final question, Madam Speaker. In spite of the fact that we had the biggest deficit in the history of this province in 1992-93, the biggest that we have ever realized in one year—at any rate, now that is behind us. Will the minister admit that he can no longer plead lack of funds as a reason to continue cutting health, education and social services, and that it is time to call a halt to undermining the quality of life of the people of this province?

Mr. Stefanson: Madam Speaker, I think what Manitobans will never forget is that the NDP quadrupled the debt in Manitoba, took Manitoba to the highest taxed province in all of Canada, took it so our debt servicing was crowding out our ability to provide quality health care, quality education and services to families. That is why we are proud that we have balanced our budget two years in a row in spite of, at this point in time over the next five years, \$1.1 billion less in funding from the federal Liberal government. That is a major accomplishment on behalf of all Manitobans.

* (1400)

Community Health Clinics Future Status

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My question is for the Minister of Health. This government now has been in office for eight and a half years, and this government still today has been unable to recognize the importance of managing change in health care. In fact, Madam Speaker, when they had the action plan, the great Action Plan for Health Care Reform, it talked about community health clinics and the importance of expanding that role. Recently it has been reported in a few media outlets I had the opportunity to visit in Montreal and while in Montreal—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. Does the honourable member for Inkster have a question?

Mr. Lamoureux: Yes, Madam Speaker. My question to the Minister of Health is: what is this government doing to ensure that the community health clinics are going to be expanded into the future? If you compare what Manitoba has to the province of Quebec, we have nothing to a far superior class of community health

clinics. This government has been failing at delivering health care services into the communities. When is the government going to in fact enhance community health clinics?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I think many of the changes that we are working on the health system would be much easier to bring about if we had not had his federal colleagues in Ottawa reduce our transfer payments for health to the degree that they have. Besides that, as the member knows, as we move to the regionalized health delivery system in this province, the opportunities to develop more primary care clinics in a host of forms are certainly there, and we are working towards that goal. I can tell the member from the reports that I have had from many of the regional health authorities that I have met with over the last number of weeks, that is certainly a goal they are incorporating in their planning. I think over the next couple of years we are going to see a very significant expansion in that particular area.

Madam Speaker: The honourable member for Inkster, with a supplementary question.

Mr. Lamoureux: My question to the Minister of Health is actually fairly specific. What we are looking for is something that is tangible. In the last eight and a half years we have not seen that. The question is, to what degree is this particular minister prepared to commit to the future growth of the community health clinics? That is how we are going to be able to deliver better quality health to all Manitobans. When are we going to see action, not talk, from this government when it comes to health care services in this province?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, as the member may be aware, there has been a great deal of effort in the planning process as we move along. The Assiniboine Clinic that was created by my predecessor, the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), is one of the, I think, first pilots of that in terms of a primary care model. We are following that very diligently because the numbers and the information we garner will become the basis on negotiating that model across the province. I can tell the member that we are detecting a considerable interest from people in this field to look at this model and expand it across the province. I suspect it is going to take off with great support.

Home Care Services

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, will the minister acknowledge and follow what the Quebec health clinics are doing where they are now actually providing home care services through the clinics? The government is on the road of privatization. Will this minister acknowledge that these health clinics should be playing the primary role of delivering home care services to our seniors and others who require it?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I think if you look at the model that is quickly developing across this province with respect to home care, as of April 1 our provincial services will evolve under the regional health authorities. Part of their plan is obviously to incorporate that into the complete structure. [interjection] The member yells privatization. No, not at all. I would suggest as we look down the system that that is not likely to be the general case across the province.

I would also suggest in Winnipeg, as we create the Winnipeg long-term community care board, the same type of evolution in combining those functions is going to take place, and I think it is going to happen in relatively short order as these authorities get up and running and are able to amalgamate and integrate those services.

Shoal Lake Health Care Facility

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, on June 17, 1994, the Minister of Health promised a new health facility to Shoal Lake, a promise which was included in a huge pre-election capital announcement in March of 1995 and then cancelled after the election. A recent letter signed by the mayor and reeves of Shoal Lake indicates our present facility is time-expired, and we would appreciate your consideration on this critical matter.

In light of the fact that dozens of people from Shoal Lake have called for the construction of this facility, I would like to ask the Minister of Health, when does his government plan to live up to its promise to build a new health care facility in Shoal Lake?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I know members opposite have followed some recent announcements by my colleague the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) with respect to an additional \$150 million that this government has committed to our capital expenditures. I am sure they will listen with great interest on Friday as he delivers the provincial budget.

One comment I would add to the member for Swan River, I think it is going to be very, very important for communities working with their regional health authorities to be looking at and assessing the true needs that they have in communities as these projects in the future will be considered.

Ms. Wowchuk: Since this government has changed the rules and is now waiting for communities to come up with money for their health care facilities, can the minister tell us whether this is going to have any implication on delaying the construction of this facility at Shoal Lake?

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, I believe the member for Swan River is referring to some discussion that both my predecessor and I have had in public forums about the possibility of a community contribution policy. I would suggest the member wait until Friday for any comment that might be on that subject in the budget.

Ms. Wowchuk: Madam Speaker, since the people at Shoal Lake are desperate for a new facility, I want to ask the minister whether the people of Shoal Lake should maybe start making some political donations to the Conservative Party and help them along to ensure that this facility is built, or is this the way private health care homes are treated?

Mr. Praznik: Those types of comments may seem to add to public debate, but I do not think they do. I mean, I could get up and talk about the \$20,000 that CUPE gave the New Democrats. Does that influence their policy or the positions that they take in the House?

The fact of the matter is this government is very much committed to ensuring that the capital infrastructure in our health care system is efficient and adequate, and I would suggest that she wait until Friday

for more detail in the budget. She may be somewhat surprised.

Manitoba Hydro Deregulation

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My question is to the Minister responsible for Manitoba Hydro. Will the minister confirm that the massive restructuring program that Manitoba Hydro has undergone in the past year is actually a form of being prepared for deregulation, that the restructuring and the merger with Centra Gas is to prepare Manitoba Hydro for a deregulated environment?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): All changes that are recommended or take place at Manitoba Hydro are to protect and enhance its interests in the Manitoba community and in the international marketplace where they export sufficient service, that 25 percent of the revenues come from the United States, which is used to keep the prices down for the benefit of all Manitoba consumers.

* (1410)

Ms. Mihychuk: Will the minister agree that the changes to The Manitoba Hydro Act coming forward, that Manitoba Hydro will be able to compete aggressively in the new energy marketplace as described, as quoted by president of Hydro, and that this new energy marketplace is actually deregulation?

Mr. Newman: The challenge that Manitoba Hydro faces is how to maintain and indeed increase its marketing ability in the United States. It is deregulation in the United States on a federal basis that is impacting very significantly on the willingness of the United States to allow us to enter into their marketplace. If we do not make adjustments to make that possible, we are interfering with the ability to keep rates down in the province of Manitoba for the benefit of Manitobans.

Privatization

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): My final supplementary to the same minister: Will the minister now confirm that what the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said

last Friday, that Hydro was safe as long as it is in a totally regulated environment, means that this new deregulated environment coming very shortly will allow the Premier and this government to sell Manitoba Hydro and break their promise?

Hon. David Newman (Minister charged with the administration of The Manitoba Hydro Act): The people of the province of Manitoba, through this government, own Manitoba Hydro. That fact remains unchanged, and there is no contemplation that that will change in any proposed reforms to the legislation sought by Manitoba Hydro in order to enhance their ability to be successful in the province of Manitoba.

Elmwood Cemetery Perpetual Care Fund

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): I would like to ask a question to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. I would like to, first of all, congratulate him on his ascension to this appointment.

The minister attended a cabinet meeting this morning in which the Elmwood Cemetery situation was to be discussed. The minister has agreed that the problem could have been alleviated by his government over the last nine years and that future such problems could be avoided by changing the regulations to increase the percentage of monies a cemetery owner must collect for perpetual care needs from the current 30 percent to 35 percent figures to a higher amount. Does his cabinet agree with him that this is a viable way of preventing similar problems in the future with other cemeteries?

Hon. Mike Radcliffe (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the honourable member for the opportunity to tell my colleagues this afternoon the fact that we have spent a considerable amount of time, not in cabinet but in my office and with some of my colleagues in the House, discussing the difficulties of the Elmwood Cemetery. This is a matter of paramount importance to us, and I would point out to the honourable member that our government has donated a significant amount of money to assist in the exhumation of bodies to put them in a safe position so that they will not be washed down the

river with the anticipated flooding that we will have this year and the giving way of the riverbank.

I would also add to my honourable colleague that I am surprised at his knowledge of our agenda in cabinet this morning, and I would suggest with the greatest of respect that that would not pass a severe test of probity in this House. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, my supplementary to the same minister is this: Is the minister satisfied that the current perpetual care funds have been properly handled over the years by the current owner?

Mr. Radcliffe: Madam Speaker, I am told at the present time that there is approximately \$1 million on deposit in the perpetual care fund for the Elmwood Cemetery, which has been donated by the families of the deceased who are interred in the cemetery. By legislation, this fund is monitored by the Court of Queen's Bench, and I believe a biannual report is made to the Court of Queen's Bench to account for the funds that are placed there.

At the present time I feel very secure that these funds are in place, they are properly invested and they are producing the highest level of income which is allowed by law. The difficulty, of course, which I am sure my honourable colleague is aware of, with current interest and rising costs in the cemetery, the owner of the cemetery is not able to meet current maintenance needs for the cemetery, but I can assure my honourable colleague that the funds are intact and that we are confident with the controls that are in place.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Point of Order

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): On a point of order, the honourable Minister of Education and Training would like to table a document, and I would ask for leave to revert to tabling of documents.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable Minister of Education have leave to revert to tabling of documents? [agreed]

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to table the Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 1996, for the Public Schools Finance Board. Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood) -

Questions regarding Cabinet Ministers and Spouses travel between 1990 and 1994.

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Seventh Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) and the amendment proposed by the honourable Leader of the official opposition, standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Rural Development, who has 37 minutes remaining.

Hon. Leonard Derkach (Minister of Rural Development): I am pleased to be able to continue my remarks as they relate to the throne speech, or better still to verify and reinforce the positive comments about the state of our economy and to look at the very positive prospects for the future of this province.

I think I stopped yesterday as a result of the closing of the House with remarks about the tone of the speeches that were coming from the other side of the House and the fact that we have not heard from the opposition any positive alternatives to the programs and the policies that our government has put forward. All we hear is a lot of negativism and a lot of doom and gloom about their view of the province and the economy. This is reflected in the way that their questions come to us and in the way indeed questions came today about the transfer payments to our municipalities.

I was pleased this morning to be able to announce to municipalities that rural municipalities across this

province are going to be sharing in the increased prosperity of our province by some \$4.4 million to the municipalities outside the city of Winnipeg.

Madam Speaker, all of this relates to the fact that indeed our economy is performing well, that we have a strong economy in this province. Businesses in this province are doing well, generating wealth not only for the province but indeed for the municipalities across this province. I think it is going to be welcome news to the municipalities, because this is revenue that was not anticipated by them. They did not budget for this revenue, and as they get into the budget period, this allows them some flexibility to provide better services to the constituents that they represent and to perhaps keep the tax increases down to a minimum in their municipalities.

For the past eight and a half years, this government has spent its time working very diligently to build a foundation, a foundation that can sustain the pressures of change and allow Manitobans to create both a social and an economic climate that enhances and improves the lives of Manitobans throughout. But let us make no mistake, this credit does not belong to us alone. It belongs to Manitobans who continue to adapt to the change and continue to move forward with pride and with confidence.

* (1420)

Madam Speaker, I see that every day as I work with Manitobans through the Department of Rural Development. We see that strong people in this province are building and are continuing to build a stronger economy for their children and for themselves. We have been working with Manitobans to indeed continue that effort of building upon those strong foundations that have been put in place over the past eight and a half years.

Our government and my department act as a catalyst by working with Manitobans by creating a framework of a foundation that they can build upon, but the credit goes to our citizens for responding to the challenges that we put before them and for taking up the opportunities that have been placed before them. The winds of change have not been kind to Manitobans in the past.

For close to a century our farmers have enjoyed the benefit of the Crow. In the last year or so, we have seen the federal government remove the benefits, and that has taken some \$750 million out of the rural economy of western Canada on an annual basis. But have Manitobans stopped? No. Indeed, they have continued to build upon their strengths, to look at their strengths and to capitalize on the opportunities like never before. If we look around us, we can see how the rural economy is continuing to grow by the value-added industries that we are seeing in the rural part of our province. I can point to some examples like the strawboard plant which is going to be built in Elie, \$142 million of investment that will create hundreds of jobs in that community.

In the last year we have been able to announce some \$750-million worth of new economic activity in our province, economic activity that is there because of the foundation that has been set in place by this government. We look at expansions in this province, expansions to McCain and the Nestle-Simplot potato processing operations that have resulted in significant increased potato production in this province.

If you look at where we rate in potato production across this country, we have now surpassed New Brunswick and will indeed surpass Prince Edward Island if the industry continues to grow in the way that it has. It is not any small potatoes as was referenced by some members in this House some time ago. These are just a few examples of what is happening in the rural part of our province. When we make the announcement of \$4.4 million of increased revenue going back to our municipalities, the credit has to go to those individual companies which have put their efforts into expanding their processing, expanding their businesses, creating wealth and creating activity in our province.

Madam Speaker, I think that our progress has been well documented and has been talked about not just in Manitoba but across this country. If you meet with ministers in other jurisdictions, they look at Manitoba as a place which is leading the way in many ways in terms of building an economy that is strong, building a foundation for the residents of the province to be able to access social services, economic programs which are of benefit to the entire province.

When you look at what the Conference Board of Canada says about our province, it is indeed gratifying to note that in the manufacturing sector they are predicting growth again in this next year of 5.7 percent, and that is being preceded by growth of some 8.6 percent this year and over 8 percent in the previous year. So the economy is growing. The economy is indeed very buoyant and very positive in our province. The Conference Board of Canada also goes on to say that manufacturers will invest more than \$540 million in Manitoba over the coming year, which is five times as high as investment elsewhere in Canada. This equates to something like 15,000 new jobs for Manitobans, and that growth is significant and evident right through the entire province.

I heard the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) talk about McJobs. Well, Madam Speaker, I do not understand that kind of approach, because whether it is jobs in the telecommunications industry or whether it is jobs in the manufacturing sector or the value-added sector, every job is important to Manitobans. Regardless of what part of the economy Manitobans work in, they are creating wealth for themselves, for their families and for this province. If we want to talk about McJobs, all we have to look at is the old Jobs Fund that the NDP used to tout in this province. They spent some \$380 million over a period of time to create jobs that were really the McJobs. They were the jobs that did not last; they have disappeared long ago and the money has gone with those jobs. But the jobs that we are creating are sustainable jobs. They are here for the future. They are here for the long term. They are here for not only our generation but for generations that will come behind us. I find it appalling that members opposite would criticize jobs that Manitobans find meaningful, that Manitobans find that they need, that Manitobans indeed are eager to take up.

We are getting into a situation in some of our industries, as a matter of fact, where we are getting into a full employment situation. As a matter of fact, I just caught a bit of news the other day where one of the reporters indicated that Manitoba was one of the best provinces in Canada to find work for young people. So all of those indicators are up. They are all positive. What do we hear from the opposition? We hear negativism on every front whether it is in education or whether it is in health.

Madam Speaker, I have to talk a little bit about the area of education because I talked to people right across this province and, indeed, we met with some advisory councils not that long ago who talked to me about what is happening in their school divisions. They said to me that as parent councils they believed in the direction that the province is taking. They understand the direction this province is going with regard to education. They believe in standards. They want their children to graduate from our high schools and from our universities with an ability to compete with their peers from wherever that may be. I think we need to listen to what parent councils are telling us, and we need to ensure that indeed our children are able to capitalize on those opportunities which will give them an ability to compete with graduates from our schools and from our universities in an exemplary way.

“Health care” seems to be a phrase that is catching everywhere today, and when I speak to people in my constituency, of course, the community of Shoal Lake is somewhat concerned about the fact that they need a health care facility. But they understand only too well that we have to be very careful as to how we spend our health care dollars, so that we get the maximum benefit out of those scarce dollars that we use for health care. Yes, indeed, their facility is getting old and their facility needs to be replaced but, as the regional health boards take their responsibilities up, they will indeed be communicating with that community to ensure that whatever kind of facility is going to be built in that community, that facility will be able to meet the needs of the population of that area in the best way possible.

So I support that community, and indeed I have met with them on many occasions to talk about their needs, to talk about what type of facility will someday be constructed in that community and that indeed they are eager to be involved in not only the fundraising but in participating in identifying the kind of facility that they will eventually have in that community.

