



Fourth Session - Thirty-Sixth Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable Louise M. Dacquay
Speaker*



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MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Sixth Legislature

Member	Constituency	Political Affiliation
ASHTON, Steve	Thompson	N.D.P.
BARRETT, Becky	Wellington	N.D.P.
CERILLI, Marianne	Radisson	N.D.P.
CHOMIAK, Dave	Kildonan	N.D.P.
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.
DOWNEY, James, Hon.	Arthur-Virden	P.C.
DRIEDGER, Albert	Steinbach	P.C.
DYCK, Peter	Pembina	P.C.
ENNS, Harry, Hon.	Lakeside	P.C.
EVANS, Clif	Interlake	N.D.P.
EVANS, Leonard S.	Brandon East	N.D.P.
FAURSCHOU, David	Portage la Prairie	P.C.
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.
MARTINDALE, Doug	Burrows	N.D.P.
McALPINE, Gerry	Sturgeon Creek	P.C.
McCRAE, James, Hon.	Brandon West	P.C.
McGIFFORD, Diane	Osborne	N.D.P.
McINTOSH, Linda, Hon.	Assiniboia	P.C.
MIHYCHUK, MaryAnn	St. James	N.D.P.
MITCHELSON, Bonnie, Hon.	River East	P.C.
NEWMAN, David, Hon.	Riel	P.C.
PENNER, Jack	Emerson	P.C.
PITURA, Frank, Hon.	Morris	P.C.
PRAZNIK, Darren, Hon.	Lac du Bonnet	P.C.
RADCLIFFE, Mike, Hon.	River Heights	P.C.
REID, Daryl	Transcona	N.D.P.
REIMER, Jack, Hon.	Niakwa	P.C.
RENDER, Shirley	St. Vital	P.C.
ROBINSON, Eric	Rupertsland	N.D.P.
ROCAN, Denis	Gladstone	P.C.
SALE, Tim	Crescentwood	N.D.P.
SANTOS, Conrad	Broadway	N.D.P.
STEFANSON, Eric, Hon.	Kirkfield Park	P.C.
STRUTHERS, Stan	Dauphin	N.D.P.
SVEINSON, Ben	La Verendrye	P.C.
TOEWS, Vic, Hon.	Rossmere	P.C.
TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
VODREY, Rosemary, Hon.	Fort Garry	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann	Swan River	N.D.P.
Vacant	Charleswood	

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 9, 1997

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

PRAYERS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Women's Resource Centres

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I would like to present the petition of Alice Riley, Nancy McPherson, John Masson and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Cece Hutchinson, Augusta Gudmunds, Shelly Bjarnson and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider long-term, adequate and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, I would like to present the petition of Marlene Stratton, Valdine Bjornsson, Harold Thorkelson and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

Ms. Becky Barrett (Wellington): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Maurice Sigurdson, Eric Sigurdson, Audrey Disbrowe and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate

and stable funding for the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

Mr. Clif Evans (Interlake): Madam Speaker, I beg to present the petition of Monica Sigurdson, Grace Fridfinnson, Susan L. Van Drees and others praying that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the Filmon government to consider providing long-term, adequate and stable funding the Evergreen Women's Resource Centre and other women's resource centres in the province to ensure that the vital services provided by these organizations are continued.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Domestic Violence

Madam Speaker: I have reviewed the petition of the honourable member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans). It complies with the rules (by leave) and practices of the House. Is it the will of the House to have the petition read?

An Honourable Member: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Yes. The Clerk will read.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Manitoba humbly sheweth:

THAT domestic violence continues to be a serious problem in Manitoba that results in the injury and death of women across this province; and

THAT certain initiatives such as the Family Violence Court, the Women's Advocacy Program and mandatory charging have been taken by the government; and

THAT survivors of abuse, their families, service providers and the community at large recognize serious shortcomings in the response to domestic violence which continues to threaten the lives of Manitoba women and children; and

THAT a blueprint for an effective response to domestic violence is being offered by several reports including the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry, the Pedlar report and the Lavoie inquiry recommendations.

WHEREFORE YOUR PETITIONERS HUMBLY PRAY that the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba urge the provincial government to consider preparing an action plan in consultation with the community for the timely implementation of meaningful change as outlined in the Lavoie inquiry, the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry and the Pedlar report.

* (1335)

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I would like to table reports that have been forwarded to members' offices prior to the House resuming, and I would like to officially table at this point the following reports, which have three copies of each. The Report of the Manitoba Textbook Bureau, 1996-97; the Education and Training Annual Report, 1996-97.

University of Manitoba Annual Financial Report, 1997; University of Winnipeg Financial Statements ending March 31, 1997; Brandon University Annual Financial Report ending March 31, 1997; Universities Grants Commission Annual Report for 1996-97; Assiniboine Community College Financial Statements ending June 30, 1997; Keewatin Community College Financial Statements ending June 30, 1997; and Red River Community College Annual Financial Report, 1996-97.

As indicated, these have been previously forwarded to members' offices.

Introduction of Guests

Madam Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, I would like to draw the attention of all honourable members to the loge to my left where we have with us today five members of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan: the Honourable Eric Upshall, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and MLA for Watrous; Mr. Dale Flavel, MLA for Last Mountain-Touchwood; Mr. Jack

Langford, MLA for Saskatchewan Rivers; the Honourable Andy Renaud, MLA for Carrot River Valley; Mr. John Wall, MLA for Swift Current.

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

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Education System Funding

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, over the last five years this government, this Premier, has cut public education by minus 2 percent, minus 2 percent, zero prior to the election, minus 2 percent after the election, and again another zero percent last year. Parents have talked to us about the difficulties their children are having with these cutbacks in their public schools. Taxpayers are concerned about the massive property tax increases based on these funding cutbacks, and of course kids feel that this government is robbing their future with a reduction in their curriculum and opportunities in their schools.

I would like to ask the Premier (Mr. Filmon): will he now agree to take some of the \$600-million lottery funds and other funds that are in the fund that the government has and reinvest some of that money in public education and go beyond the zero percent funding commitment they have made so kids can have a future again here in the province of Manitoba?

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, the member refers to percentage cuts in a few select years of depression and transfer cuts from Ottawa. The member does not refer to the fact that this year we have put \$115 million more into public schools alone than they put in when they were in office in their last year of office.

The member also talks about increases in school taxes, not remembering that increases put in place by school boards during their tenure as government were higher percentage increases than increases put in under this government by school boards. Madam Speaker, we indicated, when we provided a slight increase to the schools last year, that we would guarantee them a minimum amount this year. We were not able at that

time, nor am I able at this time, to say what the amount this year will be, but we indicated last year—and it was a great benefit to school divisions in terms of multiyear planning—that at least they could count on a minimum.

* (1340)

Children's Services Government Strategy

Mr. Gary Doer (Leader of the Opposition): Madam Speaker, the government's own report written by Greg Mason from Prairie Research Associates states that the, quote, Department of Health, Department of Education and the Department of Family Services are fragmented in this government, and secondly, they go on to state that the cutbacks have reduced services in all three departments and reduced services for our children. They actually recommend that we go to the Saskatchewan strategy for kids, an action plan for children, and a broader strategy in government.

Will this Premier finally do the right thing and take the broader Saskatchewan strategy and reinvest in our children and reinvest in our future?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I do not know whether or not Saskatchewan is also going for a 32-hour workweek as these New Democrats are—[interjection] Well, I think that philosophically they are closer to this government than they are to the members opposite. I am tempted to say I know Roy Romanow and this Leader of the Opposition knows Roy Romanow.

In any case, I would say to the member opposite that we have recognized, as governments right across Canada have, that there is a need to co-ordinate social services. There is a need to have interdepartmental co-operation and co-ordination. That is why we have set up the Child and Youth Secretariat that involves making solutions child-centred so that we bring together Family Services, we bring together Education, we bring together Justice, and we bring together Health and the relevant departments so that we can address the needs of the child in a holistic fashion. We know that that is a better way to go in the future, and indeed that is what will improve the services to those children of Manitoba.

Mr. Doer: Madam Speaker, the Premier certainly has his talking points, but he has no action points for kids and their future.

Today the Canadian Council on Social Development talked about the need to integrate health and education and social services for our kids. They condemned provinces like Manitoba that have cut back the Children's Dental Program. They condemned Premiers like the one opposite for cutting back children's dental programs in the province, and they praised provinces like Saskatchewan that have taken a long-term, integrated view with resources, with funds, with investments.

Why is this Premier content to be condemned by an independent body, and why will he not have the long-term strategy with real action like Saskatchewan that is getting praised on the national stage?

Mr. Filmon: Our government acted very early on in our mandate—for instance, in 1989 we brought into place one of the richest systems of child tax credits anywhere in Canada, raising I believe it was from \$50 to \$250 the child tax credit that involved an expenditure of something in the range of \$30 million annually to reinvest in the children of this province, in families with children. We will continue to reinvest in our children, and we will continue to build—[interjection] Well, Madam Speaker, the members opposite are always critical. I know that they take a look at every silver lining to try and find the dark cloud behind it. You know, the Prince of Darkness over there comes up with his comments time after time after time.

But the fact of the matter is that our children in our public schools continue to do well in various different analyses. We have the recent one that said that, in terms of literacy, they are among the tops in the country because of decisions that have been made, priorities that have been set by this government.

* (1345)

Independent Schools Funding

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, this government has continued to make regular cuts, not selective cuts but regular cuts—minus two, minus two,

minus two, a cynical zero as an election approaches, and what they have done is created deficits greater than dollars for Manitoba's young people. Meanwhile, away from the public eye, the minister has increased the grants to private schools from \$16.4 million to \$30.2 million. I would like to ask the minister to confirm that on a per-student basis, this has meant an increase over the last five years for private schools of more than 45 percent per student.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): As I indicated, we have increased funding to public schools by \$115 million as we took office. Just as we are seeing a lot of comparisons with Saskatchewan—and I work through the Council of Ministers of Education with ministers from Saskatchewan, for whom I have admiration—we face many of the same problems, but I should indicate that Saskatchewan spends less on a per-student basis than any province west of New Brunswick, so I think they should maybe be careful. If they are going to get into those comparisons, we can have a lot of fun with them.

Madam Speaker, in very public announcements, we indicated that funding to independent schools would rise to 50 percent of the cost of public schools. Independent schools currently receive half, approximately half the cost of public school students, and we made that a very public announcement. It has been no secret. I do not know why the member seems to feel it was. Perhaps she was not listening when we were telling people all of this information about education in Manitoba. We are responsible for all education in Manitoba, including home schooling, nonfunded schools, funded schools and public schools, and we believe in treating all students, giving them the best opportunity possible.

Ms. Friesen: I would like to ask the minister why she refuses in this House, time after time, and she has done it again today, to be accountable to Manitobans for the more than \$30 million of public money that goes annually to the private sector. Will she at least table an annual report in the Legislature on private schools indicating to the taxpayer how that money has been spent?

Mrs. McIntosh: Indeed, the member is correct. We provide some \$30 million to independent schools and

some \$746 million to public schools. Madam Speaker, the independent schools, should those students all decide to come to public schools tomorrow and become then fully funded as opposed to partly funded students, would have us having to raise overnight millions upon millions of dollars from the taxpayers of this province.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, Beauchesne Citation 417 is clear that "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

The question was about a report to provide accountability for private schools. I suggest the Minister of Education, of all people, expects students to answer questions every day in some of these tests that she provides for. Perhaps she could answer some of the questions she is asked in this House and follow our rules under Beauchesne 417.

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education and Training, on the same point of order.

Mrs. McIntosh: I am responding to points raised in the member's question. Part of the problem when the preamble makes allegations is that the answer then attempts to address all points put on the floor by the member. My answers can be much shorter if the question is much shorter, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable Minister of Education and Training that indeed answers should be specific to the question asked and should be as brief as possible.

* (1350)

Education System Funding

Mr. Tim Sale (Crescentwood): Madam Speaker, since this government got its majority in 1990, its mean-spirited agenda has fully surfaced. Children in Manitoba's public schools have suffered from deep funding cuts. Parents have had to pay higher and

higher fees for courses and other things, while children in private schools have received huge increases.

Will the Minister of Education finally come clean and admit that since 1990 the real value of her government's funding to public schools, the money our school divisions actually get at the classroom level to teach with, has fallen by an astounding \$102 million in purchasing power? That is \$532 for every child in every classroom. No wonder parents are being fleeced for higher fees.

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): I would invite the member to attend my office and meet with the financial people in my office who can explain to him the real purchasing power in constant dollars, which is not at all the information he has put on the record. I do not know where he learned his math, but I would suggest that with our new math curriculum he might be able to do better.

Mr. Sale: Madam Speaker, I would be most pleased to accept the minister's kind offer, and I think we will have a very good time sorting out whose numbers are which.

Madam Speaker, will the minister simply admit that her claims about growing support are wrong, that when you take inflation out of the numbers, it is very, very plain the numbers have dropped from \$644 million to \$542 million, constant dollars, purchasing power, \$102 million? Will she not simply admit that she is wrong?

Mrs. McIntosh: There were several points in that speech, and I will attempt to address each one of them so as not to be accused of avoiding answering any portion of it.

Madam Speaker, first of all, I should indicate that in terms of inflation, the last decade for which we have the accurate count, which was the '85-95, soon we will have the '85-96, that we have analyzed in our office shows that we kept pace with inflation, except for 0.5 percent funding to public schools by the Province of Manitoba in that decade just passed, kept pace with inflation. The problem occurred when school division spending outpaced inflation by 15 percent. Not all of that was their fault, and some of that was legitimate spending. Much of it was spending that school divisions have since begun to adjust. We are attempting to help with some of the new costs that are

coming in, special needs education, for example. We have a review on right now to ascertain what we could and should be doing with this new cost that school divisions are facing.

Madam Speaker, it comes down in the end to not being fixated on the dollars that are spent but on the learning that occurs, and we know that the learning that occurs can be excellent in any kind of circumstance where there are good teachers and willing students.

Education System Funding—Special Needs Students

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Madam Speaker, six-year-old Breanne Curé in Grade 1 has been diagnosed with severe receptive and expressive language disorder. Dr. Bowman of the Child Guidance Clinic states that Breanne has significant cognitive delays as well as significant gross and fine motor disabilities. Language development was below a three-year age level. On May 27 of this year, the school division applied for Level II funding but was rejected. Teachers, doctors and the school division support this application.

The minister states that applications will be given a thorough assessment, and I want to ask the Minister of Education to explain why you received this application for Level II funding for Breanne Curé on May 27 and rejected the application on the same day without seeing the child in the classroom, without a written explanation, without an appeal mechanism. Is this your idea of a thorough review for this—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

* (1355)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): The member is calling for an opinion which is—but then again Beauchesne does not seem to mean a lot to them, but I would say to the member opposite—

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, I just referenced Beauchesne Citation

417, and not only is the minister once again out of order, she seems to wish to continue with these editorial comments. I was wondering if you would ask her to come to order and remind her she is not an editorial writer, and she is not even the Speaker of the House either. She should for once answer the questions we are raising, in this case about the serious problems in education. A very serious question was asked on behalf of the constituents of Transcona by the member for Transcona. When are we going to get some straight answers from this minister?

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader):

Madam Speaker, I tend to agree with the opposition House leader when he objects to unnecessary editorializing in this House, and if what he says applies to the Minister of Education, then it applies to all 23 or so New Democrats who occupy that side of the Chamber who editorialize every time they ask a question in this House. So when you are considering this matter, I would hope that we might think that that rule should apply to all members of this House.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would request the support and co-operation of all members in this House to firstly, when posing questions, pose the preamble with a single statement and then pose a question. Second and supplementary questions need no preamble, and I would ask that on the other side of the House all ministers respond specifically to the question asked within the time limit allowed.

* * *

Madam Speaker: The honourable Minister of Education, to quickly complete her response.

Mrs. McIntosh: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I indeed have met with the student and the family that the member refers to. I am aware of their situation, but I think it would not be proper in any way, shape or form for me as Minister of Education to divulge the discussions that took place between a little child in this province, her mother and this minister. I think there are privacy issues that would put this office in great jeopardy were I to be discussing them publicly,

and I think the members also know that very well. It is not a fair tactic to use.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, I have permission from the family to raise this case, and I want to ask this Minister of Education: how many years does this child have to wait, how far does this child have to fall behind her peers because this government has set the special needs Level II- funding bar at a level that will forever relegate this child to a life of poverty and misery even before she has had a real chance to develop into a contributing member of our society? Your numbers mean nothing to this child, only—

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for Transcona that postamble is not required either.

* (1400)

Mrs. McIntosh: I appreciate that the member states that a third party has given him permission to raise the issue. That same third party has not given me permission to raise the issue, but I can, in generic terms, respond to the whole question of assessment, which I do not think divulges any confidence or breaks any obligations of privacy that I feel as a minister I am honour-bound to keep.

Madam Speaker, I can indicate that assessments are done by school divisions when children enter schools. School divisions will assess whether a child is Level I, Level II, Level III. They will apply to the department with their diagnosis, their expert testimony and other information that they have used to come to their decision, and the department will then take that request and assign funding, if it is deemed to be properly done, to that child. If that child is deemed to be indeed a Level II or a Level III, the money flows without question to an unlimited number of people who apply if they qualify. That assessment is done by division personnel initially and confirmed by departmental personnel.

Mr. Reid: Madam Speaker, I want the minister to take a look at this picture of Breanne Curé and tell me you do not believe that this child does not deserve every opportunity to grow and learn, to become a child proud of her accomplishments, instead of depressed and

discouraged because your education system has failed her even before she starts. Will you provide Level II funding for this child?

Madam Speaker: I would remind the honourable member for Transcona that the display of exhibits is strictly prohibited in this Chamber and other Chambers, and I would ask for his co-operation.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, I think the question reveals more about the questioner than it does about anybody attempting to answer the kinds of comments that have just been put on the record.

I have met the child that he has just shown a photograph of. I have talked to her mother; I have talked to departmental staff. I do not do the assessments. I have confidence that very, very few appeals on assessments done by school divisions and department personnel on Level II funding are questioned by those receiving the information, very few appeals, Madam Speaker, and a tremendous number of grants for Level II and Level III.

The member asks if I care, and of course I care. All my life I have been involved with education—as a teacher, as a parent, as a school trustee, and now as Minister of Education. That member over there knows nothing about how ill the system was treated in terms of special needs when his government was in power, how as a school trustee I would come down here pleading with then Minister Hemphill for help with our special needs students.

We have more than doubled funding for special needs. We have a special needs review underway, long overdue, that they never did, that we are doing because we care. We care. Had they cared earlier, we would maybe have a lot more solutions here for people like Breanne.

Video Lottery Terminals Increase

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): Madam Speaker, my question is for the First Minister with respect to the gaming policy. One of the quickest- or fastest-growing industries is in fact gaming, and after saturating Manitoba with slot machines and VLTs, they

commissioned a report. In that Gaming Commission report, one of the recommendations was to reduce the number of VLTs, to which the government actually responded and reduced some VLTs.

My question is to the Premier. Has, in fact, this government increased the number of electronic slot machines at the same time?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, I find it passing strange that the member opposite, who as a candidate for the leadership of the Liberal Party advocated having three more casinos in this province to increase the gambling revenues, is now out there attempting to say that he has some concerns about the volume of gaming in the province.

I will take the substance of his question as notice on behalf of the Minister responsible for the Lotteries Corporation (Mr. Stefanson).

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, will the Premier confirm that hundreds of electronic slot machines have in fact been added into the system, while the government on the one hand has been trying to say that VLTs have been reduced?

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I believe that, according to the rules of the House, members are required to confirm their facts before they bring them to the House and present them as fact, so I would invite him to do so.

Mr. Lamoureux: Madam Speaker, I will await the Premier's or his government's response to the first question.

