



First Session - Thirty-Seventh Legislature

of the

Legislative Assembly of Manitoba

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

**Official Report
(Hansard)**

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The Honourable George Hickes
Speaker*



MANITOBA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Thirty-Seventh Legislature

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TWEED, Mervin	Turtle Mountain	P.C.
WOWCHUK, Rosann, Hon.	Swan River	N.D.P.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

Thursday, December 9, 1999

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

Health Care System Bed Openings—Minister's Directive

TABLING OF REPORTS

Hon. Becky Barrett (Minister of Labour): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to table the 1999 Annual Report of the Manitoba Civil Service Organization and Staff Development.

Hon. Eric Robinson (Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I would like to table the Development Fund Annual Report for 1999.

Hon. Ron Lemieux (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Section 13 of The Trade Practices Inquiry Act, being Chapter 110 of the Statutes of Manitoba, 1970, I have the honour to report that no inquiries were commenced subsequent to the last report dated April 8, 1999.

Mr. Speaker: I am pleased to table the 1998 Annual Report of the Provincial Ombudsman.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to Oral Questions, may I direct the attention of honourable members to the public gallery where we have with us today from Springfield Collegiate fifteen Grade 9 students under the direction of Mrs. Carolyn Wong. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Springfield (Mr. Schuler).

Also in the public gallery, we have from Concord School eighteen Grades 5 to 10 students under the direction of Mrs. Joan Taylor. This school is located in the constituency of the honourable member for Lakeside (Mr. Enns).

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

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this morning in his Speech from the Throne the Premier made a number of platitudinous statements about the approach that his government would be taking in dealing with various issues. Specifically, he said they believe in a government that is co-operative, that works with people and organizations.

How does he square this co-operative, working-with-organizations commitment with the comments of a Winnipeg hospital CEO in today's Winnipeg Sun who says his Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) is strong-arming hospitals to do things for political reasons?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question.

We did make a commitment in the last election, and ultimately the people we report to are the members of the public, the people of Manitoba, the patients of this province, their families and their loved ones. We have established certain objectives publicly. If we do not meet those objectives, I dare say members opposite will be quite critical, as it is their role to do. It is important that this Legislature that is responsible for over 98 percent of the funding for most hospital facilities in Manitoba get patient results. It is also important in Manitoba that we work in a co-operative way to get those results.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) has met with patients, nurses, administrators, chairs of boards and others on these objectives. It is also important, Mr. Speaker, that we get financial accountability throughout the system. That is why we have collapsed the number of vice-presidents from 13 that were under the

former government. We are committed to training more nurses, to give more resources to our hospitals. We are not going to fire a thousand nurses after an election campaign and worry about them just before an election campaign. We are worried about that right now. But we made a commitment to the people of Manitoba. You will hold us accountable for that, and we accept that as part of democracy.

Mr. Filmon: The member says that he has met with all these different people, including administrators, or his Minister of Health has. The question is, of course, is he listening to anybody that he is meeting with or is he just going there to impose his will on them? That is the question. In fact, again, the Premier said that he is committed to open, accountable and co-operative government. How does that commitment square with the comment again made by a hospital's CEO in today's newspaper who talks about finding the solutions? He says imposing ill-conceived solutions on them is no way to run a health care system. It is no way to work as a team.

* (1335)

Mr. Doer: Mr. Speaker, we are accountable, and we are accountable to the people of this province that pay, through their taxes, close to 98 percent or 99 percent of the hospital budgets through this Legislature. This Legislature is accountable to the people for the results for patient services, the quality of patient services and the accountability for the money through the health care system.

We believe, and we believe the public believes, that people in hallways without privacy over a long period of time do not get the dignity they deserve as patients, and we have stated that in the election campaign. The people have voted democratically for a change to provide dignity and privacy of patients, and it is our job to implement the public's priorities in government. We will try to do that in the most co-operative way, but the objective is there, and we are determined to meet that objective.