Madam Speaker, as I work with municipalities across this province I find a fair degree of optimism from our municipalities about the direction that this province is going. It is quite a contrast to what we had some eight years ago when municipalities were very skeptical about the direction that our province was going in. Today our municipalities are participating fully in the

economy of our province. They are taking a leadership role in setting goals and setting objectives for their municipalities. They are taking a leading role in working with the communities in terms of identifying the strengths of those communities and building on those strengths.

* (1430)

We are seeing quite a change in rural Manitoba. We are seeing that indeed younger people are starting to move back to communities and they are taking up jobs in these communities and they are creating jobs. They are setting up businesses. Indeed they are creating lives for themselves in rural communities across this province, and that is quite a contrast from what it used to be some eight or 10 years ago.

Madam Speaker. I am proud of the achievements we have made with regard to rural Manitoba and Manitoba as a whole. I think that Manitoba now is poised to become a leader in this country in terms of many industries, whether it is in the value-added industries or whether it is in the diversified agricultural products or whether it is in the high-tech industries. We have an ability now to become a leader and to lead the way in the economic prosperity of this country, and I think that is being noted by other jurisdictions.

We found that in the whole area of value-added—I have just talked to people in Ontario. Ontario has been in the whole area of value-added for a long time, but they are looking at Manitoba as doing something very unique and something very different in that we are now engaging people from communities to come forward with their dollars and to partner with other jurisdictions, with other entities and also with companies in creating wealth for their communities by putting in value-added processing right where it should be, right where the products are produced. Whether it is a strawboard plant in Elie or a strawboard plant in Killarney or a hay compress plant in Dauphin, Manitoba, or wherever that might be, these are all industries which are adding value to the products that are produced right in our rural communities, and those products are finding their way into export markets.

They are not products that are used necessarily in their totality in our province and in our country. They

are finding their way into the markets in Japan, into the United States, into parts of Europe, into Mexico and all around the globe. I think we are now seeing that Manitobans are understanding the value of producing for the export market and indeed everybody is getting onboard.

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

Last year we held a forum in Brandon called Rural Forum 96 at which we had some 10,000 people walk through the doors. It was a splendid event in that it was a celebration of the success stories that we have in the rural part of our province, but it allowed also for an exchange of ideas and an exchange of information about how small businesses are prospering in our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year, as we prepare for Forum 97, we are experiencing a tremendous amount of interest not only from exhibitors but from individuals who are seeking ideas, are seeking opportunities and are looking at the prospects of partnering with rural Manitobans to build our communities and to build our economy. I think Rural Forum 97, which is going to be held in May of this year, is going to be a showcase of the kinds of business opportunities that we have in our province, the future of this province and what it holds for prospective businesses, and also the success stories that we have been building for the last eight years. Mr. Deputy Speaker, no matter which part of the province you go, whether it is into Swan River or Neepawa, we find that the activity is indeed encouraging. In Neepawa alone, we saw something like \$12 million of new building permits issued in this last year. Minnedosa has 11 new businesses established in the community in one year and no matter where it goes—my own community, which has a population of 2,000 or thereabouts, has experienced about \$2 million of building permits in this last year.

Now we have not seen that happen so much in the past; indeed, this is very encouraging because what it means is that jobs are being created in those communities, that wealth is being generated in those communities. There is economic activity in those communities, and all of this is allowing those communities to sustain their health care systems in their

communities, their education systems in their communities, and the social services that they so badly need in those communities. It is service being delivered closer to home as a result of renewed economic activity in these areas.

I would like to talk a little bit about our youth, because rural youth have had a special place in my heart for a long time. Since I came to this department, we have tried to work very hard to ensure that rural youth would find the rural landscape, if you like, as one that would be inviting to them to want to work in and to want to make their living at. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we introduced a program to rural Manitoba called Junior Achievement, and this program has taken off incredibly. At one time it functioned in the city of Winnipeg alone. Now we have been able to expand it to the rural part of our province, and Chambers of Commerce, our Junior Achievement offices, our schools, the teachers in our schools have become very involved in this program.

Last year at the Rural Forum we had something like 400 young people who participated in the Junior Achievement program participate in the Rural Forum. We are looking at the same kind of process this year, and I am told that the interest is extremely high and that we are going to have a fairly significant participation of rural youth at our forum this year. It is going to be a two-day program where youth can get together and talk about how to become young entrepreneurs, how they can take advantage of programs to build their communities, and how they can become involved in the fabric of their community. I think that this is so important to ensure that rural youth have a reason to want to come back to live in our rural communities and to stay in those rural communities.

Another program which I think is worth mentioning is our Green Team program, and I will never forget the reaction when I introduced that program a number of years ago. It was not very positive, I can tell you that. Members of the opposition kind of scoffed at the program. But today, if you look at that program, it has become one of the more popular programs for youth across this province, and indeed other jurisdictions are looking at Manitoba and the Green Team program and what it means to our province and to our youth. If you look at it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have now expanded

that program into the urban side of our province as well. I think what it is providing is an ability for our youth to become involved in good work experience in their communities, allow them to save money for their education, and allow them to live closer to home during the summer months. I think it is a program that is worthwhile not only for our small rural communities but for every community in this province.

I note that the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) is making a comment about it, but I have to tell him that his community alone or his communities of Dauphin and Grandview and Gilbert Plains have been very active in taking up the programs with regard to youth programs in our province, and I encourage that. I hope that he is positive in the way he approaches the program and the way it is operating.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I look at the opposition, and I sometimes wonder whether they live in the same province we do because they do not seem to look at the positive aspects of what is happening in this province in any way at all. All we find is negativism; all we find is doom and gloom. That is not what we hear out in our communities. As a matter of fact, we hear a lot of positive compliments in our communities about what is happening in this province. I guess we need to ask our opposition members to really get on board and to get on program and to understand that there are a lot of good things happening in this province and indeed Manitobans are very positive about what this province is doing and the direction that it is going in and that there is not a lot of doom and gloom about the future of this province.

We have balanced the budget. We have created a surplus. We have gotten a hold of the finances of this province. That is an important first step in a strong province. We know the kind of attitude that we had in this province before under the NDP when we had a huge debt and deficits that were running out of control. Today all of that has been brought back into control. We have now a situation where we can begin to repay that enormous debt that has been built up, largely by the opposition. It has taken some time to arrest that, but we have arrested it. We will continue to balance the books of this province, and we will continue to build on that foundation that we have established over the past eight years.

* (1440)

We still hear chatter from across the way about what our deficit used to be and what your deficit is. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the reality is we had the second highest taxes in this province of any province in Canada when we took office. The second highest level of taxation of any province in Canada. Today we are down in the lower part of the—in the lower third, if you like, of provinces across this country in terms of our taxes.

We have frozen taxes for eight straight years, nine years now, as a matter of fact, and we will continue that approach because that is a prudent approach. That is the way that we will build the strong economy. That is the way we will continue to sustain those important programs, whether they are in Health, whether they are in Education or Family Services, and we will continue to improve them.

I hear the opposition saying, well, you are cutting back on health, you are cutting back on education. If you look at the amount of money that is spent on health on a per capita basis, we rank as one of the higher spending provinces in terms of what we spend on a per capita basis for our health care system. Yes, and you can look at anywhere else in this country. You need only to look at the west, into Saskatchewan, and see what is happening in Saskatchewan with regard to health care. Mr. Deputy Speaker, 52 hospitals have closed in rural Saskatchewan. That is incredible.

I have families who live in Saskatchewan, and if you compare the economy of Saskatchewan to Manitoba, we are doing far better here in Manitoba. I think the opposition would agree with me in that respect, to say the least.

Agriculture is still the foundation of rural Manitoba. Agriculture is still the activity that sustains rural Manitoba and contributes significantly to our economy. Farmers in rural Manitoba have undergone some tremendous changes. Today we need to encourage the farming community to continue to diversify its activities. That is why we entered into a phase where we want to increase our exports by the year 2000 by a billion dollars so that indeed it will give farmers a goal to reach for in terms of their diversification and in

terms of the products that they produce in rural Manitoba. That is why we have entered into an emphasis on value-added products from the primary products that we produce, whether it is in agriculture or in forestry, whether it is in tourism. We know the value of putting value to our products to export because that money stays right here in our communities. When we talk about agriculture, I know that members opposite were a little concerned about our position that we took on a dual-marketing system on hogs.

I think the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) would now probably reflect on her position in that regard because we are seeing the hog industry in this province is expanding tremendously. We are seeing hog barns built in parts of this province where we never had them before. As a matter of fact, the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) understands the value of that because he has seen the expansion of the hog industry in his own backyard and in his community. We see that all around the province and all that is doing is creating jobs and is creating wealth and diversity in our rural economy.

Livestock production is still, to us, a very important aspect of agriculture. Grain production is such that it is important to our province but, because of our position geographically, we find ourselves at a disadvantage when it comes to shipping our products in raw form out of this province and so, therefore, we have to add value to it. We have to find ways to increase the value of that product so that the finished product that goes out of here goes out in a form which returns a significant amount to our province, our economy, and to the families that work in these areas.

I will continue to promote value-added industry in every aspect that I can, because I believe that is the only way that our rural economy is going to survive in the future.

That is why we have put together a program for the Food Development Centre which encourages farms, encourages small businesses to bring their products to the development centre to see whether or not there is a potential to commercialize these products. To be honest with you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it does not just refer to agri Manitoba, but I was in Lynn Lake a short

time ago, and I met with their economic development people and their council. They told me that there is a potential in Lynn Lake to process some of the natural products that are grown in that community into a finished product that there is a high demand for in export markets, and that is in the blueberry and the lingonberry market.

This year we will be sending our people from the food lab up to Lynn Lake to work with the Lynn Lake community to see whether or not there is a commercialization prospect for some of the natural berries that are grown in that part of the world. The community seems to be quite excited about it. I am hoping that indeed the positive results will occur as a result of that because I know that for the blueberry market, as example, there is indeed a niche market that can be filled by some of our people from the North.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think there is a lot of excitement out there, and what we have to do is support our communities and our entrepreneurs with programs that make some sense. That is why we have a Grow Bonds program which today is generating a significant amount of capital investment in our province. Over \$24 million, I believe, in total capital investment has resulted in our province as a result of the Grow Bond program. This is a program where our investors come from our communities, and, instead of investing their money in banks in the east, they are investing their dollars in our communities. We are there to support them. Yes, we are there with a guarantee that should a business fail we will be there. It is venture capital, and we will have failures from time to time. We have seen some of them in the past, and we are there to ensure that the investors' money is protected.

Our REDI program is one which I believe has added a significant amount to the economy of our province. Contributions of some \$27.1 million have helped to create more than 1,600 full-time jobs in our province and over 3,800 part-time positions. Most of those jobs are in our youth area. So REDI has contributed a significant amount to starting small, new businesses that may add one or two positions into a community, but one or two positions in a small, rural community are very significant in terms of the spin-off benefits that occur to that community.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the programs that we have are programs that build on partnerships. Just in this past year we had announced the Community Works Loan Program, again a program that builds on partnerships. This program puts money directly into the hands of communities, and then communities by matching those funds can then begin the process of lending that money out to prospective small businesses that want to expand or to new businesses that they may need in that community. We find that communities are taking this up. I want to say that the credit union system of our province has been a very active participant in this program and has contributed significant dollars to the program on behalf of their communities.

The small community of Grandview was one of the first communities to enter into the Community Works Loan Program, and we made the announcement there. I was pleased that the credit union of that small community came up with the total share that the community was supposed to put in. The community did not have to put in an extra penny, because the credit union in that community came up with the entire share for that community. I think this is commendable. I think we need more community participation like that through our province.

* (1450)

Just the other day, last Friday, as a matter of fact, I was in Birtle and we made the announcement on the Community Works Loan Program there. The credit union and the co-op both came together and contributed, I believe, about \$7,000 in total to that program, so it is not just the municipalities that are contributing or organizations. We find financial institutions are giving their support to this program and are finding that the grassroots approach to building an economy in a local community is the way to go. We are finding that women who have traditionally had difficulty accessing capital in small communities are coming forward and are taking advantage of this program as a partnership program and are building small businesses, home-based businesses, businesses that make sense, have meaning and have services that are required in those communities.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at all of those things that are happening across our province, I

think there is a reason for all of us to be optimistic, for all of us to go out and to keep encouraging our communities to do just that, to continue to build on their strengths, to make sure that they understand what their strengths are, to take advantage of the potential markets that are out there, and there are many markets out there.

As a matter of fact, one of the focuses of the Rural Forum is going to be trying to encourage small businesses that have export potential to take advantage of the export markets that are available for them. My colleague the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) has just returned from some very exciting potential opportunities that exist around the globe. Indeed, I think that is a good thing for someone like our Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism to be out there marketing what this province has to offer to the world because indeed we know that this province has a tremendous amount to offer to the world.

I was very privileged to be able to take advantage of a trip to Ukraine in November, and Manitoba has a significant Ukrainian population. As a result, there are some natural linkages that we should be able to establish between ourselves and the new economy of Ukraine. However, if we look at the track record, we have had very little economic activity between Ukraine and Canada or Ukraine and Manitoba, and so we want to enhance that. We want to ensure that businesses in this province have every possible opportunity to take advantage of the markets that exist in the new, emerging economy of Ukraine.

Indeed, this year we are participating in a project called CUBI, and I would like to just explain for a minute what this project is about. It has to do with the Canadian-Ukrainian Business Initiative, which involves three prairie provinces and Ukraine, and in this project we will, indeed, be merging our businesses with businesses in Ukraine. Our responsibility is the construction sector. In June of this year, we will be hosting a construction sector forum where we will be inviting businesses and agencies from Ukraine to Canada to join businesses in Canada from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba in a forum where we can showcase Canadian products, Manitoba products, Saskatchewan and Alberta products, where we can merge businesses, form strategic alliances to build the

economy of Ukraine and to develop those relationships that need to be developed. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I certainly look forward to that opportunity later this year.

I understand that my time is running out very quickly, and I would like to simply say that the throne speech that was so eloquently read by His Honour is one that we look forward to implementing in this province. Manitobans, I think, are eager to see this province grow and to prosper, and indeed I look forward to the opportunities that exist for Manitobans, for our economy, and for the population of this province. I look forward to working with all Manitobans to ensure that this province becomes a stronger place for our generation and for generations in the future. Thank you very much.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments to the government's latest throne speech of the Third Session of the Thirty-sixth Legislature which the government introduced on March 3. I must admit though there is not very much in this throne speech that I find that causes us to see that there is any progress or any change in the direction that this government has been going over the last number of years. In fact, some have said that this particular throne speech is a very cynical document and that it tries to restore some public confidence with respect to how the First Nations people have been treated in this province.

Before I get to my discussion about the document itself, I want to talk a bit about an issue that is I am sure on the minds of most members of this Chamber and that is dealing with the potential flooding problem that may be facing us very shortly, in fact, in just a number of weeks. I had the opportunity during the time that we were out of session between the end of November and when we resumed the new session on March 3, had the ability and the opportunity to travel throughout Manitoba with many of my colleagues. During that time, we have had to talk with people about a variety of issues, whether it be their health care concerns or their education concerns that they have in the various communities or the economic development concerns that they have, changes they would like to see and improvements they would like to make to allow their communities to grow to encourage their young people,

particularly in the rural areas, to remain within the rural communities.

I have had the opportunity to go to Rosenort, Morris, Carman, Morden and Winkler. I have been to The Pas, been to Dauphin, been to many communities and talked with residents and officials in those various communities, and I appreciated the opportunity to accompany my caucus colleagues to those communities. One of the things that I noticed that there is a fair amount of snowfall, as I am sure all members are aware, throughout the province, although we seemed to have more in the south than there was in the northern parts of the province at the current time that I had the opportunity to travel to the North.

One of the concerns I have—and I have received calls on this from members of my own constituency—and I am not sure if it is an issue that the government is looking at through the Natural Resources department or not, but I am going to try and be constructive. I know the Natural Resources minister (Mr. Cummings) is listening very closely here to what is being said and that my colleague for the Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) is advising the Minister of Natural Resources on his concerns with respect to flooding as well.

One of the things that I do not know if it is a possibility, but I am going to raise this with the government as a concern that has been raised with me, and I have had the opportunity to do a little bit of thinking but I need to do some more research on as well, is what happens if we have those one-in-300-year spring melts? We have a floodway that is set up to handle only X amount of cubic feet per hour water flow. What happens to the excess water that is going to come through? Is that water going to be continued to be diverted through the Winnipeg floodway system saving the interior of the city of Winnipeg from any flooding damage? If that is the case, what is going to happen to the communities of Transcona and Springfield should those flood water levels rise to the top of the floodway system that is in place, and will those communities be sacrificed to preserve the interior of the city of Winnipeg?

That is a concern that I have because I happen to represent the community of Transcona, and we are quite worried about the potential for that floodway to

overflow its banks into both Transcona and Springfield. Of course, as we all know, there is housing that is in very close proximity to the floodway system in east Transcona, and I do not want to see any of those properties sacrificed so that others will be saved in the process. I want to make sure that there is adequate preparation and planning taking place to make sure that hopefully no one will be detrimentally impacted by the flooding.