Video Lottery Terminals Definition

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Inkster): My final supplementary question is: will he agree that the chairman's report—Mr. Desjardins—on the Gaming Commission which acknowledged that, and I quote, when reference is made to VLTs, it should be understood to mean both VLTs and slot machines. That includes electronic slot machines. Does the Premier agree with the report which he commissioned and paid thousands of dollars for?

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, my recollection of that report is that it did not recommend that we reduce the number of VLTs in the province, but we as a government policy decided to do that and did bring in a substantial reduction of something, I believe, in excess of 10 percent.

Student Transportation Funding

Ms. MaryAnn Mihychuk (St. James): Early in November of this year the CBC I-Team report called Precious Cargo revealed that in the 1997 fleet inspections, 14 percent of the school bus fleet had to be pulled off of Manitoba's roads. The head of Manitoba's vehicle inspection branch or department says that any more than 1 percent is unacceptable. Some school divisions, in fact, Madam Speaker, had an 80 percent failure rate.

Will this minister admit that she has sacrificed the safety of our children for a financial gain and their election surplus fund, and will she immediately reverse her shortsighted and dangerous decisions regarding our children's school buses?

* (1410)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, I had been asked by the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) to put my comments on the record, and the comment I made before I sat down was: you come late to the caring table, sir. So I have complied—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Education and Training was recognized to respond to the question posed by the honourable member for St. James. The honourable Minister of Education and Training, to respond to the question posed.

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, the member for St. James refers to school division policy, refers to busing policy in the province. The school divisions for some time have been asking for some easier way of dealing with school bus transportation. We then responded by—

instead of purchasing a new bus for them—providing for them the amount of money that it would cost them to buy a new bus and allowing them to make the decision as to which bus they would wish to purchase, or if they wished to use some other transportation policies for their students.

We did say that school buses must be inspected twice a year. They must pass a safety inspection twice a year by division staff. As well, the government of Manitoba does an audit on 10 percent of those buses with the provincial safety inspection on top of that inspection. The school bus inspections, of course, must comply with all safety regulations put down by the Province of Manitoba.

If in the audit this province finds that there are any further things that need be followed up, we then do a mass inspection of school division, and I will answer the rest in the next question, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Mihychuk: Madam Speaker, will the minister not admit that school divisions would have preferred full funding, with the province responsible for replacing buses when they got used, at about 12 years of age? Will this minister and her government take responsibility and fund school divisions so they can provide safe buses for our children?

Madam Speaker: Order, please. I would remind the honourable member for St. James that her question is to be a single question, not a multiple question. The honourable Minister of Education and Training has one minute to respond to either question or both questions.

Mrs. McIntosh: Well, Madam Speaker, since the question took—well, I guess I will have to just answer one of them, which is really not quite cricket because she did ask two, and I will only get to answer one in the time allowed.

Madam Speaker, school divisions had long requested flexibility. They had said why should they have to get rid of a perfectly good bus if it is still roadworthy and, conversely, why should they have to replace a bus after eight years, et cetera. So we said the decision then would be theirs, provided that all safety inspections pass the test of safety. In terms of funding, we have now made it possible, in an urban setting for school

students, to get funding for busing if their division decides to bus them, if they live more than a mile from their closest transit bus stop. That is an enhancement to the system that has been very much appreciated by school divisions, and we have received many kudos from school divisions for our changes in bus policy.

**TeleSend Gateway Inc.
Funding**

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Madam Speaker, the question concerns the competence of this minister and the lack of due diligence and proper credit checks on applicants for grants from his department.

Madam Speaker, when he gave the \$200,000 grant to TeleSend Gateway Inc., at what point did he discover that the developer of the technology and the controlling mind was serving an 18-month sentence in Milner Ridge for fraud? Was it (a) after he gave TeleSend Gateway the first cheque for \$20,000, or (b) after he gave Telesend Gateway the second cheque for \$90,000?

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, just to make the record clear, the individual the department dealt with is not the individual that they are referring to. It was a different person, a young woman who was carrying out the activities of the business, so I cannot accept what the member is putting on the record as having dealt with this individual.

Mr. Maloway: Madam Speaker, if Mr. Ishmael is not the controlling mind of this company, then why does he claim to have developed the technology? Why did he apply for an American Express supplementary card on October 28, 1994, in the name of TeleSend Gateway Inc., and why was he using that company credit card for personal expenses?

Mr. Downey: I am as equally concerned making sure that any activities of the department and the government to develop and create new businesses, particularly in the new generation of activities in the electronic field, that we in fact do carry it out in a responsible manner, and it is my understanding that was done.

Far more responsible, Madam Speaker, than the NDP when they dumped \$29 million in the sands of Saudi Arabia, hard-earned money of the taxpayers of Manitoba.

Point of Order

Mr. Steve Ashton (Opposition House Leader): Madam Speaker, earlier I made reference to Beauchesne Citation 417 in regard to the Minister of Education, and you did admonish the minister. I would like to do the same with the current minister and point out that the question was about this government giving grants to a company of which the controlling mind is now in Milner Ridge, a correctional facility.

This minister is making a mockery out of a very serious question, and I think this incompetent minister should answer why that grant was given in the first place.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, on the same point of order.

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, I think an apology is in order. I said \$29 million that they frittered away. It was \$27 million that they frittered away.

Madam Speaker: On the point of order raised by the honourable member for Thompson, I would remind the honourable minister that answers are supposed to be as brief as possible, pertain to the question asked and not provoke debate.

* * *

Mr. Maloway: My final supplementary is to the same minister. On May 27 of this year, the minister claimed that the money was used for its intended purposes. I would like to ask the minister: if that is the case, then why was the company credit card used for such TeleSend Gateway Inc. business essentials such as cosmetics, beauty shop gifts, suits, shoes and other personal expenses?

Mr. Downey: Madam Speaker, I would not have any ability to know what the credit card use was of the individual as it relates to the operations of the business.

As far as I know, and I have been informed by the department, the monies were used for the purposes for which they were intended, for business-related activities.

High School Education Bursaries/Financial Assistance

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Madam Speaker, in 1991 this government cut the high school bursary program which funded 4,600 students. In 1993 they eliminated the Student Social Allowances Program which ensured that young adults on their own with no family could complete their Grade 12 education. This program helped thousands of students a year graduate from high school. When we objected and asked what these students were supposed to do, this heartless and shortsighted government said the students should go home.

I want to ask the Minister of Education to confirm how many students missed the opportunity of finishing their high school education in the last five years with no student social assistance or bursary programs. Can the minister explain how more than 6,000 students have been left behind by this government, who would rather fund a few private schools than help disadvantaged young people finish high school?

* (1420)

Hon. Linda McIntosh (Minister of Education and Training): Madam Speaker, we have done a tremendous amount of work in terms of encouraging students to remain in school, not the least of which is bringing a new program of studies into the school that will enable higher standards, measurable standards, differentiated teaching and opportunities for students at all levels of learning. We are working very hard on early intervention, early assessment. We have increased the amount of money there for special needs, double what was there before we came to office. We have programs in place in many divisions, entrepreneurial programs.

Ms. Cerilli: Is the minister aware that the Family Services' Employment First workfare program is now forcing the few students still in high school collecting

assistance, who are deemed, quote, job-ready, to leave high school and enter a workfare job-training program with no guarantee of a job? More importantly, does she support this or will she reverse this move to have kids leave school for nothing?

Mrs. McIntosh: Madam Speaker, perhaps the member would like to come with me on my routine visits to schools, to visit infant labs in schools, to help young adolescent mothers remain in school, to even be able to attend classes while their babies are safely cared for in the school. They can still nurse their children while they are attending classes. We have all kinds of programs in place to enable young single moms, who may be on social assistance, to remain in school and complete their education, knowing, Madam Speaker, as we all do in this Chamber, including members opposite, that training is the way out of a life of despair, a life of lack of opportunity.

Therefore, we have programs of training that encourage adolescents and young people to complete their education, whether or not they are on social assistance, whether or not they are parents. I think our record is very good in that regard, and again, would she like to come with the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and we could give her a thorough briefing as well?

Education System Public Health Nurses

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Madam Speaker, to the Minister of Health. New Democrats believe that teachers and principals should not have to do medical work and that nurses should be put in our schools to deliver community-based children's health programs, including immunizations, special needs help, deal with injuries and outbreaks and prevention. My question is to the minister. Would he now at least assure the families of Winnipeg School Division that when the Winnipeg Health Authority takes over health services this spring, it will maintain, if not enhance, public health nurses in our schools, as now provided by the City of Winnipeg?

Hon. Darren Praznik (Minister of Health): Madam Speaker, to my understanding and knowledge,

Manitoba Health, the public health nurses have for many years provided various functions in our school system. I believe the member's question references the discussions now that are ongoing to consolidate public health functions between two different jurisdictions in the same city of Winnipeg. If that is the case, if we are able to succeed in having that amalgamation, services will continue on the same basis, and we would hope over time that, obviously, service levels can improve.

Madam Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Speaker's Rulings

Madam Speaker: I have rulings for the House.

I am ruling on a matter I took under advisement on March 25, 1997, during Question Period. The opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) raised a point of order about an answer provided by the honourable Minister of Environment (Mr. McCrae). Having taken the opportunity to research Hansard, I am ruling that there was a point of order.

The minister was not clear on March 25 that he was answering questions asked on March 20, nor had he clearly indicated on March 20 that he was taking a question as notice. What he had said on the 20th was that he would provide the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) with information. What the Minister of Environment did say on March 25 was clearly debating the issue and was provocative. That was in contravention of Citation 417, and I would have to caution the minister when answering questions to conform to the provisions of that citation, that is, the answer should be brief, should deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

I took under advisement a point of order raised on March 25, 1997, by the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) about the orderliness of an answer provided by the honourable Minister of Health (Mr. Praznik) to a question. Having reviewed the Hansard record, I find that there was indeed a point of order. The question asked was quite straightforward, asking whether a matter would be sent to the Provincial Auditor for a review. A large portion of the answer from the minister consisted of quotations from a newspaper article which did not directly relate to the question asked.

I encourage all ministers when answering questions to be brief, to deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

During Question Period on March 27 two points were raised relating to an exchange of questions and answers between the honourable member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) and the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer).

The first point of order was raised by the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) about the relevancy of the answer by the minister to the second question posed by the honourable member for Brandon East. After reviewing the Hansard record, I am ruling that the opposition House leader did have a point of order, and I ask the minister when replying to questions to deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

The second point of order as raised by the government House leader (Mr. McCrae) was that the questions posed by the member for Brandon East were outside the administrative responsibility of the minister as they had to do with the A.E. McKenzie Company. The government House leader may indeed have had a point; however, he should have raised it before the minister began to answer the first question of the honourable member for Brandon East. Therefore, I am ruling that the government House leader did not have a point of order.

On April 11 during Question Period I took under advisement a point of order raised by the opposition House leader (Mr. Ashton) regarding an answer to a question by the honourable First Minister (Mr. Filmon). Having reviewed the Hansard record, I am ruling that the opposition House leader did have a point of order, and I ask the First Minister when replying to questions to deal with the matter raised and to not provoke debate.

* (1430)

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Roseau River Training Centre— Youth Futures Program

Mr. Jack Penner (Emerson): Madam Speaker, it gives me great pride to rise today to recognize the

efforts of the Youth Futures program in the Roseau River Training Centre at Roseau, Manitoba. They are initiating a three-month pilot project which is being funded through the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and the Regional Aboriginal Management Board. There are 15 youths enrolled in the program between the ages of 16 and 25, and the training will include the following modules: Youth Phoenix Seminar, which is a one-week, intense motivational training seminar. They will also be enrolled in a computer multimedia training course, which includes computer training, and they will also utilize a course in jujitsu, which is a martial arts training program.

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

This program was started by a group of young people on the reserve, and the trainers that are going to be involved are Ken Henry, trainer and co-ordinator, Curtis Jonny and Kirt Prince. Most of these people are local people that are going to be doing the training, and I certainly look forward to the results of this program. I congratulate the staff and students of the Roseau River Training Employability Centre for taking on this initiative, and I ask all members here to encourage and further the studies in this area.

Hog Industry

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Mr. Acting Speaker, I rise today to make a few comments about the announcement about the Maple Leaf Hog Processing Plant in Brandon and the hog industry in Manitoba. One of the good things about the announcement is that we are finally seeing a rise in the number of food-processing jobs in this province, for even though the government has talked about creating value-added jobs in this province, we are at a much lower level than we were in 1987 and '88. At that time we were up to 5,000 jobs in food-processing in this province. More recently, in 1996, we were down to about 2,500 jobs, half of what we had eight years earlier. So the additional 1,500 jobs in the food-processing sector are certainly welcome.

But, along with the processing jobs, we are going to see an increase in hog production in Manitoba, and this is where the government has to get their act together to ensure that this production is done in a sustainable

manner. This government has to bring in regulations that have strength rather than the guidelines that are currently in place and have resulted in many conflicts between rural residents. This government has simply not done a good job up to this point in addressing people's concerns. We have hog barns being built in areas that are very sensitive, and we hear concerns from rural residents who are worried about their water quality.

This is a real opportunity for the government at this time as we can have an industry grow in a proper manner in this province. We do after all need the growth in the livestock sector because shipping grain has become too expensive with the loss of the Crow, but this growth has to be done in a sustainable way. We need to look at the mistakes made in other countries and ensure that that does not happen here. We need to look at North Carolina, and we need to look at Holland and learn from their mistakes. I say to the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns): take what you saw in Taiwan as far as managing odour and ensure that some of this new technology is applied in Manitoba.

We must also consider the size of operations that are going to be sustainable in this province. We have to listen to people such as those at Netley, in Gimli, in Kemnay and in the Interlake region who have expressed concern about livestock operations and do this in a sustainable way so that all people in this province can benefit.

Open House—Manitoba Legislature

Mr. Peter Dyck (Pembina): I want to take this opportunity to express my immense satisfaction with the success of this past Saturday's open house held at the Legislature.

During the course of the day I saw hundreds of Manitobans enjoying some of the wonderful dainties, listening to the strolling carollers and musicians and visiting with elected officials. The warmth of the Christmas season was evident throughout the day. The sound of boys and girls laughing in the children's room permeated the hallways and added to the Christmas feeling.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I want to thank all the volunteers who generously gave of their time. Every year they

continue to outdo themselves, and as a result, they enhance our "Friendly Manitoba" reputation. They are the unsung heroes of the day and without their assistance we would never have achieved the success we do. A special thank you to two groups from the Pembina constituency, Wing and a Prayer from Manitou and VOX, the Morden Collegiate Women's Choir. I hope that all members have had a chance to listen to these two groups as they are a wonderful example of the quality of entertainment available in my area.

I thank all the members of the Legislature who participated in the day, including the traditional Christmas carols on the grand staircase. Despite our lack of practice together, I believe that our efforts were appreciated.

As Christmas fast approaches, let us all take time to reflect and celebrate the meaning behind this holiday. Thank you.

Home Invasions

Mr. Gord Mackintosh (St. Johns): Mr. Acting Speaker, once again Manitobans have witnessed a very tragic crime in this province, one that has certainly instilled greater fear on the part of seniors and made us question some of our basic values and how we can best protect those who are vulnerable among us. We are again calling on this government to better protect seniors from home invasions as we saw on Bannerman in the last number of days.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I remind the House that this province is the most violent province in the nation. As well, I remind this House that while nationally robberies have dropped by 10 percent, the rate of robberies has increased by 10 percent over the last five years. While I hear the police advising seniors to install alarm systems or otherwise better secure their homes, I hear nothing from the members opposite offering help to those who cannot afford this kind of protection.

Why is the government excluding safety improvements from its home renovation fund, why, when this is the most violent province in Canada? The cost of home security alarms is in the range of \$500 to a thousand dollars, not to mention the ongoing fees for

monitoring, well beyond the means of many seniors. Unfortunately, those who can least afford better home security tend to be those who live in the more vulnerable areas. Since the conditions that breed crime are worsening under the Filmon government, the least it can do is commit to rearguard action to protect those who need it most. The cost of crime must not be borne by those least able to pay and those most vulnerable.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Madam Speaker: To resume adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), standing in the name of the honourable Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism who has 30 minutes remaining.

Hon. James Downey (Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to get the floor, particularly when our neighbours and friends from Saskatchewan are in the House, because I think it is time to acknowledge and compliment the government of Saskatchewan—in Manitoba. By the way, their farm community will to a great extent benefit from the recent decision made by Maple Leaf Foods here in Manitoba as it relates to a new hog processing plant.

I also want to compliment the government of Saskatchewan in their foresight and vision to give dual marketing to their hog producers in Saskatchewan, which will lead to additional industrial development as it relates to that industry in Saskatchewan. I am sure that the member who just spoke from Swan River could take a page from their book as it relates to some of the more progressive marketing attitudes as it relates to agriculture.

* (1440)

Yesterday, when the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer)—in my opening comments, I made a comment to him about his lack of vision and about his lack of dedication to the people of Manitoba in creation of jobs. I want to table a letter which was sent to the

Leader of the Opposition, which I was copied on, from an individual who has quite a successful business in Manitoba, major exporters, in fact, has a comment to the Leader of the Opposition who, by the way, should have stood and objected to his membership wanting to go to a 32-hour workweek in the province of Manitoba. This is what the business community thinks. I want to table a letter from Canadian Tool & Die Ltd., Mr. Johnnie Gatschuff, and I will tell you, Madam Speaker, that there is a lot in there that the Leader opposite should take note of.

I will, in the interests of giving as many members an opportunity to speak today a chance, just further elaborate on a couple of points which I think are extremely important: that, when we talk about two things, one is when it comes to the exports of the products from Manitoba, how we have seen such a tremendous increase in exports, whether it is in the manufactured goods, whether it is in the goods and services that are provided in Manitoba, particularly the increases that have gone into the United States. That is why when this opposition say that this government have no view or no vision, why did this government support NAFTA? Why did this government support the Free Trade Agreement? [interjection] That is right. Why did they oppose it? That is why when we talk about vision and where we want to be for job creation, to produce the wealth, to produce the health and educational services for this province, we need exports and we need jobs that come from those exports.

When we look at some of the numbers of jobs that we are looking at in the province of Manitoba—and I want to put this on the record before I conclude—when you look at the recent job statistics, over 14,000 new jobs from October of a year ago to this current time—I will just give you the numbers for the 10 months to October, 1997. Totally, season-adjusted employment in Manitoba has averaged 537,800 persons, a gain of 14,100 over the same period last year.

Madam Speaker, the point that I am making is that all of the initiatives that this government has put in place, whether it is Free Trade Agreement, whether it is the mining sector, whether it is the mineral sector, whether it is the oil sector, whether it is the agriculture sector, the manufacturing sector, the garment industry

manufacturers, the service sector, the challenge for us today in this province is to train the people to fill the jobs.

I will conclude on this remark. I was the happiest person the other day when I heard that the employees of Edmonton may have to come back to Brandon or to Manitoba to get a job. Far too long we have seen the young people of this country exit this province for jobs in western Canada. I say it is “welcome home.” We have a friendly government, we have jobs and we have a tremendous economy. That is the vision we have for this country, that is the vision we have for this province, and I believe under the leadership of Premier Filmon and the Progressive Conservative Party, this will continue well into the 21st Century. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Diane McGifford (Osborne): Madam Speaker, I too am very concerned about other people having the right to speak so my remarks, like the Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism's (Mr. Downey), will be brief.

I do want to take the opportunity to welcome the pages to the Legislative Building and tell them how much we appreciate their work. Their work makes our work possible, and we are very grateful for their being here.

Also, I would like to welcome the member for Portage (Mr. Faurshou) to the Legislative Assembly. We have had the opportunity to exchange a few words, and I am sure we will have other opportunities.

I also wanted to join my colleague from Concordia in paying tribute to Mr. Ernst, formerly from Charleswood. I certainly found him to be a very respectful person, and he seemed to behave in a very decent, gracious and gentlemanly manner, and I appreciated his presence in the House. We certainly wish him well.