Financial Accountability

Mr. Gary Filmon (Leader of the Official Opposition): It is evident that, when he speaks

about financial accountability, when he talks about 98 percent of the money being spent in health care comes from the taxpayer, he also has determined that he, in his political wisdom, has all the answers. He is not prepared to listen to experts. He is not prepared to listen to those who administer the system. In their arrogance, they have decided that they have all the answers.

So, if indeed he is committed to financial accountability, how does he square that with the comment made by the hospital CEO who says it is a lot of resources poured into something that is not necessary. Is that financial accountability?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): We need no advice from the member opposite about financial accountability. This is a party that takes oats from Manitoba, ships them to Markham, Ontario, adds water, freezes them, and then we have to pay for those frozen, watered oats to come back to Manitoba. That is the legacy of that former Premier. We need no lectures from the member that left a \$200-million-plus over-expenditure in health care.

The Minister of Health (Mr. Chomiak) met with the administrators on November 19. He took the advice from the health advisory committee talking about flu and other home care measures; he took the advice of the observation rooms that should be opened, but we have to listen to the administrators, the boards, and something that may be very unusual for members opposite to hear, we listen to the patients and families, as well as the administrators. We are pleased that the number of people in hallways is down from a year ago, but we believe that people that are going to be admitted, day after day if they are remaining in the hallways—we have heard from families where they have visited their loved ones for two or three days in hallways when they were in a life-threatening situation. We are committed to giving patients and their families privacy and dignity. That is an objective we have, and we plan on achieving it.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Speaker: Prior to recognizing the honourable member, may I draw the attention of honourable members to the loge to my left

where we have with us Ed Mandrake, former member for Assiniboia. On behalf of all honourable members, I welcome you here today.

Health Care System Bed Openings—Minister's Directive

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Health. We continue to see the Minister of Health desperately scrambling to fulfill political promises by demanding that hospitals open beds without considering the additional strain this will place on our nurses.

My question to the Minister of Health is: are these strong-arm directives of the NDP their idea of consultation and co-operation with the health care professionals, and especially the nurses who will experience additional stress and strain as a result?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the member for that question because it provides me with an opportunity to again correct the inaccuracies that have been put forward by both the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Filmon) and by the member. In fact we went through a very extensive process, something that is very foreign to members opposite, with respect to how we came up with these proposals. Not only did we ask the hospitals and the regional health authority to come up with a plan in terms of opening beds, how they would be staffed, et cetera, which we outlined on the 22nd, but we said: what other initiatives can be put in place to deal with this issue? We have put in an additional \$4 million to \$5 million in Home Care; we put in place geriatric assessment teams; we put in place physician bed managers; we put in place emergency fast-track, Mr. Speaker, and we put in all these measures to deal with the issue.

* (1340)

We called them together on November 19 and sat around a table with them all and said is this doable; are there any problems, with every single one of those hospital CEOs that they supposedly talked to, and they said it was not only doable but they would work with us to do that. I might add that we are very pleased with

some of the results that are occurring in the very first 60 days of our office, that we have actually addressed hallway medicine, something that members opposite never admitted existed until October 5 of this year.

Mrs. Mitchelson: My supplementary question to the Minister of Health is: with all of his strong-arm directives and tactics, is he telling our health care professionals today that he and he alone knows best, or is he going to continue to walk down the hallways with his jackboots on and direct them to comply?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I should inform the member opposite that what we have done is put in place a plan that was put in place November 22 with a kick-in time of December 1 to make beds available.

Mr. Speaker, since that point in time, I have not talked to the CEOs of the hospitals with respect to the implementation plan. We have left it to the authority of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority to deal with the plan. When the bed counts were such that it was felt that it was necessary, the beds were triggered and opened.

I might add that on this day last year there were 34 people waiting in hallways with no prospects of beds. Today, there are 31 people who are in beds who would have been in the hallways had that government continued its policy of neglecting hallway medicine.