I draw this to the attention of the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) because we are not that far away from the spring melt. We hope and pray that the melt will be slow and that the waters will be able to move away in a safe fashion, but should that not occur, I hope that the government, through the Natural Resources department, is taking every precaution to make sure that ice dams, should they occur on the floodway or the river systems, are dealt with in the appropriate, timely fashion and that we will not have to see any flooding of the properties that are supposed to be protected by both the floodway and the rivers.

* (1500)

Also I want to draw to the attention of the government that, because the budget is due to come down here on this Friday that flooding in south Transcona that my colleague the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) represents, the residents of south Transcona have also called me to raise their concerns with me, their fears about what the flooding will mean to them in their communities, as we know that in the last couple of summers they have experienced some severe flooding during the summer months that has not been addressed totally yet.

It is my understanding that the City of Winnipeg has now committed some \$1.7 million to building a water retention pond and a system that will hopefully alleviate the flooding problem in the south Transcona area, which also takes in water from the Rural Municipality of Springfield. But also my understanding is that this project cannot go ahead, and I am not going to debate the merits of the project here, but I am going to talk about the funding that is necessary. It is my understanding that the City of Winnipeg is now waiting for the province to ante up its money for this project before it can go ahead. It is I believe another \$1.7

million to my understanding, so the total project cost is about \$3.5 million.

Now, that may not save the community this spring should we have severe flooding occur, but I hope that the government, when they bring their budget down on Friday, will have consideration in there for the project to help the people that are living in the south Transcona area. They have suffered long enough with the severe flooding problems, and I think it is only appropriate that that problem be once and for all solved.

It will save millions in the insurance costs both for the homeowners there that have to pay the premiums, and I know the member opposite—

An Honourable Member: He wants to underwrite.

Mr. Reid: He wants to underwrite as an insurance broker.

An Honourable Member: He wants to make money off us poor people.

Mr. Reid: Well, if the flooding occurs, you are going to be getting calls from the residents in the area, if you happen to carry those policies for them, and you will have to deal with the outrage that they will have once again as they had in past years because of the severity of the flooding and the detrimental impact that has happened to the families.

An Honourable Member: I am not in the insurance business.

Mr. Reid: We did not specify you specifically. There are others that are associated with your caucus. In fact I believe your former member was here in the loge just this week.

One of the other things I want to talk about and I want to deal with, an issue that has been raised here in the Chamber by my colleague the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen), is dealing with the education funding. In the community of Transcona I have had the opportunity to talk to trustees who had their meeting just last night with respect to the changes that we are going to see on the taxation level and the programming and the staffing levels to the Transcona-Springfield School Division.

Now, the minister may already be aware of the decision that has been made. Hopefully, her department has already been briefed on that. But there is a problem, and there seems to be a discrepancy here.

The Provincial Auditor is calling for the school division to take approximately 3 percent of their revenues and put it into a reserve fund for any situation that may occur, whether the roof of a school caves in, and God forbid that should ever happen, or a boiler blows up in one of the schools or becomes unserviceable—

An Honourable Member: Or flooded.

Mr. Reid: —or they become flooded, as my colleague points out. There needs to be some funding in place. Unfortunately the school board has once again had to dip into the reserves that the auditor for the division says would be an appropriate level to have in the reserve fund. They have taken this to maintain the programming and to make sure that there is adequate staffing levels for our students in our schools. They have restored a few of the paraprofessionals which they unfortunately had to cut a few years ago when the government had announced their serious reduction in education funding to that particular division, as they did to all other school divisions.

One of the things that I am going to be looking for when the budget is announced and the government releases its capital spending program for the Department of Education is funding that will allow for the Transcona Collegiate institute to be rebuilt. It is my understanding that there are serious structural problems with the school. It is also in need of some serious maintenance work to be done in that particular facility, and it is my understanding that it is in the order of some \$3 million worth of work that needs to be done to restore that school. Now I am not saying that it is currently in an unsafe condition, but it is my understanding that, if it is allowed to go on much longer, it will deteriorate to an unsafe condition. I hope and I will be looking for that particular announcement when the budget is announced later this week and whether or not that funding is going to be allocated through the capital program. The Public Schools Finance Board, I believe, has that money and

announces it for improvements or rebuilding of schools. So I will be looking for that when the budget is announced.

It is my understanding, too, that the government, as they have said in their throne speech here, has an apprenticeship task force that has been travelling the province, and it is my understanding that it is going to be reporting back to the government sometime this spring. We look forward to that report, and we hope the minister will table it shortly after she receives it to allow members of this side of the House to see what the recommendations and what the government's plan will be to improving the apprenticeship or the apprenticeable trades in the province of Manitoba. That is one of the things that has been seriously lacking in the province in the number of trades when we compare ourselves to other jurisdictions, in particular, to European jurisdictions, where they have many hundreds of apprenticeable trades that encourage young people to come out of the school system and even before they complete the school system to choose a particular career path and allows this training to occur.

One of the things that I would like to see, and I hope that the minister will also address it, is the certification of some of the trades in the province that are not currently certified. I think, in particular, the plumbing and pipe fitting industry needs to have a look at whether or not they should be certified. From my research, it would be my position that this warrants serious consideration with respect to certification to make sure that those who are the residents in our communities are confident and comfortable that the people who are coming into our homes and into our businesses are certified tradespeople and fully capable, qualified and trained to perform that particular trade's work. I encourage the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh), who is responsible for Education and Training, to look at certification of the trades and to expand the apprenticeable trades in the province and to incorporate or to encourage the young people not only to stay and complete high school. but to become involved. should they not choose to go on to university, in the apprenticeable trades area. I think it would serve our communities well to make sure that our young people have the highest skill level or qualification to allow them to seek out gainful employment.

I listened to the answers that the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) had here today with respect to questions that my colleague the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) had asked, that the government had seriously understated the funding. I listened when the government announced with their last budget that they were going to have I think a \$22-million surplus this year, and now we find out the Minister of Finance has come out with his comments through his press release and through his third quarter report, he is bragging now that that has over doubled and it is going up to \$56 million in surplus. Well, we can read budget documents; we can read the financial documents that come out, and our numbers show that even that \$56 million number is seriously low. It is going to be significantly higher than that and that the government has significant surpluses available to them. In fact, well over \$100 million will be your surplus for the current fiscal year, which is due to expire at the end of March.

With this, one has to ask, and people of my community are asking me, if the government has this type of surplus, why are they freezing education at its current level or cutting it back because they have not taken into account the cost-of-living impacts on the Education department? Why are they taking that step with education? Why are they disadvantaging our children if we have over a hundred million dollars in the surplus now? It is a question that I cannot answer. I guess the government will have to answer that on budget day, why they have not put the money into those programs.

Why are they cutting back or seriously shortchanging the health care system? One has to wonder, just taking a look at the event that occurred in the city of Winnipeg here yesterday when the truck ran into that business establishment on Marion, one block away from the St. Boniface General Hospital, why were the people transported to the Misericordia Hospital and to Seven Oaks Hospital for treatment when they were only a block away from St. Boniface Hospital? Now, was that hospital filled to capacity?

I am hearing information coming to me from people in the Gimli area, for example, that they wanted to bring an individual who had a serious heart condition, an ambulatory patient, to St. Boniface Hospital, any

hospital in the city of Winnipeg that would take him, to provide the care necessary and the facilities. St. Boniface, reluctantly, after a period of time, accepted that particular individual for care. Now I am unaware whether that individual survived or not. That is something we will have to do further research on.

* (1510)

If there is a surplus that you have and it is over a hundred million dollars, and we have people who cannot get into hospitals in emergency cases, the closest hospital which was St. Boniface in particular to the truck accident, one has to ask the question, what are you doing with the money? Are you squirrelling this money away for the next provincial election? You are going to announce your tax breaks in 1998, that has been much talked about, so you are putting this money into a slush fund along with the Lotteries funds and the remaining proceeds of the MTS sale. That is what appears right now.

One of the other areas that I noticed was conspicuous by its absence was any mention in the throne speech document with respect to Workplace Safety and Health changes that are so desperately needed. Now you may recall that in the last session of this Legislature I had the opportunity to ask the Minister of Labour questions pertaining to safety for working people and in particular for the individuals working in construction or in mining. We had a near-tragic event where an individual was trapped in an excavation cave-in. We note that there is no follow-up within Workplace Safety and Health for individuals that are involved, owners of companies that are involved and that fold up their tents and start up their operations under a new name the next day.

One of the other areas that causes me concern is that there are a number of miners that have been killed in this province, and that people in the northern communities, and particularly in Flin Flon and Thompson where most of the mining operations are in that area, are quite incensed that the maximum fine on a first offence is only \$15,000. For a second or subsequent offence, it is \$30,000. So that is the price that is put on a life in this province if you are killed in a workplace accident, as the miners have been in the province of Manitoba.

One of the things I would like to see and we are proposing, and we will be bringing forward legislation to this effect, is to increase the fine level to half a million dollars. Now that is not a perfect solution to the problem that is out there. We need to have greater workplace inspections take place, and you cannot do that by reducing the number of field inspectors that you have in Workplace Safety and Health.

An Honourable Member: That is what we are doing.

Mr. Reid: The minister says that there have been no reductions. I mean we have the names of the people; we have the positions; we know the numbers have been reduced. I mean he is not going to fool us and say that the numbers are constant. He says the numbers of hours of inspections are constant. Well, if that is the case, then you are paying people overtime which does not appear to be showing up in your budget line, so I find it hard to believe that you are having more or increased numbers of hours of inspections.

One of the other problems with Workplace Safety and Health that has caused me concern, and I relate back specifically to the Power Vac incident where the company was involved where that young man was very seriously burned, will never be the same. He will never lead a normal life from my understanding of the situation. That young man is still going through rehabilitation, trying to get some normalcy brought back to his particular life, but looking at the injury that he has suffered, he will, in the true sense of the word, as members of this House would know, never be the same as he was before.

I have to ask myself, then, why did the Ministry of Justice, the former Minister of Justice who is now another minister, moved onto another life, not give instructions to her senior Crown attorneys to ask for the maximum fines, which albeit they were only \$15,000? But they did not even ask on the offences that the company was charged on, Power Vac, for the maximum fine level.

It is my understanding that on the two counts the company only got half of the maximum fines that could have been levied, so it is very obvious that your Justice department and your department of Workplace Safety and Health are not communicating. If they are, the

message is not getting through to the Crown attorneys that are prosecuting these cases, that when you have very serious offences you have to take the maximum steps available to you to make sure that the message is sent loud and clear, that working people in this province are not to be sacrificed on the altar of profit as appears to be the case with some of the actions of the Justice department in this province, and I refer specifically to the Power Vac incident.

So I hope that, while it is not in the throne speech, the government will look seriously at supporting our bill that we are going to bring forward with respect to improvements to The Workplace Safety and Health Act, to also protect the workers that are going to raise issues of safety that come to their attention from time to time, so their employers too cannot take the punitive measure of dismissing or laying off or in other words disposing of their employees that may draw these workplace safety and health matters to the attention of the government. We want to make sure there is some protection for working people in that regard as well.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the things that my colleagues have raised in this House when this session started was the matter of privilege. It was a very serious matter that had to be dealt with with respect to trying to restore some confidence to the office of Speaker of this Legislature. It is an issue that is still before us, has not gone away and will not go away until members of this House realize that we need to move to an elected Speaker to restore the confidence of the Speaker of this Chamber.

In the last session, the Speaker of the last session took it upon herself to ignore members of this Legislative Assembly. I find it very offensive that I was not afforded the opportunity, after sitting in on many, many hours of public committee hearings on MTS, not as much as my colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) or other members of this House, including the Deputy Speaker no doubt, that sat in those committee hearings, I was not afforded the opportunity to raise those questions, those concerns that my constituents came here and presented, raised. I did not have the opportunity in this Chamber to raise that.

I know the member for Riel (Mr. Newman), when he did his throne speech, did not want to talk about his pay

level and how the people of Riel compensate him for the job that he does, but I can tell you, I am well compensated. I appreciate the confidence of the people of Transcona, but I have a job to do, and it is my responsibility to raise their concerns in this Chamber. By the Speaker and the government not affording me that opportunity, I am unable to do my job, and I take great offence to either the government or the Speaker refusing to allow me that opportunity to represent my constituents. I will continue to work for an elected Speaker of this Chamber to make sure that that event never occurs again as long as I am in this Chamber. I do not want to see a repeat of that, and the people—

An Honourable Member: Watch any travel claims you have too.

Mr. Reid: Well, yes, perhaps there are certain comments that have been made that travel claims that have been released that were only available to one particular individual who happens to sit in the Speaker's Chair on a full-time basis perhaps, and it is quite offensive that that would occur if that indeed did occur.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we will leave those matters to work themselves out at some other point in the future. Perhaps should the Legislative Assembly Management Commission get back together, that matter can be raised at that time, how that particular information was released. I think it is only appropriate that that would be the forum where it would be debated, so I will not go any further on that topic.

I only ask, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that either you, and I know you have in the past and will most likely continue to do in the future, recognize that I have a responsibility as do all members of this Legislature to represent their constituents and that we should be afforded every opportunity.

When the people of my community that appeared before the MTS committee and those that were phoning me that were retired in my community wanted to have me take their particular question to this Chamber and put it before the government with respect in particular to their MTS pensions—because several of them were retired and were quite worried about the ramifications for their pension when MTS was sold—I was not given that opportunity to raise those questions with respect to

the MTS sale. I was denied that information— [interjection] No, this is after you brought in your amendments to the pension plan during the committee hearings. I am sure if you had been in that committee you would have heard that there were members of the public from many communities concerned about the pension plan.

An Honourable Member: Maybe he was too busy preparing member's statements.

Mr. Reid: Well, maybe he was busy preparing member's statements, but also too that the members of my community that are employed in MTS and the pensioners are still quite worried because it is my understanding that the government has reneged on their deal that they had signed with the unions and that there is not going to be an equal partnership on the Manitoba Telephone System pension plan. These people are not going to have an equal role in the say on how those funds or the surplus of the investment of those funds is dealt with, so I think after the government, through the current Minister of Health, tried to tell the public and tried to tell the employees of MTS that they were being fairly dealt with, the government has essentially reneged on that deal and that employees, from my understanding of what I have been told, will not have an equal representation or an equal opportunity to have a say in the decisions impacting the pension and any surpluses that it may have.

* (1520)

Now we all heard about how the brokers profited. In fact, the two brokers, Wood Gundy and Dominion Securities, my colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) has pointed out, made \$4.8-million profit, each of them, on the sale after they advised the government to sell off MTS. I do not know, I still cannot figure out, if that does not paint the picture of a conflict of interest, then I miss my guess. I do not know what does then. It is very clear to me that is a conflict of interest, and yet we hear the stories about those brokers quite happy to go around buying their new BMWs and their new Jaguars after MTS was sold and the shares were flipped. It is very clear—

An Honourable Member: How many shares has Merv got?

Mr. Reid: Yes, it would be interesting to see when these members stand up in the House whether or not they reference the number of shares they bought for MTS. That will be quite interesting to find out. I challenge the government members. You still have members on the board of MTS and you have access to the shareholders' list. Table that list in this Legislative Assembly to let the members and the public see how many people in this Chamber purchased MTS shares, and who—[interjection] oh, yes, the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) pointed out that members opposite purchased millions of shares, and I do not doubt that.

I am glad he has the honesty to come forward and indicate that he has bought a significant number of shares. If the government is serious about open policy government and you still have four people on the MTS board there, come out with that shareholders' list and let us see how many Manitobans still own those shares, whether or not they have moved to eastern Canada or New Jersey. That is most likely where they have ended up for the bulk of the shares, or if the bulk of them have not ended up, they will end up there.

One of the other issues that I want to raise with the government here is dealing with jobs. It is my understanding, and I have had the opportunity to sit down and meet with the employees of Bristol and the representatives of Bristol Aerospace, which has a very significant operation in the city of Winnipeg. One of the very serious concerns I have with respect to the Bristol plant is the unwillingness of the Deputy Premier, who is also the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, to become involved directly in the events that are going to and are currently underway with respect to the Bristol operation. We have many hundreds of jobs, high-paying, high-skilled jobs in that particular industry.

An Honourable Member: They are all going to Standard Aero.

Mr. Reid: The member for Sturgeon Creek says they are going to the Standard Aero. Well, that would be a serious blow to the city of Winnipeg that, instead of hiring more people to fill Standard Aero's needs, we could not keep Bristol going as well. We would have

both companies as thriving operations in the province. I hope there is room for both of them.

The part that bothers me is that the Minister of Industry and Trade (Mr. Downey) in this province does not—

An Honourable Member: Stick to railroads.