Also, while I am on my feet, I would like to thank the Minister for Industry, Trade and Tourism (Mr. Downey) for his tub-thumping speech. He began yesterday and actually did not give his usual I-love-Manitoba speech to start with. He started with I love Canada, and then he went into I love Manitoba, I love

this government and I really love this Premier (Mr. Filmon). That was yesterday.

As well, I think the subtext of this minister's speech was that the mind can make a heaven of hell, reminding me of the great Puritan, the divine John Milton, his epic poem *Paradise Lost* and the malicious antagonist in that poem, the fallen angel, sometimes known as Satan. Milton, I suppose it is—Satan says to us that the mind can make a heaven of hell and a hell of heaven, in other words, that it is a matter of perception, and perhaps that is what the minister wants us to think of Manitoba. However, John Milton did not believe that. John Milton cautions the reader, tells us to read this poem carefully, tells us that we cannot trust devils and fallen angels. While I certainly would not want to put the minister in that context, I think we should take some of what he said yesterday with a little bit of caution. This government has not created heaven right here in the province of Manitoba.

I want to turn now to the substance of the throne speech, although I do think to refer to it as a substantial speech is a little bit of a contradiction in terms, as many of my colleagues in their speeches inside this House and as many people outside the House in the press, et cetera, have pointed out. It was not a substantial throne speech, Madam Speaker. Indeed, one must acknowledge that more than toast is being rethermalized in the province of Manitoba, and I think another example of rethermalized material is the throne speech.

The throne speech is a weary speech. We have heard it all before. I know the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) in his speech said that the throne speech was rethermalized vintage 1994, and I am sure that he is right. But I was not here in 1994, so I cannot personally be absolutely sure. To my ear, the throne speech of December 1997 rings of the speech of March 1995. We have the same old weary announcements in training and education, for example. The emphasis on training and education is, once again, on core subjects with little room, Madam Speaker, for any emphasis on the arts, on music, on culture and that, according to the Tories, most irrelevant of all subjects, Grade 11 Canadian history.

* (1450)

Many people in the community, as I am sure members opposite know, are extremely discouraged and disturbed about the elimination of Grade 11 Canadian history from the program. I want to quote from a letter sent to the Free Press by two very prestigious citizens, Celine M. Kear who is the president of the Manitoba Historical Society and Bernie Wolfe, president of Heritage Winnipeg.

They both believe that Grade 11 Canadian history should be present in the curriculum, and I read their letter: The Manitoba Historical Society and Heritage Winnipeg are concerned about reports that Canadian history at the Grade 11 level is to be abolished in Manitoba schools. Our concern is reinforced by recent studies about the ignorance of Canadian students of their own country's history and heritage. The Dominion Institute recently hired the Angus Reid polling company to study the depth or otherwise of the knowledge of their own country by young people between the ages of 18 and 24. Only 19 percent got more than half the questions correct. This is the age when the current young generation begins to engage in Canadian politics as citizens. How can they make informed, intelligent, political and economic decisions about Canada's future if they have such abysmal knowledge of Canada's past?

For the purposes of expediting my speech today, I am not going to read the entire letter, but I think that they make a very good point here, Madam Speaker.

I wonder exactly why this government wants to eliminate Canadian history for Grade 11, and I can only conclude, Madam Speaker, that what lies behind it is a desire to produce a generation of students who really lack the analytical and creative capacity to challenge and understand government.

I gather that what this government really wants are highly efficient, obedient workers, individuals who will not challenge the order of the day, more sameness, more weariness. What we have or what this government would like to produce is a culture where efficiency is the only moral principle and where morality gives way to smugness, arrogance and self-satisfaction. That is certainly what I heard in the throne speech and what we hear day after day in Question Period. We heard some more of it today, especially

from the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) who should be a model to all of us as the Minister of Education.

I want to just return briefly to the question of education and training to point out that the refusal to recognize the importance of arts and culture in our public school system is something that will ultimately backfire on us, and here I quote the great American poet, William Carlos Williams: Not only is art a rival government always in opposition to its cruder replicas, but as well—and Tories should understand this—I know the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer) does, because he was formerly the Minister of Culture—I know he understands the economic impact of the arts and knows that the economic impact of the arts is considerable and, as well, the economic impact of the arts. Arts themselves are one of the strongest tourist attractions to our capital city. The arts community, our ballet, our symphony, our theatre, our art gallery are very, very strong tourist attractions, and I think, Madam Speaker, we have a duty and responsibility to support the arts, duty and responsibility in which we are failing at present.

Given my short time here today, I think that I will move on. I really do not have to pursue this matter of education since I am sure others in my caucus will. As well, I am sure that we all heard Diane Beresford, president of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, who spoke so succinctly, intelligently, who analyzed the situation so well. She understands the educational crisis in Manitoba, and I think that she speaks very well for teachers and for the educational crisis in the province, so I am not going to speak about that.

I do briefly want to touch upon the status of AIDS as an issue in this province. I found it so hypocritical that these members, on International AIDS Day, wore red ribbons into the Legislature, wore red ribbons into this Legislature, but had no answers to questions. Such hypocrisy and such humbug, Madam Speaker, but these members should know that they do not fool anybody. Everybody in the AIDS community knows exactly what they are about. I asked three questions that day. I believe the member for Radisson (Ms. Cerilli) asked three questions, and perhaps the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale), I cannot quite remember.

I got one answer from the Premier, the Premier insisting that the province was doing its duty because it was providing health care through the Village Clinic. This was the only answer that we got. The rest of the questions were all taken as notice and we would be got back to later. Well, I for one have not been got back to later, and I wonder if I will be at all. Conveniently, the day the Premier spoke, answered my question, he was confusing basic health care, which I remind him we are still obliged to provide in this province, though his government might like to change that as well, but the Premier was confusing basic health care with an AIDS strategy, and they are of course quite different. I want to indicate to this Premier that health care and an AIDS strategy are quite different, but no wonder the treatment and care for people living with AIDS is languishing when the Premier does not understand this simple distinction.

I think I have spoken before about the whole history of the AIDS strategy in the province of Manitoba. I will just sum it up very quickly. The whole fiasco began in the summer of 1994 when Justice Horace Krever was in Manitoba and, to the embarrassment of this government, John Guilfoyle spilt the beans and pointed out that we had .5 persons working on AIDS in this province. It was such an embarrassment that there was all of a sudden the desire to create an AIDS strategy, and people gathered together in November of 1994. There were people living with AIDS, the families of those people, community workers, medical people gathered for two days, I believe, had a very, very good discussion, I think. From there a paper was drafted; the paper went back and forth from the community to government, from government to the community, and finally, Madam Speaker, in July of 1996, this AIDS paper, this AIDS strategy was released to the public.

It was a somewhat disappointing document, and I think that we have indicated this earlier during debate in this House. Still, one thinks that half a loaf is better than nothing at all, so in the summer of 1996 the Minister of Health dissolved his AIDS Advisory Committee and, though it is now December 1997, still nothing has happened, which brings me back to the point that I was making, a year and a half and nothing has happened. The Premier (Mr. Filmon) gives nonsensical answers or no answers at all to questions

on AIDS and then these people have the hypocrisy to wear red ribbons into this House. It is really a travesty, and I am quite ashamed of the government.

Madam Speaker, there are several issues I would like to have addressed today. I would like to have addressed the shameful inaction on child prostitution in this province. I would like to have addressed the prolonged underfunding of agencies supporting people who are—I am a bit confused. I would like to have talked about the underfunding of agencies that support the mentally disabled. Workers here make only minimum wage, and it is impossible for these agencies to keep workers. It is quite untenable.

I also would like to have talked about violence against women but I have done that before. There are certainly cultural issues that require addressing, health care issues, the shame of Grafton, North Dakota. Certainly this is a blot on our once-proud health care system.

I regret to say that I would like to have spoken a little bit more about the conduct of the Speaker in this House. Time does not permit. Suffice it to say that this rethermalized throne speech reflects the weariness, the staleness, the arrogance of a very elitist government. This government is out of touch with its people and, contrary to what the Minister of I, T and T (Mr. Downey) says, has no vision for the future at all. Thank you.

* (1500)

Ms. Jean Friesen (Wolseley): Madam Speaker, I want to welcome the new pages and the new member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), but I want most of all to speak about the air of unreality in this throne speech which stems, I believe, from the isolation of a government which for nearly a decade has moved around in private planes and ministerial cars and more recently whose ministers seem curiously intent on long-distance journeys on slim pretexts. Such separation from reality is partly what lies behind the meanspirited nature of the government response to the flood victims of Ste. Agathe.

The government misses no opportunity to speak of Manitobans' generosity to one another, hands across the

border, hands across to the Saguenay, city and country all in this together, and so they were, until we came to add up the bill on the government side of the House. Then the true nature of this new conservatism shone through. This was not to be a Duff Roblin response. Roblin recognized the importance of public service, and the Tories recognized the public relations value of the former Premier and capitalized on it shamelessly with their fundraising dinner.

Yet the very principles which Roblin stood for, public investment, a sense of responsibility for each other and acknowledgement that the future of the city and country are linked are the ones that they have forsaken. For 200 years, Madam Speaker, Europeans have known the Red River Valley and they have known the extremes of climate and fortune that have required extraordinary community effort and a recognition of commitment to each other's welfare, and Roblin understood that. Yet the present Tories do not. It is quite curious.

Manitobans' long-term flood relief has left a bitter taste for many. It has been slow in coming. It has followed tortuous and inconsistent paths and, while sandbags and dikes went up quickly and evacuees received courtesy and consideration, government announcements left Manitobans bewildered. For a while the Premier (Mr. Filmon) and his Minister of Government Services (Mr. Pitura) were like two old figures on a weather vane; one popped out with what seemed like a generous announcement about compensation, then he was swung around vigorously and out slammed the Premier with a sharp contradiction. It was bewildering and very distressing for the flood victims.

But most astonishing of all has been the Premier's insistence that people must take responsibility for choosing to live in a flood plain. This is an argument he made during the flood and has subsequently repeated over and over again. I must admit, Madam Speaker, that my first reaction to this was to suggest that the Premier had possibly been quoted out of context. Indeed, I suggested as much to a colleague in Montreal. It seemed so cold, so callous, so unresponsive and so unManitoban, if there be such a word. But the Premier persisted in offering the same

rejection to the people of Ste. Agathe in the Chamber that he had on radio, and so I took another look at it.

An acquaintance, a lifelong Tory—let us call him “Deep Blue”—tells me the true answer to this lies very close to the surface. I should not really puzzle about it very long, he said, it is vanity. The Premier simply could not abide being trumped by the largess of the federal government, particularly Lloyd Axworthy in an election year. So one argument we would have to consider is that vanity, political rivalry and a stubborn refusal to rethink the merits of the case of the people of Ste. Agathe are really the key to the policy of the government of Manitoba, a government which tries to portray itself as the inheritor of Duff Roblin.

Politics and history is, in part, about character, and it is possible that “Deep Blue” is right, but history is also about circumstance and about ideas and ideology, and we must consider other alternatives. This is a government whose ministers openly pride themselves on following the dictum of Machiavelli. Well-thumbed copies of Machiavelli's discourses are occasionally passed around at committee meetings, albeit in plain brown wrappers. During the MTS hearings, the Premier could be seen, a lonely and disconsolate figure at the back of the committee room. He carried in his hand a piece of paper written large with a quote from Machiavelli's “The Prince.”

Does the answer then to the Ste. Agathe question lie in the posture of a government which has taken to heart Machiavelli's advice that if as a government you cannot be both feared and loved then it is better to be feared? If that were the case, surely the firing of cabinet ministers—the last but two, member for Portage; the member for Rhineland; the member for Charleswood; the former Speaker, the member for Gladstone—the instilling of fear into civil servants who make mistakes, the cuts to health, welfare and education, the calculated attacks on teachers, would surely have carried this message of fear for the Premier and his government. Was it also necessary to rub salt in the wounds of Ste. Agathe?

As one writer wrote recently, it is not difficult to see why “The Prince” by Machiavelli is so appealing to those who fancy they are made of sterner stuff than others, and this is a government, Madam Speaker,

which certainly fancies itself. Machiavelli's astringent prostyle, however, is the polar opposite of the usual Tory platitudes. There is no waffling around there, no euphemisms such as referring to tax increases and user fees as sensitive economic adjustments, as the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) prefers to do. Machiavelli says men must be either one over or destroyed.

Now if you spent your time reading Stephen Covey, you would welcome the clarity which Machiavelli brings to a situation. This government likes to pretend that it is following the California philosophies of Stephen Covey. I think all the cabinet ministers received a copy from the Premier. Quotations from Stephen Covey are received enthusiastically by different ministers. So for the public face of this government, there are Covey's pie charts, seven routes to totally mastery, seven routes to synergy, the full monte of a '90s guru. But behind the brown paper covers and under the desks it is “The Prince” whose advice they follow. Machiavelli would indeed have approved.

As many have pointed out over the years, Machiavelli is no apologist for despotism, but his advice to princes and governments underlines that the people must always believe that by serving the prince they will be serving their own best interests. Has the government reflected on this in the case of Ste. Agathe and have they decided again with Machiavelli that, and I quote, there is nothing so self-defeating as generosity? In the art of practising it, you lose the ability to do so and you become poor and despised. Benefits must be conferred gradually and, in that, they will taste better.

Is that, Madam Speaker, what lies behind the government's approach to flood relief, a little turn of the tap now and again, the same approach they are taking to health care and perhaps education? We may see the benefits conferred gradually so that they will taste better to us as they begin in the run-up to the next election. So perhaps it is this, the government's election schedule and the doctrine of Machiavelli, to confer benefits gradually, which lie at the strategic heart of this incomprehensible response to the people of Ste. Agathe.

They faced extraordinary circumstances, the flood of the century. They had taken the precautions that were

normal and prudent for their circumstances. Their wealth had helped to build the floodway that protected Winnipeg. They, in turn, have been helped by the wealth and prosperity of the city since the 1950s, and that their government now should turn their backs and transform them from citizens to beggars and petitioners is a cruel blow, and I believe most Manitobans see it that way. Perhaps even the government sees it that way too, for the meanspirited government response is now being portrayed as a matter of principle. The government's argument is that people must take some responsibility for living in a flood plain. The lack of generosity is portrayed as a way of protecting Manitobans from their worst impulses. If it were not for this government, goes the argument, urging us to shed our dependence on the state, we would all be on some form of welfare, and let us start with Ste. Agathe.

Again, Madam Speaker, let us turn to the real guru of the modern Conservatives, Machiavelli. Machiavelli is firm that the prince should develop a flair for spin-doctoring for new management. He says: to those seeing or hearing him, the prince should appear a man of compassion, a man of good faith, a man of integrity, and a kind and religious man.

Well, this government seems to have missed the boat on this one, or is it, I wonder, that they have proffered the gospel of self-help, of rugged individualism, of antistatism as a way to disguise for the time their un-Manitoban response to those people in Ste. Agathe? All of this is possible, but we should be aware that the individualism thread runs deep in the new market Toryism. It probably speaks to the new dangers that the government rightly perceives from the growth of the Reform Party in their own ridings. It certainly has been present in other government policies.

* (1510)

The Youth Secretariat, for example, frames most of its strategies in that ideological framework. It may be no coincidence that we have heard so little from the Youth Secretariat other than government ministers passing the buck, a heavy thud as they throw it from one to the other. Because the task of the Youth Secretariat is one that requires co-operation, community participation and shared values, yet, the government

response has been framed in the language of Victorian individualism.

I do not suppose the government has ever heard of Samuel Smiles, but that is the true source of their perspective. A true and indeed eminent Victorian, an author and lecturer known throughout the English-speaking world at the end of the 19th Century, he was a missionary to what he saw as the howling chaos of the new urban centres. He argued that causes of social disorder and dysfunction, although he would never have used such terms, could be laid at the feet of the individual and that it was the responsibility of the individual to raise himself in the social order by his strength of character, duty, learning, et cetera. By so doing, he would also raise his entire class, and society would benefit.

I see honourable members are listening attentively. They might indeed learn something.

There was a seductive simplicity to Smiles's views which I am sure the government would share, and the grain of truth that we all seek to be masters of our own destiny, but we are born unequal and the wealth of our society is distributed unequally. Samuel Smiles accepted that. He was part of a society which honoured rank, accepted and even revelled in inequality, and which practised deference to authority in all things. Much of Smiles's message to the working class was intended to turn them away from dangerous revolutionary ideas such as the 10-hour day and channel their energies into self-improvement and volunteerism, and we find echoes of all of this in the government's policy and their response to Ste. Agathe.

It is matched perhaps by the Department of Education's ideas about citizenship. At the last Parents' Forum, the deputy minister was again given the political role of outlining Manitoba's position on curriculum. He talked of the importance of teaching citizenship, and I sat up and took note because, of course, this government has steadfastly refused to make Canadian history mandatory beyond Grade 6. But honourable members will forgive me if I sound incredulous, but he truly did, Madam Speaker, define citizenship at the end of the 20th Century as respect for authority and respect for property. Not respect for the

law. Not responsibility to each other. Not the golden rule, but authority.

Perhaps it is quite consistent with the desire of members opposite to throw out Beauchesne. Why do we need a set of rules that we have developed collectively and over time if our only job as a citizen is deference to authority? There is very little modern about these new Tories, Madam Speaker. Their market ideology, their simplistic belief in individualism, their justification of inequality and their deference to authority are all hallmarks of the Victorian Age or at least of the dominating ideology of that time.

Well, Madam Speaker, what are the broader consequences for Manitobans of this new Victorianism? How will it affect special needs education or respite care? We can see already how much of education costs is being shifted to families as students come home with longer and longer lists of money they must provide. Families are indeed taking the individual responsibility, as the government would have it, for paying for substitute teachers, for example, in Assiniboine South, or in River Heights where individual responsibility requires that paper be brought in for xerox, and these in our wealthier neighbourhoods.

In health care the government has no strategy to deal with diabetes or AIDS, but it is quite prepared to mouth its platitudes about individual responsibility as it offloads more and more care onto families. How much more can be expected of family caregivers in long-term diseases such as Alzheimer's or AIDS or in workplace health and safety? The deaths of so many this last year remind us of the importance of inspection, of collective enforcement of standards, and not just the individual responsibility the government wants to talk about.

Madam Speaker, I remember vividly the voice of one mother who spoke at the Association for Community Living last year. She told of the extraordinary burdens which she and her family had shouldered and shouldered gladly. But she said, we are just an ordinary family and we cannot do it alone. That voice stands for many Manitobans who are hardworking, struggling and yet just surviving. The individualism of the Premier's

(Mr. Filmon) message to Ste. Agathe would ring hollow with that woman who would understand that they too cannot do it alone.

The message of Ste. Agathe should be a warning for all Manitobans. What lies behind it is a philosophy which leads down a road that I believe most Canadians and most Manitobans do not want to go. It began with a massive transfer of wealth from the people of this province to brokers and speculators in New York as MTS was sold off, all done without consent of the people. [interjection]

Well, Madam Speaker, I hear the many groans of the members opposite. They cannot face the truth because that is exactly what it is.

Madam Speaker, the government policy will continue with the offloading of health and education onto families without regard for their ability to meet the needs of their children or their elders. It will see the rise of private pensions as the Reform Party is proposing and as Thatcher did in Britain with disastrous consequences. There is an ideologic to this train of policy, and the Filmon Conservatives are exactly on that path. But will we see this in the runup to the election? The government knows this is not the Manitoba way, and just as they knew that they must hide their true intentions with the Jets, and that they must hide their true intentions with the public telephone system, so they will hide this philosophy from the public. If this is the case, then why is Ste. Agathe being singled out for such treatment? Was it merely an additional misfortune for their situation to present itself just too close to the last election and just a month or so too far from the planning for the next one in a government which eats polls for breakfast?