Bed Openings—Staffing

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

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. This is on a new question?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. On September 9, during the election campaign, the NDP said, and I quote: With more beds in the short term and more full-time nurses to staff them, we can give patients dignity, improve the quality of care and give nurses the respect they deserve. My question—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mrs. Mitchelson: Mr. Speaker, my question to the Minister of Health is: is the respect that nurses deserve directing the opening of 100 new beds with no new nurses?

* (1345)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, again, I am very happy to see that the members on the opposite side, after 11 years of treating nurses with utter disregard, have finally recognized the shortage and legacy that they left this province. When I stood there three years ago and said you are facing a nursing shortage, they denied it and produced a study that said that that was not the case. That is disgusting that members opposite did not do that.

Mr. Speaker, we have met with nurses across this province. We have met with the Manitoba Association of Registered Nurses. We have met with the MNU. We have met with licensed practical nurses, a group that those people, when they were government, tried to eliminate 100 percent. We have said, as part of our plan—if the member would look back at the news release—that staffing would be a difficult problem because of the serious cuts undertaken by this government. We said we will announce a plan to deal with nurses in this province because we recognize that the nurses and other workers have held the system together for the past 11 years—that they tried to tear apart.

Patient Safety

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Health assure patients and health care providers that patient safety will not be compromised by his directives?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, first the honourable member said open 100 beds immediately; then the honourable member said, no, there were no beds open. Now the honourable member is going on saying that

we are supposed to be strong-arming. You know—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, if after two months in office, we could announce a short-term plan to deal with hallway medicine, if after two months in office, we could meld the authorities together, which they did not do, if after two months in office, we could do something about waiting lists like prostate cancer, I think the members just ought to have to wait a little longer till we announce our plan on nurses, and I hope they will be pleased, as will Manitobans.

Bed Openings

Mrs. Bonnie Mitchelson (River East): Can the Minister of Health confirm, in his desperate attempt to fill an election promise, that without having nursing staff in place, he is directing hospitals to find space anywhere? First, Mr. Speaker, it is patient lounges, then conference rooms. What next?

An Honourable Member: Broom closets?

Mrs. Mitchelson: Broom closets? Where is the dignity?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, on today's date last year there were 34 Manitobans in the hallways of the Winnipeg hospitals. Today, unfortunately, there are 12, but if we had not opened 31 beds, there would be 43 people in the hallways. I ask the honourable member: what better alternative?

I might also add that when we met with the CEOs—[interjection] If the member wants to talk to CEOs, she will also ask them about my directive, that when I discussed the issue with them, I directed them—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: I directed them, Mr. Speaker, for two points. I said I do not want any patient

to be harmed by any policy we are putting in place, and I said I do not want any nurse, and I made it very clear—if they could talk to them, they could spend some time talking with them—that I recognized the difficult circumstances we were putting nurses in. I wanted them to make certain that nurses were advised and were looked after and that we did not put them in any kind of a compromising situation.

* (1350)

Nursing Profession Employment Strategy

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): As a nurse, when I first heard that the Minister of Health was going to open a hundred new beds without first having the nurses to staff them, I was appalled that he would jeopardize patient safety just to meet an election promise. Can this minister tell us how many of the hundred new full-time nurses he promised to hire have in fact been hired?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, I thank the honourable member for that question. I would have hoped she would have been as vigorous in her comments as the government laid off nurses the last few years—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: I will read from the plan that was released on November 22 for the education of the member: we know success of this plan is heavily dependent on the critical roles of front line health care professionals. I want to acknowledge their hard work, commitment and dedication. Our government and Manitoba Health and Nurses Recruitment and Retention Fund will work together to attract and keep more nurses in Manitoba. The government is committed to consult with nurses to develop a new and expanding nursing strategy for the province.

Health Care System Bed Openings—Patient Safety

Mrs. Myrna Driedger (Charleswood): Can the minister confirm that attempting to open any

new beds without the proper staffing will endanger patients as stated by Maureen Hancharyk, president of the Manitoba Nurses' Union, and I quote: how safe can it be to open beds and tax nurses even more than they are being taxed, and that from the Nurses' Union. Could he please answer that?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, that is correct, and that is one objective that we do not want to engage in. That is true, it would not be safe, but I might add, as the nurse told me in Concordia Hospital that I visited: is it not better to have these patients in a ward, where we can look after them, than lying in the hallways as they have for the past years under that government?