Mr. Reid: I will get to railroads in a minute. The Minister of Industry and Trade does not seem to be playing a proactive role in the impending sale of Bristol. We want to make sure that these jobs, these high-skilled, high-paid jobs stay in our province. We do not want to see them leave to other jurisdictions, whether it be in Alberta or in the U.S. We want to make sure they stay here. I see a role here, a direct role for the Minister of Industry and Trade to be directly involved and not to go off on a different tangent.

An Honourable Member: He is always off on a tangent.

Mr. Reid: Well, that is why I am raising it. That is why I am raising it here, because I want the government to be actively involved, proactive in making sure that that plant stays here and those jobs stay here.

Bristol has taken out of this province through the contracts that have been allowed—and I say Bristol, I mean Rolls Royce, which is over in England—has taken billions of dollars out of Canada through the Bristol operations, at taxpayers' expense, I might add. Yet, that particular company is now abandoning its Bristol operations, which is somewhat suspect in itself, that they would not see to try and restructure or recapitalize that particular operation to make it move into the area that is nonmilitary in nature in the operations of the type of equipment that they build. So I hope the government is taking a proactive role to try and save that, but it is my understanding that that is not happening and that they are not working co-operatively with the particular employee representatives to try and make sure that this particular plant stays here. If I am wrong in that, please stand up in this Chamber and point out how you are trying to make sure that the Bristol operation stays in Winnipeg.

Now, getting over to railways that the member for Sturgeon Creek (Mr. McAlpine) raised a few moments ago, this pertains to the agricultural industry of the province as well. One of the things that has bothered me most about the backlog of ships that is now on the West Coast is that those number of ships there that are causing great expense to the Wheat Pool and the Wheat Board operations which is in turn being passed on to the farmers of the province, the producers, is at a great cost, when my understanding is that the rail equipment, from what I am being told, was not available and that we had during the colder months—and I know we have not quite moved out of that phase yet of the winter, by today's temperature anyway—in the railway equipment we had, one-third of our rolling stock was out of service. Our locomotive fleet was out of service during the winter months when we could have been moving the grain product to those ships that are now sitting on the West Coast ports.

That is a problem for me because in my particular constituency we repair that rolling stock equipment. That is high-skilled, relatively well-paid jobs in the province of Manitoba that are no longer here and that the farmers of the province are being disadvantaged as a result of the companies, both CN and CP, not to repair the rolling stock equipment. We have had only a few hundred jobs that are remaining in the Transcona plant operation, when we had several thousand people who used to repair that rolling stock. Now we are down to about 750 or 800 people. The motor car operations where the locomotives are repaired are not being repaired there and therefore cannot pull the grain cars to the port and fill up the ship so that the farmers can sell their product. So we have a problem here that needs to be dealt with.

I had hoped that the Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay) or the Minister of Industry and Trade (Mr. Downey) or even the Premier (Mr. Filmon) would have picked up the telephone and talked to the head of CN and CP Rail and said, listen, we have a serious problem here. Our province is being disadvantaged. Get those people back working in those plants and repair that equipment and get the grain to port so we can sell our product. Well, he has never said that in this House, never said it in this House.

So I leave that with the Minister of Highways and Transportation to make sure that we get the skilled tradespeople back working in that particular plant operation to get our people employed but, at the same time, to make sure that the farm produce is moved to market so that we can continue to export our product to all the markets of the world.

One of the things that I want to get back to was the jobs that are lost as well with respect to the 900 jobs that were lost during the month of January alone. Now, members opposite all know that it was Rogers Sugar or Molson's or the CP jobs going to Alberta, the Portage manufacturing company that closed, I mean these are serious job losses. These are well-paid jobs, high-skilled jobs on many of them, if not all of them, and yet these jobs have left the province. If you take a look at the revenue loss alone to the province, if you take an average salary for any of these people, which is \$35,000, which could be considerably higher than that, but I know it is not lower—if you take that \$35,000 figure for those approximately 900 jobs that were lost, we lost \$31 million in income for our people of this province when those industries either folded or moved. If you take a look at the revenue to the province alone, it is well over \$7 million in taxation revenue to the province. That is just on the income tax side. That is not counting the sales tax side for the people who would spend that money having been employed in those particular jobs.

* (1530)

So I take no comfort in the throne speech here when they talk about jobs. I take no comfort in the statistics that have been coming out where the government talks about 23,000 new jobs when I know full well looking at those jobs that most of them are part-time jobs at much lower pay level pay levels than had been paid at those companies that had folded. So we are going to have a serious downward spiral on the ability of the people of this province, the consumers of this province, to provide for their families at a lower income level, which means less revenues for the province to work with to provide the programs that we all need and want, and it is a downward spiral that will continue to erode the values of life that we treasure and cherish.

The throne speech document also talked about First Nations communities. I find it very cynical that you would put that much talk and effort into your throne speech after what you have done to First Nations programs in this province since 1988.

An Honourable Member: More than anybody else in the long history of Manitoba governments, certainly more than the New Democrats.

Mr. Reid: Yes, you have a long history all right, a long history of eroding and cutting the programs; that is what you have. If you take a look at the programs that have been cut here, and I have had an opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I feel very fortunate and privileged to have the opportunity to travel with my colleagues to the North, whether it be the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), Rupertsland (Mr. Robinson), Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans), The Pas (Mr. Lathlin), any one of the communities I have had the opportunity to travel and to meet many of the people in those communities, and I find that they are the most disadvantaged people that I have ever seen in any of my travels in the province of Manitoba. I can only reference back to my trip to Shamattawa a few years ago and saw the deplorable conditions that were occurring in that community and then listened first-hand to my colleague the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) when he raised the matter with the South Indian Lake water treatment plant broken down and no potable water for the residents, no clean drinking water for the residents in those communities. I find that deplorable that we would have a situation like that.

So, when you are talking about your infrastructure program, as you have talked about in the throne speech, I hope you are going to talk about sewer and water programs and how we can improve the quality of life in the communities, whether it be the northern communities, the First Nations communities, the rural communities or the communities in the city of Winnipeg that have deplorable or faltering or failing sewer and water programs. I think you should be investing those monies of the infrastructure program into programs like that so that we can have safe communities and safe water in our homes for ourselves and our families. [interjection] I am sorry, I do not follow the minister; I am talking about sewer and water

programs throughout the province of Manitoba. Northern Affairs communities, and even the city of Winnipeg has a crumbling infrastructure and you are talking about putting \$35 million into the Kenaston underpass, overpass, whatever you are going to build there, when we have streets and sewer and water systems that are crumbling around us. To me, it does not make any sense.

You put in place the funding and the programs to take care of your basic human needs first before you start going into the frills and luxuries that you had planned to do with that particular facility. I gave you options and constructive suggestion last session during the throne speech debate where you could redirect that money to solve the flooding problem, the sewer and water problems of south Transcona and solve your problem with the relocation of the Kenaston yards. No, you did not listen. You said it was a good idea, but here we are a year later, same point, no action. I will be interested to see when your budget comes out whether or not you do solve the flooding problem for south Transcona.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I know my time is very short. I hope the government will take the necessary steps to—and we have not heard about any progress on Winnport, something that you announced, I think it was in 1991. I do not see any progress on that. You are going to accumulate a bit of land. You are going to put a road out to it. I do not see any plans at this point to have any industry move in there. I do not see any value-added industry coming in. I have not heard about any contracts that you signed with businesses to come in, truck or rail their product in here and fly it out so we can have some two-way traffic. I have not heard anything about that, no announcement in this throne speech, none last year that I could recall. So I do not see any progress on that front.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I support the motion that was made by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), my Leader, with respect to the throne speech that is before us here today. I think this government could have gone a long way further to addressing the problems that are facing the people of Manitoba and the people of my community, something that was not done with this particular throne speech. I find that, for that reason, I cannot support this throne speech. Thank you.

Hon. James McCrae (Minister of Environment): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am honoured to be able to represent the people of Brandon West and take part in this discussion this afternoon on the Speech from the Throne given at the opening of the Third Session of this Thirty-sixth Legislature for the province. I would like right off to say a word which I hope will be read at some point by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor and commend the Lieutenant Governor for the fine job that he did in reading the Speech from the Throne and the exemplary way in which he carries out his duties and responsibilities as the vice-regal representative in the province of Manitoba.

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

I have had the pleasure in previous responsibilities to work closely with our Lieutenant Governor, and I can say that from that experience alone it is clear to me that our Lieutenant Governor is a committed and distinguished Canadian whose service to his country and to his people is appreciated and ought to be made note of at every opportunity.

I would like to join many of my colleagues, as well, in expressing my support for the work of the presiding officer of this House. That job, it has been made clear to me over my years in this place and as an employee for a number of years in the House of Commons, Mr. Acting Speaker, it has been made clear to me that the job of presiding officer is indeed an exacting and demanding one. The discharge of the duties of the Speaker of this Legislature has followed in the tradition of other distinguished and committed Speakers who I have seen over the years. No matter which way a Speaker finds himself or herself to the Chair of a Legislative Chamber, and that remains for debate and discussion, no matter who occupies that Chair, no matter how impartial or committed, that job can be made very difficult indeed if there is not a spirit of co-operation in a legislative body.

There is no question but that parties are going to disagree, individuals are going to disagree, and parliament provides us with an opportunity to make that known. But surely to goodness, Sir, as civilized human beings, we can work together to work out whatever differences we have or at least debate them in a civilized manner and to work within a framework that

is acceptable to the people we represent. I have my regrets too about the proceedings in this Chamber in the past few months, Mr. Acting Speaker, and I have seen low moments in parliamentary bodies and legislative bodies in the past. What we saw last November was an example of one of those low moments or what the British sometimes call those sticky patches we encounter from time to time.

I would not want to encounter a sticky patch like that very often in my parliamentary and legislative career, but I just make the comment that there needs to be a will amongst the members for a House to work. When things transpire with which one group or individual disagrees, it is not good enough and it is not credible simply to pick out one individual and blame that person for whatever it is that is upsetting you.

One might sometimes look at one's own behaviour or deportment and look for improvements there. I will tell you, I do it. I will try to do it. I do not want my deportment in this place to detract from a civilized process under which we can govern the people of this province, and I suggest that all of us could stand to look in the mirror from time to time and examine our own behaviour and our own deportment and our own attitudes about the way we do our work.

So I will commit to doing that, and I would ask all honourable members maybe to do the same thing from time to time. It is so easy simply to blame somebody else. I do not stand in my place today to spend a lot of time blaming and casting doubt on the credibility of some other person or group of people, but I do have a right to stand in my place in this House and state my view of the circumstances and the world as we find it today and to comment on the throne speech. I have that honour. I have been given that by the electors of Brandon West where the real power comes from. If we all would remember that in our dealings in this place, I think we would all conduct ourselves with just a little more civility. There is not a person in this Chamber that I cannot deal with on an amicable basis I suggest, and I would hope that we would all perhaps bring our behaviour to such a point where we could all say that same thing.

* (1540)

I detect in some honourable members a sense that oh, I do not want to work with these people. You know, that is not going to work for the benefit of the people of this province if we continue to have that kind of an attitude in our proceedings in this place. So I would like to use this opportunity to appeal to all honourable members to put the requirements, the wishes, the needs of our collective constituency, that is the people of Manitoba, ahead of our own personal likes and dislikes, our own personal vendettas or whatever it is we have that sometimes gets in the way of a rational view of the world.

It is a pleasure for me to welcome some new ministers to the cabinet in the Province of Manitoba and to comment on the performance or the contribution made by former members of our cabinet. I can do that without hesitation because the colleagues that I have been working with on the government side of the House have been very supportive of me in my undertakings as a minister and as a member trying to do the work of the people of Brandon West. So I very much appreciate that. On many occasions the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and the honourable member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) have been very kind not only personally to me but have been very supportive of those things that I needed support for for the benefit of the people of Brandon West, working in the context of a whole province of a million people.

But the people of Brandon West, I think, would join with me in extending thanks to the honourable member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and the honourable member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) for the contributions they have made that have had a direct beneficial impact on the people of Brandon West.

I would welcome my new colleagues in cabinets as well and wish them well in their responsibilities. The honourable Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe), the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura), the Minister of Northern Affairs and Native Affairs (Mr. Newman). They bring considerable skills to the task, and they have been given considerable responsibilities. I look forward to seeing them discharge their duties, but I can tell them that, if they enjoy the same kind of friendly and helpful support of colleagues around the cabinet and caucus table that I have enjoyed, Mr. Acting Speaker, you and

I can attest to the fact that working together can bring some benefit to our individual constituencies. So I can see that sort of relationship carrying forward with our new ministers as well as the ministers that have occupied the Treasury bench already in the past.

I would like to take a moment in this discussion this afternoon to call to the attention of honourable members and all the people of Manitoba the distinguished service and distinguished record of achievement of the Premier (Mr. Filmon) of the Province of Manitoba during these past nearly nine years. Manitoba has enjoyed unparalleled growth, unparalleled stability in economic and fiscal matters, a very responsible approach to government which is being noticed not only in the rest of Canada but in places well beyond the borders of our country.

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

I think it is a credit to the logical and compassionate approach that the First Minister of Manitoba takes to the governance of the people of this province, and I think that our children and our grandchildren will be grateful to all of us for having supported the thrusts and policy directions of the present administration in the province of Manitoba.

Much of what has been done in the past nine years has been done with the presence, shall we say, of honourable members opposite working in their capacity as members of Her Majesty's loyal opposition. From time to time debate gets a little more pointed than it should, and when that happens, we ought to correct ourselves, but honourable members opposite surely can admit that they, too, could stand to see some improvement in the way they carry out their work.

I believe total quality improvement is a day-to-day thing, and we can look at it not only in the running of our government departments and agencies but in the running of our own caucuses and our own work in this Legislative Chamber. Honourable members will have noted that I, too, have been the subject of change in the last changes in the cabinet in the Province of Manitoba, and after some five and a half years in Justice and other areas and nearly three and a half years in Health, I have been given significant responsibilities again, dealing

with the environment and dealing with the auto insurance company, and may I say I was delighted to have been asked to perform the functions of government House leader. I will talk a little bit more about that because that is something I had the opportunity to do once before between 1988 and 1990, during those minority years, and I remember working—

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): Those were the days.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Thompson says, those were the days, and those were the days in many ways. Yet today we have a different dynamic operating in our Legislature. We have a majority situation whereas then we had a minority situation, but many of the principles, if not all, adopted by our government in those days are still alive and well in our government today. That should be reflected in my work as government House leader.

I have worked with the honourable member for Thompson and the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) in the past in this capacity. Many of those days, I can honestly say, I enjoyed very much. There were moments then and I am sure there will be moments during this and whatever other sessions I get the opportunity to serve as House leader, but the key to serving the people of Manitoba is to get through those moments successfully and to have a result at the end of it all, whether you agree or not as you go into a discussion, to have some kind of result that will be beneficial for the people in the end. That is what I am here to do, and I know my colleagues the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) and the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) feel the same way about that. Sometimes we get bogged down a little and I hope that does not happen too often.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): We have an open mind.

Mr. McCrae: The member for Inkster says his mind is open and I know that of the honourable member for Thompson is too, so I look forward to working with them with results in mind at all times. I think if we do that we will do a good job. [interjection] The honourable member for Turtle Mountain (Mr. Tweed) has made reference to the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) and I do indeed

want to make a comment about that honourable member. I will make a note to do that just a little later in my comments.

As I say, it is a distinct honour to be able to serve in the capacities in which I serve, and I look to the people of Brandon West and to the people of Manitoba for their continued support as we go forward to maximize on the benefits that are clearly, clearly available to us as Manitobans. That potential, thanks to the work of people like my seatmate, the honourable Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey), Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson) and all the members of this government who have very carefully been part of the laying of a framework for the future, it is all part of the making of a strong future for a strong Manitoba so that those who come after us will never, ever be able to look at the history books and say, those rascals from the '90s, they did such a bad job, look at the mess we have.

* (1550)

It is my view and has been since 1985 when I first sought nomination for an opportunity to be in this place, it remains my view that we are here not only to govern for today but to make important decisions which will have an impact on future generations. As one who will see five of my children go forward now and in the future, I have a personal stake and I am sure most others in this Chamber can say the same thing, but we really have to mean that when we make those assertions. It is not good enough to use up the resources that we have, fiscal and otherwise today, and leave a legacy of harm, a legacy of disadvantage for those who come after us. I think there is going to be general agreement for that statement.

Where the debate gets interesting is how we all disagree on how we are going to achieve those things. But the point is, we have taken as Progressive Conservatives here in Manitoba a very firm position about the appropriate stewardship of the fiscal resources of the people of Manitoba. We have not done it in a knee-jerk way or in a careless fashion that does not allow for us to govern properly today so that we can store up for the future. No, we have to look after today too.

That is why if you look at the pattern evident in all of the budgets, and I will not get into the details of the one that is coming later on, but, well, I should not, because that is for another minister, and I do not want to break any rules in that regard.