On the throne speech, Madam Speaker, there is much more to say. It offers little hope for those concerned with health or education. In the case of education, the government policy remains set in stone, a rigid and expensive approach to assessment, a reduction of curriculum. There is no indication of a response to come to the special needs review, and we see a continued shift of resources from public to private schools. It is not a level playing field, it is not a fair system and most Manitobans are recognizing that.

In my meetings with parents and teachers across the province, I hear of increasing class size, and that is no wonder in a Tory reign which has seen the loss of nearly 600 teachers. I hear of children who are falling behind in their reading, of parents who are working at two jobs to try to make ends meet to look after their children, to shop and do the laundry, and who are now worried by a government which is telling them they must do more with their children to make up for the lesser amount of time that a teacher can spend with them.

One father told me he spends an hour and a half with his son on math, then he tries to read with his daughter each night. He is a single parent with two jobs and worries he is not able to do more with and for his children. I am finding that this is not an isolated case, and yet it is these families who are being told that they must welcome the withdrawal of the state, welcome the chance to rid themselves of the yoke of government. What utter and absolute rubbish. Again, it shows just how isolated this government has become. The calls I receive from anxious parents are coming not just from the inner city or my own riding but from rural Manitoba and from ridings represented by the members opposite.

Madam Speaker, I would have liked longer time to examine the hypocrisy of a throne speech which talks about the government's intentions to develop research and training, to deal with victims' services, to revitalize apprenticeships and to provide hope for aboriginal people in the city, because in every single one of those cases it is this government which has either refused assistance or delayed policies so long that people have lost hope.

I wanted to mention, too, the Premier's address to the Chamber of Commerce, which has become grandiosely and gratuitously entitled the state of the province message. It is not of course a state of the province's message. It is more like a booster speech for the Tory party. Some of my constituents have told me how offended they are that the government's vision of the province is so limited that it sees only the business community as the leader and only the business community to whom it should report in this way, and I take both of their points. This is not to say that my constituents do not recognize the importance of business in the community. Many of them are

entrepreneurs working from home or employing 20 or 30 people on wages above the minimum wage, as does the bakery and the new restaurants in Wolseley, but they also have a vision of a wider community of Manitoba. They are rooted in the politics of the '90s, and here the heroes are the neighbourhood and the community and the social entrepreneurs who work at the very basic building blocks of neighbourhood associations and which are doing so much in west Broadway at St. Matthews-Maryland, at Harvest, at Crossways, at Robert A. Steen and at the Magnus Eliason Centre.

* (1520)

They are organizing powwows and daycares, organizing small residents' associations such as that in east Wolseley. They bring together public institutions such as the University of Manitoba's City Planning department to meet with the Lions Club, with the Misericordia, with residents of west Broadway to build a safer neighbourhood with decent housing.

Those are our leaders. They are our local heroes, but they are not the ones whom this government designates as leaders and to whom they make a special report. It may be a small point, but it is a fundamental one.

Nor when the Premier (Mr. Filmon) spoke did he give a true picture of the province. His statistics on unemployment do not include aboriginal people. He gives us no indicators of social gains or losses in housing or in safety or in child or family poverty. There is no true picture there presented of the inner city. I can only quote from an article by a constituent, a teacher at R.B. Russell, who said, and I quote: Who gives a damn about the inner city? Certainly not the Conservative government of Premier Gary Filmon. It does not have a clue about how to cure societal ills among the jobless in an undereducated, racially diverse and poverty-impaired youth. Does it really see no correlation, he said, between poverty and crime? There seems to be a shortage of elementary deductive logic within the Filmon caucus. He continued to argue that Rossbrook House, FREIGHT House and Turtle Island, for example, cannot do it alone. A very interesting use of the same words and the same sentiments of the woman who spoke for the families in the Association for Community Living.

In the Premier's speech, as in the throne speech, there is no sense of the growing gap between Manitobans. There is no acknowledgment that nine years of Tory rule have created a society that is more unequal than when the Tories were first elected. There is no sense that for the small prairie provinces, like Saskatchewan and Manitoba, that our success has been built upon collective economic effort, government investment in infrastructure, particularly in the 20th Century which has opened the doors for generations of young Manitobans as well as for the enterprise and initiative of entrepreneurs.

Blakeney, Schreyer, Douglas, Pawley and, yes, Duff Roblin, understood this but not the new Filmon ideological market Tories, and so they are well on their way on the task they set themselves when they came to power to dismantle what generations of Manitobans have built.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Madam Speaker, time is running short today, and I have so much that I want to say to my constituents within my speech, and I was wondering before I say a few words for the record, might I have leave to table my speech for the record?

Some Honourable Members: Leave.

Madam Speaker: Does the honourable member for St. Norbert have leave to table his message? [agreed]

Mr. Laurendeau: I would just say a few words on the record. Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome my colleagues back. I am sure they all had a fruitful summer and fall. I am wishing them the best of the season for the winter.

Madam Speaker, one thing I learned last spring was that by working with my colleagues and my constituency, my M.P. Mr. Reg Alcock and my City Councillor Mr. John Angus, that even though we had differences of opinions, if we worked together we could resolve the problems.

We also had members of the opposition that came out to help us during the flood. I know Mr. Sale was there and Gord—[interjection] Oh, that is right. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) and the member for St.

Johns (Mr. Mackintosh) were there. Mr. Doer was out, a number of my colleagues, the Premier (Mr. Filmon) was out, the member for Concordia and the member for Crescentwood. I will not list them all, because it was unreal the response that happened during that period of time. It proved to me that that is what made Manitoba strong. When I was first elected in 1990, I was proud to be a Tory. When I was re-elected in 1995, I was prouder of being a Tory. After this throne speech, I am that much more proud and looking forward to the next election. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Ms. Rosann Wowchuk (Swan River): Madam Speaker, because time is getting short, we will not be able to raise all of the issues with respect to this throne speech, but I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome the pages to the House and the new member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Fauschou) to the House and to take this opportunity to wish all members the very best in the holiday season.

I would also like to recognize the people who are victims of the flood and hope that they have a holiday season, but certainly the actions of this government and the way they have been treated by this government will not make their holiday season very enjoyable, particularly those who are still out of their homes, those who have not got their farm operations back in order and those who are carrying tremendous debt loads because of the flood and the lack of heart from this government and lack of support. We could outline many of those families, but there will not be the opportunity to do this under this throne speech.

As we look at what the government said in this throne speech—and they talked about the prosperity in Manitoba—I want to say that the prosperity that they talked about does not reflect on the conditions of many of the people that I represent. Many of the people that I represent are having difficulty with housing and having improvements to their homes, but this government has been heartless enough to cancel all the home repair programs and has no consideration for these people, and, again, these people will be living in some desperate living conditions this winter.

Some of the people that I represent also are looking to have their education opportunities improved, but this government, although they say they want people to go

back to school, are not prepared to provide daycare for people who are trying to upgrade their education. One of those groups of people is a group of people in Duck Bay who are trying to take upgrading, and I have written to the minister for her support to provide home care, but, again, this government is heartless and does not recognize. They like to tell people that they should go back into the workforce, but they are not prepared to put the supports there for them.

The other people in my constituency who are facing difficulty are people in the Duck Mountain School Division because of cutbacks to education funding. This is a school division with a decreased population and a low assessment. Now the school superintendent and school trustees are going out and meeting with people and asking them what they should do because they are either going to have to raise taxes or close schools.

I think this is just absolutely disgraceful. In a country like Canada, in a province like Manitoba, rural children have the right to get an education in a public school system, and because of actions taken by this government we now have children who are going to have to travel greater distances, courses are cut in the schools, and there is not an equal opportunity for rural children. But this government is quite prepared to support the private schools and increase their funding, whereas the public schools are having to carry a very heavy load, and many of them are facing real difficulties. This is something that the government has to consider, and it is not considered in this throne speech as to how we are going to address the issue of areas of low population.

Madam Speaker, there are other issues, but I want to focus a bit on the agricultural issues in this budget, and I want to say that I am again pleased that the government has rehashed the announcement on research funding. The announcement was made in the last term. It has not been put in place yet, but, certainly, it is time we start to do some agriculture research. We are way behind other provinces and in particular Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is becoming the research capital of western Canada. There is no reason for Manitoba to fall behind in that, so I urge the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), and particularly in the time that we are getting into now, of more diversification of

livestock, we have to look at other diversification as well, and I urge the Minister of Agriculture to ensure that that actually happens.

Madam Speaker, I started earlier today to talk about the jobs that we are going to get in this province in the food-processing industry, and, as I said earlier, I am very pleased that we are going to have the additional jobs coming back into food processing because we lost a tremendous amount of jobs in the last few years under the Conservative government.

* (1530)

Mr. Ben Sveinson, Acting Speaker, in the Chair

Between 1987 and '88, we had close to or over 5,000 jobs in the food-processing industry, and those jobs have disappeared out of this province. We have gone down. In 1996, we were as low as 2,500, this at a time when this government continues to talk about value-added, value-added jobs. Well, those jobs are not there, so this announcement for a processing plant in Brandon is an excellent announcement. It gives us jobs that we need. We should not be exporting everything out without adding value to it, and I think that there is much more that we can do to add value in the beef industry, and, in fact, much of the pork is shipped out by carcasses, as I understand, and I think there is much more work, that we can get more jobs into this province.

With respect to the hog industry, I was talking to one of the farm leaders in this province, who said to me: We have to be sure, and the government has to be sure that they do not put all their eggs into one basket. It cannot only be hogs that are expanded, and it cannot only be the potato industry that is expanded. You have to look at all parts of the province, what other kinds of diversification can take place, and, of course, that diversification would result if we did more research into what can happen in this province, and, hopefully, that will happen.

I want to also take this opportunity to talk about the growth in the livestock industry. This afternoon we had people here visiting at the Chamber who are from Netley. This is a group of farmers who indicated very clearly they are not opposed to hog production, and

you, Mr. Acting Speaker, have similar situations in the area that you represent, where there is conflict between those people who want to produce livestock and those people who are living in a residential area. It is the same thing that is happening in Netley, in Gimli and in Interlake. There is an article from Kemnay near Brandon, and these people say they are not opposed to the increase in hog production, but they want it done in an orderly fashion. So, again, the challenge is here for this government to ensure that they bring in regulations, regulations that have teeth in them. The guidelines that are in place right now have no strength, carry no weight, and we have situations where there is conflict between municipality and municipality, people in various areas. People are concerned about water quality; people are concerned about the environment. This is the challenge to the government of the day to ensure that this is done properly so that we do not make the same mistakes that people in other countries have made.

If we look at what happened in North Carolina where it was very large operations that took over and there were not proper regulations in place, there is a real problem there. People of North Carolina and other states have said that, because there was not proper regulation, they have real problems right now.

Holland has similar problems. Holland is shutting down some of their hog operations because there just is not enough space for them. There is not enough land and they have created problems.

I know of other people who were with the minister in Taiwan where they looked at ways in which hog waste is processed. They take off the methane, as I understand it, and use it as an energy source, and then they have a product they can spread on land. Here in Manitoba we have a lot of land. We can increase our hog production, but there has to be some organization to it. We should not be putting hog barns in areas that are water sensitive. We have to ensure that when a hog barn is built there is enough land to spread the waste on, that that is in place. We have to ensure there is communication and people understand what is going on. We have to think about what size operations we want in this province. Is it necessary to have very large operations that do not really create a lot of jobs, or should we be encouraging more family farm operations

that are on a smaller scale but involve more people, more jobs? Those are the kinds of things we have to think about. So there is room for growth of the industry in this province; but, as I say to the government, we have to ensure that these things are—that it is done in an orderly fashion.

I want to just look for a minute—we quite often hear from the government when we raise these kinds of issues that, oh, this is just the NDP talking about production and they are against hog production. We heard the same thing in other areas, but that is not the case at all. There are other people out there who are concerned about this. I would like to read a little bit from an editorial, from the Portage la Prairie Daily Graphic. The editorial part of it says: Some of the rules in Manitoba's fastest growing industry need some retooling. Even pork contractors have been heard calling for tougher regulations and stiffer fines for those operating without disregard for environmental rules and their neighbours. These outspoken contractors know that it only takes a few poor operators to do severe damage to the industry. It goes on to say: But tougher regulations and stiffer fines work only as well as the enforcement accompanying them. If the province pays lip service to its own regulations and uses a hands-off enforcement approach, it could mean killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Further on, it goes on to say: It will not take much for public opinion to swing against the hog industry if hog operations are found to be carrying out poor management practices and spreading excess amounts of manure and contaminating regional ground water.

So this is what the public is saying. This is what the government has to be aware of. Let us ensure that the industry we have has the opportunity to expand in this province and is done in a sustainable way. We look forward to hearing regulations that the minister has talked about. We look forward to the government doing much more research and ensuring that not only the hog industry grows but also that other aspects of livestock, and that we look at other opportunities to diversify the rural economy. At the present time we are not having growth in the rural communities. Population is dropping; and, as the population drops, we face difficulties with our education systems, we face difficulties in sustaining services in the rural community. This government often talks about its

commitment to the rural community. This is an opportunity to do things that will help sustain and enhance the quality of life in rural communities.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I just want to raise a couple of more issues that relate to my constituency, and one of them has to do with the people in Pine River and surrounding area who worked so diligently when they found out that this government was on another one of their privatization schemes. They were proposing to privatize a spring water wayside park, a source of water that many people in the area use because they do not have good water. This government was making arrangements with one individual who wanted to bottle water and sell it, and I am not opposed to bottling water. I think that if somebody wants to start that kind of business, go to it, but there is no reason to take a public source of water. There are lots of springs around the mountain. This individual was planning to charge for water at this public site, but because the people rallied they were able to convince the Minister of Natural Resources (Mr. Cummings) that his decision was wrong. We are not completely happy with his answer, but we will continue to work with the Minister of Natural Resources and ensure that the issues that have been raised by the people in the Pine River area—and people as far away as Dauphin come to use this water.

Mr. Acting Speaker, along with that, I think that one of the disappointments that face the people in my constituency is the fact that the government has put no effort and no consideration to road construction. This is an offload of roads. Our roads are deteriorating because of lack of railway service and offloading by the government, and it is one that they have to address.

Certainly, the very last point I want to raise is farmers across the province are disappointed that this government has not in this throne speech addressed the Canadian Wheat Board, and I think that tells us very clearly that, instead of standing up with the many farmers, the majority of whom support the Wheat Board, the advisory board who is elected by the people who support the Wheat Board and want it maintained, we see this government saying nothing on it. It is clearly an indication that this government is not supporting some of the institutions, and the Canadian

Wheat Board that is very important to the farming community. Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

* (1540)

Point of Order

Mr. Laurendeau: On a point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker. I wonder if I might have leave to ask for my speech to be printed in Hansard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Sveinson): Is there leave? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Laurendeau: Thank you, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Madam Speaker, it is again my distinguished pleasure to rise and address the honourable members of this House, the people of Manitoba, and the people of St. Norbert on the subject of our government's most recent throne speech.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this occasion to welcome back all honourable members to the House. I am certain that, like myself, my friends and colleagues in this Chamber had a summer and fall filled with events and meetings and worked hard to address the various needs of their constituents. While I enjoy the time I have working in my constituency, I also welcome the opportunity to represent the views and interests of my constituents in the context of daily House activities.

Madam Speaker, I would like to welcome the Chamber's six new pages who will be playing an active role in the democratic process of our province in the coming months. It is a tremendous opportunity to witness government in action from a vantage point that few experience. As Deputy Speaker and a member for this House, I look forward to working with each of you.

Regrettably, this Chamber lost the services of one of its members since the past session. The former member for Charleswood, Mr. Jim Ernst, has left to pursue private sector interests, and I am certain that all members join with me in wishing Mr. Ernst a prosperous and successful private sector career. I hold a great deal of esteem for my former colleague, both as a legislator and as an individual, and his service to the people of Manitoba are worthy of the commendation he has received already in this Chamber. I will miss the

often fierce dedication he had to constituents and to all Manitobans. His qualities as a statesman made an immediate impression upon me, and his qualities as a friend have left a lasting one.

And while one chair in this House has gone vacant since our last sitting, another has been filled and filled very capably. I would like to officially, Madam Speaker, welcome the newest member of the Filmon team, the honourable members for Portage la Prairie, Mr. David Faurshou, to the government benches. It is a testament to the people of Portage la Prairie that they have elected an individual of character and determination to carry forward their views to this Chamber. I know that he will be a strong and able voice for the people of Portage la Prairie.

I would also take the opportunity, Madam Speaker, to offer praise to the fine people of St. Norbert for whom I have had the pleasure and honour of representing for the past eight years. As the members of this House know, the past year has been one which was often filled with anxiety and trials for the people of St. Norbert, but the strength of our community remains unbroken, and, in fact, we have grown even stronger.

When I was first elected to this Chamber, it was with the promise that I would work to the limits of my ability to represent the people of St. Norbert and to strengthen the community and the province which we call home. It is a commitment which I still hold to, Madam Speaker, and I thank each and every one of my constituents who have provided me with direction, advice and support during my tenure as their representative.

As well, and perhaps more than ever, I would like to pay tribute to my family, Madam Speaker. When I first was elected to this Assembly, it was with the knowledge that there would be times when the responsibilities of public life would lay a burden on the responsibilities of family life. Never was that more true than during this spring's enormous flood. There were many nights when my family dealt with their own personal fears about their home and possessions while taking on the extra fears of a community which I brought home every night. They never grew angry at me for putting aside family matters, although they certainly would have

been justified in doing so, and their support never wavered.

Madam Speaker, to my wife Winni and my children Amanda and Laney a thousand thanks would be too few.

Madam Speaker, as was given considerable notice in the Speech from the Throne, much of the news and much of our focus and energy last year went to battling what has now become known as the flood of the century. The constituents of St. Norbert were among the many thousands of Manitobans who helped their neighbours prepare for this devastating act of nature, and they were also among the many who suffered losses at its hands.

Yet, Madam Speaker, we do not measure loss or victory by the calculation of dollars and cents but rather by the preservation of human life, and to that I say that we were the clear victor and that none of those endangered, be they military or civilian, perished due to the flood of the century. Let me say that it was no small feat that none were critically injured in the area of St. Norbert.

The men and women of our Canadian Armed Forces, a group for which my respect has increased tenfold, placed themselves many times in harm's way in the effort to protect the personal possessions of the residents of St. Norbert. Many have claimed that this was a tremendous "peacetime" effort on behalf of our armed forces. Madam Speaker, I want to assure all members that the effort that was waged on behalf of my constituents had all the makings of a battle. From the front lines of sandbags where military personnel patrolled to ensure the rising water, a formidable enemy, did not advance its position . . . to the "war rooms" where strategy was developed on a daily basis to ensure that maximum protection and safety were afforded to area residents, a battle was fought.

Each year, it seems, we are reminded in one form or another that we are a strong and compassionate country. Each year, be it through natural disasters like the one experienced or be it through triumph such as a gold medal by a Canadian athlete, we are reminded that we are a country of pride and of passion. It is my hope that the pride and passion we demonstrate during

extraordinary situations can be equally maintained in all circumstances and in all provinces.

Madam Speaker, the words "thank you" seem so little in comparison to the mighty effort that was put forward by our armed forces personnel. Yet speaking on behalf of all of St. Norbert, the thanks I offer represent the heart and the emotion of a community that was deeply touched by the efforts of those Canadians that came to their aid in a great time of need. We will not soon forget their compassion.

In my own constituency the acts of individual heroism are too many to mention, Madam Speaker. From the neighbours who risked their own safety to check another water pump to the young and old who gave everything they had in the aid of another, acts of kindness were the order of the day. We are no longer a community populated by individual heroes, we have taken on the collective status of a heroic community.

I will remember always the sight of young and old, able-bodied and disabled, and men and women working long into the night to fill sandbags at the Fort Richmond Shopping Centre. They worked at a pace which continually surprised and amazed our city engineers. I will always remember the boxes and boxes of food prepared by volunteers for volunteers that flowed into our local flood centre. Most of all, I will always remember the look of determination that residents held as the battle waged to save home and property.