Mrs. Driedger: Can this minister explain to Manitobans how he can open his beds without proper staffing, without any regard for the consequences it will have on patient safety? As a nurse, I find this disturbing and alarming that he would open the beds, jeopardizing patient safety in Manitoba.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, I think it is curious that it was only several days ago that the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) was demanding that we open these beds, and we indicated that there was a process in place and that it would be subject to staffing, as well as subject to fluctuations, as well as subject to the clinical advice that is being provided to us by hospitals and by health authorities as to when and how those beds should be open for the best benefits of Manitobans. There is no doubt when you look at the chart that I tabled last week which showed that in Manitoba registered nurses full time employed are 10 out of 10 under the Conservative government, dead last, 10 out of 10 in this province. It is no wonder we had trouble attracting and maintaining nurses in this province for the past 11 years.

Nursing Profession Employment Strategy

Mrs. Joy Smith (Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has to give the nurses of Manitoba a straight answer. My question to the minister is: how many of the hundred full-time nurses promised have actually been hired?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health):

There are open in Manitoba today, with the use of nurses, 31 beds that were not open at this time last year that can be safely staffed and safely accommodated by patients. It is interesting, as I indicated in the announcement on November 22, as I have indicated throughout the course, that in two months time, as the nurses we visited said to us, you have to go through three things: you have to open more beds; you have to hire more nurses, and you have to get rid of bureaucracy. We have put in place a process to open beds; we have put together the bureaucracies, and we are working on a strategy that we will be announcing shortly with respect to nurses. I should indicate that the vacancy level of nurses is down since the time that those people were in government two months ago.

Mrs. Smith: Can the minister tell us exactly when those hundred new positions will be filled, which hospitals and which wards?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated previously and as I continue to indicate, we are going to put in place a process, and we are consulting with nurses and professionals in the field, and we will announce a long-term nursing strategy versus a strategy that was adopted by members opposite year after year where 1,000 nurses lost their positions, where LPNs were told they would no longer be in the system.

* (1355)

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Point of Order

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (Opposition House Leader): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I was trying not to get up this Question Period, I really was, but the honourable member—Beauchesne 417: "Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate."

Answer the question. How many nurses?

Hon. Gord Mackintosh (Government House Leader): I think the opposition wants Manitobans only to hear the questions and not the answers. But it is interesting—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mackintosh: Mr. Speaker, on the point of order, the questions have been asked about details such as room numbers, and in fact the question just asked asked for information about the wards. So they cannot have it both ways. They cannot ask for details about hospital room numbers and wards and at the same time come in here and say: Oh, just give me a yes or no answer. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: On the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader, he does not have a point of order. Beauchesne Citation 416 (1) states a member may put a question but has no right to insist upon an answer.

* * *

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, when we came into office two months ago, there were no plans to open any beds. There was no nursing strategy. There were no plans to meld the two boards together. There was a plan to go along with the frozen food experiment.

We indicated that what we would do is we would put in place a plan. We announced the availability of a hundred beds, as well as community programs to put in place. We have melded the two boards together. We have opened the contract to deal with the frozen food. We have dealt with the waiting lists.

If members opposite could only wait a little longer, as we had to wait for 11 years, we will have a plan, something that was not seen for 11 years by members opposite.

Urban Shared Services Corporation Information Tabling Request

Hon. Jon Gerrard (River Heights): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

The minister has paid \$24.5 million in public funds for the security on the Tory frozen food system, an expenditure which the Free Press refers to as a way of rising expense and shrinking accountability. The facility is reported to have been built for \$21 million. Others

suggest the building, on the open market, might be worth \$15 million or maybe even as low as \$2 million. The minister himself, in opposition, suggested it was a worthless white elephant.