I am sure, my crystal ball tells me that the budget we are going to see later on this week will be a budget that will be consistent with the kinds of things that honourable members and the people of Manitoba have been hearing and seeing from this particular government. That consistency is what allows the business community and that part of society that generates employment for the people of Manitoba, allows that sector to see that Manitoba is indeed a good place to invest your money, to create work, to respect the environment and to respect the people and to provide a future for everybody. That is the kind of message that has been consistent budget after budget after budget. I think we are going into budget No. 11 or so since 1988, and I dare say that budget will be encouraging again for people who are wondering and concerned about the quality of their lives in the future. This budget, I am sure, will be very encouraging.

But I do not need to go so far as the budget. We have a Speech from the Throne delivered by His Honour the Lieutenant Governor that provides us with the kind of blueprint that we need if we are wondering which kind of direction we are going. This, like any throne speech, can be accused of talking more about principles and not as much as honourable members opposite would like with respect to specifics. The specifics flow from a Speech from the Throne through the budget and through the legislation of a legislative session.

So there is no surprise about that, but the Speech from the Throne did a very good job, I suggest, in calling attention to issues of extreme importance in contemporary Manitoba, important matters like the future of aboriginal Manitobans, the future of children in Manitoba, and that is exactly the right kind of thrust. We have laid a good groundwork for the fiscal development, continued economic development of our province, and we have done a good job, as well, in providing for the present day health, education and social service needs of the people of Manitoba, but there remain certain segments of our society that I think could benefit from further attention.

I refer, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to some of those children in our society who are disadvantaged, and I know that there are issues related to aboriginal Manitobans that have not totally been resolved. I am proud of our record of achievement in these areas, but there is more to do. As long as there is a problem left, there is more to be done. So I appreciate very much the emphasis placed on those types of issues in the Speech from the Throne which was delivered at the beginning of this session. I look forward to working on measures that will bring into being more and more services and approaches that will create a better opportunity for the young Manitobans of today so that they can share in the bounty and the potential that will clearly be there for the Manitoba of the future.

Here is where the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) comes in because today he rose in his place because he thought maybe he could make some kind of point in this House with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). Well, he should know better by now because each and every time the honourable member for Brandon East has attempted to be critical of the fiscal policy of our government, he has been literally blown out of the water in respect to the arguments he has made. He is having a tougher and tougher time being one of those negative people that sometimes characterizes honourable members in opposition— whatever party they happen to be.

An Honourable Member: Jim, you were pretty negative when you were in opposition.

Mr. McCrae: Well, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is right. He says I was pretty negative when I was in the opposition. I remember it well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, yes, I was. I was pointing out the negative aspects of the New Democratic government of that day. I like to think I did it in a positive way, but others will have their judgment about that to make. But the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), as has been pointed out to us by the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli), has been around for many, many years. Yes, he has. He has served the people of Brandon East for many, many years as a member of this Legislature, but there are times when even the honourable member for Brandon East ought to know that you should not ask a question

unless you have some sense of which direction the answer is going to be coming from.

The honourable member for Brandon East delights us on this side of the House because he raises questions about fiscal responsibility with the Minister of Finance who has a record virtually unequalled anywhere in North America representing this particular government, because the tax freeze that has been going on in Manitoba I believe is the longest tax freeze anywhere in North America. That is not something just to crow about, but it is something that if it is true, which it is, there are a lot of other indicators that are going to show up as a result of that fact alone, and one of them is growth.

The honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) forgot all about growth today in his questions, but he has an unfortunate habit of leading people to believe things that are not so. Now, I hope that was parliamentary enough for the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), but the fact is, he calls attention to a budget deficit back in the earlier part of our term in government, and he calls that one of the biggest or the biggest deficit in the history of Manitoba. He forgets to tell anybody who is listening that over \$500 million of that deficit was because of interest on debt run up by the honourable member for Brandon East and his cronies in the Pawley government. That is what he conveniently forgets.

So sometimes I think, you know, the honourable member for Brandon East might be better if he went and asked questions about something else, because every time he raises questions about fiscal matters in this province he simply and clearly loses the debate before he even gets going, because the record of the government he supported—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The decorum is starting to slide, my honourable colleagues. May I ask you to hold it back to yourselves. You will each have an opportunity to get up and put your voice on the record.

The honourable minister, to continue.

* (1600)

Mr. McCrae: Well, I certainly hope it was not anything I said. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that brought about a decline in the otherwise rather pristine decorum we have seen around this Chamber in the last few days. There again, there are exceptions to that, momentary lapses on the part of some honourable members, but certainly you do not see much evidence on this side of the House of that, but it may be that I said something that provoked honourable members opposite, and that is what happens sometimes. When a statement comes out that reflects the truth of a particular matter, it is embarrassing, and then all of a sudden the decorum does decline just a bit.

So I suppose it could be said in a rather circular way that I am the cause of whatever disorder there might have been in here this afternoon, but I am simply raising issues related to comments made by the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), and it seems that every time the honourable member for Brandon East comes forward and brings forward information which to virtually everybody in the world is not true but to him it is, it does create some sense of disorder in the House.

The honourable member is relatively famous around here for bringing forward statistics; the honourable member for Brandon East, that is. He is an economist and this is his life's work, and it is always a question—I mean, you can show an economist a graph or a number or two, and they can come to some kind of conclusion. [interjection]

Well, the honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) does not want me to pick on economists. Somebody else is not going to want me to—the member for St. Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) will not want me to pick on lawyers; neither will the Minister of Justice (Mr. Toews), so I will just go after the honourable member for Brandon East then in his capacity as a member of the Legislative Assembly. [interjection] The honourable member for Brandon East and I have this theory which has been generated by the Brandon Sun. The honourable member for Thompson is referring to it now. I do not know if it is true or not, but I suppose some people might see it that way.

I would like to take a moment, since our rules do not allow this in nonpolitical statements and the Deputy

Premier (Mr. Downey) did not make any comment about it earlier on today, but a fairly significant event took place in our country yesterday. I would like to offer the congratulations I am sure of every member of this House to Premier Ralph Klein and his team in the province of Alberta.

There might be some people around who are surprised with the result. My only surprise with the result was that it was not even a greater result for Premier Klein and his party. Now, the pundits will look at the turnout and all the different numbers and make judgments about what went wrong for the Conservatives. This is a typical response. What went wrong; they only got 63 out of the 83 seats; oh, is this not awful.

I remember the time when Premier Getty of the time had not been successful in his riding and another member resigned his seat, a member from Stettler resigned his seat, so that the Premier could run in that riding and regain a seat in the Legislature so that he could lead it. I think it was the CBC Television or CBC Radio, I am not—it may have been that particular media outlet that made the point that, as we were leading up to this by-election result in Stettler, this one could be close. It looks like the Liberals are sneaking up and they are going to punish those Tories, and be darned if Mr. Getty did not get 70 percent of the vote in that by-election. I guess to that particular media 70 percent is close, and that was the way they ran that.

But, really and truly, congratulations are in order for the people of Alberta for showing the judgment they did, and in areas where they showed a different judgment I think the next few years will bear out that, you know, maybe next time it will be just a little different for the Progressive Conservatives of Alberta.

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

I make reference to Alberta for more than one reason. Members of my family live in the province of Alberta, and our people—my grandfather was a charter citizen of the province of Alberta in 1905, having emigrated from the western side of the province of Quebec, so that when it comes to a national debate I have always felt that I have a say—and we all do—but I certainly do too

because my people were from Quebec initially when they came to Canada many, many years ago.

But I think the people of Alberta have said yes to things like balanced budgets. Well, what do we offer here in Manitoba? We offer balanced budgets. What do they offer in the province of Alberta that the people said yes to? Get rid of whatever debt there is out there, and what are we offering here? We offer to the people of Manitoba, let us get rid of the debt. Ordinary people see that as a really good idea. If I have any criticism today for members of the opposition, if I have any at all, it would be that they have turned their backs on the most fundamental part of government that the people of Manitoba support, and that is balanced budgets, getting rid of debt, and living within your means, while at the same time you show a proper regard for priorities in government, those being spending on health, on education, and family services that we need to have in a civilized society as we head into the 21st Century.

So I congratulate the people of Alberta for their exceedingly good judgment. They are one of four provinces that have that kind of judgment when we consider that Prince Edward Island is, I guess, the newest member of that group of provinces that have shown the wisdom to elect Progressive Conservative governments. We see it in Ontario; we see it in Manitoba; we see it in Alberta. You know, Madam Speaker, if the honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) continues to be unsuccessful in talking any sense into the heads of his federal colleagues in Ottawa, we are going to see more of this going on in Canada. We are going to see Nova Scotia. We are going to see New Brunswick. We are going to see Saskatchewan and all these other provinces joining that alternative that says there is a better way to run this country and to run our provinces.

So I hope the honourable member for Inkster will take that message to his federal friends.

An Honourable Member: Consider it done.

Mr. McCrae: Consider it done. So I think the honourable member for Inkster is seeing some wisdom in what I am saying here today. So I have touched on what I think is, to me as an individual Manitoban, Madam Speaker—I have touched on some points that I

think are extremely important. I could go through line by line this throne speech that was delivered, but surely what could be—I do not know what it is that kept blinders on us collectively that would have allowed us to get into a position where a balanced budget is somehow a virtue.

Madam Speaker, a balanced budget should be a matter of course. A balanced budget should be the ordinary way of doing business. When you are left with the kind of albatross that New Democrats left us with in 1988, it should come as no surprise that through careful planning you should be able to balance the budget in a reasonable period of time.

The honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) talks about an unbalanced budget in the earlier part of this administration, Madam Speaker. Is he suggesting we should have taken from the Health department like he was doing when he was cutting out the hospital beds at the Brandon General Hospital, providing no alternatives in those days? Is the honourable member for Brandon East suggesting that is how we should have balanced the budget back in 1992 or whatever year he was referring to. Well, I do not think he is, but that is what we are left with, without regard for priorities. If that is what the honourable member is suggesting, let him come out and say that, but he does not do that. He does not go that far and he will not. The honourable member for Brandon East has been around politics too long to offer that kind of an alternative.

Let us talk about taxes just for a moment. Honourable members opposite may feel a little uncomfortable, and I would ask them, if they are uncomfortable as I talk about taxes in Manitoba, just to maybe think about something else while I talk about this, because I know this is troublesome for them. After taxation practices the likes of which Manitobans have never, ever previously seen nor since, and hopefully never will again, under the New Democrats of the Pawley-Doer administration, Madam Speaker, the greatest tax grab in the history of this province was in 1987 under that government, and the honourable member for Brandon East has the gall today to suggest that we had a deficit. Well, I wonder how that happened. Look in the mirror, I should say, if honourable members are still listening. But the greatest

tax grab in the history of Manitoba was imposed on the people of this province in 1987.

* (1610)

Contrast the record of the New Democrats—how many tax increases were there over those years?

An Honourable Member: Twenty-two.

Mr. McCrae: Just 22? I thought there were more than that.

An Honourable Member: Thirty-two.

Mr. McCrae: Thirty-two, 42, I do not know, but there were dozens of tax increases brought forward by New Democrats when they were in office.

An Honourable Member: Thirty-six.

Mr. McCrae: The honourable member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) says 36, and if we can take anybody's word for it, we should be able to take his, Madam Speaker, because he is a party outside both the Conservatives or the New Democrats.

That is the reason the Pawley government ceased to exist, Madam Speaker, in 1988, that, and their attitude towards the Crown corporations which was an attitude of drive them down, increase rates for people so that they will not want us around anymore. [interjection] The honourable member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) should know better than to be defending that sort of record because he was not part of that cabinet. He should not have to take full responsibility, not as much as the honourable member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), that is for sure, for the way the administration of the government was handled in those days. The honourable member for Thompson, if he had been listened to, I suggest there might have been some differences, but it still would not have been a very good government, I am sorry to say. It would have taken more than the sage advice of the honourable member for Thompson to redeem that government.

Indeed, Madam Speaker, the people of Manitoba spoke out about that government and at that time wanted to see a change in the thinking of government.

While I have spoken glowingly about the present administration, and I will continue to do that, no doubt, no government is perfect, and it is the ability of public people to recognize that there is always room for improvement that brings about improvement. When one stands smugly in one's place, as I saw in this place for two years as I watched the Pawley administration for two years decline as they hollered louder and louder about how great they were, there is something that people see through in that.

People do see through that approach, Madam Speaker, and I do, too. So while I think we are on the right track in virtually every area, I know there are areas where we could use more advice, and we seek advice from Manitobans.

I was going to spend more time on health, but we have a new Health minister who will be able to deal with that matter quite nicely, I am sure. I have a lot of confidence in our new Health minister. I hope I have not left him with matters that are going to be beyond his ability to handle, but I believe that he is up to the task. It is a very, very important responsibility. I congratulate him from the bottom of my heart, and I certainly wish him well. I know he is an extremely compassionate and caring Manitoban, and you need that in a Health minister. You also need somebody who has the smarts to be able to spend the dollars that are available smarter. It is true that he has increasing numbers of dollars all the time for Health. The spending on health in Manitoba has climbed and climbed, but nonetheless the demands climb too, and we know that.

So I wish him well, and I wish all honourable members well as we embark on this Thirty-sixth Legislature or this third session of this Legislature, and I hope that divine providence has been called upon here, but it will call for a little help from ourselves, as well, and I implore honourable members to keep that in mind as we go forward to do the work of the people of Manitoba. Thank you.

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to rise today to put a few words on the record in terms of the Speech from the Throne that was presented by the government and read in this House by the Lieutenant Governor just last week.

I would like to begin by welcoming all my colleagues back after our break and wish them all well. I want to, in particular, congratulate the new ministers that were appointed: the Minister of Energy and Mines (Mr. Newman), the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Radcliffe) and the new Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura). As well, I would like to just pay tribute and thank the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) for their work on behalf of the people of Manitoba in their roles as cabinet ministers. It is fairly apparent to me that all members opposite, those in the executive capacity, are in a very tenuous position. As the Premier (Mr. Filmon) said today, seniority does not count over there, and if you do not agree with the boss, well, the boss will simply remove you and put someone else in your place.

But, Madam Speaker, I must also talk about some of the arrogance of the members opposite. We have sat here—I have been here now for six and a half years—and we have had to put up with some of the barbs from some of the members opposite and some of the ministers who were removed. After being in their position for a while, it becomes apparent that they become arrogant in terms of how they view the opposition and how they view any individual out there who has raised criticism with the policies of their particular government.

I also want to, of course, recognize the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Pallister). He has decided for his own reasons, I suppose, to leave us and to go on to what, I assume, he figures will be bigger and better things, of course. He is seeking a federal seat. Of course, while he is sitting in this House, his opponents are out there knocking on doors, and I suggest to him that perhaps he should get out there as well. [interjection] Well, my colleague from Transcona suggests that perhaps he should resign, and I think that is a fair enough thing to do. I recall the former member for St. Johns and the former member for Osborne, Mr. Alcock, and Ms. Wasylcia-Leis. They both resigned to seek their federal seats, Madam Speaker.

But I do wish the member for Portage well. I do not often wish Progressive Conservatives well in their election chances, but I do not particularly care much for the extreme policies of the Reform Party or of that

member that we have here in Manitoba. The Reform Party is set out to basically show that government does not work, and their role here in Canada is, in fact, to try to dismantle the federal government, something that we see the federal Liberals about to do following on the heels, of course, of the Mulroney administration.

Anyway, Madam Speaker, the throne speech is read here and placed before us, and it is a general outline of the administration's general intentions and directions of government. Though it gives a glowing praise to itself in terms of the government, it talks about the prosperity and the improved quality of life, unfortunately that prosperity and that improved quality of life is not shared by all Manitobans. It is shared, unfortunately, by very few Manitobans.

That is apparent in my own constituency of Selkirk as I work there with my residents and my constituents and a number of individuals who come to see me every week because they do not have secure employment. In some cases they do not have any employment, individuals who are on social assistance who are finding themselves faced with tougher and tougher demands upon them in terms of finding work and so on. In fact, many times they are completely without any assistance at all, and it gets very difficult, whether it also deals with the issue of public housing and some concerns they raised about the level and the condition and the quantity of public housing in the Selkirk area.

Madam Speaker, I want to just mention something here and that would be the point that was raised by my friend the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and that is the potential for flooding in the Red River Valley. I refer, of course, to a Free Press article from Tuesday, March 11, and it reads: Flood fears spark race to move grain. Another one from February 27 of this year: Flood fears mounting. Rivers to surpass the highest levels in 100 years.

* (1620)

It is important for us and for all members in this House to recognize the potential threat of flooding in the Red River Valley. We recognize that from what happened here last year where there were many, many communities in southern Manitoba around the Morris area and north of the town of Selkirk in the R.M. of St.

Clements, the R.M. of St. Andrews, that were severely affected by the blockage of water flowing up the Red and the fact that there was a quick melt, and we ended up with severe flooding in those particular areas and dislocation of individuals and millions of dollars of property damage. I want to raise that again. That is something that we on this side of the House will be watching. We offer up, I know that I do and my colleagues do, our assistance in any way to help the government, to work with the government to ensure that an event such as occurred last year does not happen again.