The spirit that the community of St. Norbert showed during the flood of the century was not new, Madam Speaker. We just had never needed it as much as we did then. It is a tribute to a community, a community which I am forever proud to call home.

Madam Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not make mention of our neighbours to the south who battled equally hard, but in some circumstances were not as fortunate. While we are separated by a border, we were united in heart and spirit as we fought a common enemy. The pictures of devastation we witnessed from Grand Forks left many of us with a feeling of both anger and of emptiness, an anger at the force that had caused such hardship and an emptiness for the people who had lost so much. I know, however, from my trips

and phone calls that the people of Grand Forks and the affected area have taken up the challenge of rebuilding and will do so with strength and determination.

Madam Speaker, perhaps one of the most heartening things of a crisis is the response it often emits from those who are affected. Never have we seen such a demonstration of this than during the flood as strangers came to the aid of strangers and friends to the aid of friends. So often we get lost in the arguments of rural versus urban, core versus suburbs and region versus region. What a heartening experience it was to see a province, literally a province, forget about their differences and unite in a common cause.

Madam Speaker, perhaps one of the most surprising things is that we learned a great deal about each other. The friendships and the learning that I saw take place on the sandbag lines was something that cannot be taught in a classroom. For the many hundreds of your Manitobans who fought off aching muscles and tired arms, it was a lesson in humanity and a lesson in compassion that will never be forgotten and that will serve them well in their future.

Yet, Madam Speaker, the flood of the century has passed, and while a great deal of rebuilding and restoration remains, we must move on, move on as a community, move on as a city and move on as a province. But we must take with us the lessons that we learned and apply them to our future needs. We must remember the energy that we had when we worked together for a common goal. We must remember the strength that we demonstrated when we came together for the greater benefit of our neighbours.

Madam Speaker, as a province our success lies in our collective will, not in our individual knowledge and self-assurance. Today, in a world that demands global thinking and a unified approach, we can use the knowledge and lessons that we have learned and prosper from them. Today, more than ever, we are a province which has a tremendous reason to be optimistic, a tremendous reason to bond together. We are in the midst of an economy that seemingly has no bounds and which has strength on so many levels. We have a degree of financial stability that is the envy of many of our provincial neighbours, and we have a workforce which is knowledgeable and vibrant.

Madam Speaker, while it is true that we live in uncertain times, Manitobans have never before had as much reason to feel secure about their future as they do today. Our young people are poised to inherit a province which is fiscally sound, economically diversified and socially responsible.

This past summer, Madam Speaker, I had the fortune of spending a great deal of time with a group of young people who worked through the province's Green Team to help in the post-flood cleanup in the St. Norbert area. It was a group of young people who were filled with confidence and filled with enthusiasm. They were a group who were willing to learn, were willing to work hard, and, most of all, were excited to get involved in a project that made a tremendous difference in the lives of their fellow Manitobans.

It was an experience that gave me an overwhelming confidence in the future of our province and gave me a renewed vigour for the direction that our government is going. Madam Speaker, it is for these young people that we have worked to ensure that the burden of debt and interest payments will be removed. It is for these young people that our government has worked to again make Manitoba an attractive place for investors, and it is for these young people that our government has worked to ensure that there will be opportunity and challenge in the workforce.

Madam Speaker, we live in a province which can now offer our young people more than just hope for a brighter future. We live in a province in which they can achieve their goals today. Much has been made in this very House about the robust predictions for Manitoba. We have heard about the Conference Board of Canada heralding Manitoba as one of the top performers in terms of economic growth and jobs with a report that was entitled Manitoba Economy Runs Wild. We have heard about the predictions from institutions, such as the Toronto Dominion Bank of Canada, which states that, "the brightest story coming out of Manitoba these days is job creation with Manitoba leading the country in employment growth with 2.7 percent more jobs than in 1996."

In fact, Madam Speaker, Manitoba's unemployment rate is expected to average 6.8 percent for 1997, the

third best performance of all provinces and well below the national average. The Conference Board of Canada further predicts that Manitoba's real gross domestic will grow by 3 percent in 1997, the third best performance of the provinces.

Madam Speaker, I am certain that my honourable friends opposite grow tired of hearing such reports, yet I am committed to repeating them because I can remember a time that such predictions and forecasts were only a distant dream. It was not so long ago that I feared that the legacy that my children would inherit would be a legacy of debt and economic stagnation. It was not that long ago that investors feared coming to Manitoba because of upward spiralling debt and taxes that were needed to pay for that debt. Yet today Manitoba is a province in which fear has been replaced by confidence. Stagnation has been replaced by prosperity. We have become a province of leaders and innovators. It is not a transition that was undertaken overnight. It did not come about without any pain or sacrifice. Indeed, all Manitobans played a part in the turnabout our province has experienced during the past year.

Madam Speaker, what better example of the confidence that investors have in our province could we have than the recent announcement by Maple Leaf meats that they will invest \$112 million in our province with the development of a state of the art hog processing plant in the city of Brandon. The plant will solidify our position as a leader in the pork processing industry as well as spur on even greater hog production. In addition, up to 2,200 people will eventually find work in the plant resulting in a tremendous economic spin-off for the city of Brandon.

The plant is more than a testament to the sound fiscal base our government has established for investors. It is the result of the forethought that our government has demonstrated in developing and diversifying our agricultural and livestock sector. Madam Speaker, lest any members think that this is an issue of small matter, I would remind all members that every 1,000 hogs that are produced and finished in Manitoba, four full-time jobs are created in the industry and another \$150,000 in revenue is generated which is almost all spent in our local economy.

Madam Speaker, currently the hog industry in Manitoba generates \$1.2 billion for the provincial economy and provides jobs for more than 1,200 people. This is the result of a government with vision, a government with direction and a government with determination.

Madam Speaker, this government has provided direction in fostering an economy that benefits all Manitobans, and we have received direction as well. Just as the flood proved what could be accomplished when Manitobans unite behind a common cause, the revival of the economy and revival of confidence our province has seen has been a result of a unified desire of Manitobans to make it happen. Manitobans were dedicated to seeing a province with a balanced budget and with a plan to eliminate an accumulated debt that threatened to choke the future of our young people. They were willing to endure some of the difficulties needed to see a strong and vibrant economy developed. They joined together to ensure that ours would be a province of promise, not of lost opportunity.

Madam Speaker, this is a government that has made great strides and has restored economic common sense to the way our books are managed, but it is a government that has done so at the will of Manitobans themselves. It was done not in spite of Manitobans, but because of Manitobans, and they are to be commended for helping us make this province even stronger.

Perhaps as importantly, Madam Speaker, we have strengthened the future of our province without it coming at the expense of our province's most vulnerable. I am proud to be part of a government that has opened 938 new personal care beds in the province since 1988 and has more than doubled the money put into home care. We are a government that has recognized the importance of developing a health care system that is not only of the highest quality but sustainable for future generations.

Madam Speaker, we have listened to Manitobans and have continued to work in partnership to ensure that the needs that they deem important are being met. Through the development of regional health authorities, we are allowing local community leaders to set the priorities important to them with the funds which are available.

Along the road to a renewed health care system, Madam Speaker, we did not lose sight of the fact that we spend 34 percent of our annual budget on health care, and that money needs to be administered effectively and efficiently. We recognize that an essential part of health care services should be health outcomes. We worked towards the elimination of duplication, worked to increase efficiencies in the system and have worked to share information and resources through a co-ordinated approach to the health care system.

As with the renewal in our economic fortunes, Madam Speaker, the retooling of our health care system was done to meet the desire of Manitobans to have a health care system which was not only effective and available today, but one that would be there to provide quality care to their children in the future as well.

As our government continues to move forward in the field of quality health care through the reduction of waiting lists and the construction of new treatment and research facilities, such as the new \$42-million centre for the Manitoba Cancer Treatment and Research Foundation, which we are an active partner, we will continue to depend and rely upon the input of Manitobans, and we will continue to draw upon their collective support.

Madam Speaker, the renewal and sense of optimism continues in my home constituency as well. As many of you know, it is a constituency of tremendous history and tremendous culture. Recent developments have helped serve as a tribute to that rich and diverse tradition.

On October 23 of this year I had the pleasure of attending and participating in, along with my colleagues the honourable Minister of Highways and Transportation (Mr. Findlay) and the honourable Minister of Urban Affairs (Mr. Reimer), the official opening ceremonies of the bridges of St. Norbert and Lord Selkirk Highway.

The highway portion of the project stretches three kilometres from Rue des Trappistes south to the city limit, and takes in a total of 11.9 lane kilometres of new roadway. Madam Speaker, the bridge portion of the project, which is located at Pembina Highway and Ave

de l'Eglise, is made of dual cast-in-place reinforced concrete arch bridges 89 metres in length. They are enhanced by a series of walkways and extensive landscaping which join to provide a peaceful riverside park. These beautifully designed new bridges form the last link in a four-lane highway transportation that reaches from Winnipeg to the Canadian and U.S. border at Emerson.

As important, Madam Speaker, the bridges act as a welcoming point for visitors as they enter the beautiful community of St. Norbert in the city of Winnipeg. The bridges serve as a fitting welcoming point for travellers crossing the La Salle River and do justice to the historic community of St. Norbert.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank everyone who had a part in their construction and pay special acknowledgment to the Honourable Glen Findlay, the Honourable Jack Reimer and the honourable member for Steinbach, Mr. Albert Driedger, for the role that they played in seeing this project realized.

In a similar vein, Madam Speaker, on October 15 of this year I was pleased to attend the unveiling of a mural near the newly constructed bridges of St. Norbert which depicts the father of Manitoba, Louis Riel. This mural was designed by Manitoba artist Stephen Jackson and greets visitors as they pass over the La Salle River.

I am proud that a community, a community in which I have lived for my entire life and one that has such a rich tradition and heritage, is now home to one of the best points of entrance in all of Winnipeg. The Globe and Mail last year spoke highly of the cultural virtues of our city, and I am proud to say that my community is a major contributor to that success. Madam Speaker, having taken the opportunity to inform the House of some of the historic developments happening in my community, I would like to invite all members to come and see for themselves the centre for culture St. Norbert has become.

Madam Speaker, I would also like to speak proudly on many of our government's achievements in the field of education. In my own constituency, September 10 marked the official opening of the newest school in my community, La Barriere Crossings School, which falls

into the Seine River School Division. La Barriere Crossings, like all the schools in my area, will, I am certain, provide its students with a level of education that will prepare them well for the challenges ahead. To all the teachers at La Barriere, I wish you well in your classes and activities.

While our government has increased provincial spending on education by almost 40 percent, I know, as a parent of two, that the measure of our children's education is how well it prepares them for the challenges that they will face in a new century. A measure of that success came in a recent Statistics Canada comprehensive literacy survey which showed that Manitoba's young people have posted the highest literacy score in the country, besting the other provinces by a considerable margin. This is an indication that our young students are achieving the fundamentals to a promising future.

In the education system, as in many areas of this government, we have provided for flexibility and input from Manitobans. One of the ways input is garnered is through local advisory councils which give parents a strengthened role in their children's education. In fact, Madam Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet recently with one of the local advisory councils for a school in my area, and I have to tell you that I was most impressed by the level of interest and knowledge that they demonstrated. Issues ranging from the care of the school grounds to in-school activities were discussed and debated. It was an evening of frank discussion concerning the well-being of the school and its students, and it generated many positive ideas. It is the input of stakeholders such as these that will continue to be the foundation of a strong school system.

Madam Speaker, our government has also supported Schools of Choice which allows parents to select the school which best fits the individual needs of their children. This flexibility is an important part of ensuring that children receive the education that best suits their interests and strengths.

Of course, Madam Speaker, an important part of a province's education system is the training offered at the post-secondary level. Today, more than ever, we know that our young people require higher levels of education if they are to succeed in a technologically

demanding workforce. As the father of a university student, I know first-hand the academic and financial pressures that our young adults face as they prepare themselves to enter their chosen careers.

I am proud that our government has recognized these burdens and has taken steps to alleviate them. In our previous budget we introduced the Learning Tax Credit which will give back \$17.35 million to post-secondary students. We have also made it easier for post-secondary institutions to reward those students who excel in their studies through the million-dollar Manitoba Scholarship and Bursary Initiative.

As well, we have recognized and promoted the benefit of community colleges which have proved successful in training Manitobans for a variety of technical positions. As a result the Red River Community College will introduce eight new programs, thanks to new funding from our government.

Madam Speaker, I know that the new century will be a difficult and challenging one for young Manitobans. I am, however, equally confident that the education system that our province offers will prepare them for a successful and rewarding future.

Madam Speaker, I have had the honour of being a member of this House for over eight years. Those eight years have seen our government make some difficult decisions, decisions which have had impact on individuals. During the days when we were setting the framework for a stronger Manitoba, a Manitoba that had a prosperous future, I often took the time to explain to my constituents that these were measures that would have rewards both for them and for their children. But it is not an easy road to travel, and there were many difficult times along the way. Yet today, when I meet with those same constituents, I know that the difficult decisions that we made as a government in partnership with Manitobans have paid off and were worthwhile.

When I hear from constituents and they tell me that they have a renewed faith in government's ability to live within their means and to spend their tax dollars wisely, I know that the difficult financial decisions that have been made have been worthwhile. When I hear from the parent whose son or daughter has just been offered a job in Manitoba, a good job, Madam Speaker,

and will not have to move away from home, I know that the decisions we have made to rejuvenate our economy have been worthwhile.

Madam Speaker, when I hear from a constituent that they are no longer worried about our quality health care system not being available because of the strain of public debt, I know that the changes we have made to renew our health care system have been worthwhile. When I hear from the student who is learning and thriving in their local school, I know that the renewal of our education system has been worth it.

It is a tremendous opportunity to stand here today to represent a province which is on the verge of a bright and prosperous future. I believe that the new century will be one of opportunity and one of challenge, and I believe that our government has set the framework for Manitoba and Manitobans to be successful in that century. We are a province that is ripe with opportunity, Madam Speaker. I look forward to continuing the process of making Manitoba even stronger. Thank you.

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Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): Mr. Acting Speaker, I would like to begin by welcoming the new member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou). I worked very hard in the Portage la Prairie by-election to elect our NDP candidate, Connie Gretsinger, but the by-election is long past and so I wish the new member for Portage la Prairie success in his career as an elected representative, but, of course, not too much success.

I would like to welcome all the pages and hope that they enjoy their stint here in the Manitoba Legislature. I would like to especially welcome Melody Drolet who is from Sisler High School, and I know that she is enjoying her experience as a page here.

My daughter was asked to be a page, but it is probably a good thing that she did not end up being a page because she would have been very bored. She does not really enjoy politics. Her real passion is sports of all kinds.

I have been attending parent council meetings at Sisler High School for the last five and a half years, and

I am very aware of issues that are of concern to parents at Sisler High School and the teaching staff and principals and to parents in northwest Winnipeg. For example, I know that people in northwest Winnipeg lobbied the Public Schools Finance Board to have a new high school in that area of the city, but the board decided not to fund a new high school. So the proposal that has been made is to add on a new addition to Sisler High School next to the existing gymnasium, so that there would be much more suitable space for a weight room, for proper change rooms, for offices for gym teachers and other new facilities. I know that the Public Schools Finance Board has toured Sisler High School, and they have heard the request for an addition, and the parent council and the administrators at Sisler High School are very hopeful that the Public Schools Finance Board will approve funding for this much-needed addition.

I would like to congratulate one of the teachers at Sisler High School, Ms. Linda Bulka, a Grade 11 teacher who was one of 12 finalists for the Governor General's Award for Excellence in Teaching Canadian History. She was the first-ever finalist from Manitoba, and she was selected from a Canada-wide pool of nominees. On October 4, 1997, Ms. Bulka was honoured at an award ceremony in Ottawa at the home of the Governor General. I know that she is a very well-liked teacher at that school, and she is also a very creative individual. Also, I think she has gone out of her way to show support for her students. For example, she came on the day that the throne speech was read, I believe as a sign of her support for one of her students who is a page here.

As I said, she is a very creative teacher. One of the things that she does is she allows the students the freedom to, in essence, create their own assignments and create their own learning experiences. So a group of students in one of her classes created a game called the Mennonite Game. This game has had some publicity and so teachers are now borrowing it. That is just one example of the kind of creativity that she inspires in her students at Sisler High School.

In preparation for my Throne Speech Debate, I visited a classroom at Isaac Newton School in Burrows constituency. It is a class that is led by Mr. Phil Tynes

and Ms. Gloria Milroy. I interviewed some of the students and asked them what kind of problems they experience in their lives and in their families and in their communities and what suggestions they have. The information that I got was very revealing and very interesting. For example, I was told that there are too many gangs in their neighbourhood, and one of the solutions that they proposed was more police foot patrols which have been introduced in the inner city in Winnipeg and which are very well received by the public and I believe very successful. However, they do not extend as far west in the north end as Isaac Newton School neighbourhood.

They also spoke of teenagers getting involved in drugs and prostitution. When I asked why that happens, they said they do it to make money because they have no money and that they could make a lot more money in prostitution than in a real job. It is very sad to hear high school students making those kinds of comments, not sad because they are not necessarily true, but sad because some families feel forced to do this out of economic necessity. In fact, one of the really disturbing things that we have heard recently in the inner city is that amongst very poor families the income from prostitution is augmenting family income, which, as one of my colleagues pointed out, means that we have a situation like Thailand in the inner city of Winnipeg, and that is a very sad parallel as well.

Now, these young people at Isaac Newton School come from families where people are working very hard. For example, one boy said that his father has two jobs; another student said that his or her mother had three jobs; another said that a mother had two jobs. It is heartening to hear that people are willing to work very hard in order to support their families in spite of the difficulty of doing so with one job and being forced to cobble together two or three jobs in order to do that.

The teachers pointed out to me that some of their students move frequently and that this is a very serious problem which affects learning; in fact, it disrupts learning. For example, they said that some students in this class had attended 14 schools. Can you imagine the negative effects on someone's education of attending 14 schools. Some of these children are latchkey children. They spoke of nine-year-olds babysitting younger children, of children raising themselves.

They also asked the students how many had had no heat in their apartment or house or no hot water. Two had had no heat; four had had no hot water. They asked how many stayed home to babysit or watch the house because there is no security alarm system. Out of 10 students, four said yes, they had stayed home to babysit or to watch the house. So obviously these students are very disadvantaged in terms of getting a good quality education.

It was also very interesting and disturbing to listen to one of the teachers, who said that she did not feel that she had the respect as a teacher in our society that she did in the 1970s or that education and teachers are valued in today's society. I blame the provincial Conservative government for that and their attack on teachers, especially their salaries, for causing this change in public attitudes. She said that she was not proud to be a teacher like she used to be. This is certainly something that this government could do something about if they so chose.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair

From time to time, I canvass my constituents and ask them about issues that they are concerned about. In addition to a questionnaire, I give people a space to write their issues in. My constituency assistant tabulated some of these write-in issues. We found that the most important was health, followed by jobs, and then crime, and then the flood. Almost no one said that taxes were an issue, although I am sure that if you ask people about the City of Winnipeg property taxes they would probably say that that was a concern, but it is not surprising that, even in Burrows constituency, people talked about the flood. I know it is a much bigger issue in the valley.

I talked to a Conservative voter in the valley, and what he had to say was very interesting. In fact, one of his comments was that the member for Morris (Mr. Pitura) and the member for Emerson (Mr. Penner) are invisible, and I thought that was quite amazing. Now, maybe it is not true, but if that is the perception in the valley, then you should be worried about that perception. But of course the most interesting comments were about Premier Filmon and his comments about the flood victims.

I was told that there was enough heartache over the flood without Filmon's comments and that people are still hurting, that people were devastated by the Premier's comments, that his statements were inaccurate and not fair. We know that people are still hurting and still grieving. In fact, I was told that very recently a Catholic priest had a grief counselling session for flood victims just a couple of weekends ago.