I ask the minister to provide evidence for the value of the Tory frozen food system by tabling the report that he referred to yesterday. Will the minister come clean and table the report?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): I thank the member for that question because it allows me to explain to all members opposite who did not understand this for many years.

Mr. Speaker, we bought the mortgage, a mortgage that was entered into by the previous government without approval and a guarantee for 20 years of payments, for 20 years of payments from the government of Manitoba through USSC to a private company in Toronto that was acquired by a New York company. That was what we bought.

* (1400)

The facility itself, the member has to understand, is not worth \$21 million. It is an ongoing payment for the operations, for the equipment, et cetera, plus not only did we buy the \$21-million initial mortgage, there was \$3 million in escrow for \$24 million and half a million dollars, of which there would have been \$2 million in additional investment and other clauses with relation to the mortgage. We bought a mortgage that has locked us into a 20-year deal that we are going to have to have paid in this province for 20 years regardless of what we did, except we got it for a cheaper rate and we had the ability to have the contract and to have some say over that particular mortgage.

Mr. Gerrard: Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is to the Premier.

Why, when Newcourt Capital is a private corporation, why, when his government paid the \$24.5 million of public money to a private sector organization, does he believe that nationalization of a private enterprise should have less scrutiny, less openness and less accountability than privatization of a public enterprise?

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, one of the reasons for buying the contract was when we came into office—we had been demanding that contract for years and the government was not giving it to us. When we came into office, we said, well, now can we make the contract public? We were precluded by the terms and conditions of the contract for making public a contract that cost Manitobans millions of dollars.

The member has to not only—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Chomiak: Mr. Speaker, not only are we willing to make the contract public, we are willing to make the data and all the information available and due diligence available to the member or any members opposite, if they have the courage to look at that deal.

Mr. Gerrard: My second supplementary to the Premier: how on earth, Mr. Premier, when your government's first huge expenditure of \$24.5 million is on a white elephant, based on a report that you will not table and before the Provincial Auditor has even reported his analysis of the worth of this facility, can you expect to be credible fiscal spenders?

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): First of all, Mr. Speaker, let the public know that the government had signed contracts that were not available for the public to see that required us to pay a higher interest rate, a long-term mortgage that would cost more than the achievement that has been made by the Minister of Health this week and would have—[interjection] Well, if the members opposite want to continue to send oats from Manitoba to Markham, Ontario, add water, freeze the water and ship back the frozen oats to Manitoba, that is not our vision of how we are going to serve our patients in the future. The Auditor—[interjection] Well, if the former Premier has any guts on this issue, he would ask the question himself. He has been silent all week and he should be silent, given the deal they signed.

Mr. Speaker, we have, in essence, a public debt based on a contract to a former monopoly company. We now have the mortgage, which is debt that is owned now by the people of Manitoba through the purchases it made. Due diligence was conducted by an independent lawyer, and we will—

Some Honourable Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Yes, you know, the jackals over there—

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Mr. Doer: Thank you.

If the members would like to pipe down, I will try to give them the answer. Mr. Speaker, we have conducted—Martin Hak, an individual, has conducted an independent due diligence on the contract. From what we understand, he was quite shocked at the deal that was signed by the former members, but that due diligence and the contract and the former contract should be released to the public, and we will do so when we are able to because the public should be able to see it. They have a right to see it, and they will know how bad the original deal was.

Health Care System Minister's Directive

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): By running a deficit, this government has admitted it cannot manage the province's finances. With the Minister of Health's directives to find quick fixes, it is also clear they cannot manage health care.

My question: is the Minister of Health, using his words not mine, issuing directives based on delivering quality health care for all Manitobans or delivering his party's ill-conceived election promises?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): No, Mr. Speaker. But what I would like the member to know is when we came into office we inherited probably the biggest health care mess that has ever been experienced by any govern-

ment in the history of the province, and within 60 days of office, we have put together the two boards; we put in place the first step of ending hallway medicine through our plan that was agreed to by the CEOs in the other hospitals; we did something about waiting lists, particularly the terrible waiting lists for prostate and radiology therapy. We also said we would deal with the frozen food mess, and we would be putting in place a labour strategy that looked at all of the shortages across the field, not just nurses but radiation technologists and technologists right across the board that this government has left as a terrible deficit on the people of Manitoba.