We realize that we are dealing with a situation that is beyond our control in a lot of ways. We do, after all, live in the Red River Valley, and the Red River Valley is formed by runoff. In fact, you know, there are areas within the town of Selkirk and north of the town of Selkirk where there is development, is in fact the flood plain for the Red River. So it is a difficult problem, no denying that, but I just urge the government to work with us in any way to ensure that the residents there are warned of any potential flooding and that any of their concerns are handled in a very appropriate manner.

I also want to raise with the Minister of Northern Affairs (Mr. Newman)—and that is a suggestion offered to me by an individual from Winnipeg here. He offered up a suggestion to use a hovercraft to go on the ice and to break up the ice, thereby reducing some of the blockage. The theory is that, if the Red River is broken up, Madam Speaker, the potential for flooding would be somewhat reduced. I realize that it would improve the flow of the water from the basin to the lake.

I understand from a letter from the Minister of Natural Resources that in fact they are looking at that. They are looking at that, and I think there is a potential for that to work this year. I know that the ice is considerably thinner than what it was last year. I understand last year at the mouth of the river the ice was between four and five feet thick. I understand this year it is about half that. It is about half that, so those are encouraging signs. That is an encouraging development. In fact, the ice is half that, two or three feet thick. There is a good chance that the ice will break up and we will have a normal, a relatively normal melt, a relatively normal spring.

So, Madam Speaker, that is something I wanted to raise, and I also want to offer up that I will be holding a public meeting in Selkirk a week and a half from now, and members are invited to attend. The community will be invited, as will government officials, as will municipal officials from St. Clements, Selkirk, and St. Andrews, who will be participating in this public forum as an information-sharing session; have the province there to provide an update in terms of any potential flooding.

I recognize that is an imprecise science. It could rain. We could have a quick melt. There are a number of factors that go into making a prediction, but all the indications so far are that we could be heading towards the century's worst flood. People like to talk back to, well, '79, and 1950, but I believe it was in 1836 where the fledgling community here in the area that we now live in, Manitoba and Red River Valley, that there were only two areas in the whole Red River Valley that were above water. That was Stonewall and Bird's Hill Park, and there is no reason why that could not happen again. Madam Speaker, there is no reason why, as I said, that could not happen again. There are trends. It goes up and it goes down, the water level, and I understand that at this particular stage we are in fact going up in terms of precipitation and in terms of the potential for flooding.

So I just wanted to raise that issue. It is very important to the constituents of Selkirk and the constituents who live a little bit further north of our town in St. Andrews, and, of course, in St. Clements.

Madam Speaker, like many of my colleagues, I feel it is necessary to heed the wisdom of my constituents and follow their advice and their suggestions, so I took some time over the last number of weeks to do a survey of my constituents, and I think it is incumbent upon members to ensure that their concerns are brought forward into this Chamber. I would like to just take a few moments now to read the questions and the responses of my constituents.

The first question that was raised in my survey dealt with the new Health minister scrapping the cuts to hospitals, Pharmacare, and home care, and in fact, Madam Speaker, 80 percent of the constituents of Selkirk—and I am talking Selkirk, and Lockport, and St.

Andrews, and West St. Paul. I had a fair, a good response from constituents, and they represented the whole area. I had responses from Selkirk, and St. Andrews, West St. Paul, and Lockport, and they felt that in fact the government had gone too far and that 80 percent of them feel that the cuts should be stopped.

The next question dealt with the election of regional health authorities. Now, we recall that when this issue was first announced, the government made a commitment that all members of that board would be elected, but, subsequent to that, it was revealed to us and acted on by the administration that the board members were appointed. We have been given numerous examples in this House of the fact that the majority of these board members are members or supporters of the government opposite. Madam Speaker, 81 percent of those who responded to my survey felt that, in fact, the government should have acted on its initial recommendation and had all the board members elected by Manitobans, as opposed to the political appointments by the members opposite.

This next one, Madam Speaker, I am sure we will all find very interesting. It deals with the election of a Speaker in this House. This received 90 percent. That, in fact, was the highest. Of all the questions that I asked, that was the highest percentage of yes. Ninety percent of my constituents feel that, in fact, the system that we have here now, of the Speaker being appointed by the Premier, should be abolished.

In fact, there was a private member's bill brought in by my colleague the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) calling for the Speaker to be elected. We recognize the House of Commons in Canada, the House of Commons in Britain, and I believe five or six provincial legislatures across this country have an elected Speaker. Ninety percent of my constituents who responded to this survey feel that we should here in Manitoba as well.

* (1630)

The next question deals with the property tax increases, and it was a very topical question. We are dealing with this now as school boards across this province finalize their budgets. They recognize that over a number of years the provincial administration

has been either reducing or freezing their commitment to public education in this province, and the question deals with, are the cutbacks resulting in increased property taxes for residents of Selkirk and West St. Paul and Lockport and St. Andrews? Eighty-three percent of those who responded feel that it is, that the government cutbacks to education, whether they are direct cutbacks or education freezes, are resulting in increased property taxes.

The next question deals with the highway system; in particular Highway No. 9 between Provincial Road 101, which is the Perimeter, and Little Britain Road. Now, the government had during the election campaign of '95, the Minister of Highways, at that time, suggested to the media and to the residents—of course, it was in the middle of the election campaign—that, yes, he would like to see the complete upgrade of that particular road. You know, anybody who has travelled that, and I travel it, of course, very frequently, will recognize the dangerous elements of that particular stretch of highway, basically one big four-lane highway. There have been, unfortunately, many serious and tragic accidents over the last number of years on that road, and it is particularly dangerous in the winter.

But, Madam Speaker, the minister knows—I have written to him many times. I have raised it in the House, and I raised it in Estimates with him and his predecessor in his job as Highways minister, and they kept saying, well, next year, next year, next year, and here we are once again, and it is next year, next year, next year. But they did make a commitment, and they made a commitment of \$150,000 to do some spot paving, which, I suggest, is really the bare minimum of commitment that they could make to upgrade that very important road, that very busy road.

Madam Speaker, I will commend the government on the paving of the River Road between No. 9 and Lockport. I understand that is going to be paved, and it is a concern that is raised to me by my constituents. Again, this time of the year and as we begin to approach summer, the road itself is prone to serious decay, dust and so forth. So I recognize that and the minister was saying I did not give him credit in the Selkirk paper. Well, in fact, I did. It is just that the Selkirk paper did not pick up on that. I do not want to be completely negative.

The final question—again it was 80 percent. Eighty percent of those who responded feel that road should be rebuilt, and I recognize that it is not a small financial commitment. It is \$30-odd million, and I recognize that is a lot of money. It is not something that I pretend to, you know, want done overnight, but it has to be done. Obviously, it has to be amortized over many years, and the longer we wait the more expensive it eventually will cost. So they put on \$150,000 worth of asphalt, and I recognize and appreciate that, but it is simply repairing. I think they should have used that money instead as a down payment on actually rebuilding that particular stretch of Highway No. 9.

The final question deals with MTS and the shares of MTS. Now that it has been revealed that the majority of the shares are now owned by outsiders and not owned by Manitobans, will we see higher phone rates and job losses? Our rates have already gone up \$2. They are scheduled to go up again, I believe, next year, and just this spring, I believe it was in January or February, MTS, the new Manitoba Telecom, has announced that they are going to reduce their workforce by 170 people, Madam Speaker, and this is after we were raising this issue in the House last year time and time again, my colleagues were—we are going to see higher phone rates; we are going to see job loss under a private system. Members opposite said, oh, no, no, you are fearmongering; you are not going to see that. You are not going to see that. You guys are wrong.

Within a matter of months, our predictions have come true. We have seen an increase in rates, and 170 people will be out of work by the government's privatization, and how many more to come? I really fear that. But 88 percent of those who responded to the questions, that particular question, feel that yes—well, I mean, it is easy for them to answer that considering it is happening right before them—we will see higher phone rates and we will see job losses.

So, Madam Speaker, I want to thank all my constituents who responded to the survey. There were many, many very useful comments that I will take from them, and I appreciate them acting upon that.

I do want to talk a little bit about some of the aspects of the throne speech. I want to talk about one line, on page 7, where the government talks about they will be

expanding services in chemical dependency programs. I want, in particular, to bring attention to the members opposite about the plight of the Selkirk Healing Centre. Now, the Selkirk Healing Centre was established a number of years ago—in fact, it is two years ago, in '93—on the grounds of the former St. John's Boys' School which is very well known in the Selkirk area. It is, again, on the grounds of the former Dinaver [phonetic] Hospital.

The Healing Centre was established in 1993 to help individuals deal with their addiction problems. Madam Speaker, the Healing Centre was established, as I said, and it was a contract that the Healing Centre had, or St. Norbert Foundation had, with the federal government, with the Medical Services Branch of the federal government, for 20 treatment beds. In 1996, it was announced that the federal government was going to cut that contract in half to fund only 10 beds and as of June of this year zero beds.

This is the commitment of the federal government to aboriginal people, Madam Speaker. I think it is very plain, when one sees that, their lack of commitment, and that has a potential currently of a layoff of nine jobs and has put in jeopardy the remaining 20-odd jobs. I want to bring it to the attention of the members opposite and to all members of the House that in fact 90 percent of those individuals that work there are aboriginal. I know several of them. Many of them are from the Selkirk community, and it seems odd that the federal government would do this. We have an institution that is up and running that is providing a different approach to dealing with this very difficult addiction problem that people have, and they take a different approach as opposed to the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba or other healing centres or treatment centres. They take a more holistic approach.

Maybe there is a possibility and maybe there is something that the members opposite can do. I do not know. I wait, of course, for the budget to be announced on Friday, but I suggest that maybe there is something they could do to help the centre out. It was an issue that I raised here in 1990 I believe with the former Minister of Health that they would look at this facility and perhaps establish some type of a treatment centre there. At that time he was not interested, but here we are, we have a centre there now. The so-called bricks

and mortar are in place. There is a well-trained staff that is currently there. It provides—well, it used to provide—secure employment for a number of individuals in my community and the broader Selkirk community as well. Provided jobs for, like I said, 90 percent of the people there were aboriginal.

An Honourable Member: What is the name of this place? What is the name?

Mr. Dewar: Selkirk Healing Centre.

An Honourable Member: On the old St. John's Cathedral Boys' School, or whatever.

Mr. Dewar: Yes. But perhaps they could look at—and they mention this in the throne speech. Now I am not sure what their intentions are with chemical dependency programs, but here we have a centre that is in trouble, one that is currently in operation that perhaps the province could look at, and perhaps they could redirect some of their money into maintaining the centre and keeping it going. It treats sniffers, which my understanding is—I am trying to learn about this—but apparently the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba will treat drugs and they will treat alcohol abusers, but apparently they will not treat sniffers, but they do here.

* (1640)

An Honourable Member: Do they treat gamblers?

Mr. Dewar: No, they do not treat gamblers. This deals strictly with substance abuse. Again, they say they have a waiting list of like 300 individuals out there which speaks I suppose ill of our society. They also provided support for adult men and women, but since they have had their beds reduced, adult men and women have been moved out I think to St. Norbert and to other places. Currently they provide services to youth and males at this point. I think they have 20 there currently.

I was speaking with Mary Brown out there. I met with her last week. She is a program manager. She also informs me that there are 60 boys on the waiting list. Where the AA philosophy is a short-term one, I understand this is more of a long term. In fact, if they have a young person there, they would invite the family

to come in. So it is not only one person that is healed; it is the whole family. Often that is the problem where someone comes and is removed from their home community; they come to a centre and they are treated and then they go back to their home community, and unless they find that their environment has changed, they may, unfortunately, go back to their former habits.

So it is quite a unique centre, and I want to raise it with the members opposite. You mention again in the throne speech about chemical dependency programs. The Healing Centre is a place that is up and running. It is unfortunate that the federal Liberal government is withdrawing their support, but you know I am raising it with the members opposite. They provide counselling, education, and work experience. I do recognize that. They use traditional native healing techniques—[interjection] In a way, because the majority of the clients are aboriginal. But I quite frankly think anybody there could benefit from this type of healing, from this type of treatment. I was there when the place was opened, and I believe our M.P. was there and he was up on stage touting his government's commitment to this. Unfortunately, it was very short-lived. I wonder, why would they raise everyone's hopes and expectations and then dash it so quickly in two years? Shame on you, shame on you, the members for the Liberals.

I also want to talk about, and this falls under the responsibility of this particular government, and that is—again I got this from the Speech from the Throne, where they are going to improve the services, and they talk again about dialysis. I want to draw to the attention of the Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) the need for a dialysis unit at the Selkirk General Hospital. Many area residents travel to Winnipeg. Every couple of days they usually go. I know a friend of mine travels in on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. In fact I gave her a ride home last night, but it is difficult for her to arrange travel to and from Winnipeg each day. It is difficult for these patients. They have to spend at least six hours at the Health Sciences Centre receiving that dialysis, the lifesaving medical technique, but it is very difficult for individuals to make that trip, to ask family or friends, unless they have their own rides.

This individual that I know, Mrs. Elsie Bear, is well known to the members opposite. In fact, it was the

members opposite, and I do congratulate the government for doing this, but they awarded her the Order of the Buffalo Hunt five years ago. Now Mrs. Bear unfortunately requires this treatment Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and she has to find her way in. She has lived in Selkirk now for over 52 years and she is proud of her independence and living in her own home, but she is finding it very difficult to travel in those three days a week for this much needed medical treatment.

Apparently there is a machine in the Selkirk Hospital. It is one that you operate on your own, and that will not serve the needs of Mrs. Bear and others who will have a problem doing that. So I write to the minister and I raise it with him today that in fact when he again speaks of that—in the throne speech, they talk about expanding services in terms of dialysis—that they look at that particular issue and consider funding. I would assume that if there was a machine there they would require someone to actually use it, to operate it and to provide that much needed assistance, much needed chemical treatment to my constituents. There are many of them who travel in from Selkirk. Many travel in from the broader area in the Interlake who have to travel into Winnipeg because they do not have that treatment in their home communities.

Madam Speaker, my Leader, in the opening of the session, announced a number of alternatives. The members opposite like to say, well, all you guys do is criticize, knowing very well when they were on this side that all they ever did was criticize us when we were over there. So we recognize that as fairly hollow, but it is important, I realize, for us to offer alternatives, which we do.

You know, we mentioned a Healthy Child plan which would put children first. Now, to me that is a very responsible and a worthy program. As well, a health reform accountability act, a personal care home bill of rights. Now, there is a topical subject. We are finding out over the last number of days that owners of private personal care homes have been donating significant amounts of money to the campaigns of the government members. One would argue, I think, that they are using that influence with the government in terms of health care delivery in this province.

We have also talked about an all-party committee on economic development. We had an all-party committee on Meech Lake. We had an all-party committee on constitutional issues. There is no denying that constitutional issues are important, but what is more important than the economic well-being of our constituents and of all Manitobans. So we offer this, a committee on economic co-operation. Of course, the government, who knows what they will do? We are hopeful, Madam Speaker, that they would join with us in an all-party way to deal with some of the economic issues that we face as Manitobans.

We recognize, and it has been referred to by my colleagues, the number of plant closures over the last number of months, well over a thousand jobs. This apparently is the great Canadian comeback, Madam Speaker, where the Premier (Mr. Filmon) is yelling and chasing the trucks, yelling, come back, come back. That is the great Canadian comeback.

* (1650)

So we think, Madam Speaker, that all parties should get together and work together in attracting and keeping vital industries here in the province. This is what we think we should do in an all-party way. As I said, it is good enough for the Constitution but not good enough for economic co-operation and economic development. We are offering that up, and I think in a very responsible way.

We are also going to be bringing resolutions forward to implement some of the recommendations of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The throne speech did mention some of the concerns faced by aboriginal people, but, Madam Speaker, I do not think that aboriginal people or members on this side of the House are fooled by these comments made by the members opposite.

I mean, I have been here for six and a half years, Madam Speaker, and I recall in 1993, in that budget, where the then Minister of Finance eliminated the annual funding to Manitoba's 11 Indian and Metis Friendship Centres, and that resulted in the layoff of, I believe, 30 individuals, and this is just one of them. I do not think the members opposite were ever inside of

a friendship centre. They know nothing about it because the rationale at that time, they said, oh, they are an advocacy group. An advocacy group, that is all they are. Let us cut their funding to them.

Well, they know that—well, they should know, we at least on this side of the House know that friendship centres provide a far more important service to individuals and their communities other than advocacy work, Madam Speaker. I am just talking, in particular, about the one in Selkirk, and I visited the one in Dauphin. I like the one in Dauphin, and I was up in Riverton, and there is one there, and Swan River. I was in The Pas; I was in Flin Flon.

Friendship centres, Madam Speaker, provided assistance to elders and the elderly, the homeless. They had programs for young people, socially disadvantaged, families in crisis, housing relocation, fine-option, counselling, court assistance. These are all the programs that the friendship centres provided, and the government, oh, you are an advocacy group, you are advocacy. That is all you do. Let us cut your funding.