* (1550)

Also a very interesting comment was that the government should not come out better financially as a result of the flood. Someone said the province will come out a net winner financially because of the 7 percent sales tax and fuel taxes, construction wages, overtime resulting in more income tax revenue. So people have seen some implications to the flood that I had not seen, but I would like to congratulate all those people who worked so hard and co-operated with government and emergency officials to do sandbagging, for example, the thousands of students in Winnipeg and elsewhere that were on the sandbags. I am only familiar with the Scotia Street dike, which myself and my colleagues worked on, but I know that thousands of Manitobans were involved in this co-operative effort and we could only hope that the government would be equally co-operative in their dealing with Manitoba citizens.

I regret that because of time constraints that I am not going to take time away from my colleagues. I am going to wind up very shortly but, before I do, I would like to say that I did not really intend to address very much of the content of the throne speech, because it is such a vacuous speech in any case. I was going to comment on the amendment to the motion on the throne speech, because I think it is much more relevant to what is happening to Manitobans these days. The throne speech, by contrast, reflects a government that is heartless, that is hardhearted, meanspirited, miserly, and out of touch with Manitobans.

An Honourable Member: That is being generous.

Mr. Martindale: As my colleague from Thompson said: that is being generous.

The one amendment that I will comment on has to do with people who are on waiting lists in the health care

system because, not only did we raise it yesterday in Question Period, but it affects thousands of people in Manitoba, including my constituents, and one of them is waiting for by-pass surgery. She is on a nitroglycerine patch. I asked her if she was willing to go public with the fact that she has been on a waiting list for a very long time. Initially she said yes. Then when I phoned her Monday morning, she said no, she could not, because she did not have a union at her place of work. She was afraid that if the boss found out how seriously ill she was that she would be fired from her job. So she was afraid to go public for a very good reason, and she is—

An Honourable Member: No, not true, not true, Reverend.

Mr. Martindale: I can assure the minister from Lakeside that this is absolutely true, and the constituent is so ill that she is afraid that she will not last until she gets by-pass surgery.

Another example that I had was of someone who was on a very long waiting list for heart by-pass surgery at the Health Sciences Centre, and someone at the Health Sciences Centre phoned up, after this very long wait, and said: you can come in for by-pass surgery now; we are booking your appointment, and his widow said: he has been dead for two years. They did not even know that he was no longer a patient on a waiting list; he was deceased. What happens to people when they are on waiting lists is that they die before the surgery happens. That is absolutely appalling, and this government could do something about it. This government is sitting on a rainy-day fund, a slush fund of \$577 million, and they need to address the issue of waiting lists. We think that in the interests of Manitobans they should do it soon.

With that, I am going to conclude my speech, and I think our wrap-up speaker here is the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton), who I am sure has many things to say—the member for Transcona (Mr. Reid) and the member for Thompson, who have things that they want to put on the record as well. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Daryl Reid (Transcona): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to rise to add my comments to the government's latest throne speech, and I am reminded

of that billboard that we see, at least here in the city of Winnipeg, talking about recycling here in the province of Manitoba. If I recall it correctly, it says: 72 percent recycled. Now, we are not sure 72 percent of what, but it does remind me of this throne speech, because very much of this throne speech has been recycled from past throne speeches, and I think that that billboard is probably an applicable description of what is in this particular document here today.

The things that I see missing—because my time is so very brief here today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, talking about the throne speech, and I have so many comments that I would like to add, I will not spend my time talking about what are the few pieces that are in this throne speech but in fact what I see as essential that is missing from it. I have had the opportunity to read through the document and to listen to the comments of others in this Chamber. I see no mention in this particular throne speech about changes that we need to see to the special needs program, to the funding for the students of our province, a topic I just raised here in Question Period today. I see nothing in this throne speech that would lend enforcement under The Employment Standards Act of this province. I see nothing in this throne speech that would lend support to the enforcement of the Workplace Safety and Health Branch of the Department of Labour in this province, something that is sorely lacking in our province, and I have raised in this House on many occasions.

I can reference the fact that a particular document came out of the Provincial Court of Manitoba in Flin Flon just this fall, October 30 to be precise, where the government and the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting were in court talking about a particular workplace safety violation, charges that had been laid, and the government through the Workplace Safety and Health Branch decided that they were going to sit their field officer on the stand in court to be the sole defendant of the government's position. The company chose to bring in experts from everywhere to defend their case, and you left this Workplace Safety and Health officer on his own to dangle out there in the wind while the company's solicitors destroyed the credibility of this individual without any comeback by the Crown attorneys in this province, something that I find that is sorely lacking in the enforcement arm of your Department of Labour.

I know I have raised this in private with the Minister of Labour (Mr. Gilleshammer), because I think that this does a disservice to the people who are acting as field officers and inspectors who are supposed to go and inspect the workplaces and do it to the best of their ability, and when it goes into court you allow the defence attorneys to ridicule and to dissect these individuals without any support for them. I think it is reprehensible on your part to leave these people on their own without so much as even a thought for their concerns.

I also want to talk, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and I know my time is brief here because my other colleague wants to add some comments as well—about the special needs case for Breanne Curé that I raised here in this House today and I raised back on June 26 of this year. This is a legitimate case. This is not something that is brought forward for any political gain, but I bring this issue forward on behalf of the family, on behalf of Breanne Curé and the other special needs children who are in my particular community schools and I am sure are in other schools around the province of Manitoba.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is an important issue to Breanne Curé because if she does not receive the instructional support that she requires to assist her to overcome her disabilities at this point in her life, she will be disadvantaged for the remainder of her life and likely relegated to a life of poverty and misery. I do not want to see that happen to this child or to any other child in our province, and all I have asked this Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) to do here today was to reconsider this particular case, because the application had gone forward to her department and was rejected on the same day that it was received, to reconsider this case on behalf of Breanne Curé and to consider what the future holds for this particular child. I want to make sure that this child has a bright future and that every opportunity is afforded to her, so that she can progress in her education. I do not see that happening in this particular case.

I am hopeful, though, that when the new application does go forward from the school division, as I am presuming that it will—that is what I have been led to believe to this point, a new application will go forward—that the minister's department will have another opportunity to do the right thing and to provide

Level II funding. I am asking the Minister of Education in all consciousness, in good faith, to look at the bar level you have set for students to achieve to be accepted for Level II funding, to reconsider your decisions in that, to look at the disadvantages you are placing the special needs children of our province in and the impacts that you are going to have on their later lives, so that they are not disadvantaged, so that they are given every educational opportunity to progress. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am hopeful that there will be some reconsideration, but I am not optimistic that this government is even worried about Breanne or any other child in similar circumstances.

* (1600)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is much more I could talk about in changes that have been impacting upon my community. I am doing my best to serve the people of my community by raising their issues here. I hope that the government will listen to the concerns and take them seriously, but I can assure you that if this government will not, we will. Thank you.

Mr. Steve Ashton (Thompson): I, too, wish to put some remarks on the record. I first wish to congratulate the new member for Portage (Mr. Faurichou), the fourth largest city in the province. The third continues to be Thompson. We have had a little bit of a debate back and forth on that, but our community of Thompson is third largest, and I certainly welcome the friendly competition back and forth between our communities.

I want to state from the outset in my comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I intend in this upcoming session, this being the first part of it, the session that will continue into the spring and summer, to speak out as I have done since I was first elected in this Legislature in 1981 on behalf of my constituents.

I want to stress the kinds of concerns that people have been expressing to me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have spent a considerable amount of time this fall, once again, visiting, going door to door to talk to people in my communities, and I can tell you what they are talking about. It is quite a contrast from what this government is talking about. They are talking about health, particularly the impact of health cuts, the

dramatic situation we are faced with in terms of doctor shortages in rural Manitoba. Those are specific concerns I am going to be bringing to this Legislature.

In terms of education, it was interesting the discussions we had earlier. I think about the only person in the province that does not understand the impact of nine and a half years of Tory neglect and cuts in our education system is the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh). The bottom line is where I go, and I talk to my people in my community, and in the communities throughout the Thompson constituency they are talking about the impact of education cuts. This may be of no surprise to members of this Legislature. I have heard it from northern members before and many areas of the neglected rural part of our province.

Highways is a concern whether it be in terms of maintenance or the continuing lack of resources put in to upgrade our highways. There was some improvement on Highway 391, which I was pleased to see this year, but our northern and rural highways particularly in the Interlake or the Parklands—coincidentally, a lot of people are asking, is it because they do not vote the right way, to quote the former Minister of Northern Affairs, the current Deputy Premier (Mr. Downey).

I want to state, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I look forward to the session being an opportunity to put forward ideas, put forward some real potential for some debate in this province, because, you know, I thought if there was ever an indication of just how out of touch this government has gotten, I thought it was shown in the Premier's (Mr. Filmon) so-called state of the province speech to the Chamber of Commerce. I think it is sort of an interesting trapping of this government. They have chosen a rather presidential-style term, but I find it interesting that if you read that speech, you see just how far and out of touch they have come as a government.

Part of the problem, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think they have been holed up in their caucus too long. They are beginning to believe their own arguments. I could use another term but that would be unparliamentary. I think the best example of that was the Deputy Premier,

who I think made up in volume for the lack of consistent content.

I thought it interesting with the Premier, for example. You know, he talked about—it is very, very interesting how we can get into the economics and the fiscal side, which was the majority of his speech. He talked about the deficit, and you know what he did? He picked the highest deficit of the previous government and then—which, by the way, was not the deficit, the final deficit; we have the budget amount; a small deficit was budgeted, and it resulted in a surplus in 1988—did not mention the deficit they ran up in 1992, and then all of a sudden comes in by saying, well, we now have a surplus; you know, did not reference where a lot of that money is coming from, just look at gambling, did not mention the reality of that, but, you know, apart from getting into discussion about economics, I do not think the Premier understands what a lot of Manitobans are talking about now.

I mean, first of all, let us deal with the economic circumstances. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am glad when we get any improvement in the economic circumstances in this province. I was very pleased to see what happened in Brandon, very pleased to see the role that all members of this House played, the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans), the member for Brandon West (Mr. McCrae), the Deputy Premier, the Premier, whoever was involved and, yes, labour unions.

Yes, I thought it interesting that this party which has spent most of the last nine and a half years attacking labour and attacking, in particular, the president of UFCW, was working co-operatively with that president, Bernard Christophe, and I find it interesting, ironic that in many ways we often urge the government to put aside its preconceived ideas and work with people and look what happens when you work together. I think what happened in Brandon is an example of what you can get for this province, and I think it is really positive.

I think the greatest growth industry in this province is the rhetoric coming from the Premier and the members of this government. The Premier was talking about, this was the biggest thing since INCO in the 1950s and all these statements we have heard. I have been listening to a few of the speeches; I even read the one in the Free Press. But I ask anyone in this House to just

go and ask very simple questions to Manitobans, and I want to see what the response will be after nine and a half years of Conservative government.

I think they are missing the point here. First of all, ask people if they are better off in terms of their health care system today as compared to when these guys came into office. Yes? No? Not even close.

And this is for the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh). By the way, they are still trying to blame the previous government, but not only the previous government, but the previous, previous government was a Conservative government. They cannot use that argument anymore. Education. Is our education system better off today after nine and a half years of Conservative government? People are going to answer no. They know what is happening in their local schools. They do not need the Minister of Education, who would fail any one of the math tests that are issued in this province with her arithmetic about the level of government support for education. They know what is happening in their school division. They know that class sizes have increased, that programs have been cut, that special needs students cannot get the programs they need.

But it is the same thing with the economic circumstances. Well, I think people may want to ask this question, and I welcome this, by the way, because ask people if they are better off. Ask first of all if their kids have better opportunities. I tell you, you ask most Manitobans and they will tell you their kids have worse opportunities today than nine and a half years ago. You ask them if they have a better chance to access an education. It is worse today. Students today are graduating with a debt load that can be five times as high as it was 10 years ago—10 years of Conservative government.

You know, you can ask other questions as well. One question I like to ask people in Winnipeg and especially when they hear this bloated rhetoric of the Premier is: how better off are they in terms of their disposable income? They are worse off. Even such measures as a house price—what is a house worth in Winnipeg today compared to what it was worth nine and a half years ago? You are lucky if it is still the same price. The government tries to turn this obvious sign that we have

not had this glorious growth these last nine and a half years into a sort of a thing where they say: oh, well, we are affordable. But you know, depressed house prices are a barometer for a lot of people. It is the major single investment that most people make in their life, and I know a lot of people that are sitting in houses that are worth less today than nine and a half years ago. The member for Transcona talks about it.

Madam Speaker in the Chair

Those are the real measures for people, not the exaggerated rhetoric from the Conservative government. I want to state on the record that I think the government misses the point here. I am glad to see any economic improvement in this province, but it has got to be real, not just rhetoric, and it has got to be economic improvement that is going to deal with the need for jobs and quality jobs and a future for our young people. We also have to, I believe, recognize the need to reinvest in our health and education systems, something that the government still has not understood. I think the government has been so obsessed, so obsessed by the sort of accountant's view of the world—I know some very good accountants; this is not a broad statement—but, you know, they forgot about compassion. They forgot about some of the most basic principles that you could run into, which I believe is, you have to invest. You have to invest in the future.

* (1610)

Well, I think we are going to see throughout the session increasingly that it is not just on specific issues that we can point to this. I think fundamentally this government is out of touch. Some references have been made about a number of examples. The best example came from the Deputy Premier's speech. He got up and, first of all, he does not see any problem at all with the Speaker of the Legislature going in and sitting in on cabinet committees. None of them do. After nine and a half years, they do not understand anymore that just because they are elected as the temporary government of this province that they only have certain powers, that they have an obligation to this Legislature and the people of Manitoba to listen, to be accountable and to observe some of the basic principles of parliamentary democracy, in particular, the separation of the Speaker from the executive branch of government and cabinet.

The ultimate chutzpa was the Deputy Premier talking about the NDP being stuck in a time warp, and then he launched into a discussion about work and the hours of work in the province. You know I kept wondering what was he arguing for, because I believe, I will grant this anytime, the Conservatives are a party of the '90s, but you know they are part of the 1890s. The arguments we hear in this Legislature whenever there is a new idea or a new concept were the same ones that were used in the 1890s. I agree. You know if they have got a problem with working hours, what is their solution, 44 hours? Let us go back to the good old days, 48 hours. Let us raise it. Let us go to 52, let us go to 56.

The reality, we all know there is not going to be an immediate reduction in the workweek in Manitoba, but I tell you, you talk about the next century, we will have the same trend that we have seen in this century. That is something is happening worldwide and that is ironically there is the same amount of production, increased production, coming out and far less work. It is a global trend. Okay. I want to suggest, by the way, that they get into the next century because you know the low-wage strategy is not a strategy that is being recommended anymore, other than by the ideological right wing.

I know the Premier (Mr. Filmon) likes to go off to Davos, Switzerland. Perhaps he should talk of Singapore, where in Singapore they took a conscious effort to concentrate value-added industries and actually discourage the location of low-wage industries in the province. I say, on the positive side, I think the hog production is going to be good-wage jobs. That is what we need in this province.

But I can go one step further. Even the World Bank is admitting that problems we have had with the fixation on the deficit internationally, and the fact that we are not investing in our education systems and training for tomorrow, our strength as a nation. One of the reasons that the UN indicates that we have the best quality of life, Madam Speaker, is why? We have a quality of life in terms of income, but it is not the highest in the world; it is because of the money we invest in health and, most particularly, the fact that we as a country spend more money on education than any other country in the world.

In the next millennium, the next century, we are going to have to compete on the basis of the quality, not just of the amount of capital you can have, but the human capital that we can have in this province, a healthy and educated workforce. We are also going to have to compete in terms of the infrastructure, whether it be traditional infrastructure, such as highways or in terms of the newer infrastructures, the information highway.

Madam Speaker, in the next millennium, the low-wage strategy will not work. Many of the developed nations of the world are concentrating increasingly on value-added in niche markets. I say to the government, look at the one here where they have had a success because the real lesson of even with the hog production again is that where you have a competitive advantage, and where you have infrastructure and where you have a trained workforce, that is where you get economic development.

I say to this government, you are running out of ideas. We have in this province an unmatched multicultural community and communities, and you know I have seen some work with some communities, but in the markets of southeast Asia, why are we not using our community contacts? Why are we not doing a better job in many other areas, eastern Europe and western Europe?

I think we can have a vision for Manitoba in the next millennium that makes us the international province, and I say, Madam Speaker, one of the problems is we have seen a government that has attached itself to the right-wing concept of globalization. I remember 10, 20, 30 years ago, if you talked about globalization, it was from a left perspective, a left of centre perspective, a progressive perspective. I remember talking years ago about think globally and act locally. I believe we can have a global vision, but not a vision of a race to the bottom, not a vision where we try and establish ourselves as a low wage and a low benefit and a low standard-of-living province, but where we take our greatest advantage, our people, and invest in the future and mark Manitoba as a global leader in providing a quality workforce, a healthy workforce, and providing the kind of infrastructure we need for economic development.

Madam Speaker, I will say to this government, and I will say it again, and we will be repeating this throughout the session, they are tired, they are out of touch, they have run completely out of new ideas, they are so used to applauding their own speeches. I say, increasingly, this looks like a government that is on the back end of the golf course. I think this looks like a government that is getting tired, cynical and out of touch. I say I look forward to the next election because we need a government in this province with a vision for a new millennium, a New Democratic Party government. Thank you.

Hon. Gary Filmon (Premier): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back in the House and to have an opportunity to address the throne speech. This is one of the two major policy debates that we have in this Legislature each and every year. I think it is something that I look forward to. I am trying to think of how many years it is. I think this is my 18th year in the House, and I get to look forward to it just as much this time as I did over the past 17 years. It really is a privilege to be able to represent my constituents and indeed to be able to speak on behalf of people throughout the province about the goals, the priorities, the visions that they have, the dreams and aspirations for the future.

Madam Speaker, I want to welcome you back as the chief presiding member of this Legislature. I wish you well in all of your endeavours, and I know that members on this side of the House will do everything they can to be co-operative and to be able to assure that proceedings in this House go as smoothly as possible. I know that it is not always easy; we certainly do not envy you and your challenges and your responsibilities, but we support you in your efforts to keep this House running smoothly and to ensure that we have the opportunity to represent the views of all Manitobans when we are here.

I would also like to, of course, take the opportunity to welcome the newest member of the Legislature, the member for Portage la Prairie (Mr. Faurichou), who joined us very recently and I know has a great future ahead of him in this Chamber as a representative of the people of Portage la Prairie. He has had the opportunity to show leadership in a variety of different ways throughout his life in this province. He has a very

extensive and interesting background. I believe he spent some time with the RCMP after university. He came back into a family business that is a very large farming operation, a pedigree seed operation and many other business aspects to the operation. He has been involved with the Chamber of Commerce, with a number of local social service organizations and has been for a number of years on the school board in Portage la Prairie where he contributed very substantially to the field of education. We welcome him here. We look forward to his contributions. We know that his family is very proud of him, particularly his dad, Ralph—is an old friend from a long time back and I know is one of the most highly respected people in the Portage area. We are absolutely delighted to have him as a member of this Chamber for many, many years to come.

I want to welcome all members back, and indeed I am always happy to see familiar faces both on our side of the House and on the other side of the House. They sometimes say that familiarity breeds contempt but, in fact, I guess it is a little bit like the devil you know is better than the devil you do not know. We know what to expect of members opposite. They rarely disappoint us. They have not had a new idea or a new approach in all the time that they have been in this House, Madam Speaker. So it is actually comfortable to be able to come in here and fit in like an old shoe, you know. You look over there and you know exactly what they are going to contribute to the debate, and maybe it could be a lot worse. You know, if we had some excitement, some real new energy and some real new ideas, it might be more difficult and more challenging for us to deal with, but I particularly enjoy the opportunity to have these exchanges with old familiar faces and old familiar rhetoric. [interjection]

Well, the member for Inkster (Mr. Lamoureux) is wanting to get in on the action here. I want to say that the member for Inkster, of course, has now a slightly different title and perspective, and indeed he is playing a very statesmanlike role these days in the Legislature, as he is within his party as a critic and as a voice of reason, I suppose, somebody who is giving a different perspective to his party. He is giving me a signal here, so I am not going to—I do not want to make light of any of the challenges that face the Liberal Party of Manitoba. Like the member for Inkster, I wish them

well in their challenges and hope that they can sort out some of the difficulties that are facing them these days.