Consultations

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): My question to the Minister of Health, who at the AMM convention admitted to the delegates that 85 percent of the health care in Manitoba was in excellent shape: will he commit to consult with health care professionals instead of issuing directives?

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): If the honourable member would check with one of the former ministers of Health, he will recall that I made that same comment when he was minister and I was the Health critic. I said that for a long time; 85 percent of the health care system worked fine.

But, for a former government that never lived up to any of its promises, I am surprised that members now would be critical of the fact that we are trying to deal with hallway medicine, that we have done something about melding the boards together, that we are putting in place a labour plan, that we are dealing with the waiting lists and that we are finally trying to fix the mess that was entered into regarding frozen food, and I welcome questions in any of those areas from members opposite.

Minister's Directive

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Turtle Mountain): Based on that response, can the minister explain the contradiction of statements directed at the government by a hospital official that says, and I

quote: imposing ill-conceived solutions on them is no way to run a health care system, is no way to work as a team?

*(1410)

Hon. Dave Chomiak (Minister of Health): Mr. Speaker, in consultation with nurses and all of the other professionals and patients, we went to the health authorities in the hospitals and asked them what was doable in the short term as well as long term. The solutions that we put together in the package were a combination of these solutions as well as recommendations from a report that was put together by members opposite in the Centre for Health Policy and Evaluation.

In addition, we called them into our office—something that had never been done before, we were advised—ahead of the time, and I asked them what the concerns and problems were and to go around the table and tell us where the problems were and any concerns or problems they had. And, to a person, they approved of the recommendations that we had all put together collectively. We are trying to create in this province a new climate of not blaming this person or blaming that person, but we are trying to do this collectively because we have a problem we all have to deal with and we all have to solve.

Devils Lake Diversion Status

Mr. Gregory Dewar (Selkirk): My question is for the Premier (Mr. Doer). Over the past number of months there have been serious concerns raised about the proposed diversion of Devils Lake into the Red River water system. Water diverted from Devils Lake would go into the Red River and eventually end up in Lake Winnipeg and would have serious negative impacts upon commercial and sports fisheries on those waterways. My question to the Premier: can the Premier update the House about recent developments on this proposal?

An Honourable Member: It is always when the heat is on, let us divert the attention from health care.

Hon. Gary Doer (Premier): Mr. Speaker, if the member for River East (Mrs. Mitchelson) has never got out of the Perimeter Highway and does not understand how important it is in Selkirk, Lake Winnipeg, Gimli and all these other matters, they are suffering premature Perimeteritis over there.

Mr. Speaker, the two proposals of North Dakota—and my predecessor worked hard on this file as well, and I paid tribute to that earlier today—are very, very contrary to the best interests of Manitoba. The Garrison Diversion project under the new name, the North Dakota state water act, got through the Senate committee in 1999, in September. It is now in a situation where we had to try to get a couple of votes to stop it from going through with unanimous consent when all these bills were being added up, the Lewis and Clark bill and other bills. We are quite concerned about that because it never got this far in the Garrison Diversion project in the early '80s, and it is further along.

On the Devils Lake outlet, Mr. Speaker, we were absolutely opposed to the governor of North Dakota proceeding without a licence. We believe that no diversion from that lake through to the Cheyenne River to the Red River is helpful to the quality of water, to the \$200-million fishing industry, to the billion-dollar tourism industry. I am pleased that all members of this House are opposed to the outlet, opposed to the North Dakota state water act, and we are going to be meeting with the federal minister tomorrow to update our attempt to work as Team Manitoba on stopping these two water projects which are bad for Manitoba.