So now here we are, four or five years later, and they are making a little token announcement here regarding providing assistance to aboriginal people, the recognition, after ignoring the AJI for years. It is on a shelf some place in the minister's office there. Access programs were cut, BUNTEP, New Careers.

The issue of northern roads has been raised by my colleagues and the other problems that are faced, and I have had a chance to travel. I thank my colleagues for giving me that chance to go and travel and visit some of the northern Manitoba reserves and northern communities as well. You see, while you are up there, really the Third World conditions that exist within our own province. It is shameful, Madam Speaker. It really is shameful to see that.

But, Madam Speaker, we do not hold a lot of hope out for this government when it comes to improving the plight of aboriginal people. There was some recognition, some mention of it in the throne speech. But we can only hope, and it is our job, of course, to offer up suggestions and to raise the issues. They could make a considerable sign of their recognition and their

support by looking at the healing centre, as I mentioned, just north of Selkirk. I have information. You could go out there and meet with them. That probably would blunt some of our criticism, I would suggest, if they were to look at centres like this and provide some provincial assistance to meet with them to see if there is something that they could do. I offer that up again as a positive suggestion to the government.

You know, their track record on this issue is not a good one when you look at what they have done over the last number of years. Again, they mention aboriginal people. For the most part, all they did was they attacked the federal government. The majority of the Speech from the Throne dealt with attacking the federal government and reannouncing some of their programs, Madam Speaker, and it did not deal a lot with what is going on currently here in the province. As I said, they talk about prosperity and improved quality of life, but a lot of the people that I talk to in Selkirk do not share that, unfortunately.

Madam Speaker, I just want to say in closing that I hope the government will heed some of the suggestions offered by myself and some of my colleagues, but, unfortunately, I will heed the advice of my constituents and I will have to vote against this throne speech.

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to be back for this session of the Legislature and to welcome you again in your capacity as the Speaker of our House. I want no doubt at all to be on the record that I am a member who supports fully you as a Speaker of this Assembly and am very proud to do so; a Speaker who has, I think, shown great courage in having to fulfil her responsibilities in the most difficult of times.

Madam Speaker, I am also pleased to congratulate my colleagues who joined the cabinet of this province. One recognizes, after having been in cabinet for a number of years, what a great privilege it is to serve in the Executive Council of the Province of Manitoba. It is an honour that is afforded citizens rarely, and it is, for someone who is the youngest member of cabinet and looking at my own place on the order of precedence—

An Honourable Member: You are starting to realize you may not be the youngest anymore.

Mr. Praznik: Well, realizing how quickly time seems to pass, and changes take place. I would also like to pay a tribute to two of my colleagues who no longer serve in that capacity: the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) and the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger). Both of these gentlemen I consider to have been, and be, mentors of mine in this place. They have both been very kind to me as a member of this Legislature and a member of caucus. They were both extremely supportive of me when I first ran for this Legislature in 1986 and when I was elected to it in 1988, and both have been very encouraging of me in my political endeavours, in my political career. I had the experience of working with both on many, many issues. The member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst), I served under him for a number of years as his deputy House leader, a very, very able individual and one who I think in the annals of this Assembly will go down as one of the finest government House leaders, an individual whom I have a great deal of respect for.

I also want to say to the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger), whom I have had the privilege of working with since my election here on a host of issues pertaining to his cabinet responsibilities as Minister of Highways and then as Minister of Natural Resources, he was always, in those capacities, interested in issues in my constituency and working with myself and my communities, municipalities, community groups to resolve whatever issues came out and showed a great deal of foresight in many of the projects that were begun under his stewardship of both the Department of Highways and the Department of Natural Resources.

I know today we have an excellent airport in Lac du Bonnet because of his intervention as Minister of Highways and Transportation to ensure that an old gravel strip that was really going nowhere, in fact was slated I think for being removed from our list of funded airports, that he gave me, as the local MLA, the time, the technical resources to work with my constituents where we were able to create a municipal airport authority which ultimately led to that strip being paved by the Government of Canada through their airport authority.

* (1700)

I believe it was the Honourable Jake Epp, who was a member of Parliament in those days, who initiated that program, and today we have an excellent airport facility in our community and a piece of I think good transportation infrastructure that will be long used and appreciated by my constituents. I want to recognize the member for Steinbach's role in securing that particular facility for us.

I know in his capacity as well as Minister of Natural Resources, there were countless issues involving wildlife, resource use in my area in which he took a great personal interest and was almost most helpful.

So I want to thank today on the record of this Assembly both of those colleagues for their dedication and support and assistance to me personally. I know that both have great contributions to make to the people of our province in the months and years ahead.

Madam Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today in my new capacity as Minister of Health. In appointing me to this position, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) gave me, I believe, a great challenge, and I think it is important at the outset to take the opportunity to thank my predecessor, in fact both of them, the former member for Pembina, Mr. Don Orchard, and the current member for Brandon West, the Honourable Jim McCrae. Both gentlemen in their tenure in this office I think spent a great deal of effort and time in trying, in a complex field, to chart a course on which Manitobans could revamp, revise, rebuild and point our health care system to the next century.

If we have learned one thing from health care across this county in the last decade, whether you be Conservative, Liberal, New Democrat in power at the provincial level, we have all faced the same great questions and issues. What is surprising about it, maybe surprising to some, is that the solutions and answers and courses that we have chartered are very, very similar. What may surprise members of the New Democratic Party the most is that many of the courses that have been chartered by provincial governments are based on plans and initiatives and the kind of great application of thought and understanding that was

developed in Manitoba by the former member for Pembina as well as the current member for Brandon West in their work in that department.

So I want to recognize them today. Much of the work that has been done to date in planning and targetting how we would move our structure of health care into the next century is a credit to both of my predecessors in these portfolios, and I would like to recognize that today.

Madam Speaker, my challenge as an incoming Minister of Health at this particular point of time is to get on with the implementation of the great deal of planning work and consensus building that has been done. If one spends some time in examining a host of the issues that are faced in health care and one breaks down the various issues and regions and areas that must be addressed and examines where we are today, one discovers that the issues that face us are not really issues of finances. Yes, there is a financial pressure, and the financial pressure arises from the fact that health care generally in Canada continues to be funded well above the rate of inflation year after year after year, but the growth and expenditure have been well beyond the capacity of virtually every province and certainly the national government to be able to support.

Yet when you get into studying the system, you find that we have another problem as well, well exhibited in rural Manitoba, and that is the relevance of many of our facilities today to the communities that they serve when one studies occupancy rates in rural facilities, when one studies the services being delivered out of facilities, and I am generalizing, Madam Speaker. There are always exceptions to this, and members will be able to, certainly, point out those exceptions, but generally speaking, particularly when you factor in where rural Manitobans receive their health care, in many parts of our province people walk by, drive by, go by their local facility to receive health care services in larger centres. Some of that is inevitable because we do not have the numbers to justify programs in every part of the province. Things like heart surgery require a grouping of physicians in a program delivered out of one or two facilities as we do now in the Health Sciences Centre and St. Boniface, but there are so many other programs and services that our citizens require that we believe,

and health care providers know, can be provided in a variety of settings across this province to the betterment of the service to our population.

Madam Speaker, we also know that the current model of governance in our health care system where our governance by and large is the corporate entities of facilities, relatively small facilities in the case of rural Manitoba serving specific communities, does not afford us the ability in the long run to be able to develop the flexibility, to be able to make the changes we need to be more relevant to our community or to more efficiently move resources around the system, which ultimately we need to do if we are going to respond to what I believe are the two greatest driving forces of change in health care, technology and demographics. I think anyone who studies these issues will find that in the case of technology new techniques of dealing and treating illness have made many of our views on how treatment is delivered obsolete. The Victoria Hospital today in our capital of Winnipeg tells me that two-thirds of their surgeries are now done as day surgery. The reason is not a budgetary issue. The reason is because we use laser techniques. We are less intrusive. We do not require the recovery times because of those things, and consequently we do not need the acute-care beds. That does not mean that there are not other services that are needed, but they must be delivered and will be delivered on a different basis.

So, Madam Speaker, technology is one force, demographics is the other. We know that across our province and across the city of Winnipeg there are on a regular basis significant shifts in the age and, consequently, health requirements of various communities. We have suburban parts of this city that were developed 30-40 years ago. Young families moved in, children grew up. We close schools in them today because the young children are not there. Their needs for certain kinds of care for the young, for obstetrics, are far less than in suburbs of the city today that have much greater numbers of young families and are growing and require those services. Conversely, the health needs of the citizens in the areas that are older are different and are changing. In a few years, shifts in housing, as people sell houses to find smaller places in which to live as they age, may again shift the demographic health needs of those particular

communities. So in the case of Winnipeg it is important that we be able to move resources about our system to be able to meet those demographic needs.

You know, one of the things that has absolutely amazed me since I became Health minister, and I had an experience to encounter it again in south Eastman last night. We look at the use of our facilities. That is just one part of it. Madam Speaker, the number of operating theatres we have in Winnipeg or in rural Manitoba that are not used at all, some of them very new, and yet we have pressure on other operating theatres, areas where we have sufficient ICU beds and are crowded in ICU beds. How do we shift our resources? How do we move, whether it be our patients, our care providers, to maximize the use of the resources that we have? That is really the greatest challenge, the greatest challenge for care providers in the way we organize our system in the future.

Madam Speaker, that is one of the motivating factors behind creating the regional health authorities and certainly the Winnipeg Hospital Authority: to give us that kind of organizational flexibility to be able to move resources without every move being in essence a turf battle between two facilities. It only makes sense, it makes common sense, and, surely, the citizens of Winnipeg and of Manitoba should expect us to be able to structure our health care system to meet the modern challenges of technology and demographics and to be able to move resources to where they are needed and best used at any given time.

Madam Speaker, another component of this that I think is very important, and I think today if you ask me what a chief requirement to be a Minister of Health would be, I would suggest that to have some experience in the labour relations field or to have been the Minister of Labour. So many of the issues that I must deal with today and that we are addressing are labour relations issues. Health care is a huge employer; there is no doubt about it. There are tens of thousands of Manitobans who earn their living as health care providers, and so every time a decision is made in the system, not only are you dealing with the issues of providing health care to our citizens, but you are also dealing with the lives, the employment, the income of the people who deliver that care.

I know when I was first appointed and I was being briefed by my deputy, Dr. Wade, he pointed out to me the need in Winnipeg. Part of the plan that has been developed is to be able to deliver our clinical programs through clinical program heads or teams, so that we would not have a heart surgery program in one hospital and another program in another hospital. We would have one program delivered on two sites. Whether it be a host of areas, we would operate in the city of Winnipeg on a clinical program basis to be able to best utilize resources. He said to me the plan is that we are going to be able to handle that through our ability to control the clinical program centrally through the Winnipeg Health Authority and move programs and the dollars that go with them around the system to best utilize resources. One component of that that I have added that is critical, I believe, is the need to also have the organizational structure that allows us to also see that kind of movement of people within the system.

* (1710)

Madam Speaker, a few weeks ago, there was a headline in the Winnipeg Sun about the deletion of 195 positions at Concordia Hospital. Other than the 40-or-so LPNs who were affected, virtually all of the other staff were having their positions deleted and being invited to apply for new jobs that were created. In fact, the job total at Concordia Hospital went up by five. In the case of R.N.s, there were 86 R.N.s who received notices of deletion and 88 new positions being created.

Well, how do we look as a Legislature, as government, those people in the eye who had to receive a deletion notice and then being invited to apply for another job? Talk about putting pressure on people who are delivering health care, unneeded pressure. Well, there is no one to blame in this scenario. Maybe there is no specific person to blame. Maybe we are all to blame collectively, because our collective agreements which are developed on the basis of how we organize our health care system, Madam Speaker, and reflect the organization of that health care system, the collective agreements under which that hospital operates and which our system operates are built on an organizational structure that has been developed and created over a number of decades that does not allow that flexibility, because they are separate corporate entities.

So one of the concerns in the creation of the Winnipeg Health Authority that I have raised is the need to have some basis, a common employing authority, that will allow eventually, because you have to have a transition, there are a host of rights that people have in bumping today and seniority, and I am not saying those are going to be lost. These things have to be negotiated and worked out over time.

But where do we want to be? I believe, Madam Speaker, we want to be at a point that as a Winnipeg Health Authority moves resources about a system to best use them that we could also ensure that the employees delivering those services are also moved and protected so that at least within the system, the people working in it, and I believe we are getting fairly close now to the kind of right numbers at the current time in which to deliver health care that at least the people working in the system can have a sense that there is a job for them—it may not necessarily be in the same place. It may not necessarily be in the same work location, the same job—but there is a job and that change does not mean they are going to be out of work and unable to feed their family or pay their mortgage.

Madam Speaker, if there has been a great success we have had in managing labour relations within government, that is the way in which we have managed our own elimination of positions over the last number of years. I have been out of it since my days as Civil Service minister, but I know we have eliminated well over 2,000, maybe 2,300 or 2,400 positions across government with only a couple of hundred layoffs, a hundred and some layoffs, because we have managed the system. I think the great success in our own budgetary process is that people are not getting deleted and told that they have to reapply for other jobs but how we have managed to work with the MGEU, in many cases, to be able to, as we eliminate positions, be able to help people and reassign them and find them other positions so that their choice when they get told their position is being deleted—so what they are facing is not the question of, will I have a job in a month or two weeks or whenever, but, what am I going to do now within government? What other opportunities are there for me? That is a far more humane and better way in which to manage people than the alternative of layoffs and deletions and reapplication.

So, if there is one personal goal, I believe, from my past experience that I would like to be able to build in over time in regionalization, it is the ability to better manage the human resources of health care, the people who work in the system so that we can eliminate a lot of the frustration and anxiety.

Madam Speaker, I appreciate that bargaining agents for many of our employees have a host of issues and concerns in addressing these things, and it is not a simple task, it is not an easy one but, ultimately, if we can at least envision the goal that is better over the next number of years, we can work towards that goal, working out the difficulties and problems so that we all provide collectively, I think, a better and I think a more secure working environment for the people who deliver our health care system.

There has been great debate in this House in Question Period over the last while about private versus public health care, and I have heard on many occasions members opposite talk about the privatization of services in government. I think any objective observer of our system in this province, the Canadian health care system, will quickly come to the conclusion that the vast majority of services in our health care system will be publicly administered and provided. In fact, if anything, if we look at the Assiniboine Clinic model that we spoke about today in Question Period, which is a new model for the remuneration of physicians, it really starts to erode or eliminate the fee for service in primary care and provides a contractual basis of delivering a certain amount of service or deliverables for a set contract. Madam Speaker, if anything, that is a greater trend towards centralization of delivery and better allocation of resources through that tool.

If you look at what we are doing in creating regional health authorities, we are in essence centralizing the government structure of health care which is a move, I believe, of greater control by government over the system. Members opposite, in fairness to them, I have not had a question criticizing that, or a comment criticizing that particular role from members of the New Democratic Party or from members of the Liberal Party, and they may have a different view of it. But that particular move is because today we have some 160 health care boards or facilities boards across the province.

Now in the case of personal care homes, particularly stand-alone personal care homes, those with a faith-based background or governance board, their role in achieving those flexibilities really is not critical. I have had meetings with them over the last number of weeks, and I expect many of them will continue on the same basis negotiating with the RHAs on their service agreements. The funding will flow more or less the same as it has been, but it is the hospital facilities, health care facilities that regions need to have control of, whether it be in Winnipeg or rurally, in order to be able to sort out and better provide services to their communities.

* (1720)

We are not in the business of closing facilities, Madam Speaker. This is not what this exercise is about. It is not about closing rural hospitals. It is not about closing rural facilities. It is about making them more relevant to the communities in which they serve and by having regional boards being able to do that. I will tell you a great advantage to me as a minister, whether one be a Conservative or a New Democrat, is with regional health authorities we will have 13 in the province. We have 11 of those now appointed. Every Monday currently, I get on the telephone on a conference call with every chair and CEO of the current 11 boards. When the other two are added for Winnipeg, there will be 13. Twenty-six people, it is a manageable enough group that we can have a regular weekly contact.

The current structure of 160 facilities boards out there through MHO—I am not suggesting it was wrong for the time, but times have moved on. Having MHO as another basis between the deliverers, the ministry was just another larger piece of bureaucracy. So in many ways, I say to members opposite, the regionalization structure will allow for a much closer relationship between ministers and the people who govern those regional health boards. It is more centralized. It is more government controlled. It is not what they are suggesting where we are privatizing the delivery of services and saying we are only going to be the payors and we are going to have the private sector, a nonprofit sector or someone else delivering the service. So if anything, we are going in the somewhat opposite direction of that suggested by members.