* (1620)

I also would like to welcome back the table officers and the staff of the Legislature. We have a new member of the table officers and welcome her with us. I also want to very much welcome the pages and hope that they enjoy the opportunity to be here in the Legislature. I know that for all of us it is always exciting and interesting to have young people come from our public school system to learn about parliamentary democracy, to learn about this Legislature, and to be able to contribute through their service here in the Legislature to the workings of democracy in Manitoba.

The members opposite have had a great deal to say about the throne speech, not a lot of it complimentary and not much of it productive, I might say.

An Honourable Member: You were so complimentary when you were Leader of the Opposition in speeches.

Mr. Filmon: Well, the member opposite talks about my contributions as Leader of the Opposition. I attempted to be constructive and from time to time offered different perspectives and what I considered to be better ideas. I found it difficult, and I will share with him what I have shared with friends and publicly from time to time, that I found it difficult to always be critical when I was Leader of the Opposition. I had to work very hard at it, despite all the ammunition I was given by the Pawley government.

The Pawley government may have been the most discredited government in the history of Manitoba, and I think that history will probably demonstrate that, because each and every day as members opposite criticize us, they find that they were worse. We have statistics and plenty of objective third-party comments to demonstrate that the Pawley government was worse in virtually everything that they can come up with to criticize, but those days were not easy because I recognize that as bad as they were the Pawley government from time to time did some things right and it was important—[interjection] Well, I will have to

think about it, but I am sure I can come up with something, given enough time. It is important for us, I believe, to give credit where credit is due and to be able to, from time to time, show a different attitude

You know, Madam Speaker, that reminds me, because I am going to begin by speaking about the economy and some of the wonderful things that are happening in the economy. I thought for a glimmer of a moment there last week that the New Democrats were actually going to take a positive view of the initiative that resulted in the major investment by Maple Leaf Foods in Brandon. Indeed, I understand that the member for Brandon East (Mr. Leonard Evans) got up and spoke positively about the initiative. I know certainly that the member for Brandon East and the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) were positive about the initiative when they travelled with us to Brandon for the major reannouncement at which Mr. McCain, Michael McCain, and his colleagues were there so that Brandon could join in the celebrations, join in the good news that was there.

You know, here we are—[interjection] Well, the member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) said he was positive, and he was. He acknowledged that it was a good thing for Brandon and that that kind of investment was not something to be scoffed at, that it was a good job creator with probably very reasonable levels of salaries to be paid and positive. He even said to us that here we were and despite the fact that we have criticized Bernie Christophe over the years that here we are beholden to Bernie.

I would say that it is the workers who will work in that plant who will be beholden to Bernie, because he made the right decision. He made the right decision to support a very significant job-creating initiative. I think he is pragmatic, and I think it demonstrates that we are pragmatic and that we recognize that there is a role to be played by those who are involved in labour to ensure that the labour force is part of the attractiveness of this province, and we have always said that, Madam Speaker. Our labour force, regardless of where we go, is regarded as certainly being highly productive; secondly, being very motivated; and, thirdly, having the skills that outside investors are looking for to create big enterprises such as this.

I want to just mention to him that we are happy to work with Mr. Christophe. We are happy to work with union leaders in this province to achieve shared goals for the betterment of the province and the people in the future. We look forward to that.

I found it therefore rather surprising and very disappointing when their federal Leader, Ms. McDonough, came here and said, among other things, that she thought that this was a bad deal, that she was disappointed that this announcement had been made and this investment had been made for Brandon. She somehow brought this into a scenario where she tried to create regional tensions, and she said that it was bad for Brandon because it had brought some harm to workers in Edmonton. I have to tell you that I had been interviewed by Edmonton media and I had been interviewed by people from Alberta who wanted to know my reaction to it. I said I am sorry for the people of Edmonton and I am sorry for the workers who I think were misled by their union leadership in Edmonton.

I have seen the numbers from meat processing companies right across Canada, and there is a variance of hourly wages being paid amongst approximately a hundred different plants across Canada, and that variance is approximately between \$15 an hour and \$25 an hour. It happened that the very top of all of the plants in Canada—or almost at the top—was Edmonton, where it was very much at the \$25 an hour rate in a plant that was 91 years old, that was structurally questionable and functionally unsound. So obviously it was functionally obsolete and there had to be serious decisions made to try and make them more competitive. Among those decisions had to be the potential to invest in a new plant maybe as much as \$50 million or \$100 million and, at the same time, to get their labour rates, their wage rates in closer line to what is required to compete in very much what is now an international market.

Somehow, some way the workers were unfortunately convinced by their leadership, their union leadership, that it did not matter, that they could in essence hold a gun to the head of the company and they would still get everything that they wanted and all their demands would be met and there would be no consequences to their actions. Well, Madam Speaker, there is a

consequence to every single action that we take, and we have to take responsibility for it.

* (1630)

I compliment Bernie Christophe for being responsible here in Manitoba, but that does not mean that Ms. McDonough should say that it is bad for Manitoba because he was being responsible and acting in a positive way. She should not go and support the irresponsible leadership that led to the loss of 850 jobs in Edmonton by essentially deluding and misleading the workforce there into believing that they could get something that was impossible for them to get. So that just shows, I think, that where there is a pragmatic leadership, where there is positive leadership, we can recognize that, see that, and work with it.

I just want to tell a bit of an anecdote about what has happened that led to the decision of Maple Leaf Foods, a decision that we all welcome. I found it really tremendous to go to Brandon to celebrate this big announcement and to let the people of Brandon really revel in so many positive things that are happening for them these days, and this particular announcement I think is symbolic of it. Brandon, you may know, was selected by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as being the best city in western Canada for business investment. They cited many things but, among them, was that they had no business tax.

I found it interesting that Ms. McDonough criticized them for not having a business tax, and that is one of the very things that attracts investment, a competitive tax environment, and she thinks that is a bad thing. Well, again, you have to wonder where the head of the New Democratic Party is. That was one of the criticisms.

Brandon has shown up as one of the most attractive places to live. In Chatelaine's survey of the top 10 cities, it has been there twice in the last three years. Brandon has shown up as one of the top places for international organizations to hold events, so you have things like the World Junior Baseball Championship, the World Curling Championship being held there. You have the Wally Byam Caravan being held there. That brought in thousands and thousands of mobile home owners who came and spent millions of dollars in

the city of Brandon, all of this over the last number of years. The Canada Summer Games, of course, the Olympic curling trials; they are going to be part of the World Junior Hockey Championships there in December of '98 and January of '99. That is because Brandon has been doing a lot of things right to create an attractive environment, a competitive environment, and the kind of things we want. Well, Alexa McDonough says that is a bad thing, she says that it is a bad thing.

Now, it reminded me, Madam Speaker, of the battle that we went through here in this Legislature and throughout the province about whether or not we should open up the marketing of hogs in the province, whether we should get rid of the monopoly, the single-desk selling system of the old Manitoba Pork, and open it up to dual marketing and opportunities for people to sell their hogs either directly from producer to processor or through the board, that kind of flexibility and that kind of opportunity that we felt was necessary.

The members of the New Democratic Party fought that hammer and tong. Particularly, the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) made speech after speech after speech. She got up on a matter of urgent public importance here in this House. She did everything she possibly could do to fight that.

Now, since we made that move, since we made that change to dual marketing, what has happened? We have had the investment of \$50 million by Schneider's, creating 450 jobs in Winnipeg, and they attributed, in part, their decision to the opportunity to be able to have direct access to their hogs, and, secondly, of course—and Mr. Michael McCain was very direct when he said they would not have come here if it were not for the decision to open up the marketing of hogs, to have essentially a free market that allowed them to operate directly with the suppliers in obtaining the assurance of supply.

Now, this is not rocket surgery, as Don Cherry would say. The member for Lakeside, the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns), he did not recommend to cabinet and to our government that we move on this without some background knowledge. He had a report, a very thorough report that was prepared by some very knowledgeable people, Professor Clay Gilson, one of

the foremost agricultural economists in Manitoba, Mr. Gerry Moore who has worked all of his adult life in the agriculture and agribusiness industry, and Dave Donaghy, an assistant deputy minister of the Department of Agriculture. After very, very substantial research and input, they came up with a whole host of reasons why the industry had to change and modernize if we were going to take our rightful place as the centre of pork production and processing for Canada. They showed that this could be an industry adding 10,000 jobs in the next 10 years if we did the right things.

Now, what was the rationale behind having to have an open market for the marketing of hogs? Very simple, that if you are going to ask somebody to invest millions of dollars in the creation of hog production facilities—and these days with the scale that they are being built at, they require anywhere from a million to up to four million for the size of production facility that you need at the farm gate—if you did that, those people wanted to be assured that they could enter into agreements with processors to sell the hogs that they were producing. That then becomes a bankable deal. You can go and get the financing. You can have it financed by private capital, by banks and anything else, because you have an assured agreement that you can sell to a processor.

On the other side, you have the processor who is expected to invest, in the case of Schneider's \$50 million, in the case of Maple Leaf \$112 million, and create in one case 450 jobs, in the other case 2,250 jobs, and they need to have the assurance that their supply will not be cut off arbitrarily by some monopoly agency.

So, as I say, it is very straightforward economics. It is very straightforward business assurance and security that is at stake here, but nobody, nobody is going to have 900 people or 2,250 people sitting there able to be rendered idle virtually overnight if somebody refuses to sell them hogs, and, indeed, from time to time—

Mr. Harry Enns (Minister of Agriculture): In January of this year we just about had that.

Mr. Filmon: January of this year we almost had it happen. It has been threatened, and it has been actually implemented in the past under the monopoly selling

system. You cannot have that because people's livelihoods are at stake, both the workers and the investors, with hundreds of millions of dollars on the line. That was the rationale behind it. That is why it was done. Members opposite fought it tooth and nail. They convinced, I might say, people throughout the province that somehow this was a bad deal. I remember, I went to the annual meeting of the Manitoba Pool Elevators, and there was plenty of criticism of it to me personally, to our government.

The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) met with Manitoba Pork, was roundly criticized by them. We had people dogging us, came here after Question Period, after the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) went through her antics, and were screaming at me in the hall about—you know, interesting thing. I have had people stop me in different parts of the province and say, you know, I was opposed to what you were doing. I was a critic, I wrote you letters or I spoke to you in Arborg or whatever, and I understand now what you were doing, and you were right. I had one person actually write me a letter of apology, saying he was one of the ones who were shouting at me in the hall while I was being interviewed by the media of this Legislature. He said: I was wrong, and I am sorry that I did that. You people did the right thing.

* (1640)

Well, people have to take a broad view of issues. They have to look at the big picture and say, where do we want to go? This was an interesting coincidence of two organizations almost at the same time coming up with a similar plan and a similar idea. Our government decided something like two years ago when that report was being developed and conceived, that we could have the centre for not only the pork production side of the industry but processing right here in Manitoba. The Minister of Agriculture and his people put together a major promotion called the Manitoba Pork Advantage.

I know I spoke to a large gathering of several hundred producers, financiers, processors, bankers and so on at the Lombard Hotel, as did the minister; a very, very positive upbeat after that report was released, people saying, yes, we can do it here. We do not want to let what happened to us because of the policies of the NDP that took away the beef processing and beef

packing industry from us. We do not want that to happen. We can keep the pork industry here, and we can make it a centre for not only Canada, but we can become North American competitive.

Well, not too long after that Maple Leaf Foods—it was Wallace McCain firstly who spoke out publicly, and then his son, the CEO now of Maple Leaf Foods, Michael McCain, said that they felt that if Canada did not get its act together, that Canada would lose most of the pork industry to the United States. Yes, we might still produce it on the farms, but more and more it would go down to the States and the value adding and all the real jobs would be down in the United States. They felt that this did not have to happen if certain things could change. One of them was that they had to become more competitive, and therefore there were two things that were required. One was that it required the investment of very large sums of capital, over \$100 million at a time, such as we have got here in Brandon. The other side was that the labour force had to be aware of their requirements: (a) for productivity and (b) for income levels; that they had to be competitive with the United States. They were currently somewhere in the range of 20 to 30 percent higher; there had to be some adjustments along the way.

They have been going through that process, and they have said that if they could find a province in which (a) there was the assurance of supply of high-quality hogs being produced to meet their specifications, and (b) there was a good labour force that could work for reasonable levels. We are not talking about cheap labour here; we are talking about them getting labour rates that are probably between \$15 and \$20 an hour to begin with. Those are the kinds of things that they could put together along with all the logistics of being in the right place to be able to access the Asian market, because Asia is going to be probably the point of destination for a very large portion of their production, so they would be willing to make that investment.

They brought in consultants that they knew would not be influenced by any local communities or local provinces. They, in fact, brought them in from the United States, so they were not people who had any vested interest in any province in Canada, and they asked them to do an analysis of 42 locations to find the best place to locate that plant, and to the credit of

Brandon and surrounding area, that proved to be the best place out of 42 that they investigated for that, and they made the announcement. That is what happens when people have a long-term view of what they want to achieve.

That is what happens when governments take the long-term view, not the short-term view that has been taken by members opposite, arguing as the member for Dauphin (Mr. Struthers) did, as the member for Swan River (Ms. Wowchuk) did, as the member for Interlake (Mr. Clif Evans) did, that, oh, no, no, this is going to be a terrible thing for our producers; you cannot get rid of the monopoly marketing system for hogs. They argued and argued and argued. They were wrong, wrong, wrong, Madam Speaker. [interjection] Absolutely. The Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Enns) reminds me that we debated that during the election of 1995.

So that is what has happened recently, but it adds to so many things that have been happening in recent times. We had major investment in the expansion of McCain, more than doubling their capacity for french-fried potatoes, an \$83-million investment in Portage la Prairie. We had, similarly, an investment of over \$25 million at Carberry by Midwest Foods, and they are looking at even further expansion there because they continue to access American markets, particularly McDonald's Restaurants, for their high quality french-fried potatoes that they are producing. It is going very, very well, Madam Speaker, in that field.

We have had, of course, a canola crushing plant built. We have had a flour mill built at Elie. We have the first strawboard plant in Manitoba being built, some \$130-million investment. We have had a tremendous investment of over \$200 million by Simplot in their fertilizer plant plus a nitrate plant that they are also building there for another \$30 million.

Madam Speaker, all of these things are happening because Manitoba is in the right place at the right time. Value-added agriculture is going to be a strength area for investment, for job creation, all of the things that we said, that people said for most of this past century should happen in this province of taking our agriculture basic production and adding value to it before we export it. That is now happening and it is going to continue to happen.

Well, Madam Speaker, the economy, of course, is not just booming in agriculture, but it certainly is booming in agriculture, and I was looking at some of the figures as to the farm income increase, and that, too, of course, has gone very well. In 1996, there was a substantial increase in farm income, and this year, despite the fact that we have had the flood and the fact we have had so many things that disrupted our economic activity, farm income will probably still be up over last year, and last year was an all-time record high.

Manufacturing, in general, has been extremely positive for Manitoba. Manufacturing, of course, we have got now the largest furniture manufacturer in all of Canada right here in Winnipeg, Palliser Furniture. We have the largest centre of bus manufacture in all of North America. The combination of New Flyer Industries and Motor Coach Industries makes us the largest centre for bus manufacture in all of North America.

Now, the interesting thing there, members opposite, of course, deserve to be given a compliment because they privatized New Flyer Industries. I saw the former Minister Eugene Kostyra just the other day. There is an example. He is a union boss, and he is a pragmatic individual. He saw the handwriting on the wall, and he saw that they, as a government, would be losing taxpayers' money forever as long as they chose to continue to operate that business, and they were losing money forever, sold it at the time at a considerable loss. For all the money that they had poured in, they did not get that money out, but what did they get? They got an investor who has stayed with it, who has continued to invest, with help from government—

An Honourable Member: And we supported it when we sat on the other side.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, we did. Now there is an example of supporting things that you believe are the right thing to do, not just playing politics and opposing everything.

An Honourable Member: That would never happen today.

Mr. Filmon: Now that would never happen today. Members opposite find a way to weasel out from their support for matters that they should be supporting, but

New Flyer Industries, Mr. den Oudsten has invested. He has given credit to our government because we stuck with him through the difficult times of the early '90s, and we continued to support him financially and with a variety of different means to ensure that they could come to the point they are, and that is now with over 1,400 employed in that plant. It is a phenomenal success.

* (1650)

Aerospace: We are one of the largest centres of aerospace, third largest centre of aerospace in Canada today, and that is again a very high-value manufacturing operation that everyone is proud of and should be proud of. It continues to grow.

You know, I was fascinated when I saw, Madam Speaker, the information that came out of Statistics Canada about the exports of agricultural equipment. I found that five years ago, Manitoba represented 20 percent of the agricultural equipment manufacture exports in Canada. Today we represent over 50 percent of all the exports of agricultural equipment manufactured in Canada. That is again an example of just how well we are doing in the manufacturing field.

Take a look at the fashion industry and look at how well that fashion industry has done. It has done so well because of having open markets for its products, principally in the United States. The fashion industry in Manitoba is again one of the leaders in Canada. The third largest fashion manufacturing industry in all of Canada located here, and most of it for export.

That leads me, of course, to remember again how viciously members opposite vehemently opposed free trade with the United States and the NAFTA free trade agreement. Again, you know, stuck in the past, in reverse, head in the sand, opposed to change, just opposed to change. That is all for the sake of change, that is all that we had from members opposite time and time again. That NAFTA agreement, that free trade agreement with the United States, has been the biggest boon for manufacturers in the history of the province of Manitoba.

Do you know what? I was leafing through the resolutions of the annual meeting of the New

Democratic Party, and you want to talk about being stuck in reverse. What are they doing? There are two resolutions that they should get out of NAFTA. This province in the last six years has increased its exports to the world by almost 120 percent. That is six straight years of double-digit increase in our exports to the world. In that period of time, over 140-percent increase in our exports to the United States, the largest consumer market in the world, and they want to get out of it. They want to get out of it. Unbelievable, Madam Speaker, that this is what they say.

What is worse still, they are so afraid of Manitoba's ability to compete, and this is what we have to change. We have to change the attitude that is represented by the members opposite, and that is that they believe that we cannot compete with people anywhere in the world.

You know, we competed with 41 other centres in Canada for this plant. It was the same thing when Monsanto built their plant in Morden. They looked at 44 locations throughout the world and decided that Morden was the best place to place that plant. We can compete with anybody anywhere in the world. We can do business with anybody anywhere in the world. We do not need people to give us artificial barriers to protect our markets. When you come right down to it, we are a market of one million people. We could not have the standard of living that we have to date if we could not access markets everywhere in the world. We need free trade. We need liberalized trade.

I want to tell you how negative the supporters of the New Democratic Party and the members of their caucus are. They had a resolution at their annual meeting to get out of the internal trade agreement. They do not even think we can compete with the other provinces of Canada. That is how black their vision is of the future. They think that the only way they can survive is to put walls up and do not let us trade with the other provinces. Do not let the other provinces come in here. Well, good heavens, I have never ever seen such negativity in any group in society and, indeed, to have it represented here in the Legislature day after day, and it gives us an indication of just what it is that they believe in.

But, you know, I start to think now that maybe, just maybe, the reason they do not think we can compete is

because they want to bring in some of the resolutions that were actually passed at their annual general meeting. One of them is, of course, that without any decrease in income you reduce the hours of work by 20 percent, from 40 to 32, and that would automatically increase the cost of everybody's production by 20 percent. The cost of doing business in Manitoba overnight would go up by 20 percent. But they also had another resolution that said that everybody must get three weeks of paid vacation in the first year. That, too, would add another couple of percent.