Mr. Speaker: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Millennium Villa

Mr. Doug Martindale (Burrows): On September 12, 1999, the residents, board of directors, family and friends of St. Mary The Protectress Millennium Villa, located at 800 Burrows Avenue, celebrated the 10th anniversary of their seniors apartment building. The

occasion was celebrated with a church service, a luncheon and a service at the villa with his beatitude, Metropolitan Wasyly, presiding. Millennium Villa is far more than a building since it is home for the residents, and as one of them said: As soon as I walked in, I knew it was like heaven.

The sponsor, St. Mary The Protectress Ukrainian Orthodox Church, and the board of the villa are to be congratulated for having the foresight and for working so hard over many years to make their dream come true when the building opened in 1989.

Mr. Matt Duschak is deserving of special mention since he was elected to the building committee in 1967, was the first chairperson of the board, has chaired the board since Millennium Villa opened and continues to devote many hours of time to the villa. The homelike atmosphere owes much to my friend and building manager, Stefania Myhaluk, who is like a mother and much more to the residents. I thank her for allowing me to hold an annual coffee party for the residents.

The residents are a wonderful group of people who continue to participate in activities in the villa and for many of them at their church, St. Mary The Protectress, to which they are connected. They can often be found there making varenyky. May the villa and its board and manager continue to provide housing and a home for seniors for many more decades.

Canada Compound (Western) Limited

Mr. Edward Helwer (Gimli): I would just like to take this opportunity to congratulate Canada Compound (Western) Limited on the official grand opening of their natural beef casings processing plant in Teulon. Canada Compound is a superb addition to the community, providing employment and other benefits for the people of Teulon. This plant presently employs about 10 people and has the capacity to hire up to 30 employees. This will have a very positive effect on the area's economy.

All of the product that is produced here in Canada Compound's plant will be exported to countries such as the United States, England,

Russia, Italy, Germany and Australia. In total, the company employs 55 workers in Canada and is planning to construct more plants in western Canada and Quebec.

I had the privilege of representing the community of Teulon in this House for many years. Even though Teulon no longer lies within the boundaries of my constituency, I still remain very active in this community, and I am proud to say that the opening of the Canada Compound plant, the only one of its kind in western Canada, was in no small part the result of the strong economic environment that was created in Manitoba by the previous Conservative government. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Ms. Marianne Cerilli (Radisson): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize today government and community initiatives to address the growing problem of fetal alcohol syndrome.

This is a disease with serious medical, developmental and behavioural implications for children exposed to maternal drug and alcohol abuse prior to birth. FAS can result in lifetime and lifelong problems, including brain damage, heart defects, abnormal facial features and poor growth patterns. Complications extend to the families, the communities and indeed all of society where FAS is present.

FAS children require extensive medical, educational and social supports through the developing years, special care and supports that can amount to \$1.5 million over a lifetime. The tragedy is not only these effects but that all of this is entirely preventable.

Mr. Speaker, government has announced a multifaceted strategy to address both the prevention of FAS and the care of children affected by this illness. The strategy draws on the Stop FAS program recently piloted in Winnipeg. The government's strategy is now expanded to include the opening of two additional projects in sites to be located in northern Manitoba, in The Pas and in Thompson, I believe.

In addition, the strategy includes public education components for media and public

education, women at risk in the communities and in prison. Medical and health personnel will benefit from training offered through the Children's Hospital and from increased and expanded diagnostic technology. Youth justice workers will receive education and enhanced training to ensure they are working with the most up-to-date knowledge when working with FAS clients, and the children will have an opportunity to attend summer camp programs especially designated for their recreational development.

* (1420)

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

St. Daniel School Filming

Mr. Denis Rocan (Carman): I am pleased today to rise regarding some film production work that took place at St. Daniel School. Mederic Productions of Winnipeg, a co-venture with Tapestry Films from Toronto and Buffalo Gal Pictures from Winnipeg, approached the Rural Municipality of Dufferin asking for permission to use the school property for two days of filming. The movie is based on the Gilbert Roy book *Children of My Heart*. The film explores the life of a schoolteacher in the 1930s, and St. Daniel School was a very appropriate location for filming. Some 60 crew members and 20 actors and extras were on hand for the production.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to see how the film industry has grown in Manitoba in recent years. Under the stewardship of the previous administration, a great deal of effort was placed into developing this fledgling industry. We know that, for every dollar spent by the film industry, there is a \$2.18 benefit to Manitoba's economy.