Madam Speaker, I know the issue of home care comes up on a regular basis after last spring, the strike and other things. In speaking with the former minister as we had a transition on issues and he shared many things with me, I think it is fairly obvious that in an area where you are providing, it is always good in some of these areas to be able to have ways of testing the quality of your service delivery, the price in which you are paying for it and the effort to see. To put out the tenders for some additional private providers of home care services in the city of Winnipeg, I think, is an exercise that allows us to do that. I do not think that is as dramatic as has been portrayed.

In the case of rural home care, on April 1, those services are being transferred to the regional health authorities. I do not know of any regional health authority today who told me that they are going to be out privatizing; in fact, if anything, I think it gives them the ability to better integrate those services with their hospitals and facilities and with other service programs that are being provided to seniors. I would suggest to members opposite that within the next couple of years they will see, I think, a better home care service across the province than we have ever had before. I am not trying to put that out as a boast in anyway. I just think that the change in organization will allow home care services, whether run by the RHA or the long-term authority in Winnipeg, will be able to be better integrated into our institutional care and be, ultimately I think, a more effective tool in the continuum of care for citizens of this province. So the organizational change will give us those kinds of ways to see service improved, Madam Speaker, and I look forward to seeing that happen.

Madam Speaker, I want to address some of the issues that have arisen in the House with respect to personal care homes. There is no doubt, I think, if one studies this issue, that the workload of personal care homes in terms of the needs of the people who are going into them has been increasing and will continue to increase over the next number of years. That is the result partially of an aging population, a population that lives longer and in its latter years has greater health needs. It is also a result of the fact that we have a much better home care system in our province that allows people to stay in their dwellings for longer periods.

Madam Speaker, I have acknowledged in questions from some members opposite the need for more personal care home beds in this province. Since this party has assumed the role of government in 1988, we have added some 700 additional personal care home beds to the system. I am not saying that we have fulfilled all of the need, but we have certainly made a great stride in even the most difficult of financial times. Seeing that as a priority to add additional beds we have replaced a host of beds that were not in the best of condition and required refurbishment.

We have also added beds in specialty areas like the psychogeriatric area, Madam Speaker, and I am very pleased to have worked in my community with the East-Gate Lodge personal care home for the creation of a 20-bed psychogeriatric unit which services people with specific needs—[interjection]

Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) talks about speculation on reports. Yesterday in this House when he quoted from the report of the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation on personal care homes, he did a lot of very selective reading in that particular report. I think he did some speculation because the report itself identifies its weakness in its own data collection and indicates in that report that the report itself should not be taken as a firm indicator of quality. It also did not take into account, I understand, the fact that the proprietary personal care homes have a greater percentage of Levels 3 and 4 higher need cases than the nonproprietary of that given time.

So you know, Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition can talk about a host of things, but I think time will prove over and over again as it has in the past that he so often comes to this House with inaccurate information or less than accurate, and he stretches it under the guise of it being a fact when it is not.

An Honourable Member: Just apologize, Darren.

Mr. Praznik: Madam Speaker, if we talk of apologies, the Leader of the Opposition owes one to this House in not, I believe, accurately portraying the information in that particular document, and I notice today he did not ask me about it, and I was looking forward to him doing that so I could share that information with him.

Madam Speaker, as Minister of Health I can assure this House that the security of people living in our personal care homes is an issue that is important to myself as it was to my predecessor and to government, and we will continue to work to ensure that there are procedures and processes in place that, to the best of the ability of the department, are able to monitor and check the operations of our personal care homes on a regular basis, but let us understand, Madam Speaker, it is very much a human system and mistakes and errors happen from time to time. What we do with them, how fast we find them and what we do to improve problems when they happen is very, very important, and we will work to ensure that happens.

All we have had is this great argument that somehow we should have no proprietary personal care homes in Manitoba. Is there somehow with a stroke of the pen the Department of Health can eliminate those tomorrow? Let us appreciate that all of our nonproprietary care homes are either sponsored by an organization or by municipalities, so, with the 19 proprietary homes, is the member suggesting that the Ministry of Health operate them directly or we find other groups who are prepared to take them over? We have had in this province for many years a mix of care providers, and some have had problems from time to time; others have not, and departments of Health, under whatever political leadership, have worked to improve that service. So we will continue to do so. I would just hope that the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer) from time to time could be a little more accurate in the information that he brings to this House, rather than try to stretch things into issues that they are not.

Madam Speaker, another area that I would like to address is northern health care, and a number of our—[interjection] I know some of my colleagues would like me to stray off the issues of health and to other subjects, but I must admit that, although tempted to get onto some other topics, I will try to remain focused and resist the temptation of members opposite. I know some of my colleagues would like me to talk about the Alberta election yesterday, and I guess as a Conservative one disappointment I have is the New Democrats did not do well enough in Edmonton to get the right splits to elect more Conservative members from that city.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. According to Rule 35.(3), I am interrupting the proceedings and putting the question on the amendment to the throne speech before the House.

On the proposed motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition in amendment thereto as follows:

THAT the motion be amended by adding to it, after the word "session," the following words:

But this House regrets that this government has failed to meet the goals of Manitobans by:

- (a) implementing plans for the regionalization of health care without heeding the demands of Manitoba communities to have elections to the new regional boards and to receive full information on the impacts on the new structure on health services; and
- (b) failing to respond to Manitobans' concerns over the safeguarding of standards in personal care homes; and
- (c) failing to implement the key recommendations of its own report on the Health of Manitoba Children; and
- (d) failing to adequately fund an education system that will meet the needs of our future citizens and workforce; and
- (e) failing to implement the recommendations of the AJI, while cutting funding to friendship centres and to the Access and BUNTEP programs; and
- (f) failing to provide an effective, co-ordinated response to plant closings and threats of plant closings in key Manitoba industries; and
- (g) failing to implement an effective strategy to address the growing **problem of criminal gang activity**, by offering hope and opportunities for youth who are **being lured** into gangs, accompanied by an effective justice system response to gang crime; and
- (h) failing to implement effective workplace safety measures; and

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

Voice Vote

Madam Speaker: All those in favour of the motion, please say yea.

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

Formal Vote

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Yeas and Nays, Madam Speaker.

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

Order, please. The motion before the House is the motion of the honourable Leader of the official opposition in amendment to the throne speech.

Division

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

Yeas

Ashton, Barrett, Cerilli, Chomiak, Dewar, Doer, Evans (Brandon East), Evans (Interlake), Friesen, Gaudry, Hickes, Jennissen, Kowalski, Lamoureux, Mackintosh, Maloway, Martindale, McGifford, Mihychuk, Reid, Robinson, Sale, Santos, Struthers, Wowchuk.

Nays

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Ernst, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh, Mitchelson, Newman, Pallister, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Stefanson, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Madam Deputy Clerk (Bev Bosiak): Yeas 25, Nays 30.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly defeated. What is the will of the House?

An Honourable Member: Keep working.

* * *

Mr. Stan Struthers (Dauphin): I am pleased to rise in the House today and put a few words on the record having to do with the throne speech that was presented to us recently. I want to go directly to a point in the throne speech that really stuck in my craw, one in particular when it started to talk about the work that this government—that being the part of the throne speech that dealt with this government's inability to deal with the aboriginal people in our province. It is absolutely ridiculous that this government would say that it is working in a spirit of partnership with aboriginal communities. It is absolutely ridiculous for this government to say that it is embarking on some kind of a new, co-operative kind of a partnership. I want to remind the House of what this government has done in the area of aboriginal affairs in the province of Manitoba.

Well, if they had done nothing they would have done more than what they have done, Madam Speaker. If they would do nothing they would not be cutting the Access program. In 1994 the Access program was cut by \$2 million. How can this government stand here in this throne speech and defend a spirit of partnership? Is that the spirit of partnership? Are you trying to tell us that the aboriginal communities in Manitoba are in some kind of partnership with you when you talk about cutting the Access program by \$2 million? Get serious.

The year after that in 1995 the same Access program was cut by \$1.4 million. Even students who are in the middle of these programs were told that they would not get the funding anymore. Is that some kind of a spirit of partnership? Does that have something to do with co-operation? I do not think so.

When I taught school in Norway House I met a lot of people who lived in conditions that quite honestly looked like many shows I have seen depicting living

conditions in the Third World. It is not that I come here with some kind of book knowledge on what happens on reserves in the province of Manitoba. It is not that I come here talking through my hat. I have a little bit of experience, and I have lived a little bit of time with my brothers and sisters in the aboriginal community, and I have a pretty good idea of what happens economically and socially on our reserves. And I really do take offence to this government so glibly and so cynically talking about its role with aboriginal people in our province in a Speech from the Throne that is as thin a Speech from the Throne as we have had in a long time, very thin when it comes to aboriginal issues, too thin when it comes to aboriginal issues.

At the same time, I want to be positive in a way and think back to a time when there was in fact a government who did take aboriginal issues seriously, and that occurred in the '70s and '80s under Premiers Schreyer and Pawley, where not only did we take these kinds of problems seriously but we did something about it. Now, the members across can sit there and they can laugh about these kinds of things and they can make stupid little statements in their speeches from the throne, but they have not done anything that they can point to in a positive way to say that they have actually done something to help the people that I used to know and that I used to work with and live with at Norway House when I taught school up there.

I want to talk about the PENT program, which was a program that many of my friends in Norway House took advantage of, a program that helped a lot of people from the Norway House area train to become teachers. Once they trained to become teachers they were hired back in the school system through Frontier School Division. At Rossville School, when I taught there, I worked with many of these people. The people graduated from Norway House and went to Brandon University and took this program and then came back to Norway House and contributed in a positive way to their community.

Now when the aboriginal people, people who live in the First Nations in the province of Manitoba, start to talk about self-government and providing positive leadership on the reserves, they also are aware enough to say that at the same time we need some aboriginal people to be working towards leadership positions.

What is this government doing? Whatever you can say are the good things that happened in the PENT program, in the BUNTEP program, when it has to do with teachers, you can apply it to all the other areas in which there could be aboriginal people trained, educated and then hired to be good leaders in their communities. This government cut the BUNTEP program. Is that helping aboriginal people? No. This government cut the Northern Bachelor of Nursing program. Why, so that it can balance its budget? Is this government proud of the fact that it is working to balance its budget on the backs of people who live in third-world conditions? Is that what this government is here today to do? It seems to me that is the case.

As my colleague from Selkirk (Mr. Dewar) talked about earlier today, this government has cut funding to Indian and Metis friendship centres. They cut in 1993 by \$1.2 million, and that is all 11 of the centres across the province. I know that in the Dauphin Friendship Centre where a whole range of very successful, very important programs are offered, they are offered despite the best attempts of this government to skewer them. This government should be ashamed of its absolutely awful record when it comes to dealing with aboriginal people. In 1993, in the budget of 1993, this government eliminated the annual grant to MKO. That was a grant of \$78,500, and they cut the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs by \$325,000. Is that what you call a spirit of partnership? Is that what you call some kind of a new co-operative partnership? That does not sound to me like a partnership at all. That sounds to me again like you are trying to save some money on the backs of people who need to be represented in this province.

Cuts to hospitals is another area that has affected the aboriginal people in a very negative way, and at this point not just aboriginal people but people throughout the province have been suffering because of the cuts that this government has laid to our hospitals. My own community of Dauphin, for example, has been struggling for several years, struggling because of the cuts to health care that this government has implemented. What is the point? What is the point of these cuts? You are making it so that people throughout the province do not have health care to turn to when they need it. You are producing one horror story after the other after the other. Do you think a few nice little words in your throne speech are going to

solve these problems? Do you think anybody is going to believe your nice little words in this throne speech when they reflect upon your absolutely awful record when it comes to serving our aboriginal constituents?

Madam Speaker, I am glad to be back here at the Legislature to talk about these types of issues, and I want to join with many of my colleagues in welcoming everyone back to the Legislature, the pages, the people at the centre table here who try to keep us in line.

I would also like to congratulate the new ministers who were appointed since we left each other here at the end of November. I do wish them well in their service to Manitobans. I want to, at the same time, point out the member for Steinbach (Mr. Driedger) and the member for Charleswood (Mr. Ernst) for the work that they have done for the province in the time that they have spent in cabinet. I wish those two members well in their endeavours as MLAs here.

I want to report that it has been a busy time since the end of November. From the end of November to the time we came back in here at the beginning of March, we have been doing what I think the members across the way should have been doing, which I suspect maybe they did do as well because, looking at their throne speech, there are some clichés and some words and some innuendo that maybe they are starting to hear that the people of Manitoba are saying, you have cut us enough, that the people of Manitoba are saying you have cut us way too far.

The people of Manitoba have been saying that this is a heartless government, it is an extreme government, it is a dictatorial government. Judging by this throne speech, maybe you did listen to a few people along the way but, Madam Speaker, myself and my colleagues here on the NDP side of the House did extensive travelling around the province and we talked to lots and lots of people. We have done extensive travelling around the province and we have been talking to people. They have been absolutely clear in what they think the direction this province should be heading in.

* (1750)

I want to point out that the people of Manitoba are absolutely in disagreement with the direction that this

government has been taking, and it is only a very cheap, cynical kind of a ploy to include in the throne speech all of the nice little words that I do not believe this government means. This government cannot be going down the highway at reckless abandon and then all of a sudden take a U-turn and expect the people of Manitoba to believe that they are actually meaning what they say.

An Honourable Member: Especially since their highways are in such bad shape.

Mr. Struthers: Especially since their highways are in such a bad shape is what the member for Flin Flon (Mr. Jennissen) has just reminded me.

I would suspect that if the government across the way did any travelling, they did not go to Highway 391 or 280 or 373 to see what some of the roads up north are all about. I think they spent some time on roads that they know have been worked on recently. In that breath, I would like to invite them up to the Dauphin area. I can take you out to a little town, little district called Makinac, where the farmers of the area would love to be able to have a decent road to haul their wheat out to market on or into the district of Makinac to where the Pool elevator is. The Pool elevator guys would sure love for a little bit of money to be spent on that road as well, but I guess they do not give enough money to the PC fund or whoever you give your money to to get things done in this province, as we have seen recently with the personal care homes.

We do have one road, though, that I would like to point out recently that has had some money thrown at it and, in this respect, thank heavens for the odd federal election here and there. Provincial Road 366 is going to get a little bit of attention paid to it. That is a road going south from Grandview to the town of Inglis. [interjection] The Minister of Justice speculates that it may have something to do with the road where the sitting member of Parliament lives. He can speculate that if he likes, but I would wonder if his own provincial government is going to keep up with the federal Liberals in spending money on highways. I would ask the provincial government if they are going to maybe consider matching and providing some money for some highways which, over the next little while, are going to get beat up pretty good because of the federal

Liberals who are abandoning rail lines along the way. So it is nice to see that the Liberals are putting a little bit of money into the roads on which they are going to have a lot more grain trucks drive along.—[interjection]

Yes, I would point out to the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) that it would take a lot of cut-and-paste to get an endorsement from me for the current sitting Liberal in Dauphin-Swan River, a lot of cut-and-paste.

Madam Speaker, the other message that I got loud and clear from the people of Manitoba is that there is some activity out there, there are some people out there with good, strong, solid, positive attitudes. The Parklands area is full of people who are committed to making life better in our area. The Parklands people are hardworking, imaginative and creative, and I predict that the people in the Parklands are going to do well despite this government and despite the cuts that this government is implementing in our area, despite their lack of commitment to our health care system. I think that the people of the Parklands, from Swan River right down through to Rossburn and over to Neepawa and McCreary and Dauphin, that we, not because of the government, but in spite of the government and its lack of commitment to things such as our public schools, are going to do okay. We have in the Parklands a spirit that I hope and I am sure is apparent across the province. No matter what this government comes up with, no matter what plan this government comes up with to hit us yet again, we are going to keep on struggling along.

I want to mention a project which has been talked about and has been built and is now a reality in the town of Dauphin, and that is the Parkland Recreation

Complex. I need to provide some recognition for those people in the town of Dauphin who really did a great job in fundraising and putting the money together to build a structure which, I believe, will bring a lot of people into our area. I think that this one project alone will signify an increase in the quality of life for people in the Parkland. I think this one project will inject a lot of hope into the people who have worked so hard to build and worked so hard to fundraise for it, and, Madam Speaker, I would actually invite all honourable members to come up and check out our Parkland Recreational Complex, and come on up and enjoy all of the amenities that Dauphin has to offer at any point in the year.

The debate over the Parkland Recreational Complex itself was a boon to our local economy. It was a boon to our local thinking. It provided us in Dauphin and throughout the Parkland a little bit of a watershed to talk about other things that the Parkland needs, other very deserving projects that we are going to work on, and the first one that springs to mind is the water treatment facility that Dauphin so desperately needs these days since most of the town or all of the town is under a boil-water order from Public Health, but since most of the people of the town are in fact boiling water or trying to provide water in another way—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The hour being 6 p.m., when this matter is again before the House, the honourable member for Dauphin will have 20 minutes remaining.

This House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Thursday).

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Wednesday, March 12, 1997

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