Then they wanted to add some statutory holidays, forestry day in February with another—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, yes, yes. Well, you know, this is the kind of thing that—

An Honourable Member: I wonder how Michael McCain would have liked that.

Mr. Filmon: Yes, if you want to make it uncompetitive so that people cannot continue to stay here and do business, you just pass all those resolutions, and then you can put up all the barriers you want, because everybody else will leave and there will be no jobs here for anybody in any case. That is the old saying that used to be here during the Pawley and Doer days: the last person out, turn out the lights. That is what we would be looking at, Madam Speaker.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to continue debate.

Mr. Filmon: I cannot believe the negativity over there. The duke of doom, the guy from Crescentwood—the member for Crescentwood, excuse me—the duke of doom over there. Every time there is something that comes out that sounds positive, he turns it into a negative. He tries to tell people that there are not more people working in Manitoba today.

Madam Speaker, 13,500 people more working in Manitoba for the first 11 months of 1997 versus the first 11 months of 19—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Filmon: —a 2.6 percent growth rate in the total number of people employed. We have been at or around record levels of employment for almost the entire year. We have had nine straight months in which our unemployment rate has been under 7 percent, and we are being predicted by both the Conference Board and the Toronto Dominion Bank to be under 6 percent next year.

* (1700)

These are the kinds of things that have not happened here in such a long, long time. The last time Manitoba's unemployment rate was at that level was in 1981—1981. That was the last time we were at that level. Of course, that was even prePawley, yes.

These are the kinds of things that—members opposite, they can take any silver cloud and try and find a black, black edge to it, and that is all that the member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) says. Last year at the annual get-together with the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce he got really upset with them. He said: all you are is boosters. You are just boosting Manitoba, and it is terrible. Why do you not get negative, he said, you know, I mean, come on, get down here with us, he says to them. Unbelievable, unbelievable.

But also, of course, what is really impressive about this increase in the numbers employed is the fact that it is almost all full-time jobs. In fact, over 14,000 full-time jobs have been added in this past year and, more particularly, 17,500 jobs in the private sector. Now, what is happening, of course, and we can all understand it, is that governments at all levels are reducing their workforce. You know, the members opposite think that is a bad thing. They think that we should keep government workers numbers up so that people can pay more taxes. I do not happen to agree with them. Most Manitobans do not agree with them by far, but they keep thinking that it is better for people to work in government than for them to work in the private sector.

The private sector has added 17,500 jobs this past year, Madam Speaker, and more particularly what is happening, of course, is that we are starting to develop

skill shortages. We have got shortages of people in computers. We have got shortages of people in science and technology. We are short of long-distance truckers. We have got shortages of people in the fashion industry.

When they talk about these being low-wage jobs, Madam Speaker, Manitoba Bureau of Statistics says that most of Manitoba's net job gains on a year-to-date basis have been in industries where the average wage rate is over \$13 an hour, over \$13 an hour. That is what is happening in this economy. It is positive. We think that it bodes well for the future, and we believe that the economy in every area of the province is starting to pick up in ways that we have not seen for three decades. We have not seen this kind of distributed, buoyant economy in three decades in this province.

If you look at the North, mining continues to do well. We had people at our mining conference say that this is the best place in Canada to invest in mining. Madam Speaker, the secret, the secret to having a healthy mining industry is to have people come in and invest millions and millions of dollars in exploration. That was not happening under the New Democrats. Their policies in fact dictated against that happening. That is why, as time went on under New Democrats, you got lesser and lesser and lesser bodies of ore that had been explored and found that you could convert into productive jobs, and so you were losing. That is why you had the industry close down in Lynn Lake. That is why you had the industry continue to weaken in place after place after place.

Now, of course, we have been having \$40-million and \$50-million-a-year investment in exploration, and we have been finding new bodies and new mines.

An Honourable Member: Prices are down.

Mr. Filmon: Well, the member opposite says that prices are going down. That is one of the challenges of being in a world commodity market. The price does go down from time to time. That is why you have to keep people interested in being here through thick and thin. Through good times and bad, they have to keep investing in exploration.

When I went to our annual mines and minerals conference, we had more people than we have ever had before, we had more companies than we have ever had before, and they were all saying positive things about investing in Manitoba.

Madam Speaker, I just want to take a few minutes to talk about education. The critic is here, the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen). I just want to say a couple of things. What we are trying to do in all of these things is to ensure that we bring people into a position where they can work productively in the workforce. We can get them off welfare, get them off the cycle of dependency and get them into the workforce where they can be proud of their efforts.

I think one of the people that I saw quoted in the Free Press said that she had gotten a job as a result of the Taking Charge! program, and there are I believe 4,000 people who have been in that program, and about half of them are already in jobs. This young woman said: I feel awesome, she said. That is what she said. That is the way she felt because she had taken herself off of welfare, into the workforce, made that break of dependency that the New Democrats preach and support, and said she was taking charge of her life.

You know, we look at all of these things that have been done as a result of the programs that have come in, the welfare-to-work initiatives, and let us just take a look at some of them, Madam Speaker. Since May of 1996, the number of single-parent and general assistance clients on welfare has decreased by over 1,700 people, almost all because they have gotten jobs. The member for Crescentwood (Mr. Sale) criticizes the call-centre industry. He stands up and says: This is terrible; these are McJobs; people should not have these jobs; it is a terrible thing.

But, you know, it has gotten people off welfare, into the workforce, and working their way up. I have visited those call centres. Some of those people who start off in outbound telecommunications calling, they then work their way up to supervisory positions, then they go into research positions, they are making a good living, and they are raising their children, and they are in a very happy circumstance.

I have seen people who are working in all sorts of service industries. I have seen people in construction, in manufacturing, and these are people who are absolutely thrilled, thrilled to go back into the workforce because they know that the best social program is a job, Madam Speaker.

We are doing Taking Charge! on a partnership basis with the federal government, and we will work with the federal government where there are good initiatives and where there are good outcomes from the money we invest, and this is one of those.

We are working with the City of Winnipeg, two community services projects, a \$750,000 contribution by our government to assess clients' employability and to provide work experience.

We are partnering with the Mennonite Central Committee, Eden Health Services, Mennonite Economic Development Associates, and Employment and Income Assistance division of Manitoba, all working together to provide employment, training, job placement, monitoring and support for clients.

These are good-news stories. These are making people better citizens, better able to support themselves, and long-term able to raise a family and to be able to hold their head high.

What do members opposite work on? Well—

An Honourable Member: They hold seminars in this building, how to stay on welfare.

Mr. Filmon: That is right. Thank you. The member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns) is prompting me, but I could not believe when I opened the Metro One and found a block ad for the member for Wolseley (Ms. Friesen) advertising a seminar to tell people how they could get welfare. All she is doing is selling welfare as an alternative, and she is criticizing us for investing in people for long-term jobs, economic opportunities, and self-sufficiency, and all she wants to do is sell dependency, Madam Speaker. I could not believe it.

You know, the members opposite, led by the critic from Wolseley, are the people who are constantly, constantly harping about standards and testing in the

public school system. Well, I tell you this, Madam Speaker. Every time I read internationally about what people are looking for, they are looking for skilled and trained people, but they do not judge what they are getting by how much money was spent on their education. They judge it by what the individual knows and understands, what skills they bring. Nobody asks: How much did your country or your province or your city pay for your education? They say: Here, we want to see what your skills are. Do you have computer literacy? Do you have keyboard literacy? Are you a literate person? Do you have mathematical, science, all these skills? That is what they want to know. They want to know what the person knows, what skills they have and what they understand. At no time do they ask how much money was spent by your government on your education.

Why is that? Because there is a principle in everything you do in life, and that principle is that if you want to improve what you are doing, you have to be able to measure it, and there is a second principle in life that says what gets measured gets done, absolutely. That is nothing different than what is being done in the public education system by virtue of setting high standards, and I say this for the Minister of Education (Mrs. McIntosh) and people throughout the government system in Canada, we are finally making some progress where we are getting together to have joint curriculum development so that we choose to have high standards, we choose to set high standards, and we work at them co-operatively to ensure that we are all working towards the same high standards.

Next, we have to have the courage to test periodically to find out whether or not we are achieving those standards that we set, that we believe in.

Those are the things that the members opposite are opposed to. They and their friends who are the bosses of the teachers' unions are out there saying, no, no, no to testing, no to standards. They do not want anybody to test. Well, if you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there. That is the New Democratic view of things, Madam Speaker. That is how they organize their lives. They are opposed to standards.

* (1710)

Let me just read for you something that I found very, very interesting here in the last little while. I just want to read it because it might sound familiar. Which political Leader said these things? Firstly: Our commitment is to zero tolerance for underperformance. Schools which have been found to be failing will have to improve, make a fresh start, or close. There will be unrelenting pressure on schools and teachers for improvement. The problem with our education system is easily stated. Excellence at the top is not matched by high standards for the majority of children.

Do you think that that was Mike Harris, maybe Ralph Klein? Tony Blair. Tony Blair, the person that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) says is an example of what he wants to be. Well, I want to tell the Leader of the Opposition and all of his colleagues, Tony Blair became the Prime Minister of England because he was willing to adopt change. He was willing to shed all of the hyperbole of social democratic rhetoric and go to what is needed in their economy. That is, he adopted privatization; he adopted change in education—standards, testing, all of those things.

Here is another thing that Mr. Blair said. This is another thing. Now did Mr. Blair blindly support all educators? I think that the majority of our educators in Manitoba are doing a great job—absolutely right. Why did we rate among the highest provinces in Canada in literacy? Because our teachers are doing a good job in the classroom. Why do we have good outcomes from kids who get—we have a very large number of them getting Rhodes scholarships. We have people who are doing well in all of these things because our education system is doing a good job. But nobody can say that every single teacher is doing a good job, that every single classroom is being well taught. We need to ensure that we raise the average level up, that we attempt to ensure that those who are now in the lower echelons in terms of performance get increased in terms of their performance.

What does Mr. Blair say about it? Teachers accused of incompetence must be given a chance to improve, including training where appropriate. What else does he say? If sufficient improvement is not possible, they must be removed from the profession so as to avoid further damage to their pupils' education.

Is he blindly supporting all teachers and saying that every single one of them is doing a super job and they should not be tested and they should not be evaluated? No. He is not blind; he is absolutely a leader who, unlike the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), looks to the future and who evaluates what is necessary and is prepared to accept change and is prepared to accept progress for the better. He says, there shall be in Britain zero tolerance of underperformance. That is not an unreasonable thing to ask of people in any profession. That is what we expect of people who are being well paid by the public to do that job, and I do not think there is anything wrong with that.

The member for Concordia, the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer), is comparing himself again to Mr. Blair. Well, this is what was being criticized when I was over in the U.K. earlier this fall. This is what was being said; this was being said of him. The government got rough rides for cutting benefits for single mothers and for replacing student grants with loans. That is Tony Blair. That is a social democratic government who has seen the writing on the wall, who understands that you have to provide incentives for people to do better, that you have to help people get out of their poor circumstances, and that you have to give them a hand up, not a hand-out.

Madam Speaker, I want to just say a few words on aboriginal issues.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to continue.

Mr. Filmon: I just want to speak for a few moments about aboriginal issues, because members opposite were alleging at the time of the throne speech that this government was somehow just now focusing on aboriginal issues or somehow this government was just doing—this was just rhetoric. Well, I want to talk about who is responsible for rhetoric and who is responsible for action in this House, Madam Speaker. In treaty land entitlement we have settled all of the validated claims with some—is it 26 First Nations in Manitoba? That is something that has been worked on for six decades. This government settled it.

The Northern Flood Agreement—[interjection] The member for Thompson (Mr. Ashton) is revisiting history, Madam Speaker. People will judge him by his actions, not his words.

The Northern Flood Agreement was an issue, an outstanding irritant, an outstanding obligation that goes all the way back to the Schreyer years. We have now settled with four of the five First Nations involved, and, Madam Speaker, we will keep working until we settle the fifth one. That is a matter of hundreds of millions of dollars of compensation for damage that was done by the Schreyer government in their development of hydro in the North.

Madam Speaker, when we got into government, we looked at matters that had been settled legally and financially in the North: the Grand Rapids forebay settlement, the South Indian Lake flooding settlement. We took a look at them, because I for one had worked in those areas and knew what they were like before they were flooded, and Brian Ransom, at the time the chairman of Manitoba Hydro, had similarly worked there as a student, and many of our members of government knew what had happened in that area. We said that, despite the fact that there was full and final settlement in those areas, we believe that we should reopen them and that we should look at them again and put more in. We put \$30 million more into those two areas to resettle those claims because we thought it was the right thing to do.

The North Central Transmission Line will be providing power to nine First Nations communities in an area that got 15 amp service, so they could not even have all the normal modern appliances and the normal services that people depend upon throughout—members opposite did not care about it. It was, oh, they represented it. They never did a thing about that when they were in office. Now we have proper electrical service. Now we have modern services for the aboriginal people in that area, Madam Speaker.

* (1720)

So, Madam Speaker, we will continue to do the things that are right and the things that are necessary for our aboriginal people to ensure that they have

opportunities like they never had under New Democrats.

Madam Speaker, I just want to speak for a few minutes about the tremendous trauma that took place in this province during the flood of the century that occurred this spring. I just say that the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Doer) in his remarks on the throne speech talked about the fact that during that period of time they co-operated, that the House sat shortened hours, that we made up for it by extra committees, that there was lots of co-operation, and I compliment him and his members for that because that was when the good things were done for the people of Manitoba.

That is when all of us needed to be involved in ensuring that not one life was lost and ensuring that we did everything possible to minimize the damage that took place, and because previous generations of Manitobans, previous governments had been foresighted enough to invest in things like the floodway around Winnipeg, the greater Winnipeg floodway, the primary diking system in Winnipeg, the ring dikes around eight communities, the ring dikes that were built in places like Turnbull Drive and so many different areas of the province after the floods of 1950, after the floods of 1979 and so on—because of all of that and because of the fact that we had some very, very highly skilled, motivated and dedicated people throughout our public service in Manitoba and tens of thousands of volunteers working hand in hand in hand, not one life was lost.

What was the damage? Well, it is going to be substantial. In the end it will probably end up being about \$300 million that we will have suffered in total property damage in Manitoba. But when you look at it, that is for a distance of about 75 miles that involves a population of about three quarters of a million people. Compare that to Grand Forks, where they will have suffered well over a half-billion dollars to 75,000 people. That is because we were not only prepared for it, not only did we have people of foresight who had done that, but because people worked together hand in hand.

I just want to say to every person who lives in the Red River Valley that firstly, obviously, our hearts go out to the people who suffered the damage. We know

that resources were not spared to protect the life and the property of people. We know that everything that could have been done was done in that flood event and we thank everybody involved for being a part of that process, Madam Speaker, to make it happen, because it could not have happened without the co-operative effort of everybody.

I thank the federal government. They sent in 8,500 military personnel. I mean, this was the largest peacetime operation by the Canadian Forces in their history, and I know you, Madam Speaker, spent hours and hours and hours along with so many members of this House out there personally volunteering and working on behalf of the effort, and everyone should be given credit for what they did to ensure that not one single life was lost.

I want to just conclude, Madam Speaker. I really wanted to speak a lot more about health care and about some of the initiatives that we are pursuing to reduce the waiting lists, to reinvest—[interjection]

Madam Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Filmon: You know, Madam Speaker, the critic over there from Kildonan, this is an article that is taken out of the Winnipeg Sun earlier, and it says: Longest wait in B.C. British Columbians wait longer for surgery than anywhere else in Canada, says a study conducted by the Fraser Institute, and that is not healthy. While people in Quebec and Ontario wait about five weeks for a major operation, B.C. residents can wait nine weeks, the report indicated. Waiting periods in the province have increased since 1995 when they averaged more than seven weeks.

Now, this is the response given by the New Democratic Premier of British Columbia: Premier Glen Clark dismissed the study, saying his NDP government has put a lot of money into reducing waiting lists and the Fraser Institute supports a private health care system.

So, Madam Speaker, what I am saying to the members opposite is that we went through a period of time in which our transfers from Ottawa were reduced by \$230 million a year over a two-year period, that after going through a period of time in which we had to bring

our own budget into balance. We then had to suffer yet \$230 million of reductions from Ottawa, and we still are able to provide services to people. I want him to know, I want the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak) to know, this headline says: Manitoba a leader in breast cancer war.

That is a story that was in this summer in the Winnipeg Free Press. Here, in the Free Press of September 27, a story that says: Canadian health care praised.

It is a story by Dr. Morey Bubis about how his father was cared for with a heart attack and heart surgery in the St. Boniface Hospital, Winnipeg, and he compares it to California, where he practises, and he says that it is better here, Madam Speaker.

If there is one thing that I think members opposite do that is absolutely a disservice to all Manitobans, it is their negative, negative attitude.

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. The honourable First Minister, to complete his remarks.

Mr. Filmon: Madam Speaker, I think the biggest disservice that members opposite do is their constant negativity. Everything that happens in this province, the member for Kildonan (Mr. Chomiak), the member for Concordia (Mr. Doer), they can find a way to try and put a negative perspective on it.

They go to public meetings, and they discourage people. They go to public meetings, and they tell people the doom and gloom. The prince of darkness, the duke of doom, all of their colleagues, they do a disservice to this province because today this province is doing things that it has never done in its history. It is on a more positive track than it has ever been. We have the most buoyant economy in more than three decades, Madam Speaker, and all they can do is grovel around being negative and nattering; nattering nabobs of negativism.

I think that Manitobans deserve better, Madam Speaker, and that is why I am going to vote for this throne speech, because it is a positive throne speech.

Madam Speaker: Order, please. According to our Rule 40(4), I am putting the question on the main motion.

The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for Pembina (Mr. Dyck), that is the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Do members wish to have the motion read?

Some Honourable Members: Dispense.

Madam Speaker: Dispense.

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

Madam Speaker: All those opposed, please say nay.

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

Madam Speaker: In my opinion, the Yeas 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.

Division

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

Nays

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

Yeas

Cummings, Derkach, Downey, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Faurschou, Filmon, Findlay, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Laurendeau, McAlpine, McCrae, McIntosh,

Mitchelson, Newman, Penner, Pitura, Praznik, Radcliffe, Reimer, Render, Rocan, Sveinson, Toews, Tweed, Vodrey.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 28, Nays 24.

Mr. George Hickes (Point Douglas): Madam Speaker, I was paired with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Stefanson). Had I not been, I would have voted against the motion. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: The motion is accordingly carried.

Hon. James McCrae (Government House Leader): Madam Speaker, shall we call it six o'clock?

Madam Speaker: Is it the will of the House to call it six o'clock?

Some Honourable Members: Agreed.

Madam Speaker: Agreed. The hour being 6 p.m., this House is adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow (Wednesday).

Corrigenda

In Volume XLVIII No. 8, Monday, December 8, 1997, Oscar Lathlin's speech:

Page 302, second column, third and fourth paragraphs, should read:

As far as aboriginal people are concerned, Madam Speaker, this throne speech did absolutely nothing with respect to providing a blueprint for the future development of aboriginal people. It failed miserably in my mind to provide a vision for anybody, let alone aboriginal people. Rather than talking about the future and being visionary, this Premier (Mr. Filmon) decided to rehash old issues.

Now, Madam Speaker, rehashing old issues, I am sure you know, does nothing to advance and enhance the state of aboriginal development. This Premier . . .

Page 303, second column, third paragraph, third sentence, should read:

Since 1990 this Premier and his government have budgeted only about anywhere from 4 to 6 percent of the Highways budget for northern Manitoba, and he is trying to tell us that we are his friends, he supports us, and that he is our partner?

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Tuesday, December 9, 1997

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