During the past 10 years, the Manitoba film industry has grown from \$1 million to \$25 million annually. The previous administration recognized the province's considerable advantages for the film industry, including our unique geographic location, our beautiful production sites and our considerable pool of local talent, and chose to cultivate this growing industry.

Manitoba Film and Sound has been instrumental in fostering an infrastructure and

environment to promote the province's film and sound industry. All around the province, movies and television shows are being filmed, and this provides a considerable economic boost to the province.

I hope that the new administration will maintain the highly successful Manitoba Film and Video Production Tax Credit, knowing that it has done so much for the development of the local film industry. I also look forward to seeing film production companies again making their way to my constituency.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Rural Child Poverty Rate

Ms. Linda Asper (Riel): Mr. Speaker, more evidence has come to light concerning the failure of Tory economic policy over the past 11 years. While it is generally well known that their policies proved disastrous for the city of Winnipeg, new evidence shows that even their rural supporters in Manitoba suffered under their regime.

A December 2, 1999, article in the *Portage la Prairie Daily Graphic* reveals that the city had the highest child poverty rate for urban centres in Manitoba based on 1966 figures. This is the first time the report has looked beyond the city of Winnipeg and the findings are disturbing. Their rate is 27.2 percent, well ahead of their closest competitor, The Pas at 24.3 percent. This information was brought to light in the Manitoba 1999 child poverty report card, *An Agenda For Action*.

The report was developed by the Social Planning Council in Winnipeg in conjunction with a long list of partners. The Portage numbers reflect only upon the city of Portage and do not include outlying communities and First Nations. According to the Social Planning Council, part of the problem is wage levels in cities such as Portage. Overall, the wage levels are low, with many people working near the minimum wage. Under the past Tory government, minimum wages did not keep pace with the cost of living, creating an ever-widening gap between rich and poor.

In 1971, people earning minimum wage were on par with the poverty line. In 1999, those earning minimum wage fell 45 percent

short of that line. A gauge of Portage la Prairie's poverty problem can be seen in that city's Salvation Army's Christmas hamper program, 480 hampers last year.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE (Eighth Day of Debate)

Mr. Speaker: By previous agreement of the House, I will now be putting the question on the motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), that is, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Do the members wish to have the motion read? [agreed]

Moved by the honourable member for St. Vital, seconded by the member for Brandon West (Mr. Smith), that the following address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor:

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this First Session of the 37th Legislature of Manitoba.

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

Voice Vote

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

Some Honourable Members: Yea.

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

Some Honourable Members: Nay.

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

* (1430)

Formal Vote

An Honourable Member: Yeas and Nays, Mr. Speaker.

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

Order, please. The question before the House is the motion of the honourable member for St. Vital (Ms. Allan), that is, the motion for an address in reply to the Speech from the Throne. Do the members wish to have the motion read?

An Honourable Member: Dispense.

We, the members of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba, thank Your Honour for the gracious speech addressed to us at this First Session of the 37th Legislature of Manitoba.

Division

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

Yeas

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

Nays

Cummings, Dacquay, Derkach, Driedger, Dyck, Enns, Faurshou, Filmon, Gerrard, Gilleshammer, Helwer, Loewen, Maguire, Mitchelson, Penner (Steinbach), Pitura, Praznik, Reimer, Rocan, Schuler, Smith (Fort Garry), Stefanson, Tweed.

Mr. Clerk (William Remnant): Yeas 29, Nays 23.

Mr. Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Marcel Laurendeau (St. Norbert): Mr. Speaker, I was paired with the Minister of Finance (Mr. Selinger). If I would have had the opportunity, I would have voted against this vision.

* * *

Mr. Speaker: The time being 2:38 p.m. and by previous agreement, the House is now adjourned and stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. Monday.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF MANITOBA

December 9, 1999

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